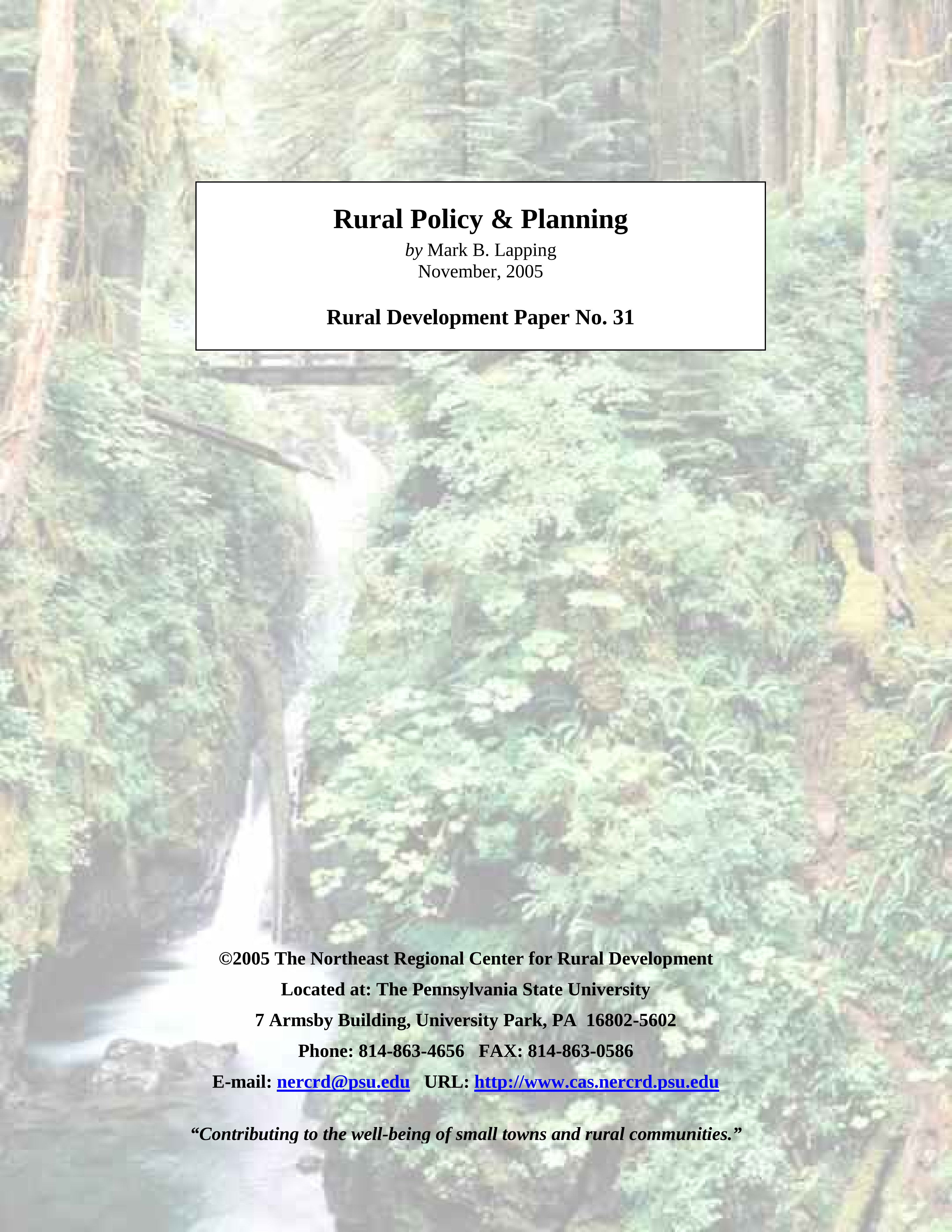

Rural Policy & Planning

by Mark B. Lapping
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Located at: The Pennsylvania State University

7 Armsby Building, University Park, PA 16802-5602

Phone: 814-863-4656 FAX: 814-863-0586

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Rural Policy & Planning

Mark B. Lapping*

Mark B. Lapping is Distinguished Professor of Planning in the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine, Portland, Maine 04104-9300, USA. He serves as North American Co-editor for the Ashgate Press' "Rural Planning & Policy" Series, has authored or co-edited nine books and over 250 scholarly articles, monographs, symposia, essays and reviews. He is a frequent consultant to governments, agencies and groups around the world. Previous to his current position he was founding Dean of the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University (New Jersey, USA) and the founding Director of the School of Rural Planning & Development at the University of Guelph (Ontario, Canada).

The majority of the world's population live in rural areas and communities. Historically this was even more the case than in the present era when the processes of urbanization, industrialization, modernization, and globalization have increased the movement of people to cities and urban places. Yet the "rural fact" remains the overwhelming reality for the majority of those who inhabit the world. Rural places are not all the same and diversity and variation defines the rural scene. Many rural dwellers live in small communities and villages. Others live in the open countryside among farms, ranches, and forests, or in places which skirt oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers which provide food and the possibilities for trade. Substantial numbers of indigenous people, or aboriginal groups, live deep in the rain forests of the world, in small enclaves in the mountains, or roam the savannahs, steppes, plains, deserts, and tundras along with the animals upon which they depend. And some rural people occupy 'instant settlements' which have sprung-up, seemingly over night, to exploit forest, mineral, or fishery resources. Significantly, too, many people who live in urban areas and regions continue to dream "rural dreams" and maintain a deep longing and even nostalgia for the way of life they impute to the village and countryside. It is stunning how many national cultures locate their "essence," their Hungarian-ness or Ethiopianness, if you will, in the countryside and among those who live a rural/village existence. Though this has long been the way of the human family, it is perhaps surprising that policy and planning strategy devoted to the 'rural fact' is of relatively recent vintage.

Before the rise of the modern nation-state and its organizational paradigm, what James C. Scott has identified as a tendency toward "high modernism,"[1] rural planning and development was largely vernacular in nature. It remains so in many areas of the world. Early planning efforts in rural places were often defined by strategic considerations, such as the need to protect fertile fields, trade routes, water sources and irrigation systems, and even religious and symbolic locations. As specific community functions grew, political and economic power became more centralized, populations expanded, and bureaucracies developed, villages were often transformed into permanent settlements and central places. This was the pattern in Pre-Columbian America, Africa, Australia, Asian, and Europe.

It is difficult to talk of defined, legible, and clearly articulated and enforced rural policies proper to the rise of imperial systems and bureaucratic states. One may conceive of certain organized attempts which sought to remove people from the land—as in the case of a series of laws in England which forced peasants off the land and into the cities—to push indigenous people to the periphery and onto marginal lands so that farmers and other settlers could occupy and fence 'productive lands'—as in the case of the Swedish reindeer herding laws which enjoined the Sami (Lapp) people—to the colonization of huge hinterlands and the forced resettlement or the elimination of entire populations—as in the cases of the homelands policies of Apartheid South Africa and the Homestead Act and the establishment of reservations for Native Americans in the United States—to the codification of land tenure laws and the promotion of land reforms—as was the early promise of the Mexican Revolution—to the transformation of substinence agricultural practices into plantation systems for the production of export and cash commodities—as throughout the Caribbean and Central American, and much of sub-Saharan Africa and South and Southeast Asia—and the disestablishment of rural elites and the end of serfdom throughout Europe—as in the case of the Estonian land reform of 1921—all as forms or manifestations of rural policy. Yet it was not until the 20th century that we can truly speak of nuanced and legible state-sponsored rural planning and policy.

Roots and Branches

Because rural planning and policy can cover an array of issues and problems, such as housing, poverty, health care delivery, transportation, gender, land use, conservation, and much else—indeed it is such a broad term as to almost lose meaning—it is perhaps best to recognize that the very notions of "planning" and "planned change" reflect the optimism, the belief in the power of empirical science, and the desire of people and states to shape both nature and society which accompanied the Enlightenment. As Isaiah Berlin pointed out throughout this long career as a student of ideas, many of these Enlightenment and "modernist" impulses actually found their origins in utopian thinking.[2]

The utopian tradition in western thought proved to be particularly powerful for rural planning in that it so often reinforced positive representations and notions of rural life—conviviality, community, coherence, simplicity and organic integrity—at the very time when 'modern' was coming to be defined by city life and cosmopolitan ideas and lifestyles. Whether in the form of Saint-Simon, Fourier, Tolstoy, or Owen inspired ideas and colonies in Europe, or similar experiments in North America, such as Oneida, Brook Farm, Sointulla, or New Harmony, the utopian impulse had a profound impact upon the rise of planning and community organization theory, as Thomas Refiner, amongst others, has pointed out.[3] In North America utopianism was further reinforced by a religious pluralism which encouraged rural communitarianism and experimentation among the Shakers, the Hutterite, the Amano Colonists, the Amish and other Mennonites, and similar groups which all saw in agrarianism both a positive statement framed by faith and a pattern of sustainable living.[4] In this way utopianism was for some a response to the excesses of industrialization, urbanization, secularism, and alienation from tradition, work, and family which modernism seemed to represent.

In the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in Europe where "national romanticism" was a major artistic and intellectual force, some of these ideas found further amplification in the 'Arts and Crafts' movement of William Morris and others which had the village and the tradition of pre-modern craftsmanship at the center of their critique of the modern world and their conception of the good society.[5] Rural simplification also developed deep roots in North America as well.[6] In understanding things in this way some early planners came to see the rural village, bucolic simplicity, and organicism as essential counterpoints to the social chaos, alienation, class warfare, and rootlessness so many came to see in the all-powerful forces of industrial capitalism and urbanization.[7] To some extent, of course, this bred a form of rural romanticism and agrarian fundamentalism which could not but impede the realism necessary to comprehend the nature of the profound changes in rural life which were in process. But in other ways, it helped to form a foundation for rural planning ideas which were to emerge in the 20th century.

The first generation of planners who held an avowed interest in rural people and places included Raymond Unwin and Ebenezer Howard. They led the English 'Garden City' movement which sought to limit British urbanization, especially in the London region, by connecting cities—whose growth would be confided within specified physical limits through the creation of "green belts" and other tools—with new smaller settlements nested in productive rural hinterlands and connected through rapid transportation. The Garden City tradition sought to elaborate a 'middle landscape,' to use Leo Marx's powerful term, wherein urban economic functions could be meshed with the environmental amenities and lifestyles of smaller communities in a rural setting.[8] Howard argued that through controlling the use of land and its ownership –he was an advocate of public land ownership and land banking—that the culture and the amenities of urban places could be made accessible to rural people, thereby improving the life of those who lived in the countryside. And the lives of those in cities would also be enhanced through the imposition of limits on urban expansion and by providing greater proximity to green space and nature landscapes. The noted planner Peter Hall calls Howard one of the early "seers" of planning theory and aptly summed-up what Ebenezer Howard attempted to do in his work and writing, most importantly in *Garden Cities for To-morrow* (1902), when he wrote that "…Howard was saying here that both existing cities and the exiting countryside had an indissoluble mixture of advantages and disadvantages."[9] Some, including the great urbanist Jane Jacobs, have come to see these ideas as fundamentally "anti-urban,"[10] while Stephen Heathorn has argued that Howard was the leader of a loose intellectual movement whose sole "binding element" was "a shared idealization of English rusticity."[11] Nevertheless the 'Garden City' movement genuinely reflected an expression of the need for limits to and boundaries on the very social forces and technological processes –largely uncontested and rarely debated in the larger society—which were generating irreversible changes in people's lives and the ordering of social and economic life.[12]

In North America these and related ideas found resonance among decentralists, regionalist thinkers and, most importantly, a small group of planners known as the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA). Composed of some of America's truly most seminal planning intellectuals, Clarence Stein, Lewis Mumford, Catherine Bauer, Henry Wright, and Benton Mac Kaye, the RPAA implemented its own conception of the 'Garden City' ideal in the establishment of the new community of Radburn, New Jersey.[13] Rayburn represented an attempt to foster the fundamental decentralization of economic opportunity away from the city together with the reestablishment of spatial ties between work and residence which large-scale industrialization had generally destroyed.

Through the late 1920s and 1930s the RPAA continued to generate important plans and proposals, such as the introduction of comprehensive regional planning for the entirety of New York State, the elaboration of extensive systems of rural highways, rural electrification, new towns developed along the lines of the original 'Garden City' ideal, regional natural resources conservation—MacKaye was the 'father' of the Appalachian Trail which spanned the mountain tops of the Appalachians running from Maine to Georgia—and large-scale economic decentralization to enhance rural regions.

These ideas struck a responsive chord with other architects and planners, academics, social critics, and "progressives" across the country. This was especially true among a group of thinkers centered around the person of Howard Odum, a sociologist at the University of North Carolina, who, during the 1930s, focused on the problem of regional backwardness and peripheral regions, most especially the American South. A number of other southern intellectuals, largely writers and poets known as "Fugitive School," were simultaneously promoting a "return" to traditions of chivalry, agrarianism and thinly veiled racialism,[14] Odium and his colleagues, labeled the "Regionalists," advanced a far more progressive line of argument which sought to understand the underpinnings of rural backwardness, dependency, and poverty. As Freidmann and Weaver have rightly noted of them, "they wanted to fend off the attack of northern industrial interests and metropolitan culture on southern rural values; they wanted to alleviate agrarian poverty and racism,"[15] Odium and the reformers advocated land reforms to break the hold of tenancy and to favor small and family farmers, both black and white, a transformation in southern agriculture away from export and cash cropping systems, like "King Cotton" and peanuts, toward a more diversified food production model, the introduction of critically important physical infrastructure into rural areas, the provision of new rural credit systems and other financial institutions, the conservation of marginal lands and forests, and the establishment of a broad system of cooperatives, amongst other programs and policies.[16] All of this was to be done through a national commitment to social planning implemented on a regional basis and locally controlled industrialization.[17]

Not surprisingly, many of the ideas and concepts articulated by Odum, the RPAA, and other decentralists, like Ralph Borsodi, found fruition in the development of the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1933, North America's first mega-project aimed at the re-creation of an entire peripheral rural region. Together these "roots and branches" form what Hall has labeled the "Anglo-American tradition" in planning.[18] Though often neglected by the overwhelming urban orientation and bias among planners and policy makers, much of the core and some of the most seminal ideas about planning really sought to speak to the issues and problems facing rural people and rural places.

The Modernist Pose

If there were those who advocated rural policies which would substantially alter the nature of society and contest the urban-industrial model of development—which invariably required the continued underdevelopment of rural areas and places—there were others who struck a different ideological pose. Accommodation rather than resistence to the unfolding urban-industrial hegemony was the strategy which the Country Life movement adopted.[19] Taking its name from the Country Life Commission established by American President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908, the movement was most active through the United States and Canada. Nearly every state and several provinces established its own country life commissions, or something similar to it, and its impulses were extended to much of Europe and Australia through the promulgation of similar "modernization" efforts.[20]

Country Lifers understood the impact of emerging technologies—most especially agricultural science—the concentration of population and economic production in cities, and the sheer and growing prominence of urbanization. They aimed to secure for rural people an appropriate niche in the unfolding urban/industrial order. Though it too engaged in a certain amount of rural nostalgia and agrarian fundamentalism, the Country Life movement sought to change rural areas through the full adoption of technology and modern business principles to farming as well as the reform of many rural institutions. If the decentralists and the regionalists saw the answer to rural problems largely in the defense of rural people, institutions, and culture through large-scale planning and the development of cooperative institutions, Country Lifers and other proponents of modernization saw accommodation and adaptation as the most appropriate strategy. The leader of the movement, and head of the US Country Life Commission, was Liberty Hyde Bailey, Dean of the College of Agriculture at Cornell University, arguably then American's foremost agricultural educator.

Bailey reflected the rising pre-eminence of the land-grant university model of public higher education in the United States. Created under the terms of the 1862 Morrill Act, nearly every state in the country accepted a federal authorization which permitted states to sell-off federal lands with receipts directed to the establishment of state colleges where agriculture, the mechanical arts, as engineering was then known, and home economics were to be taught. These institutions came to form the most significant 'human capital' engine in existence in rural America. It was a model that would be duplicated in Canada and in numerous other nations which attempted to modernize their agricultural and rural sectors through the application of technology and science. Unlike other institutions of higher learning which placed almost exclusive emphasis upon teaching and pure research, the land-grant universities combined teaching with applied research, through federally-supported agricultural and forestry research stations, and direct assistance to producers in-the-field, via the jointly federally and locally sponsored Cooperative Extension Service, which maintained "agents" in many rural counties throughout the national. Cooperative Extension was the liaison for government/university support for agricultural activities and even in matters of home, farmstead, and community. It became the backbone of a unique system of technology transfer which, at every step, assisted farmers and country people to adopt new technologies to production, to bring scientific discoveries and innovations into the countryside, and to shape a new and more modern rural sector. Like the Country Life movement, of which it was a key component, the emphasis of much of the land-grant system rested upon a vision of larger, more highly specialized and capitalized, and scientifically oriented farms with farmers who were scientists and businessmen as well as better and more engaged citizens. Extension agents, along with management experts in the banking system, were as Deborah Fitzgerald has called them, the "shock troops of rural transformation."[21] Together with agricultural economists in the newly organized Bureau of Agricultural Economics in the USDA, farm management experts were busy advocating a fundamentally different model for American agriculture, one which would see farmers "industrialize their farms."[22] As one prominent Country Lifer put it, "the small farm of today is similar in its organization to the shop of yesterday, and must surely give way."[23]

If the reform of agriculture and the family farm was a major constituent of the Country Life/modernization approach to rural policy, the rural institution which actually received the greatest amount of attention was the local school. Its perceived limitations, rather than the contraction of the rural economy and the concomitant growth of the urban-based economy, were blamed for the depopulation of the countryside and the persistent rural "brain drain." Reformers argued for the end of the "one room schoolhouse" pattern of local education. It became the metaphor for much that was thought wrong with rural life. In its place reformers called for larger and better equipped schools which would be staffed with certified and properly supervised faculty who possessed the latest pedagogical theories of instruction and discipline. In these ways schools would be better able to instruct children "to do in a perfect way, the things their fathers and mothers are doing in an imperfect way, in the home, in the shop and on the farm." [24] Much of this was to be accomplished through school consolidation and regionalization. This proved to be an early example of the "economies-of-scale" calculus which persists world-wide as one of the primary criteria utilized by policy makers in making decisions about the size, scale, and location of agricultural and forestry investments, as well as the provision of basic human services and infrastructure investments in rural areas.

While the Country Life commissions continued to study, research and advocate for change in the rural sector, it was World War I which made its agenda national policy throughout North America and much of Europe. As David Danbom has noted, "the war, then, was the pivotal occurrence in the industrialization of agriculture. It unnaturally speeded the attainment of agricultural efficiency to the point where depression resulted, which in turn decreed that the gains of the war would not be lost. Not only did the depression (1919-1920) assure the cities the cheap food that had been their primary goal all along, it also stimulated the sharp competition in agriculture which assured that it would become still more productive. And finally, then, war accelerated those trends which were breaking down rural social institutions leading to increased realization of the Country Lifers' social goals."[25]

The Power of Power

The place where these two seemingly oppositional threads of thinking came together lies in the experience of numerous national governments in utilizing mega-projects to modernize their rural sectors. And the medium for doing this, for transforming, modernizing, and radically altering the entire nature of rural living with electrification.

By the 1920's more than two-thirds of the farmers in Germany, France, the Netherlands and Scandinavia had electricity while 90 per cent of American farmers did not. Further, European farmers had very favorable rate structures which allowed them to utilize power in literally everything they did. At the same time those few American farms which had access to electric power had to pay rates well in excess of those charged urban dwellers.[26] American farmers and others would have to await the New Deal during the Great Depression before the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) would create a system of cooperatives which would bring power to rural Americans. Prior to 1935 fully 90 percent of all American farms were without electricity; fifteen years later, 90 percent of all farms had power and light. Under the dynamic leadership of Morris Llewellyn Cooke, the REA made low-cost loans available to private utilities to bring power to farms, rural homes, and local businesses. Where private utilities failed to provide such service, Cooke helped to establish many new non-profit cooperatives which brought electricity to even the most remote corners of rural America. As New Deal historian William E. Leuchtenburg concluded, "no single act of the Roosevelt years changed more directly the way people lived than the President's creation of the Rural Electrification Administration. With electricity farmers increased their productivity, the healthfulness of foodstuffs was enhanced through refrigeration and better sanitation, and the quality of life in rural America more closely approximated the standards of cities. "[27] But even before the creation of the REA, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) brought power to an important part of rural America, the watershed of the Tennessee River which encompassed parts of seven states of the South. The TVA was to become the model for rural development mega-projects throughout the world.

Ostensibly a flood prevention project, the TVA built a number of major dam projects on the river. These not only controlled the river and prevented flooding, they also created recreational opportunities by developing lakes which served as low-flow augmentation catchments for the larger purpose of the dams, the generation of significant amounts of hydroelectricity. With the development of the river's extensive hydroelectric capacity, the TVA became not only a major producer of power but a marketer of electricity throughout the region. Though its ability to do so was challenged a number of times, and it became a rallying cry of conservative forces who saw in public power a menace to capitalism, the TVA used its control over electric rate structures to both modernize agriculture in the region—one of America's poorest rural areas—and also to industrialize the Tennessee Valley. Textiles, chemical plants, pulp and paper mills, and aluminum production all established themselves in the area. Some of these firms and enterprises relocated to the Tennessee Valley from other parts of the nation, such as New England. These businesses were attracted by the region's low and predictable electricity rates as electricity was a major factor of production in the products they developed and sold. During World War II the TVA's power production capacity helped the United States to develop its nuclear power and atomic bomb capacity at Oak Ridge, one of several "new towns" established in TVA territory. The story of the TVA is truly a compelling one and quite well known.[28] For our purposes here, however, the TVA represents a milestone in the evolution of rural policy in a number of significant ways. The TVA became *the* model for rural regional development throughout much of the world. This was especially the case for a number of the new nations of Africa and Asia which emerged out of colonialism after World War II. The TVA model did this by encouraging a concentration on the development of an entire river basin and watershed and by fostering a large-scale or a mega-project approach which invariably required dams which, most importantly, produced electricity. Electricity became the currency of the TVA and all subsequent river basin development projects. It was heavily capital intensive, centralized, and promoted rural industrialization, the growth of settlements, and the modernization and standardization of agriculture. The TVA development model used electricity and a relatively cheap rate structure to attract and to relocate development into a rural region from areas outside of it. In this way it established something of a precedent for the use of growth incentive policies which would redirected development from one place to another. The TVA was as much about the re-arrangement of economic activity as it was about the stimulation of new indigenous local development and entrepreneurship. As with many growth incentive programs, then, the TVA rearranged the location of economic activities from one place to another rather than by emphasizing new wealth-creating development. To an extent, this was a "beggar thy neighbor" approach. Those new enterprises which were created often had their basis on the exploitation of natural resources as well as a dependence on cheap energy availability. This industrial development inducement approach invariably led to the growth of cities which, TVA planners believed, would help anchor larger rural hinterlands traditionally mired in chronic underemployment and poverty. By permitting economic opportunity to essentially "trickle down" from these newly emerging metropolitan areas to rural places, rural people would be helped, as measured by the growth in personal income. Many, of course, would migrate from the rural hinterlands into the growing cities, like Knoxville. The TVA, then, actualized a "growth pole" development strategy which would later be popularized as the "polarized development model" by European theorists, such as Perroux and Boudeville, and not a few others as well.[29] At bottom polarized development theory argued that by stimulating certain "propulsive" industries a substantial "pull" forced would be created which would bring along lagging sectors of the economy. Enshrined in the national development programs of many newly developing nations, and promoted by the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other development agencies, polarized development policies invariably institutionalized the primacy of cities over rural areas in development, the manipulation of local agricultural and food production systems toward export socialization, the migration of labor to cities from rural hinterlands, and industrialization over rural development, amongst other effects.

During World War II the TVA model attracted the attention of numerous academics and planners. Most noteworthy among these was Alvin H. Hansen and Harvey Perloff. In 1942 they published *Regional Resource Development*, which was to spread 'the gospel' of the river basin development/rural development approach throughout the world.[30] This strategy had a special appeal in the developing world, where newly emerging national governments seized upon river basin development as the mechanism to induce industrialization, urbanization, the modernization of the agricultural sector, and broad change in rural regions. By utilizing capital-intensive, large-scale dam building mega-projects—often financed by development aid from advanced economic powers like the United States, the U.K., the Netherlands, France, and Sweden, as well from international funding organizations, such as the World Bank—the generation of electric power became both the means and the metaphor for rural development. As Friedmann and Weaver have noted, "comprehensive river basin development was to reappear in Columbia, Ghana, India, and elsewhere, but like the reality of the TVA, these would-be development corporations meant to encourage urban-industrial expansion."[31] Finally, the TVA experience substituted the region for the local as the scale of analysis for rural planning and policy development. Hereafter rural development came to be expressed very largely as regional policy. To a great extent, then, the TVA model of rural development, which would also become the backbone of the plans for the Mekong River basin, the Aswan High Dam on the Egyptian Nile, the James Bay project in Canada, and the Three Gorges Project in China, was fundamentally about altering rural areas, stimulating industrialization and urbanization, and changing the focus of planning and policy from the local to the regional scale of description and analysis. Indeed, at one point Nehru, the leader of India who warmly embraced both central planning and river basin development, said that dams would become "the temples of modern India."[32]

The linkage between rural modernization and electrification reached its zenith in the Soviet Union.[33] Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, V. I. Lenin penned the blue-print for the socialist reconstruction of the countryside, *The Agrarian Question*,[34] in 1907. Lenin saw an inevitable shift from a peasant-based agriculture—based on family production units, low-intensity technology, and what he saw as "backward" habits and processes—to a highly-mechanized, large-scale production system based on communes as essential to the socialist development of Russia. Central to this vision was the electrification of all of Russia. As James C. Scott notes, Lenin was famous for asserting that "Communism is Soviet Power plus the Electrification of the whole countryside."[35] He was mesmerized by electricity and his belief in its potential to change rural society in the most drastic and fundamental ways became a bedrock of Soviet rural and regional policy. For the Soviet Union electricity became the metaphor for centralization, planning, mechanization, the destruction of the Kulak class, and the modernization of the entire rural sector. So total was Lenin's belief in the power of electrification – pardon the pun – that H. G. Wells noted of him that he "has succumbed to the last of the Utopias, the Utopia of the electricians."[36] Despite massive investments and numerous attempts to bring electricity to the countryside, "only one in twenty-five collective farms had electricity by the eve of World War II."[37] Though the Soviet Union aggressively dammed rivers, built power station complexes, felled whole forests and attempted to exploit the country's hydroelectric potential to the fullest—often using forced labor from prisoners in the Gulag system—counterproductive effects could often be observed.[38] As Zhores Medvedev, one of the Soviet Union's great independent scholars has written, "the building of power stations like the Volga, Don, and Dnieper cascades, the Dnieser power stations, and others has created large water reservoirs which permanently cover some 10 million hectares of very productive flood meadowlands, as well as cultivated land and some forests."[39] So powerful a representation of Soviet power and so pervasive was the metaphor of electric power to the dream of the transformation of the Russian countryside that hydroelectric dams appear as symbols in the poems of some contemporary Russian poets, like Yevgeny Yevtushenko, as well as serving as a background for one of the 20th century's most important Russian novels, Boris Leonidovich Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*. The popular mind and the popular culture of the Soviet Union had adopted Lenin's obsession. In a very real sense the provision of electricity, its control and distribution was as fundamental to Soviet rural policy as was the collectivization of agriculture. Indeed, the latter could not be achieved without the former.

Whether in the rural American south, in newly emerging independent African nations, in Canada's north, in Asia, or across the vast entirety of the Soviet Union, the power of power was pervasive. Electrification, through river basin planning and development, was one of the most significant paradigms and models for rural development. The provision of electricity had become a prominent rural policy throughout the world and in all types of national economic systems. The production and wide-scale distribution of electricity was seen by planners, economists, politicians, bankers, and agricultural scientists as holding the potential to revolutionize rural areas and the lives of rural people. It was not the first time—and surely it would not be the last—when a “technological fix” would be advocated to address rural problems.

Depression and the Run-Up to World War: A Policy Watershed

By the end of the 1940’s, the centrality of federal or national governments to rural policy and planning would be complete for nearly all national political cultures. Clearly, the depth, the pervasiveness, and the longevity of the Great Depression, as well as World War II, hastened this development. Likewise, this was the period in which the equation that ‘agriculture was rural and rural was agriculture’ seemed to have been confirmed, despite the actual variety of ways rural people lived and worked. The practical result of this was that the central or federal agricultural ministries became the focal point for rural planning and policy-making and agricultural policy often became the contested landscape for rural and urban interests.

In both the United States and Canada the prosperity of the 1920s very largely bypassed rural areas as a depression gripped the agricultural sector. Prices for commodities of all types were low and it was during this period that the concept of “parity” emerged as a consistent demand from the agricultural community. In the U.S. the concept of parity was pegged to the buying power of farm commodity prices in 1910, deemed to be the “golden age” of American agriculture. Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, a number of new laws, collectively known as the “McNary-Haugen Acts,” were consistently defeated in the national Congress until the “New Deal” administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR). The impact of the New Deal upon rural America was substantial if highly variably. Federal policies and programs were put together very quickly and too often they lacked coherence and direction. Some programs were highly experimental in nature while others were quite traditional. The modernization of agriculture, infrastructure development, and rural electrification—as noted above—were among the major themes of New Deal rural policy.

At the outset of the Great Depression 44 per cent of the American population lived in rural areas and 22 percent, somewhat better than 1-in-every-5 Americans, lived and worked on farms. Farmers suffered from low crop prices, often tied to an urban-biased cheap foods policy, surplus production, and chronically low incomes. FDR’s administration implemented an array of programs with a view to increasing the prices which farmers received for their crops and livestock under the broad heading of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933. In 1934, additional support was provided for southern cotton and tobacco farmers through the Bankhead and Kerr Acts respectively. By 1936 these supply-management programs were partially withdrawn because of a Supreme Court decision which found them to be unconstitutional (U.S. v Butler, 297 U.S. 1, 68, 1936). A substantially different constitutional regime in Canada permitted such supply-management approaches to develop and these have come to typify much of Canada’s contemporary agricultural incomes policy.

In 1938 an even more sophisticated program was developed in the U.S. in the form of the Agricultural Adjustment Act, which established a complicated system of market quotas and acreage allotments for specific commodities.[40] Although farm prices continued to fall, these programs managed to prevent further drastic declines in agricultural incomes and achieved some degree of stability. Additional farm related programs were put into place during the New Deal years. These included, among others, federal crop insurance to reduce the financial risk and loss of crop damage, the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, to curtail farming on highly erodible lands, the Farm Mortgage Corporation, to provide low-cost loans on farm land, the Farm Credit Act, to support marketing initiative as well as the extension of credit to tenant farmers and sharecroppers, and the Farm Security Administration, which established small cooperatives specifically to help low-income farm families.

The previously noted Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1936 was a watershed in American rural planning policy. Its focus upon the conservation of agricultural lands, the reduction of soil and fertility loss, and the need to apply rational and scientific methods to resource use came to be mirrored in the experiences and policies of many other nations' planning systems. In the context of the United States serious federal concern over soil erosion and the need to conserve soil and land fertility preceded the New Deal by several years. While the U.S. Department of Agricultural (USDA) published a number of advisory bulletins and brochures on soil conservation prior to 1928, it was in that year that Hugh Hammond Bennett's *Soil Erosion: A National Menace* was published.[41] Of Bennett agricultural historian Wayne D. Rasmussen has remarked that "it would be difficult to overestimate his influence in bringing about a national soil conservation program."[42]

Bennett was a pivotal figure in the establishment of a joint USDA-Department of the Interior effort to address the serious erosion problems which spawned the dust bowls which gripped the Great Plains in the early 1930s. This initiative had the support of both Henry Wallace, Secretary of the USDA, and Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, and led to the establishment of the Soil Erosion Service in the Interior Department in 1933. By 1935 the Soil Erosion Service was transferred into the USDA after serious internal conflicts within the Roosevelt Administration. In that same year the Congress passed the Soil Conservation Act which, among other things, declared soil degradation to be a "national menace," and re-named the Erosion Service the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) of the USDA. Perhaps for the very first time a national government began to see agriculture as a "strategic" issue. Many nations would, in subsequent years, also adopt this same perspective and would come to equate the relative health and well-being of the agricultural sector with national security.

Bennett assisted Secretary Wallace in subsequent efforts to transform the SCS from a largely research and demonstration project initiator into a direct service to the farming community and others. The mechanism to deliver such programs and support was the formation of "soil conservation districts" which FDR encouraged states to establish through the passage of the necessary enabling legislation.[43] By 1941, forty-one states passed the necessary laws to establish such districts. In this way a new set of institutions were introduced into the countryside to provide individual and district-wide soil conservation plans. While not strictly "community planning" in the urban sense of the term, e.g., zoning, subdivision regulations, etc., there can be little doubt that the establishment of soil conservation districts constituted America's first federally-inspired rural planning effort. As a consequence of the program farmers, forest land owners, soil scientists, watershed specialists and planners came together under the program to form cooperative voluntary organizations to support planning to preserve and enhance rural lands and the communities which depended on these resources for their livelihoods.

With the subsequent passage of the Agricultural Adjustment Act a set of federal incentives was developed with the aim of shifting acreage from soil-depleting crops to soil-conserving ones, like legumes, grasses, and other crops. The goal of this program was two-fold. First, there was a genuine concern over soil erosion and the belief that too many highly erodible acres had been turned under the plow. Second, the program was seen as a way to reduce commodity surpluses and thereby raise farm incomes. The law created county agricultural adjustment committees which continue to the present day. Combining conservation strategies—usually through land idling and retirement—with income-generating programs became an established principle which has been carried forward in nearly every major subsequent piece of U.S. federal agricultural legislation.

In Canada similar problems also brought a federal government response. Drought as well as economic dislocation ravaged the Prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Rural depopulation during the Depression years reached staggering proportions – as much as 50 percent in some areas—and the remaining households and communities were threatened by the loss of the critical mass necessary to sustain rural life. The national government responded by passing the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (PFRA), the first federal rural development initiative in Canadian history. The focus and emphasis of the PFRA was on resource conservation through internal rationalization and farm infrastructure support. Three programs of action were initiated: (1) support for the adoption of tillage and cropping practices to reduce soil erosion; (2) water conservation investments, and; (3) placement of marginal lands into grazing as opposed to crop land utilization. PFRA has remained a valuable assistance program through the region, though its emphasis has shifted to meet other needs.[44] As in the case of the U.S., the Depression years saw the Canadian federal government become the focal point for public sector rural development activity.

In the United Kingdom the years leading up to World War II also saw a renewed interest in rural areas and their problems. With roots in the Victorian era nature movement, British rural planning took on a distinctive "countryside" or "Olde England" orientation which reflected, in large part, the long involvement of various groups and organizations, such as the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty, the British Empire Naturalists Association, the Society for the Preservation of Birds, and many others. Beyond a strong commitment to preserving the countryside and traditional land ownership and management, access to the countryside and its many amenities was also an important part of the emerging planning regime in the U.K. In 1932 the national government passed the landmark Town and Country Planning which is, as Paul Cloke has noted, "the traditional starting point for rural planning" in Britian.[45] The act permitted local rural governmental authorities to develop planning tools to deal with actual or potential development pressures. Because landowners were given something approaching a "veto" over any regulations which might be promulgated, the emphasis of the evolving planning system very largely ignored compulsory plan implementation and focused, instead, on the protection of amenities, such as areas of natural beauty, and historic buildings and sites. The effect on rural areas undergoing change was minimal. As Cloke concludes, "…although the 1932 Act may be viewed as a harbinger of rural planning, its permissive rather than obligatory stance meant that rural areas were not subject to compulsory planning controls within the inter-war period during which substantial rural development was taking place."[46] And Cullingworth, in his comprehensive study of British planning, calls the Act and similar measures simply "inadequate."[47] Other initiatives enacted by Parliament included laws to establish several commissions to address the problems of persistent unemployment in several "special areas" within the UK. While some of these regions were decidedly urban in nature, such as South Wales and Glasgow, others were quite rural. The emphasis of these commissions was upon employment generation through the attraction of industrial firms into these areas. Other aspects of the program included enhanced funding for social services, physical infrastructure, amenity protection, and help for local farmers. These programs tended to reinforce the emphasis on attacking problems within a regional rather than a local or a specifically rural policy framework.

On the eve of World War II, certain themes in rural planning and policy making became clear. First, the Depression forced many national and federal governments to review and then to intervene in the agricultural sector. A fear of chronic rural depopulation was often tied to agricultural income policy initiatives. French agriculture, for example, which engaged fully half of the nation's population at the turn of the 20th century, witnessed a precipitous decline to only a third of all French workers by the end of World War II.[48] Second, agriculture became coterminous with rural, somewhat to the exclusion of other dimensions of rural life. Third, agricultural resource utilization was often the specific focus of public policy. Planning, to the extent that it was institutionalized, tended to address land and resource issues rather than rural socio-economic problems and concerns. Governments were deeply concerned with agricultural and fiber production shortages and vulnerabilities. This was exacerbated during World War II. Yet the rudiments of rural planning and policy could be discerned in the years leading up to World War II. While in North America little was achieved during the war years per se—serious concerns over the fate of rural areas would manifest themselves only in the post-war era—in the United Kingdom a series of important reports were published during the war years –the Barlow Report on the Distribution of the Industrial Population (1940), the Uthwatt Report on Compensation and Betterment (1942), and the Scott Report on Land Utilization in Rural Areas (1942)—which would come to shape the structure, direction, and nature of planning in the UK in general and rural areas more specifically. Of that latter study, in particular, Whitby and Adger call it "one of the major documents shaping the post-war planning system as it affected rural areas" because it "was committed to the notion that land conversion from agricultural to other uses should be conducted under rules which placed the 'onus of proof,' that new uses were in the national interest, on the shoulders of the developer."[49]

Post-War Rural Policy

The years directly following World War II saw several rather profound changes in the way people and governments came to see and understand rural areas and, most especially, agriculture. Though writing essentially about Finland and Scandinavia, Granberg and Peltonen have defined a number of far more pervasive and universal "sea-changes" in attitudes and policies. Among these was the realization that free markets and laissez faire policy approaches too often failed to guarantee adequate food and fiber production. Second, that the political culture of much of Europe had to be reformed with a focus upon democratizing the countryside given that so many rural people came to support fascist movement in the pre-war and war years. Perhaps in no place was this more necessary than in Germany, as Baranowski has so deftly shown.[50] Third, war-time planning and intervention in the marketplace, which had become commonplace, carried over to many sectors following the war, including agriculture. Fourth, food self-sufficiency and income parity became joined as policy imperatives throughout the developed world. These two goals would come to drive agricultural and rural policy for decades to come. As Granberg and Peltonen conclude, "a decade after the Second World War, the free market had almost disappeared from the agricultural sector. Although the main features of this development were shared, national variations were considerable."[51] In the United Kingdom, as an example, the situation has been aptly characterized in this way: "Since the Second World War and the shift to an agricultural policy that has emphasized the protection of domestic production and the quest for self-sufficiency, the free market and laissez faire approach that prevailed previously has often been portrayed as reckless and misconceived. Not only has it been condemned as the cause of extensive rural decline and impoverishment, but also for undermining the country's food security and thereby rendering the UK dangerously exposed to food blockade."[52]

Throughout what has become known as the "developed world"—essentially the advanced capitalist and mixed economies of the West—rural policies as defined by agricultural sector initiatives almost always had as their "primary objective the production of a high proportion of food requirements from domestic resources in order to reduce external dependence and to reduce the risk of food shortages." These policies were, as Robinson has observed, "partly precautionary, but also apply directly to agriculture's fluctuating production by regulating prices and marketing in order to achieve stability."[53] Aside from some of the factors previously mentioned, many of these same nations pushed food self-sufficiency though increased domestic production as a way to off-set potential losses brought about by the divestment of colonies and territories whose economies were predominantly based upon agriculture and other staples.

In the United Kingdom four key agricultural production strategies were employed, as embodied in the 1947 Agricultural Act, and stood well into the 1970s when membership in the European Economic Community brought yet another shift in agricultural policy. These included subsidy programs which guaranteed minimum prices—the deficiency payment schemes—grants for the acquisition of equipment and support for on-the-farm improvements, the establishment of producer-controlled marketing boards to support prices, an extensive system of agricultural research and education, and the imposition of an import protection regime which would secure domestic producers.[54] The practical effect of the 1947 law was to push agricultural production "at all costs," as Cloke and White have observed.[55]

Elsewhere similar policies were also put into effect. "In the Nordic countries," for example, "agriculture was protected from the international market by import restrictions and export subsidies…"[56] Finland promulgated an Agricultural Income Act which utilized a very complicated set of calculations in an attempt to peg the incomes of farmers to those of urban industrial workers. This was policy in Denmark, Sweden and Norway as well.[57] Farmers throughout this region were also aided by a historically rooted and robust farmer's cooperative movement. These, in turn, served as models for farmer's cooperatives elsewhere, as in Ireland, for example.[58]

In North American agricultural policy took similar forms. Canada developed an extensive system of supply-management programs both to stimulate production and provide an incomes floor for its farmers. Canadian federal programs reflected the highly decentralized nature of Canadian governance as well as the profound regional disparities between provinces which existed and yet persist across the country. As previously noted, the 1938 the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act was the initial federal level foray into direct support for agriculture, coming as it did during the Great Depression. This was followed by the Rowell-Sirois Commission of 1940 which provided farmers and other rural residents in the poorer provinces of the country with direct and indirect transfers of cash payments from wealthier provinces. Together with some other programs, this institutionalized a national commitment to regional equalization, which really meant equalization between "center" and "periphery."[59] By the 1960s the federal government passed and implemented the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act (ARDA) which "provided joint federal-provincial funding for soil and water conservation projects and land consolidation schemes designed to increase the productivity of farms."[60] This reflected a growing sense that too many Canadian farms were too small to take advantage of the economies-of-scale made possible by new technologies and other innovations in agriculture.

Nowhere was this more important than in the western provinces where grain production defined much of the region's agriculture and rural sector. The Prairie provinces had long been the focus of much of Canada's rural settlement policy. From a population of slightly more than 400,000 in 1901, the region's population grew to just under 2 million by 1921.[61] To aid grain producers in the Prairies the federal government supported the development of a transcontinental railroad system with subsidized freight rates to help farmers. This subsidy allowed farmers cheap shipment costs to millers and processing facilities in eastern Canada. To assist farmers in marketing their product throughout the world, the federal government established the Canadian Wheat Board "to ensure smooth transitions in prices from year to year and to assist in marketing the product. In a variety of ways (purchase of railcars, upgrading of ports, payments to farmers, payments to railroad companies, negotiation of trade agreements with other countries, agricultural research carried out at federally funded Agricultural Research stations, construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway), the Federal Government has continued to support the production of grain in Canada."[62] Canadian policy aggressively incorporated state intervention in the agricultural economy.

In the United States, the situation has been accurately summed-up by Mann and Dickinson when they wrote "[f]rom 1938 to the present the particularities of the farm acts have been modified many times to meet varying conditions such as war, differential market conditions for various crops and so on. In general, however, the current government programs incorporated many of the fundamental principles embodied in the New Deal legislation. In particular, government payments are made to those farmers who participate in market quotas, comply with acreage allotments and/or participate in land diversion programs. In turn, while the exact methods of calculating parity payments have changed considerably over the years, the aim of stabilizing farm income through government supports has remained fundamentally the same."[63] Very importantly, as they point out, American agricultural policy during these years led to a situation wherein "increased productivity has not led to a decline in the need for state support, but on the contrary, as agriculture has become more productive, so state intervention has become more imperative, more extensive, and more expensive. Indeed "…many of these state agricultural policies accentuate and perpetuate over-production and inequalities in the countryside and hence function to reproduce those very conditions which called forth the need for state support in the first place."[64]

Small adjustments were made throughout this period, as in the case of the Food and Agricultural Act of 1965, which saw price supported lowered for key commodities, such at cotton, wheat and feed grains, to meet lower world market levels. The process of substituting capital for labor—in the form of land, machinery, chemicals, energy, and other inputs—continued unabated and remains pervasive throughout and across the entire American agricultural sector. This was emphatically promoted by consensus national agricultural policies, no matter which political party came to power. The result has been that large-scale and highly capitalized farms increased in a number while medium and small farms declined. This also led to a concentration of agricultural production on fewer but far larger farm units where technology and capital have made it possible for farmers and corporations to claim an ever larger percentage of agriculture income, as well as federal subsidies and supports. Given the political economy of agriculture which emerged in the United States in the post World War II era—which continues to the present day—farmers have invariably had to get larger and more capital and technology intensive. Further, they have been forced to increase yields from each acre of land merely to stay even. Willard W. Cochrane, a leading agricultural economist, has argued that this predicament has led American farmers to economically “cannibalize” one another. The farmer, he writes, remains “on a treadmill from which he cannot get off.”[65]

Across the mature capitalist and mixed economies agricultural policy as rural policy reached an almost inevitable end or what Vail, Hasund and Drake have called the “handwriting on the wall.” “By the early 1980s,” they write, “…the core agricultural policy instruments used for decades in most advanced capitalist nations had created an economically intenable situation. The triple bind of chronic excess production, escalating public farm expenditures, and depressed international food prices was widely attributed to policy measures that inflated domestic farm prices, restricted imports, subsidized exports, and encouraged ceaseless technical and structural ‘rationalization.”[66] The “crisis on the farm” had become a permanent part of the rural landscape.

A Socialist Alternative

The socialist revolution which swept through Russia with the conclusion of the Bolshevik Revolution and the ensuring civil war brought profound and far-reaching changes to rural Russia. The new Soviet Union, initially under Lenin and then under Stalin, sought the rapid industrialization of the country by capturing the rural surplus and transferring it to the nation’s cities for investment in heavy industries. As Pallot has put it, “the economic purpose of these transformations was to reorganize agriculture in such a way as to provide for the transfer of resources from the countryside to the towns.”[67] To a very real extent, early Soviet policy had a strongly anti-rural orientation and attempted nothing less than the restructuring of rural life, even to the point of near-destruction. A slightly less dramatic conclusion has been reached by Wyman when he wrote that “during the first 25 years of its existence, the Soviet Union essentially ignored agriculture…”[68]

To accomplish the re-creation of the rural regions of the Soviet Union a process of de-peasantization became ‘the order of the day’ through a sustained process of the forced collectivization of agriculture and rural labor. Private property was all but abolished and the rural bourgeois or middle class—the Kulak class—was physically removed or eliminated. As Furet has written, Soviet policy, especially in the form of the National Economic Plans (NEP) and subsequent five-year plans, was little more than “a cover for a war against the peasants-some of whom were killed, others deported, and still others locked up in the huge farms under the auspices of the Party—Kolkhozes and Sovkozes. Never before had any regime in the world initiated such a monstrous undertaking on such a scale and with such enormous consequences; the elimination of millions of peasants and the eradication of rural life.”[69] In 1932, for example, a politically inspired and enforced famine was created in the Ukraine to destroy the peasants. Between 5 to 6 million people died in the Ukranian operations.[70] As Gorlach and Starota have observed the “peasants were transformed by political pressure and administrative means from the status of small owners to the status of formal co-owners of large collective farms. In fact, however, they were reduced simply to agricultural workers subordinated to and commanded by state bureaucracy. This policy was implemented in the Soviet Union from the 1920s to the early 1930s.”[71] Even Soviet apologists, like V. P. Danilov, came to condemn the forced collectivization of agriculture under Stalin.[72]

The major policy tools implemented to bring this about were the mass collectivization of Soviet agriculture, the expropriation of land, the creation of massive state land reserves composed of formerly privately and Church owned lands, the imposition of confiscatory taxes on farmers, and commodity prices well below cost. More specifically, the Soviet model of rural reconstruction relied heavily on the establishment of the kolkhozes, or collective farms, which were to be transitional institutions from private farming to the ultimate model of Soviet agrarian collectivization, the sovkhoze, or the state farm. Although this was all-Union policy, collectivization occurred at different times and at different places. In Estonia, for example, agrarian collectivization began in 1947, once Soviet power was consolidated and entrenched after World War II in this formerly independent republic annexed into the Soviet Union in 1940.[73] At first collectivization in Estonia started slowly, in large part because the war destroyed much of the agricultural infrastructure of Estonia and food shortages were ubiquitous across the Baltics.[74] In 1949 not quite 6 per cent of all farms were collectivized.[75] A year later, after the pace of collectivization was greatly increased, fully 80 per cent of all farms in the country had been collectivized. This was brought about, in part, by the establishment of a nearly confiscatory tax system on farmers which indicated that an independent existence outside of a kolkhoz was no longer possible.[76] But forced deportations of farmers also played a significant role in collectivization. “Soviet and Western historians now seem to agree,” according to Misiunas and Taagepera, “that deportation started a stampede into kolkhozes, but there is disagreement regarding the motives. Were farmers afraid of being deported unless they joined? Or were they, as claimed by Soviet historians, eager to join kolkhozes the moment they were freed from the threats and scare stories spread by the ‘kulaks’?”[77] At first many of the kolkhozes were small, given Estonia’s traditional pattern of widely dispersed rural settlements. However, by 1950 all-Union policy came to favor larger units and smaller cooperative farms were merged into bigger ones. The results of consolidation were felt immediately and these had some profound impacts upon the spatial organization of rural life. As Raun has observed, “from a peak of over 3,000 [kolkhozes] at the beginning of 1950, the number of collective farms declined rapidly to 1,137 by the end of 1951 and further to 1,018 by the end of 1952. At a later date they were divided into 934 agricultural kolkhozes and 84 fishing kolkhozes.”[78] Additional collectivization finally slowed toward the end of the Stalinist era.

Collective farms operated in an environment defined by state controlled central planning mandates, edicts, and production goals. Alanen, citing the work of Clarke, has written that “the Soviet system was basically a variant of a barter economy: exchange, investments in production, etc. were the result of a complicated negotiation system rather than a straightforward command structure. Production goals were nevertheless assigned from above (the Politburo and central planning ministries) down to the bottom, where production plants like kolkhozes and sovkhozes were located.”[79]

The Khrushchev era of Soviet leadership brought a number of important changes to farm life and rural policy throughout the Union. Levels of state interference were reduced, “the obligatory delivery system was abolished, and prices were raised to non-confiscatory levels. Dismantling of the state MTS in 1958 was a major step.”[80] The MTS, or state-owned and controlled Machine Tractor Stations—collective farms could not own their own tractors nor other pieces of heavy machinery—were separate from and independent of the collective farms, demanded payment in-kind, and were under little or no pressure to meet production quotes, unlike the farms. Now collective farms could purchase their own machinery from the soon-to-be eliminated MTSs. This brought about increases in farm productivity. Khrushchev also ordered the dismantling of some of the larger kolkhozes, though a number were transformed to state farms, or sovkhozes, which were coming to play an ever larger role in all-Union agriculture, including in Estonia. Land in the Estonia kolkhoze system declined from nearly 1.8 million hectares to slightly less than 800,000 hectares from 1950 to 1970. During the same period of time land in the sovkhoze sector increased from approximately 118,000 to nearly 600,000 hectares.[81]

With the relaxation in some areas of agricultural policy, small-plot private farming soon emerged and compulsory deliveries from such plots, as well as the high taxes placed upon them, were largely eliminated in 1959. What emerged in the kolkhozes was a "symbiotic" agricultural production unit, according to Alanen. It combined large-scale farming with small-scale plot agriculture which supported one another. As he writes, "this symbiotic relationship, which was complementary and economically beneficial to both parties, had originally developed spontaneously during the post-Stalin era. It arose from the inability of the Soviet government and Soviet farms to control the co-operation between private plot farmers and tractor operators, but later kolkhoz leaders, and Soviet leaders more widely, came to realize its obvious advantages, and developed the system further with their own goals in mind.[82] Such private plot farming was crucial to feeding the population because one of the results of collectivization—all through the years of the Soviet Union—was a persistent inability to reach the levels of agricultural productivity which Soviet planners had consistently projected. In 1983 Estonia's small private plots accounted for more than 30 per cent of the country's vegetables and nearly 90 per cent of its fresh fruits and berries.[83] One of the most productive and efficient agricultural regions in the Soviet Union. Estonian agricultural productivity only reached pre-annexation levels in the mid 1960's.[84] High yields per acre were achieved with the wide scale introduction of tractors, fertilizers, and other technological inputs. One of the reasons for the lack of success under the Soviet model in Estonia was, as Raun makes clear, the fact that "for the products in which Estonia specialized—grain, potatoes, vegetables, milk, and eggs—the state prices were considerably lower than production costs."[85] Food shortages of one type or another would continue to plague the Soviet Union until its very dissolution in 1991.

Other reforms were implemented which sped the mechanization of collective farms and increased the availability of fertilizers. In 1959 those who worked on kolkhozes ceased to be paid in-kind and started to receive monetary salaries. And by the Brezhnev era, the most industrialized model of Soviet agriculture, the Sovkhozes, were being eliminated in favor of self-management farms, or khozraschet, many of which were located in Estonia.

Yet the obvious result of all of this, beyond an underperforming agricultural sector, was that "rural living standards suffered accordingly, agricultural workers became second-class citizens denied of the legal rights of town dwellers, and they were poorly remunerated for their work in the collectives."[86] A more subtle though no less transforming effect was the realignment of territory and rural space throughout the countryside in the USSR. The kolkhoz, or the collective farm, was rarely a farm. Rather it was a grouping of farms and villages linked together under a centralized administrative structure. This permitted authorities to begin the consolidation of living space and service units as they sought to achieve certain economies-of-scale in the provision of physical infrastructure and other improvements. Places termed "non-viable areas" were simply slated to disappear. Adopting something akin to the notion of the: "key settlements" approach,[87] which would also find favor in British and American planning circles, Soviet planners sought to consolidate rural institutions, concentrate resources and investments only in community centers which would anchor a number of interconnected settlements, and permit a more "rational" approach to land utilization and community lay-out. But as Pallot has pointed out, in many regions of the Soviet Union the "lack of funds meant that village concentration never progressed beyond the planning stage…"[88] The practical effect and impact of consolidation and the overall poor prospects of those who lived and worked in rural areas was that people, especially the young, left the Soviet countryside in droves. Nove indicates that "…a lack of amenities had led to the out-migration of younger and more skilled peasants."[89] This in turn led to an endemic shortage of agriculture labor which required that soldiers and "voluntary" brigades of students leave the towns for the countryside when harvests had to be brought in.

This system was imitated by many of the USSR's East European neighbors which also adopted forms of agricultural collectivization under communist leadership. In Hungary, for example, collectivization was nearly complete by 1963 when fully "93-94 per cent of previously independent peasants joined—more often than not under external pressure—the new cooperatives."[90] Once achieved collectivization soon moved to rural spatial consolidation with the promulgation in 1971 of the National Settlement Network Conception (OTK). Here the "main settlements were the receivers of these funds, whereas those not considered significant enough received little or nothing. In the small village districts, the local councils were united, and five or six settlements came under the authority of one council. Each council district had one school, one kindergarten, one doctor and one vet, etc."[91] Not surprisingly, here too the young left for larger communities and settlements and the depopulation of substantial parts of the countryside was largely achieved as collective farms grew both in size and in population.

Some socialist countries, most especially Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria, experimented with alternatives to the collectivist model of agricultural production. Some of these programs, especially those which permitted some private household farming, were successful in raising rates of agricultural productivity, increasing commodity exports, empowering farmers at the local level, and in modestly raising rural incomes.

China also sought alternatives to the Soviet model which is adopted after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. With the "Great Leap Forward" program in the late 1950's and early 1960's, the commune system was fully established, private property was all but abolished, agricultural prices were kept artificially low through very tight "command and control" mechanisms and plans, and grain self-sufficiency was pushed at nearly all costs. The "cultural revolution" spread havoc across the countryside with the majority of China's farmers operating at a semi-subsistence level. By 1979 and restoration of some degree of order drastic and significant changes occurred throughout the Chinese rural sector. Decollectivization became the norm with a return to family farming, agricultural prices were allowed to rise, internal trade restrictions on farm produce were relaxed and productivity increased markedly in grain, livestock and horticultural products. Rural incomes also increased, though not nearly as rapidly as incomes in urban and industrial areas.[93] Productivity on the farm continued to rise, largely as a consequence of the adoption at the farm-level of new technologies, all the while migration from the countryside to the cities was also interesting. This led to substantial regional disparities between China's urban centers—largely in the coastal provinces and the "special development zones" of southern and eastern China—and the huge rural hinterlands of interior China. These divisions appear to be growing and closing the income gap and narrowing the regional disparities continue to be a major objectives of Chinese domestic policy.[93] Responding to a newspaper reporter's question in 2003 on what was the most vexing problem facing China. Premier Zhu Rongji responded, "to be honest, I have headaches all day.' But the biggest single challenge, he said, was bolstering farmers, many of whose incomes have stagnated or declined in recent years, even as an urban minority becomes wealthy."[94]

It is perhaps one of the great ironies of the Soviet model of the socialist reconstruction of the countryside that is actually adopted as its model, its sin qua non, the American system of mass production, the industrialization of agriculture.

The Developing World[95]

With the end of World War II, a process of decolonialization ensued which saw the end of the overt empirical systems of the developed or mature economies. Three very important forces led to decolonization in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. First, the old colonial powers found it increasingly difficult to retain power in far-flung territories. Second, national liberation movements emerged and 'wars of independence' were fought which challenged the very efficacy of imperial systems. Third, in the unfolding "cold war" environment which pit the United States and NATO against the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact nations, the internal contradictions of democratic nations continuing to marginalize and control colonies and territories became too great.[96] But while many former colonies and territories attained their national independence during the years following World War II, their economies and societies remained peripheral and largely "undeveloped." The old imperial powers, often led by multinational corporations, made significant investments in the newly emerging countries and their hegemony changed from a crude to a more subtle form. For many the key question remained: how to build the economies, political institutions and societies of the "developing world?" Overwhelming rural, largely dependent upon the former colonial powers and overseer states, and often desperately poor, this question remains unresolved in an era of increased globalization, competition for resources, and the redundancy of labor.

The very notion of "developed" and "undeveloped countries" owes much to the thinking incorporated in the seminal United Nations (UN) report, *Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries*, published in 1951.[97] Designed essentially by economists, relative levels of development were literally reduced to a system of national economic performance accounting as measured by growth in the value of production per capita of population. "Having established a single dimension of 'development' it was natural," as Friedmann and Weaver have observed, "to see the rich countries as more *advanced* and poor countries as relatively *backward*. Being backward (in the sense of both primitive and retarded), the problem of poor countries was said to be how to *catch up with* and become rich, modern, and powerful like the West."[98] To a large degree this meant becoming urban. Most contemporary planners, including those in aid agencies and development bureaucracies, saw a strong correlation between a nation's economic performance and the percentage of the population which was urbanized. Unfortunately, this became distorted in a way that saw economic performance correlated with a country's rate of urbanization. Development policy, then, became defined by the *rate* at which a "developing" country could be urbanized, even while research demonstrated that no correlation existed between the rate of urbanization and the growth of per capita income as measured by the Gross National Products (GNP).[99] This was a recipe for policies which promoted unequal development as encapsulated in programs which emphasized urbanization over rural development.

A concentration on national economic performance as defined in this way was certainly consistent with the "high modernist" conceit of social science analysis, and most especially neo-classical economics. But it also had a far more pernicious turn. Again as Friedmann and Weaver write, "the acceptance of a single dimension for the measurement of economic development had yet another consequence, still largely implicit in the approach, but soon turned into a major article of faith. In accordance with the basic separation of efficiency in allocation from equity in distribution, which underlies the doctrine of unequal development, questions of fair distribution were almost always completely ignored. Attention came to be focused instead on *growth* *efficiency* and hence on questions of efficient resource allocation, rapid capital accumulation, and technological change."[100]

Friedmann and Weaver identified four core elements of development theory and practice during this period. These are: an openness to the "developed" core countries on the part of the "developing" or peripheral countries through free trade, especially in agricultural and other staple products, such as minerals and timber, and by accepting foreign investment as well as development aid for modernization; adoption of an urban-based program of accelerated industrialization which would siphon-off redundant labor from the rural areas that would, in turn, trigger the modernization of agriculture through a greater reliance on advanced farming technologies and new farming techniques; placing primary on those would could achieve the highest rates of domestic capital formation, essentially by concentrating income and wealth in the "hands of those with the highest *propensity* to save and invest," namely urban entrepreneurs, the small middle class, and the State itself, and; instituting centralized national planning as a mechanism for controlling resource allocations, investments and, most crucially, for "the maintenance of the basic macro-economic balances…regarded as an essential tool of successful economic development." In practice, "the logic of unequal development, in its specific form of urban-based industrial growth, led to certain conclusions for regional planning: an emphasis on the growth of large cities, the pursuit of unequal development as a matter of policy, a view of regional planning that regarded it primarily as a way of influencing the location of manufacturing, and a belief that 'growth impulses' would eventually spread from major centres of innovation to the remainder of the economy. This focus on *polarized development* suggested that rural areas would take part in the general process of growth diffusion only to the extent that they were subject to the impact of the metropolitan economy."[101]

Induced urbanization became the de facto rural policy of many developing countries. This was achieved through some of the aforementioned mega-projects, like electrification through river basin development, programs that promoted and accelerated rural-to-urban migration, the expansion of wage-labor opportunities and even plantation agricultural at the expense of rural sustenance farming—which also acted to discourage the growth and development of small and medium-sized villages and communities—taxation systems which fell disproportionately on rural people, and infrastructure provision programs which favored cities over the countryside. The results were largely predictable. Many cities in the "third world" or "developing countries" grew at astonishing rates. Migration from the countryside became a wholesale demographic transition. But agricultural productivity failed to live up to the expectations of the experts and, in many cases, it actually declined. While urbanization increased rapidly, unfortunately neither industrialization nor urban infrastructure grew fast enough to absorb and adequately accommodate the new urban migrants. Cities were teeming with unemployed and underemployed workers, huge squatter settlements emerged on the outskirts of cities because of the lack of housing options and adequate physical planning and infrastructure investments, and health, education, and social service provisioning also proved to be inadequate.

Many planners and policy makers saw this both as inevitable and necessary, for the transition from national underdevelopment to development was neither easy nor without pain. Gunnar Myrdal's work began to focus on the problems of inequality, especially in rural areas, which the dominant development paradigm deepened.[102] Albert O. Hirschman, one of the most perceptive scholars who advanced polarized development approaches, did not dodge the issue of inequality but believed that, over time, the positive effects of urbanization and industrialization would spread to rural areas.[103] His approach required that governments in the less developed countries focus their investments on those industries with "backward" and "forward" linkages which would spread demand throughout the entire economy. Accordingly, backward linkages were those which supplied inputs to a targeted industry while forward linkages were those which purchased the outputs of the targeted industry. Unfortunately for rural areas, Hirschman's target industries did not include agriculture—he simply did not see agriculture as having enough of the appropriate linkages to energize an entire economy. Rather, he focused his attention on urban-based large-scale heavy industry which, if anything, depended upon the cheap labor released from an agricultural sector pushed into decline.

Theodore Schultz' work argued that this optimistic view of the results of polarized and unequal development policy might not be the case if rural and hinterland areas were not directly linked ad physically approximate to the expanding urban economies.[104] Planners in developing countries themselves also began to criticize the dominant paradigm of national development.[105] In both developing and developed countries a different approach was emerging which focused on meeting the "basic needs" of people instead of upon industrialization and urbanization. Rural people were often the focus of this approach, and, to a degree, as the "basic needs approach" (BNA) began to take hold, development programming had a stronger rural focus. Formally introduced by the International Labor Organization as a method to attack chronic rural poverty in the developing world, the BNA emphasized consumption as opposed to production oriented programs.[106] These include nutritional and health intervention, family planning, housing, and community development projects.

Schutlz' on-going engagement with the problems of developing countries supported such investment.[107] He argued that rather than treating programs for health and education as "welfare" outlays of secondary importance to those for the acceleration of urbanization and industrialization, meeting "basic needs" was key and fundamental in enhancing the well-being of individuals, raising their productivity, increasing their consumption, and building a country's "human capital."

Friedmann, at first an early proponent of "unequal development" strategies, came to a different and more radical conclusion. His innovative rural development approach was called "agropolitan development." It stressed selective territorial closure to the world economy, partial communalization of productive wealth, and the equalization of the bases of social power. To do this he and others advanced an approach which sought the diversification of rural economies, the maximization of physical development "constrained by the need for conservation," the expansion of production and trade within the national territory, self-financing, and the promotion of society-wide "social learning," or the ability of institutions to demonstrate greater capacity to solve ever more complex and difficult problems.[108]

There were others whose critique of unequal development policy and planning took on a more overt political tone. This was particularly the case among those who studied the history and nature of underdevelopment and dependency,[109] especially in Latin America,[110] the Maghreb region, and other places in Africa.[111] For them nothing less than political struggle, revolution, and a commitment to broad-based socialism would 'turn the tide' of chronic rural poverty and dependency. These theorists and planners maintained that the very conception of national dependency was 'part-and-parcel' of colonialism and certain crucial historical facts, such as the continuing implications of the slave trade for many African nations. On-going control of the economies of developing nations by the former colonial powers kept them in a "dependency" relationship relative to the latter. Local elites in the former colonies were largely based in the cities and they organized the hinterlands and manipulated the local economic environment on behalf of the former imperial powers. This chain of control could be broken only if, according to dependency theorists, self-sufficiency and withdrawal from economic relations with the old imperial powers could be accomplished.

Developing countries themselves attempted a number of "home grown" and highly idiosyncratic approaches to rural self-development, such as China's "Great Leap Forward," Tanzania's villagization or "ujamaa" movement. "Arab socialism," land reforms and "land to the tiller" programs, projects geared to emancipating women and gaining their participation in the economy, such as the Grameen Bank micro-loan and micro-enterprise system in Bangladesh, and a good many others. Some of these have had positive and sustainable results while still others, as Scott has argued, have led to both "economic ruin and starvation."[113]

In the 1950s India, perhaps more than any other developing country, embraced the idea of "central planning." Nafziger summarizes the Indian experience in this way: "Thus we had Indian planners frequently choosing public sector investments on the basis of rough, sketchy, and incomplete reports, with little or no cost-benefit calculations for alternative project locations. And the government, having selected the project, often failed to do the necessary detailed technical preparation and work scheduling related to the project. The bureaucracy was slow and rigid, stifling quick and imaginative action by public sector managers…India has slowly improved its public-sector planning. Indian politicians have increasingly realized the inadequacies of the bureaucracy in controlling private output and prices, and the costs of licensing and quota policies. In the 1980s, the Indian government relaxed production and materials licensing, import restrictions, and other controls on private business, increasing efficiency and savings."[114] The liberalization of policy in the late 1970s saw programs to encourage investments in agriculture, the adoption of new agricultural technologies, and similar rural-based programs. Though there was a fundamental overhaul of the central planning function in government, some programs with their roots in the 1950s – land reforms, the encouragement of village cooperatives, the introduction of rural credit systems and services to the rural poor, and the provision of literacy, educational, health, family planning, water and sewage, electricity, and transportation – remained a fixture of the mixed-economy model which India pursued.[115]

In terms of the discourse of rural planning and policy, the experiences of the "developing countries," or "third world," have demonstrated that rural people the world over have been and remain essentially marginal to the unfolding world economic and political order. Further, rural places no matter where they are have become peripheral areas and regions, especially where agriculture is of declining importance to national economic growth. Since World War II the emphasis has been fixed upon industrialization and accelerated urbanization as the policy markers of development. Such a strong and profound urban bias in policy making and planning casts a dense and dark shadow over rural people and rural places.

The Rural Planning System in the Modern State

The years after World War II ushered in the "Cold War" in its many manifestations. As previously noted in this essay, agricultural policy and much of what passed for rural policy were often conterminous. In the West – democratic Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and North America—rural planning was often driven by programs to foster food production to meet domestic needs. Often cloaked in the rhetoric of self-sufficiency and a renewed enthusiasm for the "rural idyll" after the horror and chaos of world war and genocide, domestic food production at all costs became the hallmark of much of the thinking about rural areas.[116] Along with this came a strong impulse toward protectionist policies to buttress domestic agriculture. This policy paradigm, what Marsden and his colleagues have called the "productivist regime," defined agricultural policy specifically and rural policy more generally.[117] Even in a nation with a bare minimum of arable land, as in Sweden, food self-sufficiency became a key component of national planning and policy.[118] Doubtless in the case of Sweden this had much to do with its policy of neutrality during the Cold War, but it reflected, too, the near universal reaction to food shortages and outright starvation which existed in many countries during the war. In much of Europe, this policy objective, which had implications for land use policy, has remained largely intact even with the accession of nations into the Common Market/European Economic community and the development of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Simultaneous with this thrust in agricultural policy was the emergence of various planning regimes which brought greater focus to economic growth, land use and natural resources/environmental policy. In part a result of war-time mobilization and public sector spending to induce rapid industrialization, this new burst of activity was also derivative of a growing recognition across market-based societies that "modern industrial society requires public intervention to achieve national goals; assumes that such intervention must touch all fundamental social developments; must be goal-oriented, and effectively coordinated at the center; must be anticipatory rather than characterized by ad hoc solutions and timing dictated by crisis."[119] In the 1950s France, for example, established its General Planning Commission (Commissararíat General au Plan) which issued a number of four-year national development plans. The Netherlands created a country-wide econometric model to guide growth and development, while the first social democratic government of newly democratized Japan issued a highly detailed set of national economic projections to guide reconstruction and industrial and spatial development. Even on the international level several new institutions, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, were founded to provide some degree of planned guidance in the realms of trade and fiscal policy. The rural sectors in both developed and developing economies were directly and indirectly effected by this new emphasis on public intervention in markets. It is also worth noting that these periods of interventionist and place-based rural programming have often been followed by a re-emergence of non-interventionist policies, which championed the marketplace and the efficacy of labor and capital mobility. Reviews of several national rural planning systems—the United Kingdom, the United States and Sweden—will demonstrate these points.

The full range and nature of the rural planning regime in the UK has been well described and assessed by Gilg.[120] He, amongst others, places particular emphasis upon the importance of the 1947 Town and Countryside Planning Act as the defining statutory authority for the British rural planning system. Cloke concurs is this evaluation and calls the 1947 act the "midwife to the organization of radical postwar planning in Britain,"[121] In essence the act created a system of restrictive controls which sought to achieve national objectives and goals within the framework of a nationally guided but locally operated and enforced system of land use regulation.

One of the key sections of the 1947 law created a requirement that firms seeking to build manufacturing plants of a certain size and scale had to obtain permission to do so – an industrial development certificate – prior to breaking ground from the national Board of Trade. Because the process could took a considerable amount of time some developers choose to locate plants in a rural areas which the government had designated for growth. Reviews for facilities in such places tended to take less time for approval. In this way some new employment opportunities came to be located in some rural communities long saddled with high rates of unemployment.[122]

The Act also helped to create several new towns and communities and these, too, helped to anchor growth in some largely rural regions.

The 1947 Act was subsequently amended a number of times and when one also considers the Local Government Acts of 1972 and 1974 – which altered the nature of local governance throughout the country – the UK had what Gilg has called "the most comprehensive piece of land use legislation in the world." This regime "gave land-use planers one major weapon—the power through regulation control to permit, impose conditions, or refuse applications for countryside development, except most of these involved with agriculture and forestry."[133] Along with the 1947 Act, the UK also passed into law the Distribution of Industry Act of 1945, the New Towns Planning Act of 1946, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and the Town Development Act of 1952. The Parks law additionally led to the establishment in 1968 of the Countryside Commission, the successor to the National Parks Commission, which had been an advocate for the national parks system, areas of outstanding nature beauty (AONBs), rural footpaths, and a particular conceptualization of the rural UK which had emphasized the leisurely, scenic, and recreational values of the countryside. It has also been the source of considerable support for the Countryside Acts of the mid-1960s. Taken together this "remarkable burst of legislative activity," as Peter Hall has called this period, established much of the contemporary planning regime in the UK.[124]

In 1958 a new Distribution of Industry Act was passed and more areas within the United Kingdom were designated for growth through the utilization of special development incentives. Funds were allocated, new programs inaugurated and policies were altered to favor such places. Very significantly, a key determinant in the designation process was the rate of unemployment as opposed to other criteria, including those more consistent with the theories and thinking of regional scientists and planners. This reflected the fact that regional and rural development was as much a political process as anything else.

With the passage of the Local Employment Act of 1960—which to an extent over-road the past policy of the national government as expressed through the Distribution of Industry Act—programs became more directive and considerably more top-down. Growth-pole or "growth centre" theories of regional growth and development became the official policy of the government. A change in government to the Labour Party from the Conservatives, however, brought a rapid end to this experiment in policy reorientation. Throughout the next several decades, and no matter which party was in power, much of the development and planning debate focused on a number of core issues: the definition and delineation of designated areas; the nature of incentives to be provided in such places; the efficacy and effectiveness of growth pole based development schemes as opposed to other theories, and; whether or not areas of chronically high unemployment or places with large, efficient industries with considerable growth potential should be the focus of government support and encouragement. To a large degree these debates began to downplay the needs of rural areas as the 'crisis of the inner cities' came to dominate discussion and policy-making. Perhaps the death-knell for regional and rural development policy came with the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister. Higgins and Savoie report that one of her key ministers quipped that a major achievement of the Thatcher years was "to bring regional development in Britain to an end and to stop all the nonsense."[125] While some rural areas benefited throughout these years, it was the nation's urban areas which received the greatest attention in addition to the larger macro-economic problems confronting the UK.

Perhaps the most far-sighted aspect of the planning system in Britain was the collectivization or nationalization of development rights. This codified the notion that community rights superseded those of the individual land owner. Additionally a "betterment" levy was implemented. Any increase in land values as a result of development was defined as 'the betterment value' and was no subject to a tax. The rationale for this was clear. As Cullingworth has described it, "all betterment was created by the community, and it was unreal and undesirable (as well as virtually impossible) to distinguish between values created, for example, by particular planning schemes, and those due to other factors such as the general activities of the community or the general level of prosperity."[126]

In subsequent years a number of changes and amendments to the planning system were made. Indeed, the national planning systems established under the 1947 act was becoming somewhat fragmented when, in 1974 Scotland assumed responsibility for planning in its territory and Wales achieved similar status and responsibility in 1996.[127] But for the UK, as with much of western and southern Europe, the CAP continued to be an important structural reality, largely because it persisted in stimulating agricultural over-production and high surplus food storage costs. The government attempted, in the mid-'80s, to take steps to reduce surpluses by implementing a package of programs known as ALURE, which stood for Alternative Land Use and Rural Enterprise policies. This allowed for the delineation of environmentally sensitive areas with compensation to the farmer, a wood lots program to take agricultural land out of production through increased afforestation, and by making it easier to convert farmland into urban uses by easing planning requirements and restraints.[128] Of these programs it was the designation of environmentally sensitive areas and their removal from agricultural production uses which proved to be the most popular. Whitby and Adger note of it that, "[t]he uptake of the agreement offered was remarkably rapid, reflecting some combination of the farmers' enthusiasm for the objectives of the policy, the level of payments offered to those complying, ease of compliance with scheme prescriptions and the individual farmers' view of future levels of price and income."[129]

In 1985 the government made another change in that it permitted the agricultural ministry to use its budget to support environmental projects not directly linked to production. This was a harbinger of the growing influence and power of emerging interest groups, some of whom were settling in rural areas as part of a modest national trend toward counter-urbanization along with the well-established rural Tory elite.[130] They tended to see the English countryside not solely as the locus of food and forest products production but also as the generator of prized environmental and leisure amenities. On balance, however, little really changed and the thrust of state policy remained focused on the provision and enhancement of the necessary infrastructure to support agricultural development.[131] Writing in 2003 Terry Mardsen concluded that "despite over fifteen years of debate and policy crisis concerning the 'arthritic' nature of productionist support mechanisms within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and the need to shift the emphasis towards a new social and environmental agenda, it is still the case that the main pillar of the CAP remains in this area in terms of funding. Moreover, it still tends to reinforce the logic of agricultural productivist scale economies by rewarding the largest volume producers, as well as 'locking in' many of the less productive producers and those least able to meet the demands such policy-designed 'technological treadmills' require."[132]

Robinson has concluded that the British experience with rural planning has been "piecemeal" and "lacking focus."[133] Yet Cloke maintains that by adopting a key settlements policy, which concentrated resources into growth centers, Britain generally avoided rural sprawl while successfully providing many of the necessary services for those living in villages and across the countryside.[134] He further notes that rural planning in the UK has been defined by two seemingly contradictory impulses. As he writes: “almost regardless of which government has been in power, land-use planning has been used to strengthen the economic and political power of development interest.” Yet at the very same time he finds that the planning system also has an “enduring commitment to long-term conservation.”[135] This seeming paradox or tension perhaps was most apparent in the on-going battles over development within the country’s green belts and came into its clearest focus during the ‘appeals-led period’ of the Thatcher years when developers made a number of successful appeals to the various Secretaries of State, who have overall operational authority over the British planning system, and who routinely overturned the judgments of local authorities on land use matters to support development at odds with local policies.[136] These tensions are but part of the larger differentiation in the ways that various interest groups, actors and governments understand and conceive of the UK’s rural landscape.

“The essential features of the English planning system are…in many ways little changed from those introduced over 50 years ago with passage of the 1947 Act,” as Baker has observed.[137] And while the Secretary of State for Environment, Transport, and the Regions has issued a number of planning policy guidelines (PPGs) and regional planning guidelines (RPGs) over the years, the spatial focus of powers and responsibilities for the rural areas of the UK remain essentially focused at the national and local levels through structural plans at the county level and discretionary plans at the local level.

In the United States the rural landscape was permanently modified by at least one significant Cold War policy imperative. During the Eisenhower administration of the 1950s massive federal support went into the development of a country-wide interstate highway system—known as the National Defense Highway System—which was seen both as a means to decentralize defense production and installations and provide for the rapid movement of armaments, goods and people across the entire nation. As America’s railroad system began to be replaced by trucking as the primary means for the transport of goods, the interstate highway system continued to grow and crisscrossed the country in every direction. Fortunate was the rural community with a highway interchange on the interstate system. Many towns and hinterland areas bypassed by the new transportation network simply went into decline. Those places attached to or located near the road network often experienced the reorientation of local land use patterns away from their central business districts of downtowns to the highway interchanges where strip development and sprawl soon came to define the landscape. In subsequent years the rise of “big box” retailers, epitomized by Wal-Mart, sealed the fate of many downtowns and service centers. This may well have been one of the proverbial “unintended consequences of policy.” With hindsight it now seems astounding that policy makers seemed almost unaware that public infrastructure investments, like the interstate highway system, would not have such profound land use and community development implications. The American land use planning system, such as it was, proved largely ineffective in controlling or containing this transformation.[138]

In time the interstate highway system sought to bypass busy metropolitan areas and a system of circumferential roads were built around them, most at the same scale as the interstates themselves. This brought many hitherto for rural places within the “commuting shed” of major cities and fed counter-urbanization pressures. This led to making communities and land within the rural-urban fringe among the most contested in America.[139] What Murdoch and his colleagues wrote about the UK is likewise an accurate characterization of the nature of contestation in the US: these areas “lie outside the main commuter zones. Here local agricultural, commercial and development interests may be politically dominant and these interest will tend to favour development for local needs. However, these traditional development interests are increasingly opposed by ‘incomers’ who may be middle-class workers or retirees attracted to the area because of its residential environment. Thus the development process is marked by increasing conflict between old and new groups, but with no single interest attaining dominance…”[140]

Additionally the US federal taxation system provided handsome subsidies for home ownership as opposed to renting and further favored new construction over renovation and rehabilitation. Taken together these investments and subsidies had the effect of making America a rapidly suburbanizing country, one in which both cities and rural areas were consistently losing population, housing, retail activity and jobs to the suburbs. By 2000 the United States had become, according to the national census population, a suburban nation.

Unlike the British system, and those operative in most other advanced economies, the American federal or national presence in planning has historically been indirect. Indeed from 1968 to 1976 annual efforts to pass a National Land Use Policy Act failed to garner enough congressional support to become law. Those who argued against the adoption of a federal land use policy often did so from a position that the exercise of the power to protect the public’s health, welfare and safety was constitutionally reserved for the states. Planning authority, then, has traditionally been a local responsibility operating within a national ideological framework which has sought to minimize the role of government intervention and to maximize market-based initiatives and solutions to problems. Further the “taking clause” of the U.S. constitution, which requires ‘just compensation’ for governmental exactions and land-use controls which limit a land owner’s reasonable expectation for returns on development, also defines and modified planning initiatives in the United States.

Having said this the federal government did provide some of the necessary legal infrastructure and resources to promote rural land use planning. Again during the Eisenhower years planning programs received an enormous boost with the 1954 amendments to the federal 1949 Housing Act. Known as the “Section 701” program, the federal government provided matching funds to state and local governments to assist them in establishing and staffing local and regional planning commissions.[141] Many of these were located in rural areas and regions.

As the federal government began to disburse more funding to locales through numerous programs, a “grants economy” began to emerge wherein local and regional bureaucracies competed with one another for such funding. The federal government refused to take responsibility for vetting which applications ought to receive priority for limited funding. It published “Circular A-95,” also a part of the “Section 701” system, charging each state with naming an agency that would evaluate and recommend grant applications according to some priority ranking. Indirectly this seemingly bureaucratic rule had the practical effect of pushing a number of states to create or enhance state planning offices with the responsibility to plan, coordinate, review and rank applications, among other functions. Some of these offices, like Vermont’s, took the then bold step of establishing rudimentary statewide land use and growth management strategies and plans.[142]

The federal government created much of the legal and policy context within which the states operated. This framework was defined by a set of new environmental laws, the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, the Air Quality Act of 1967, the 1972 and 1977 amendments to the Clean Water Act, the Forest and Rangeland Renewal Resources Act of 1974, the National Forest Management Act of 1976 and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968.[143]

A number of these federal laws concerned themselves with the planning and management of public lands in the federal or national domain. The size of these holdings are especially significant in the American West. In the State of Nevada, for example, fully ninety per cent of all land is federally owned and managed by branches of the US Department of Agriculture and the US Department of the Interior. New management and planning regimes for such lands have had important implications for rural communities dependent upon ranching, mining, forestry and tourism. These programs were not greeted with universal enthusiasm by all Westerners and a movement against planning and federal ownership emerged known as the "Sagebrush Rebellion." It had the tacit support of President Ronald Reagan, himself strongly identified with western and anti-government interests and the movement to privatize federally owned natural resources. In time this movement morphed into the "Wise Use" movement which continues to be active across the landscape.[144] Overall, however, these federal policies and mandates reflected the growing strength of the environmental movement in the United States and the beginning of the "greening" of rural and wild lands planning and policy.[145]

During the 1960s and 1970s important if oftentimes subtle changes within the local planning framework emerged, perhaps to alter forever how Americans understood the land and the countryside. Bosselman and Callies have called this period "the quiet revolution in land use control."[146] Popper saw it as a burst of imaginative "land-use reform." This movement, which focused its critique on the limitations of local planning processes, "succeeded in obtaining the passage of a great deal of innovative land-use legislation embodied in new programs of centralized regulation. Most of these programs are administered at the state level…"[147] Areas of critical or unique environmental concern, such as the California coast and the San Francisco Bay, New York's Adirondack Mountain region, Massachusetts' Martha's Vineyard island and New Jersey's Pine Barrens and the Hackensack Meadowlands, were among these pioneering or "quiet revolution" planning innovations. In each case an extra-local planning authority was created to address specific land use issues with an eye toward protecting fragile environmental resources and attempting to balance economic development with emerging environmental priorities. Likewise projects of regional rather than purely local scale, such as the citing of major infrastructure facilities like waste management and disposal facilities, and especially the protection of agricultural lands, also came in for particular attention in many of these new planning systems. Yet if much of the experimentation with new land use planning and guidance systems was to be found at the state level, it was not true that all states were equally involved in the "quiet revolution." Among those jurisdictions whose programs have garnered the most attention are Vermont, Oregon, Florida, California, New York, New Jersey and Main.[148]

No single issue quite defines the nature of rural planning practice in the United States to the degree that the preservation of agricultural land does. Indeed protecting farmland appears to be a substantial planning effort in many developed nations as Rachelle Alterman's recently published comparative study of farmland retention strategies in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France and Israel reveals.[149]

Those who seek to preserve farmland come to the issue from many different perspectives though in some important ways the problem has also become closely identified with the strong desire "to save the family farm" in the face of the rapid and widespread consolidation and industrialization of the American food system.[150] The extent of farm land loss has itself been a matter of considerable debate. The National Agricultural Lands Study of 1981—carried out jointly by the President's Council on Environmental Quality and the US Department of Agriculture—studied the problem intensively and came to the conclusion that between the years 1967 and 1975 approximately 1.2 million hectares of farmland was taken out of production annually due to retirement, urbanization, infrastructure development, and other factors.[151]

Immediately the study's findings were attacked, even by economists with the USDA which helped to sponsor and staff the study commission.[152] Opposition to NALS and the emerging farmland preservation movement contended that increased productivity per acre, due to the adoption of new technologies and better farming techniques, made the loss of land largely irrelevant. In the aggregate, they argued, production was increasing and that, rather than the amount of land in production or the number of farms, was the crucial thing to assess.[153]

It was on the local and regional level, however, that the loss of farmland was perceived to be a substantial issue and it was here that policies were adopted to stem the tide of farmland loss. Literally every state has implemented some program(s) to respond to the problem. A number of states and many local governments have adopted land use controls on development in the countryside. These measures have included the creation of agricultural districts, the establishment of agricultural zones within more robust zoning and planning systems, the review of public infrastructure investments to determine their growth-inducing potential, incentives for cluster housing, and similar measures. Every state, however, has sought to address the problem of the economics of land conversion, as Alterman notes, or the economics of agriculture itself.[154] Thus, all states have adopted some form of differential or preferential land taxation for farmland and most have implemented some form of a right-to-farm law in an effort to protect farmers from the sorts of lawsuits which non-farm rural residents have used to curb legitimate agricultural activities.[155] Additionally many states and local jurisdictions have created programs to transfer or purchase the development rights or obtain conservation easements on agricultural land which lower tax assessments, reduce the costs of operation, provide farmers with capital for investment and retain land in permanent agricultural and open space uses.[156] A growing number of states are seeking to give further help by providing subsidies for on-farm infrastructure investments to control pollution, direct support for diversification efforts, and a variety of marketing initiatives, including direct-marketing programs to consumers.[157]

The farmland preservation problem is really many different problems and varies greatly from place to place. This reflects the diversity of interests within the rural planning mix. Some retention policies are oriented to enhancing the economic viability of agriculture in general. These have tended to find their greatest support among those in the farming community, the agribusiness sector and traditional small town America. Here most of the issues relate to the changing structure of agriculture, chronically low prices, marketing and trade. There is little competition from other potential land uses and so land use controls are seldom seen as necessary. Federal policies have been as important in such places as local ones have been.

Others policies seem to be more appropriate for land in rural-urban fringe areas where the preservation of open space and the countryside as an amenity tends to define the planning framework as much as the desire to secure local or regional agricultural economies. The emphasis in such areas has tended to focus on growth controls, preventing rural sprawl, and securing land in permanent agricultural use. Economic viability also is an on-going concern and it is within these communities where support for niche marketing, organic production and direct marketing to consumers, as in farmers' markets and community support agriculture agreements, are common public policy objectives.[158] Land use policy is the overriding planning framework. Others tend to support agricultural land preservation because of a deep concern over the loss of wildlife habitat and the other environmental benefits and services which farming produces. Here land planning is crucial and it is carried out both by local and state governments and, increasingly, also by private land trust organizations which acquire and manage land for biodiversity. And still other measures reflect the desire among urban consumers for the continuation of a cheap food policy. The larger point is that farmland retention programs, the single most common rural planning policies implemented across the US, are derivative of the many different and sometimes conflicting interests which seek to "drive" rural planning.

As previously noted agricultural policy in post-WWII Sweden reflected a strong self-sufficiency orientation which grew out of the nation's commitment to neutrality. Rural policy reinforced this imperative. A type of vernacular rural planning had been evident in Sweden since the middle of 18th century when a series of land reforms—storskifte and enskifte—led to greater control over farming on common lands and the consolidation of farm holdings. A far-reaching land reform—lag skifte—took place in the middle of the 19th century. It had the practical effect of destroying many small rural settlements by creating larger contiguous farms dispersed across the countryside. Each of these measures reflected a desire by the authorities to "rationalize" agriculture by altering land use and ownership patterns. The theme of economic rationalization—creating economically viable farms through efficiencies in production—was one of the areas of emphases of the first important post-war rural measure, the Agricultural Act of 1947. By far the most salient element of the law was that it started a process for establishing a level of income parity between farmers and those working in urban industrial occupations. While this proved to be both an elusive and difficult goal to achieve over the years, parity became the hallmark of a national policy framework which attempted to keep farmers on the land by providing them with a decent income and the physical and social infrastructure in the countryside which promoted a reasonably high "quality of life."

As surpluses in some commodities developed throughout the 1950s the government brought about yet another phase of rationalization by taking marginal lands out of production. The Agricultural Act of 1967 confirmed and continued these policies by extending support and services to larger farms reflecting an understanding that technological advances in agriculture now made large-scale farming a growing feature of the Swedish countryside while small farms were in decline.[159] And as farms got larger, a result of rationalization policies, rural population across the countryside began to decline.[160]

In 1972 agricultural policy became integrated with Sweden's national physical planning system, thus bringing greater coherence to rural planning altogether. The institutional locus for this integration was the Country Agricultural Boards (CABs), which were established in every county. Under this approach the CABs provided not only extension and technical assistance services to farmers but also regulated agricultural land transfers, purchased and reallocated rural land both to assist farmers who were increasing the size of their holdings and to prevent speculation and urban development in the countryside, channeled state financial grants and loan programs from the central government to local full-time farmers and even assisted them in preparing for retirement by helping with investments. The Land Acquisition Act of 1965 was the basis for the CAB's ability to participate in the local land market. It established a process which anticipated that the local CAB would grant permission for every land sale in the countryside, except those between intermediate relatives in a family. A case study of the operations over time of the Kristanstad CAB is provided by Lapping and Forster.[161]

Much of the backbone of contemporary Swedish planning came about in 1947 with the passage into law of the Building Act which mandated that every municipality develop a comprehensive master plan for long-term development. While a number of rural areas complied with the new requirement, the linkage between planning and housing construction funding programs made this very largely an urban-oriented process.[162] The 1970s witnessed a new generation of plans which more closely tied together infrastructure provision, land development and conservation. This was made practical by the fact that municipal land banking had become an important feature of the Swedish planning system. Established in 1967 municipal land banking was supported by a national fund from which local governments could loan funds to finance the acquisition of land to be "banked" for future development as well as for conservation puposes.[163] A number of these new municipal plans sought to limit urban expansion thereby protecting farm land in the rural-urban fringe as well as environmentally significant areas.[164] The plans were reinforced by the Municipal Boundary Reform of the 1970s that "resulted in all municipalities having a very differentiated structure of development within their boundaries—a large central place, smaller 'suburbs', agricultural villages, and purely rural areas."[165] This policy reflected a hierarchical ordering of communities based on some traditional notions about central places and key settlements.[166] Changes in the local planning regime were reinforced by a number of new national environmental initiatives, including the Nature Protection Act and the Shoreline Protection Act of 1952, the Nature Conservancy Act of 1964, and its amendments in 1974, the Environmental Protection Act of 1969, the Products Hazardous to Public Health and the Environment Act of 1973 and the 1974 and 1979 Forest Management Acts. Through this new legal and policy framework, as Wramner has written, "national physical planning became an increasingly important environmental policy instrument…"[167] Additionally these years also saw a municipal reform program that consolidated approximately 2,000 municipalities into 275.[168]

Forty years after the implementation of the first comprehensive planning law a new Planning and Building law was passed in 1987. Importantly for rural areas, it was consolidated with a new a Natural Resources Act. As Holm and Fredlund asset, this joint authority was "perhaps the most important aspect of the new legislation. The link between the Planning and Building Act and the Natural Resources Act emphasizes the need to plan for a sustainable development of urban and rural areas."[169]

As Sweden's environmental movement matured a certain degree of "greening" took hold of agricultural policy. In particular the environmental impact of modern agricultural production processes began to attract attention as more and more of its residuals and spillover effects came to the attention of citizens and policy makers alike.[170] Among the measures that Sweden adopted were: manure management requirements, integrated pest management, registration of hazardous farm materials, acreage set-asides—especially on marginal and fragile lands—reduced chemical applications technology transfer, afforestation requirements, organic certification standards and animal-rights laws, among other.[171] Most importantly, as Vail and his colleagues point out, policy makers did not blame Swedish farmers for all of the problems and externalities created by the agricultural system. Indeed, the major farmer's organization actively supported the new legislation and programs as they "moved rapidly and decisively to catch the green wave…" and "recognized the potential for cashing in on Sweden's clean, green image by exporting organic and reduced-chemical food."[172]

Rural planners in Sweden understood that agriculture was not the only important land-based activity in the countryside. Nature tourism had a long and traditional linkage with rural and wilderness areas. From medieval times the Common Access Prerogative (allemansratt) guaranteed to all Swedes the ability to "move around the countryside at will, crossing or halting on privately owned land as long as he does no damage. He/she may pick wild flowers, berries and mushrooms, bathe in privately owned water courses, negotiate them by boat and use beaches provided that the privacy of the landowner is not encroached upon."[173] In more contemporaneous times, however, public access, even on publicly owned lands, has sometimes clashed with the need to regulate and control the utilization of particularly fragile landscapes and environments, as in the case of the Sarek National Park in the far north of Swedish Lapland.

A somewhat distinctive aspect of Sweden's rural landscape is the wide-scale ownership of forest land by farmers. Folksedotter points out that "with some exceptions, Swedish farmers combine agriculture and forestry."[174] It was the traditional pattern that farmers worked the land during the warm months and occupied themselves in the forest during the winter.[175] In 1945 the Land Purchase Act, part of the larger Companies Law, sought further to enshrine this tradition by allowing only those engaged in farming or forestry to purchase forest land, unless they had the explicit permission of county or municipal authorities.[176] This was but part of a larger strategy to continue the rationalization and capitalization of Swedish agriculture. It invariably led to ever larger and more capital-intensive units. As farms became larger they also became more highly mechanized both in terms of farming and forestry activities. Over time this policy preference saw subsidies to small holders decreased and this, together with other factors, led to a more rapid decline in forestry sector employment.[177] From the 1950s to the 1980s this reduction in the demand for labor in forestry was especially pronounced in Sweden's remote rural areas where small holders were leaving the land. Stimulating out-migration from rural areas into cities and regional centers was a policy reinforced by the national Labour Market Board as well as by some local planning authorities.[178] "The official policy towards the sparsely populated areas was," remarks Hans Westlund, "that it was meaningless to make any efforts for redevelopment in them."[179] This situation has been accurately described for a region in neighboring Finland where the dynamics were similar to those operative in Sweden: "In 1967, the Koitere Forest District took on twenty chainsaw operators on its regular payroll, with the result that the small-scale farmers disappeared entirely from felling operations. The need for forest labour shrank to a fraction of its former magnitude and the population of Kontiovaara dwindled in pace with this trend as faithfully as it had once grown."[180]

The pattern of small holdership in such places generated a scattered rural land settlement pattern.[181] As traditional forms of employment in agriculture and forestry declined, the public sector grew to become a far more significant part of the labor force. This was a function of the evolving welfare state and reflected, too, a change in the orientation of policy. As Sjoholt describes it "the redistribution of industries and population from peripheral areas began to cause concern in wide circles in all Scandinavia, including in Sweden. The concern was partly economically motivated. On the one hand, there was the growing demand for both physical and social infrastructure, coupled with increasing planning implementation costs. On the other, existing infrastructure, some of which had recently been developed, was in danger of being not only suboptimally used but entirely lost in the out-migration areas."[182] This transition, or a redirection of concern and funding for rural areas experiencing population loss and economic decline, had three significant effects on life in such remote rural areas, according to Per Olof Persson. First, the growth in public employment created jobs for women who were often limited in their occupational choices in the more traditional land-based economy. Second, "by setting formal professional standards for most jobs in public administration, as well as in the social and health services and education, the public sector has contributed substantially to upgrading the formal education level of the labour force." And third, population began to leave the hinterlands and scattered settlements and began to concentrate in the service centers and key settlements where services and employment were located and concentrated.[183] The reorientation in policy was also reflected in the erosion in support for top-down planning programs. As Westlund writes, "[t]he main reason is that when policy shifted from *redistribution* to *development and* *economic growth,* it became obvious, even for the state that although redistribution must be handled from above, local and regional development and growth cannot. Therefore, local/region development issues have increasingly become a task for the counties and municipalities."[184]

As the welfare state began to retreat in Sweden, a function both of the deep recession of the early 1990s and Sweden's entry into the European Union in 1995, transfer payments and subsidies to such rural areas were slashed. This signaled a substantial reorientation in official Swedish regional policy which, since the late 1970s, sought to reverse the decline of sparsely populated rural areas and to prevent people from migrating to cities. Erik Westholm sees this change, and other similar to it, as part of a "gradual change in the focus of regional policy from the geographic redistribution of welfare to what could be termed a development approach."[185]

In the particular region that Persson has studied, Harjedalen, in west central Sweden, he finds a population dispersed with the growth of seasonal housing and a return to the more remote mountainous areas of the region where some workers found employment in services for the tourism sector. Persson doubts that this emerging tourism employment base and its associated scattered rural spatial pattern will be able to hold the educational standards, the high rate of women's employment, and the critical mass of services that were extent during the previous period. Westlund concurs and says that "tourism has created new jobs, but not enough to counteract the loss of jobs in other sectors. Even if e.g., wildlife, hunting and fishing tourism will experience growth, this conclusion will probably be the general one with few exceptions."[186]

This dispersed settlement trend reflected a more general counter-urbanization thrust which Sweden experienced, especially to those places within commuting distance of centers and cities.[187] Indeed, while peripheral and isolated areas continued to see a decline in overall population, there had been an increase in the number of younger people in the local population. Westlund asserts that this growth was very largely spontaneous and is "more or less in conflict with the plans of the municipalities."[188]

Perhaps all of this leads to the conclusion that for rural Sweden, especially in its more remote areas, planning is less rather than more robust than in the country's urban regions. To some extent such a view is consistent with the conclusion of Pia Enochsson, Director of the National Rural Development Agency, when she recently declared that Sweden really lacks a coherent rural policy.[189]

Peripheral Regions in Developed Nations: The Appalachia Case Study

Few rural problems have been as vexing and seemingly intractable as those of peripheral rural regions in highly developed countries. One famous American report on these areas in long-term distress seemed to capture the emotion behind the dilemma in its very title, *The People Left Behind*.[190] In the midst of so much material abundance, economic growth, mobility and seeming opportunity, some rural places and some rural people have long remained "at risk."

Many of these peripheral areas are typified by a high level of dependence upon traditional resource-based economic activities, such as small-scale agriculture, forestry; trapping, fishing and mining. Some of these sectors have been in a long period of decline while others are in rapid "free fall." Multiple job-holding (two or more jobs) has been a norm for many males and females in such places. Where residents of such areas have been located near to a city, increasingly someone in the household has found work there with the other rural-based occupations supplementing household income rather than defining it. Some of these peripheral rural communities are subject to "boom and bust" life cycles. Here occupational profiles are narrow as the community is based upon one industry or one firm, such as a paper mill, an energy generation facility, a prison or a mine. A number of these communities are also “company towns” where decision that effected the very life of the people and the place were made in distant or even foreign cities. These communities are especially vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity demands and prices, that are effected by the machinations of international markets and labor flows. Many of these peripheral rural places have substantial aboriginal populations, such as the Australian Outback, northern Canada, Amazonia, the western United States and northernmost Fenno-Scandinavia. Here, as well as in the American South with its large African-American population, race and ethnicity have tended to conflate with chronic poverty to produce even more severe problems.

In addition to the interstate highway system, the 1950s in the U.S. saw some attention given to rural development in peripheral regions. Actually, there was an intense debate during the Eisenhower years about how best to address the problems of rural unemployment and chronic poverty. The subject of the debate was whether or not to create a new federal independent agency, referred to as the Area Redevelopment Agency (ARA), which would specifically address the problems of such places. In the end President Eisenhower repeatedly vetoed legislative efforts to create the agency, even in the face of substantial support for it within his own political party, the Republicans. The federal government did establish an interagency Committee on Rural Development, headed by an Under Secretary of Agriculture. The Committee tried to coordinate rural focused services throughout the federal bureaucracy in an integrated and targeted way. Working largely through the Cooperative Extension Service and local USDA staff, a substantial number of studies were generated and county-levels programs inaugurated. The interagency committee published its own study, *Development of Agriculture’s Human Resources*. It advanced the argument that there were actually too many family farmers and maintained that some attempt at “thinning out the numbers” was justified. The belief was that this would increase the economic viability of those farms left in production. Newly released rural labor would either migrate to the expanding metropolitan areas or would be employed in local non-agricultural industries.[191]

But the larger debate over the potential establishment of the Area Redevelopment Agency would not go away. With the ascendency to the presidency of John F. Kennedy, things in Washington, DC began to change. He was greatly effected by the conditions and problems he encountered while campaigning in West Virginia, the heartland of Appalachia. He carried this distress with him to the White House. He soon appointed a “Depressed Areas Task Force” spearheaded by the US Senator Paul Douglas, who unsuccessfully championed the ARA in the Congress during the Eisenhower years. The Task Force’s recommendations were comprehensive and focused especially on the need for funding for Appalachia, educational program enhancement, support for the conservation of natural resources—a major issue in the coal fields of the Appalachia region—the need to implement a jobs creation program, the provision of funding for small business support as well as funds for facilities and infrastructure development. In the middle of 1961 the ARA legislation was passed into law, largely using the Task Force’s findings and recommendations for support. The ARA was not placed within the USDA, however, but rather in the US Department of Commerce. The problems of peripheral regions were no longer seen as solely within the purview of agricultural interests but now required a wider policy and programming context more consistent with broadly-defined economic development which focused on labor market analysis and capital availability for development and physical infrastructure, especially in the form of water and sewage systems, port facilities, other transportation related investments, as well as on support for industrial parks.

In what has become an issue in nearly every nation's rural development programming, the designation of target communities, areas and regions for the resources of the development agency–in this case the ARA—was complicated and highly contentious. As areas were designated, each had to prepare an Overall Economic Development Plan (OEDP). The rudiments of these plans, which were financed by the ARA, were to become mainstays of economic development practice in the United States. These were: assessments of local "venture capital availability, entrepreneurship, availability of lands, labor training needs, appraisal of public utility availability, and the financial capacity of local government," according to Colgan.[192] While Kennedy was initially concerned with the problems of the long-suffering Appalachian region, the ARA soon was pushed to consider problems throughout the entire country. This dispersion of the effort was, perhaps, the logical outcome of a political process wherein federal representatives of different states and congressional districts each vied for a "piece of the pie" in the environment of an emerging "grants economy." As Colgan has observed, the ARA "had a wide variety of programs with which to assist designated areas, but the major efforts focused on planning, loans, and public works. Its technical assistance grants funded planning studies on everything from tourism development in the New River Gorge of West Virginia, to peach canning in Georgia, and fish packing in Massachusetts. One of its more interesting grants was earmarked to assist bringing refrigerators to the Inuit of Alaska (the problem was one of developing commercial-sized refrigerators to store reindeer meat and fish for export)."[193] A substantial ARA loan program provided funding for business start-ups and expansions, especially in the areas of food processing and forest products. Largely because of the concerns of New England representatives, whose experience with the TVA was one in which firms and businesses relocated out of that region for the middle South because of cheaper electricity rates, provision was made to deny loans and grants to firms seeking to relocate from one area to another. Sar Levitan's evaluation of the ARA experience indicated that, in fact, no such grants or loans were made.[194]

One of the grants which the ARA made was to the Council of Appalachian Governors to assess the special problems of this region, which included nearly 350 countries in 13 states, stretching from southwestern New York State to northern Mississippi. This was, after all, the region which initially gained Kennedy's attention and commitment and he acted upon a recommendation from the Council by appointing the President's Special Appalachian Regional Commission. Its findings were directed not only on the region's needs but also focused on certain structural problems, such as a tradition of absentee corporate land ownership, highly destructive patterns of resources use—strip mining of coal and clear-cutting of timber and the attendant water pollution—without much local value-added manufacturing, and a politics which could only be described as "feudal." With the publication in 1963 of *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, by local Appalachian attorney Harry Caudill, the American public's attention also became riveted on Appalachia. As Batteau has written, "more than any single book or article, it [*Night Comes to the Cumberlands*] is today responsible for the resonant image of Appalachia held by the American public."[195] Together these events came to make Appalachia the quintessential American periphery. And it remains so down to the current day for, as a recent *New York Times* article argues, Appalachia remains "Poverty's Poster Child."[196]

The Council's recommendations focused on problems of establishing new industries, agricultural diversification, natural resource development, tourism and recreation, and the need for infrastructure in the form of highways, water and sewage systems, new and expanded educational and health facilities, as well as all manner of human resource development. By this time Lyndon Johnson had assumed the presidency after Kennedy's assassination and very soon thereafter he submitted legislation to establish the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) as a permanent federal-state partnership for regional economic and community development.[197] It did not receive congressional support until after Johnson's own successful election in 1965, when it became law. Establishing the Appalachian Regional Commission was the first of the "Great Society" programs to be implemented.

Neither purely a federal agency nor a state level agency, the ARC was really something new, a regional entity, a new level of governance in the US system. The ARC was given control and coordination responsibility for an array of federal programs in the areas of health, housing assistance, vocational education, soil conservation, timber harvesting and development, mine land reclamation, water resources and highway development. The overriding theme of the ARC was the successful targeting and concentration of federal and state investment to maximize returns. In practice the ARC pursed a "growth pole" approach which tended to favor small and medium-sized urban settlements over the open countryside or small towns. In reality, of course, the absence in the region of any substantial metropolitan area made a genuine growth pole strategy far less than what Perroux initially proposed when he wrote about the crucial role which "poles de croissance" could come to play in such an approach to development.[198] In the case of Appalachia, service centers and some relatively small communities which might provide a critical mass of economic activity became the focus of this approach. The ARC was pursing yet another round of rural modernization "to restructure the agricultural economy, provide new job opportunities in other sectors of the economy, train rural people to participate in the industrial work force, and encourage integration with the urbanizing society," as O'Connor has observed.[199]

Perhaps not surprisingly, other distressed rural regions of the country also wanted ARC-like commissions for their territories. President Johnson was initially opposed to this idea fearing, in large part, the budgetary implications of adding to this new layer of government. He did, however, recognize the need for a far greater federal focus on economic development in such areas and he proposed and succeeded in changing the ARA into the Economic Development Agency (EDA). The idea of several new ARC-like commissions did not fade away. It was incorporated in the new EDA legislation as Title V agencies but with one highly significant difference from the ARC: while they could have an advocacy and coordinating role, the new regional commission would not have the extensive and robust level of federal funding that the ARC had. Thus, an Upper Great Lakes Regional Commission, a New England Regional Commission, the Ozarks Regional Commission, and the Four Corners Commission—in the Southwest—were among those established. Some had small staffs and simply passed federal funding programs along to the counties and states in their designated areas while others, like the New England Commission, had more substantial staffs, provided by the region's state governors, and played a strong planning role for regional development. Not unlike the ARC model, these commissions tended to adopt the "growth pole" or "growth center" model for regional development and growth. The focus thus remained on building infrastructure and robust community economies which would, so it was believed, anchor larger rural and hinterland areas with services and employment trickling down into the countryside. Public works programming remained the mainstay of most of the commissions while the EDA also supported funds for business start-ups, job training, and research.

In 1967 Johnson appointed an Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty which issued the previously mentioned study *The People Left Behind*, one of the signal events dealing with rural poverty during the entire “War on Poverty.” Still the feeling persisted that rural issues were being given short shrift and this was very likely reinforced when Johnson’s created a new cabinet-level bureaucracy to address pressing urban problems, the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

At approximately the same time a number of social scientists and policy analysts were coming to frame the problems of peripheral rural areas as having roots beyond economic conditions. Many began to articulate a critique of the people of places like Appalachia and their cultural “traditionalism,” which was seen as resistant to change, mired in generation-after-generation of poverty, religious fatalism, and a fundamental antagonism to modernization. This became known as the “culture of poverty” paradigm and challenged both structural explanations of rural poverty and contemporary economic and regional development theory. Those living within a “culture of poverty” were, according to Alice O’Connor, “fully aware of their relative depravation and felt a profound sense of alienation from the rest of society. In response to their depravation, the poor developed habits and psychological adaptations that put them at odds with modern capitalist culture: they showed no signs of middle-class ambition, sought gratification when and where they could find it rather than planning for the future, felt powerless over their own destines, and frequently indulged in ‘deviant’ social and sexual behavior. What was more, they were passing these traits on to their children. The culture of poverty isolated the poor from the rest of modern society.”[200] Beyond “blaming the victim,” the “culture of poverty” paradigm would provide subsequent administrations with an excuse to begin the disengagement from the problems of persistent rural poverty and regional development.

When Richard Nixon became the president he introduced the notion of federal “revenue sharing” which provided a certain amount of discretionary funding to states to do with as they wished. This was a departure from previous policies which earmarked federal funding for specific types of projects and purposes through categorical grant packages. Nixon appointed a Presidential Task Force on Rural Development which made a number of recommendations for a national rural policy. This led to the drafting and passage in 1972 of the Rural Development Act, arguably really the first federal rural legislation as distinguished from farm bills.[201] Historian Sandra Osbourn has observed that “rural development policy buffs consider 1971 and 1972 to be banner years” because of this legislation.[202] As is the case with most complicated pieces of law, the act had several parts or titles. Some of these dealt with the expansion of water systems in rural areas, a small amount of funds for land grant universities to establish regional rural development research centers, enhanced support for extension services, and additional though limited financial assistance for conservation projects. By far the most important part of the new law dealt with a number of incentives for rural industrialization. Funds were provided for the establishment or improvement of industrial parks, loan programs for small business development, and water and pollution control systems for rural industries as well as communities. While much appeared to have been gained in the new law in fact little new funding was appropriated to make these programs truly viable and effective. The emphasis on rural industrialization and job creation reflected the dual need to provide off-farm income to supplement farm-derived sources that would help stabilize the farm situation as well as help diversify the economic bases of rural communities. To some extent this recognized a trend which was emerging, factories locating in rural places to take advantage of cheap land, easy access to suppliers and markets through the interstate system, subsidies for location as well as job-training, and a non-unionized employee environment.

To help organize federal rural development efforts the 1972 Act also established the new position of Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Rural Development. This post would hereafter serve as the “point person” within the federal bureaucracy for rural development activities, though much was still happening in other federal departments and agencies, such as the Department of Commerce and the Interior Department, amongst others. The reality was that rural programming was widely dispersed throughout the federal government and little actual coordination seemed possible, thus minimizing whatever potential effectiveness targeting might have. It would not be an exaggeration to conclude that in terms of rural programs, especially for peripheral regions, that the “right hand did not know what the left was doing,” so disorganized and poorly coordinated were existing federal efforts.

With the election of President Jimmy Carter, Americans selected a leader who celebrated his small town and agrarian roots. While many of his administration’s rural policy goals soon became sidelined by the energy crisis brought about by the Arab oil embargo, double-digit inflation on the macro-economic level, and significant unemployment, Carter really poured his energies into resolving the deepening urban crisis and trying to alleviate broad-based economic decline across the nation. With the publication in 1980 of the *Small Community and Rural Development Policy* yet another attempt was made both to concentrate and consolidate federal rural programs.[203]

The policy recognized the importance of planning and the lack of planning expertise in many of the nation’s rural communities. Carter moved to overcome this by supporting through the Farmers Home Administration of the USDA and the EDA a system of “circuit rider” planners who would work for a number of small communities and assist them in their efforts to secure adequate and fair treatment from the federal system. The logic of the program was in inescapable: if it was impossible to coordinate activities at the federal level perhaps local planning could work to coordinate efforts so that federal resources would be targeted at the local level to resolve locally-defined problems. Philosophically the Carter administration continued to rely on a growth pole orientation which would spur rural industrialization. In addition, new programs were created in rural housing, alternative energy systems, and more and varied transportation options, especially to help the elderly in accessing services and support.[204] Through the regulation of some industries and direct subsidies to specific business with a commitment to serve rural markets, the government attempted to overcome problems of distance and scale in transportation and communications. The “rural subsidy,” for example, was given to particular airlines to help maintain or extend routes to small communities. Finally, the administration argued that the real goal of federal rural policy should be to build local “community capacity” so that continued reliance upon federal resources might not evolve into a genuine dependency. There is an inkling here of the coming debate on the meaning of sustainability for rural communities.

It was ironic, though, that increased federal activity and renewed federal spending were seen as necessary for ending this growing dependency. Carter’s government was attempting, perhaps, to resurrect an image of rural life in which communities and people would be truly self-reliant, independent and capable of solving their own many of their most pressing problems. If the history of American rural policy indicates any one thing it is that rural development has always been a function of government intervention in the market and that the federal government was the “key” actor, along with rural people themselves. The rural American the Carter administration sought to re-create was an America which never really existed. The final effort of the Carter years was the passage of the 1980 Rural Development Policy Act whose importance, according to one USDA expert, was largely "in a symbolic sense."[205]

When Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency he vowed to slash all federal funding, save for the defense budget, drastically reduce the number of federal employees, end revenue-sharing with the states, cut federal programs, and unleash the forces of the free market through privatization, the reduction of regulations and environmental standards and all other federal constraints. David Stockman, the Reaganites' "wunderkind" budget director, put matters succinctly when he testified before Congress that "we believe that government should get out of the regional development and job creation business."[206] True to its word, the administration successfully moved against all of the Title V ARC-like regional commissions. They were simply eliminated, the EDA was not shut-down but its budget was drastically reduced as were all rural development programs in the USDA. The TVA, long a lightening-rod for conservatives, was not closed but its work-force was severely cut by a "reduction-in-force," the federal government's way of shedding jobs. And even the ARC itself was targeted for elimination. It survived very largely because over the years it built-up a strong reputation for getting things done as well as amassing a substantial amount of support across a geographically large and diverse service area. If the ARC did not necessarily pioneer a new way to undertake rural development it did succeed admirably in the creation of a model for regional governance and cooperation. As Bradshaw has written, "one of the main contributions of the ARC experience has been to emphasize the importance of political structures in the functioning and maintenance of such an agency…It has linked the 'top-down' approach of many federal agencies with the 'bottom-up' involvement of local districts. It has linked federal, state, and local governments and has brought cooperation among a range of federal agencies."[207] Over the course of the next several years Democrats in the Congress attempted to stymie the efforts of the Reagan administration to make further cuts in job creation programs, the EDA, and similar programs. Oftentimes they were successful. As federal budget deficits continued to balloon, especially after Reagan's re-election and stimulated further by substantial tax cuts, over-all fiscal concerns brought about something of a stand-off with neither of the two parties able to make very much progress in pursuing their agendas.

Consistent with the administration's anti-government views Reagan policy makers borrowed from the Thatcher government in the UK the notion of "enterprise zones." In their US incarnation these zones, located both in urban and rural areas, sought to attract employment to chronically poor places by reducing taxes, relieving employers of certain federal mandates, environmental regulations and standards, and also subsidized salaries for a period of time. Beyond being a reversal of previous policies in a number of ways, the program altered the pre-existing national consensus on regional policy: enterprise zones actually sought to relocate economic activity from some places to others. It increased competition between communities and states and stoked the growing 'sun belt versus snow belt' regional competition.

In time several Republican governors from the Appalachian region challenged the Reagan orthodoxy and argued for a re-invigoration of the ARC. The agency continues to make investments in the region, coordinates federal programs, and stresses human capital enhancements. In a reflection on the ARC's history, a past director declared that the ARC has "proven almost invincible politically."[208] Bradshaw notes that the Appalachian Regional Commission "established an early reputation for getting things done through new approaches that circumvented established (delay-inducing) procedures. It had the advantage of not being tied to the long-established bureaucratic practices that are often characteristic of the larger agencies and specific to each one."[209] And as Higgins and Savoie conclude, "there can be no doubt that the ARC brought significant improvement in living standards and productivity to the Appalachian region during its twenty-seven years of operation. Roads were built, health and education standards raised, housing provided, unemployment reduced, and—perhaps most importantly of all—the population was infused with a new sense of hope and pride, and provided with a new image."[210]

Not all rural and regional development activity was at the federal level, however. As the national government began to withdraw and disengage from its previous activist role to a far lesser one, the various states began to assume a greater degree of responsibility for their own regional and rural economic development. "Most states," writes Peter Eisinger, "proffer a mix of traditional location inducements with one or more programs designed in response to market demands. However, some states—for example Massachusetts, Connecticut, Michigan, Pennsylvania—have either staked their claim as pioneers in entrepreneurial experimentation or shifted decisively across a broad front to the newer strategy…" that being demand-side policies and programs.[211] Essentially Eisinger found that most states and local communities utilized "supply side" strategies to "grow" the economy. These consisted of: programs to lower the cost of production relative to other places; a concentration on established capital deemed to be mobile; public support for low-risk undertakings; and encouragement for the private sector's decisions relative to which sectors will be "winners" and which product lines will secure a niche in the market. Toward the end of the 1908s, however, he saw a very profound shift among states and locales to what he described as highly entrepreneurial strategy to development. These places began to utilize "demand side" approaches. These included: economic growth through new discoveries and the creation of new markets for existing products; a focus on creating new sources of capital, include venture capital funds generated by public-private partnerships; a focus on new business start-ups and small business expansion; government involvement in "high risk" but potentially "high gain" projects, such as biotechnology, communications and other emerging technologies; assistance targeted to potentially "winning sectors" based upon a set of criteria which often reflected R&D investment strategy among firms in the sector, aggressive government participation in identifying new products, new markets and new industries, and; initiating collaborations between universities, laboratories and private sector firms. He explained this change in state and local policies as reflecting a "shift in recent years in response to a series of transformations in the American political and economic setting" which had the net effect that "once exclusive reliance on supply-side factor subsidies designed to induce industrial relocation has given way to a more broad-based approach in which supply-side initiatives share the terrain with policies sensitive to structural dynamics of the market. These demand-side policies are not so concerned with shifting the location of established capital or even with retaining it (though the latter particularly is an important goal of all economic development bureaucracies) as they are with the effort to foster new business formation, business diversification, and new industries."[212] While it is not so that programs to "beggar thy neighbor" through relocation incentives and other measures have been abandoned in their totality, it is the case that as the federal government distanced itself from rural and regional development that states and local communities have emerged as powerful actors which have initiated more balanced and sophisticated approaches to the creation of wealth and employment in some of the most depressed rural areas across the American landscape.

Conclusions

Over the last half-century or so the landscape and political economy of rural planning and policy demonstrate an amazingly consistency and lack of imagination in terms of their focus and orientation. In many national and international contexts an emphasis on agriculture as *the* rural persists. Even in the face of rapidly changing demographic, social, environmental and economic realities, policy frameworks all around the world continue to emphasize agriculture as the key sector for rural regions. As Thomas Rowley, a research scholar with the University of Missouri's Rural Policy Research Institute, has observed of the American situation "…policymakers continue to believe, or at least act as if they believe, that farming is the sum total of rural life, therefore, policies aimed at supporting agriculture are touted as 'rural economic and community development' when in truth their effect on the larger economy and community is minimal. Yes they help, but most of the benefit goes to landowners (many of whom neither farm not even live in the area) and many of the dollars head straight off the land, past the town, and out of the area, never to be seen again."[213]

The situation is little different in the sprawling and highly diverse European Union. As Marsden has observed "despite fifteen years of debate and policy crisis concerning the 'arthritic' nature of the productionist support mechanisms within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and the need to shift the emphasis towards new social and environmental agenda, it still the case that the main pillar of the CAP remains in this area in terms of funding. Moreover, it still tends to reinforce the logic of agricultural productivist scale economics by rewarding the largest volume producers, as well as "locking in" many of the less productive producers and those least able to meet the demands such policy-designed "technological treadmills" require."[214]

Reform of this policy model of rural development—the 'agriculture-as-rural' 'productivist' system—has been slow and halting and remains largely intact. Indeed, farm sector supports, domestic subsidies, and import duties in mature economies not only pose significant problems for the rural sectors within the countries where these measures have long been implemented, but have now become a very real impediment for the development of "third world" nations in that they are a barrier to trade in foods commodities, their primary exports. In response to a strongly worded request from several developing nations—India, China and Brazil amongst them—for drastic cuts in such farm supports, the EU Farm Commissioner Frans Fischler recently declared that the "third world" nations were "circling in a different orbit. If they want to do business, they should come back to earth."[215] In other words, a change in the dominant EU model is highly unlikely.

Change at the far margins is taking place, however, even if the pace is slow, halting and lacking in substantial financial support. The CAP in one form or another has been in place since 1962. Faced with growing demands for a more broadly-based, nuanced and sustainable approach to rural development, the EU instituted a 'Second Pillar' of the CAP known as "Agenda 2000." The major element of it has been the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) which provides member states with a broad selection of strategies and tools from which each country can choose to meet its own unique and idiosyncratic conditions. To date both France and UK have chosen comprehensive rural development plans to meet the diverse needs of their rural areas and places. In the case of the UK this has happened simultaneously with some other changes, such as the renaming of the Ministry of Agriculture as the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Development. The approach which the UK has selected under the terms of 'Agenda 2000,' known as the Rural White Paper and the English Rural Development Programme, places a new focus on the revival of rural market towns, rural tourism and development, rural business and enterprise creation, and a set of environmental objectives for the agricultural community to achieve as part of its operations. Yet John Bryden argues that while ‘Agenda 2000’ has promoted some new thinking about a more robust rural development strategy, “it has turned out to be almost entirely composed of measures for farmers, and little concerned about the rest of the rural population (the majority), enterprises, and diversification. The mid-term review of the CAP (July, 2002) mentions rural development, but the proposals turn out to be focused almost entirely on agri-environmental measures.”[216] Marsden is just as critical of the new rules. As he writes, “the recent policy reforms under Agenda 2000, in addition to the new rural development regulation, expose a policy framework which will do little to shift the basic philosophy beyond its bias toward the industrial model.”[217]

Even in the face of some new and more localized programs to support rural areas, such as the LEADER I and II programs adopted by the European Commission to stimulate innovative solutions to rural programs,[218] renewed attempts by the EU to foster greater regional planning through spatial planning and redistribution and an ‘endogenous development agenda’ dependent on networking and local initiatives through the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and similar initiatives,[219] or the initiative of the State of Texas (USA), which recently established an Office of Rural and Community Affairs (ORCA), both to split rural development from agriculture and to more effectively coordinate services and support for rural communities, rural planning and policy around the globe seems to remain fixed in its commitments. These biases include a focus on the regional over the local, an agricultural-productivist paradigm, a reliance upon scale-economics within a neo-classical framework of analysis, a dependence on the provision of physical infrastructure and mega-projects to generate employment and capital and labor mobility, a fundamental disregard for indigenous peoples living in the rural periphery, and a fragmented and poorly coordinated service delivery environment together with out-dated governance systems. Together these elements consistently expose their own internal contradictions and move us only slightly closer to a model and a reality of genuine rural sustainability.[220]

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