

## **People, Places and Landscapes: Social Change in High Amenity Rural Areas**

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## People, Places and Landscapes: Social Change in High Amenity Rural Areas

By Richard S. Krannich, A. E. Luloff, and Donald R. Field. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2011. 167 pp. US\$ 159.00. ISBN 978-94-007-1262-1.

This is an important book for a relatively new area of research and public policy: migration to rural places principally because they are perceived to be rich in natural and cultural amenities, and the effects of this movement on host communities, ecological systems, and the amenity migrants themselves—or what is often more amorphously referred to as seeking a better quality of life. More generally, the book will be of interest to scholars and practitioners concerned with rural and regional change and development. This study of a driving force transforming rurality in the US Intermountain West particularly strengthens our understanding where it is weakest: the sociocultural dimension. The authors bring a wealth of experience and skill to a task they have accomplished well.

The book is structured to take the reader logically through research and discussion on a rather complex and multiscaled subject. There are 8 chapters, an appendix, and a 3-page index. The introductory chapter on the rationale for the research is followed in chapter 2 by an overview of the changes experienced by rural and small communities as they move away from natural resources extraction to a more diversified economic base and associated social organization, and how, in this shift, natural or environmental amenities gain primary importance. This leads to the authors' thesis on the spatial and temporal connections among human behavior, community structure, and ecosystem change.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the changing sociodemographics of an intermountain region made up of the diverse environments of five western states: Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado. Between 1970 and 2000, the region's population increased from 1.6 to 2.8 million, at nearly double the growth rate of the United States in the same period. Using US Census data, the authors skillfully demonstrate the varying patterns of growth and change of the region's communities. Turning to the more specific data of US Census-designated places, they then differentiate between two types of communities: "Old West" and "New West." The former exhibit more traditional economic and social structures, whereas the latter are places where these characteristics no longer dominate.

In chapters 5 and 6, the scale of analysis becomes further detailed, focusing in-depth on life in a sub-region of 5 counties in southwestern Utah. To accomplish this, in addition to US Census data, the study utilized interviews of key informants for issues scoping, followed by a sample survey. The 5-county area (17,351 square miles or 44,939 km<sup>2</sup>), although thinly populated (137,423 residents), experienced an increase in population of nearly 318% from 1970 to 2000. Especially over the past 2 decades, some communities attracted substantial numbers of new year-round residents and many others occupying their residences part-time. Samples were drawn from lists of residential property owners obtained from county tax assessors' offices; the initial questionnaire was mailed to 2646 owners. The overall response rate was quite high: 64.4%. Key questions concerned the ways in which residential status, time-in-residence, and other sociodemographic characteristics may relate to patterns of use and other behavior, especially toward public lands, as well as residents' values and attitudes toward the natural environment and resources and their man-

agement. The findings and their discussion highlight community issues that arise from differences, especially between year-round and part-time residents, and conclude with convincingly reasoned and policy-relevant implications for natural resources and other land managers.

Chapter 7 shifts the focus to social conditions in the subregion and identifies how adult residents' social and collective well-being may vary across residential categories, in particular offering profiles of two types: part-time and year-round residents. The findings indicate that social integration, participation in local community everyday life, and community attachment vary across residence grouping. Time-in-residence appears especially important. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the research findings' implications for local residents, leaders, and community development and management professionals.

The last chapter summarizes the research findings on amenity-based change and development and synthesizes well "the reasons linkages between natural resources, demography, and community-level social and economic change need to be considered in attempts to facilitate adaptive success and enhance prospects for future sustainability" (p. 7). In doing so, the "positive consequences and potentials" and then "the limitations and liabilities" of the region's amenity-based growth are considered. This reader was impressed with the paucity of "positive consequences." Local and regional public and NGO decision-makers, planners, and managers, in particular, may be disappointed with the brevity and generality with which these critical findings are treated.

The appendix includes a description of the study approach and methodology, and, generously, the complete survey questionnaire (49 questions) that was used. A small but, for some readers, an important

point: Color photography is appreciated for the additional information it offers. However, along with citing the source of the photograph (ie a person or institution), it would have been helpful to also include short descriptions of what in particular the reader is looking at.

This book is highly recommended to academic researchers, as well as citizens and their decision-makers, planners, and managers struggling with amenity-led sociocultural, economic, and biophysical transformations of rural communities and their natural ecologies.

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