



Literature Review

Introduction

The *Regional Solutions for Rural and Urban Challenges* project hypothesizes that regional collaboration and solution-seeking can be an effective way of improving social and economic opportunity and health for all people and places within a region. Specifically, it aims to identify and curate examples of policy and practice that promote boundary-crossing, and multi-sector solutions to regional challenges while advancing opportunity, health, and well-being without leaving behind rural areas, low-income people, and people of color. *Regional Solutions* intends to provide a counterpoint to the prevailing narrative of growing divisions between rural and urban populations. These occur along economic, social, cultural, and political lines, often supported by simplistic and misinformed ideas about daily lives across the spectrum from remote rural to dense urban places.

The project's research process is designed to answer the following questions:

- What are examples of policy and practice that promote boundary-crossing, multi-sector solutions to the above-stated regional challenges?
 - How effective are these examples? Who are the main players and beneficiaries? What are the important contextual characteristics? What is innovative? How replicable are they? How can they be improved? What is next?
- What lessons can be taken from these examples that can be replicated elsewhere or at least inform policy and practice more generally? Specifically:
 - What are the conditions that make a regional collaboration and solution-seeking approach most effective in improving social and economic outcomes?
 - Where there is a strong regional collaboration and solution-seeking apparatus in place, what contribution has this made to improved social and economic conditions?

This literature review is the first part of a five-stage research process that framed and guided stakeholder interviews, location selection, on-site interviews and discussion groups, and subsequent analysis. It presents the theoretical underpinning, the range of applications, and any evaluated outcomes of regional approaches to solving social, economic, and environmental challenges.



Interpretation

Fourteen salient points emerged from the literature review.

1. The way 'rural' and 'urban' are defined has profound implications for policy, resource allocation, and program design. Despite obvious limitations and the availability of alternatives, most public policymakers and academic researchers use Federal definitions that make hard and fast distinctions between urban and non-urban, metropolitan and non-metropolitan – rural being a residual category.
2. Common perspectives and images of rural America tend to be based on, at best, partial reality, including that it is predominantly reliant upon agriculture. Far from being homogenous and undifferentiated, rural America is vast, complex, diverse, and evolving. The often-stated view that urban America thrives while rural America struggles is not supported by the data. In fact, economic growth and opportunity is uneven across the rural-urban continuum. There are struggling urban places and prospering rural places.
3. Most research rejects the notion of a simple rural-urban dichotomy and points to the shifting, crossing, and blurring of boundaries between rural and urban. New ways of describing the areas where urban and rural meet and mingle have emerged. They highlight the dynamic nature of rural-urban interactions fueled by contact between multiple and divergent interests.
4. Rural-urban interactions and specifically locational patterns of economic activity are products of comparative advantage, economies of aggregation, and costs of transportation and communications. Three themes emerge from the research: the economic dominance of cities is a strong and continuing centralizing force, the benefits of rural-urban interactions tend to favor urban centers, and the most visible interactions are through commuting. Rural economic development strategies favor greater integration with the urban economy for rural places within commuting distance, and local asset-based economic and entrepreneurial development for more remote places.
5. Current thinking on rural-urban interdependence emphasizes that interactions can be both positive and negative, and indeed that interdependence may be an underlying cause of many rural-urban conflicts. Thus, economic, organizational, and development decisions made without a rural lens may have a range of unintended social, economic, environmental, and identity consequences.
6. Some evidence appears to highlight the positive roles that small towns and micropolitan areas play in facilitating rural-urban connections. Such linkages benefit low-income households and long-time rural residents, and support upward economic mobility of low-income youth. Suburbs can act as bridges between rural and urban places, with exurbs representing a blend of urban and rural values, cultures, and landscapes. However, in certain places, development pressures and newcomers can lead to struggles over identity and competing visions for the future.
7. History plays a large role in shaping a place and its development, not just in its physical form, but in the deeply embedded ideas, norms, and values that local people take for granted. These influence the way in which local structures, institutions, actors, and



processes confront and respond to external economic, political, cultural, and environmental shocks. Seemingly benign policy changes can produce unexpectedly divisive reactions.

8. History also shaped the policies, practices, and investment patterns that conferred benefits on some people while imposing burdens on others. Established systems reinforce entrenched poverty and racial inequalities that generation after generation worsen health outcomes and increase community vulnerability. A lens of regional equity focuses on how life chances and health outcomes can be addressed for all people wherever they may live on the rural-urban continuum.
9. Poverty is a feature of both rural and urban places, although rural places have suffered generations of relatively higher poverty and lower income rates especially in more remote areas. These have been compounded by environmental injustice associated with location of land uses and functions not wanted in urban areas.
10. Rural areas are becoming increasingly racially diverse, and social and capacity challenges are observed where this shift is recent. There are also indications that residential sorting takes place with whites and minorities concentrating in different rural locations.
11. Complexity and dynamism of rural-urban interactions raise questions about the ability and capacity of governance structures. Of major concern is fragmentation of government that inhibits collaboration to tackle region-wide issues and creates inefficiencies, costs, externalities, and conflicts. A range of regional governance tools have been developed and employed to mitigate the effects of fragmentation, ranging from formal regional authorities to collaborative groups and councils to more informal networks.
12. Obstacles to regional collaboration include potentially high transaction costs, imbalances in preferences, resources, and power across a region, and often fundamental differences in philosophy between cities, suburbs, and outlying rural areas. An important tension exists in this regard as communities seek to adopt regional perspectives to tackle large-scale issues while also wishing to preserve association with a community or place – sometimes described as finding the balance between collective action and local autonomy.
13. “New regionalism” describes the evolution from conventional top-down, government-driven, highly structured efforts to those that encompass multi-level governance, place-based development, integrated development approaches, and rural-urban interdependence. Thus, collaboration and coordination across sectors and levels of government, a focus on identity and regional assets, the connection of social, economic, and environmental considerations, the bridging of urban and rural, and continuous learning and innovation, are important components of a regional solutions approach.
14. Over the past 20 years, several studies and initiatives have sought to document, reframe, or implement some or all these components. Rigorous evaluations looked at the conditions under which regional collaboration is most conducive to incorporating equity, and concluded that it takes time, trust, care, and strong leadership. Several reports advocate regional approaches to rural and urban challenges.



A Question of Definition

The starting point for discussion on rural-urban interactions is how the terms ‘rural’ and urban’ are defined. This is a matter of both statistics and perception. The way rural and urban areas are distinguished has profound implications for policy, resource allocation, and program design, and this responsibility falls to the U.S. Census Bureau and the Office of Management & Budget (OMB), and to a lesser extent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service.

For the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau classified as ‘urban’ all territory, population, and housing units located within urbanized areas and urban clusters. Urbanized areas consist of densely developed territory that contains 50,000 people or more, and according to the Census Bureau are delineated “to provide a better separation of urban and rural territory, population, and housing in the vicinity of large places” (U.S. Census Bureau; Ratcliffe, Burd, Holder, & Fields, 2016). Urban clusters are densely populated territories with at least 2,500 people and fewer than 50,000. ‘Rural’ consists of all territory, population, and housing located outside the urbanized areas and urban clusters.

According to the OMB (OMB, 2017; OMB, 2010) metropolitan areas comprise a collection of counties that have at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more population, together with adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties. Micropolitan areas are similarly defined but with at least one urban cluster of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population. In both cases, integration is assumed when either at least 25 percent of the workers living in the county work in the central county or counties of the metropolitan/micropolitan area, or at least 25 percent of the employment in the county is accounted for by workers who reside in the central county or counties of metropolitan/micropolitan area. Areas designated as neither metropolitan or micropolitan are termed ‘non-metropolitan’ and widely assumed to be ‘rural’. As Isserman (2005) referring to both the Census Bureau and OMB definitions, observes, “(R)ural is used in two different and often contradictory ways, always defined by what it is not – not urban, not metropolitan” (p.466).

To overcome this unnuanced rural-urban statistical split, there have been efforts to form classification schemes that present a continuum from urban to rural. The Economic Research Service’s Rural-Urban Continuum Codes (ERS, 2013) distinguish metropolitan counties by the population size of their metropolitan area, and nonmetropolitan counties by their degree of urbanization and adjacency to a metropolitan area. The result is a nine-level scheme that extends from metropolitan counties with one million population or more to nonmetropolitan counties that are completely rural or having an urban population of fewer than 2,500, not adjacent to a metropolitan area. Isserman (2005) also proposes a typology to better measure and reflect the realities of rural-urban relationships. He combines the Census Bureau and OMB systems into a six-level scheme ranging from ‘rural nonmetro’ to ‘urban metro’. Efforts continue to better capture the nuances of regional and rural America (Ulrich-Schad & Duncan, 2018; Walmart, 2019; Chinni & Pinkus, 2019) but, for most public policy and academic research, the defining of rural as non-urban and non-metropolitan remains the predominant perspective.

Perceptions and Misconceptions of Rural

The definition of rural and urban is also a question of perception. At least in part, this reflects the historical connotations and images of what is to be urban or rural that contribute to (mis)conceptions of what they are really like today (Brown & Shucksmith, 2017). A study commissioned by the Kellogg Foundation (2002) based on interviews of rural, suburban, and rural Americans, finds that:



“...respondents hold strongly positive views about rural life in America, seeing it as the repository of traditional values, closely-knit communities and hard work. At the same time, these perceptions are tempered by the economic and social challenges facing these regions and the poor prognosis for their economic future. This means that perceptions of rural America are centered on a series of dichotomies - rural life represents traditional American values, but is behind the times; rural life is more relaxed and slower than city life, but harder and more grueling; rural life is friendly, but intolerant of outsiders and difference; and rural life is richer in community life, but epitomized by individuals struggling independently to make ends meet. Rural America offers a particular quality of life including serenity and aesthetic surroundings, and yet it is plagued by lack of opportunities, including access to cultural activities.” (Kellogg Foundation, 2002, p. 1.)

A decade later, Lichter & Brown (2011) identify ten common conceptions of rural and small-town America to analyze how spatial and social boundaries between rural and urban areas are changing. Rural America as a cultural deposit box, backwater, engine of urbanization, place of consumption, ghetto, new immigrant destination, food basket, and dumping ground are among these conceptions. In each example, there is (or was once) more than a grain of truth, but as Lichter & Brown (2011) note, the reality on the ground is that complex interactions between rural and urban interests blur spatial boundaries and challenge simple, binary definitions. This is reinforced by a recent report from the Pew Research Center (Parker et al, 2018) that shows that despite the widening gaps in demographics and politics, people in urban, suburban, and rural places have many experiences and aspirations in common.

One misconception has been particularly hard to overcome – the notion that rural is homogenous and undifferentiated. Part of this reflects the statistical definitions referred to earlier, and part is the belief that rural America is still predominantly reliant upon agriculture. Clearly for many parts of the United States farming remains the main economic engine, but for most of the country, this is no longer the case, and has been replaced by manufacturing and service activities more commonly associated with urban centers (Lichter & Brown, 2011). Castle, Wu, & Weber (2011) point out that rural America is a vast and highly diverse landscape and population, with varied local conditions and relatively high degrees of autonomy to pursue their own comparative advantages. They too note that the economic importance of agriculture varies greatly among rural places, although rural-urban challenges in general are all too often framed in agricultural terms.

That said, current trends of widespread rural depopulation and divergent patterns of development across the United States have their roots in the 1950s as many rural counties reached their peak populations when agricultural employment was still robust and before mechanization and consolidation radically transformed rural landscapes. Johnson & Lichter (2019) note that a combination of net out-migration and natural decrease have exacerbated the diminishing rate of population growth in the past decades and contributed to the downward spiral of population loss in some areas.

One classification of rural landscapes (Hiner, 2014) suggests that four main types. *Productive* landscapes, such as those associated with agriculture, forestry and mining, have a focus on modernization and increasing efficiencies and outputs, with profound impacts on employment, land use, and the environment. *Traditional* landscapes are where there is an emphasis on preserving cultural and historical heritage and scenery, while *post-productive* landscapes are where the value of ecosystems services is recognized and protected. The fourth is *consumptive* landscapes which include leisure and recreation, tourism, food and crafts, primary targeted at urban populations. These are commonly in tension and are central to rural-urban interactions, emphasizing how rural land use has significant implications for natural resource and environmental policy (and vice versa) (Castle, Wu, & Weber, 2011).



The Rejection of the Rural-Urban Dichotomy

In much of the recent literature, there is acknowledgment, notwithstanding statistical definitions and common perceptions, that the rural-urban dichotomy has no practical meaning. Garrett (2005) suggests that policies built on presumptions of separateness or on traditional ideas of urban and rural livelihoods limit the possibilities for economic growth and poverty reduction. Moreover, Garrett (2005) argues, if there was a better understanding of the current reality of urban and rural areas and the connections between them, policies would better reflect the ways people live.

Social processes are shifting, crossing, and blurring rural-urban boundaries (Lichter & Ziliak, 2017). Nonmetropolitan areas are regularly reclassified as metropolitan areas to reflect growing populations and expanding metropolitan influence, thus *shifting* boundaries outwards from the urban centers. People, ideas, and money *cross* back and forth between urban and rural areas, as improved transportation and communications accelerate commuting. It becomes harder to discern bright lines between rural and urban, spatially, socially, and economically. Boundary *blurring* means that people and communities often experience both worlds – rural and urban – on a daily or regular basis (Lichter & Ziliak, 2017).

In a series of six CityLab posts, Florida (2018) analyzes data on population growth, jobs, economic mobility, wages, educational attainment, and knowledge-based creative class across the rural-urban continuum. A consistent theme for all these metrics is that winners and losers can be found among all types of places. The narrative of urban revitalization and rural decline does not reflect the full complexity of economic life in America, where economic growth and opportunity is not only uneven and unequal between rural and urban places but uneven within them. “Some cities and large metros are growing like gangbusters, while others are declining; some suburban areas are booming, while others are beset by economic dislocation and poverty. So, it is with rural places.” (September 18, 2018).

The rejection of the simple rural-urban dichotomy has led to different ways of describing the spatial relationship between rural and urban. ‘Rural-urban interface’, ‘peri-urban interface’, ‘urban-rural space’, and ‘translocal’ appear in the literature as attempts to capture the complexity and fluidity of the relationship. The *rural-urban interface* is a zone of interdependence (Lichter & Brown, 2011), an area of intense social and economic interaction that links rural and urban people and communities (Brown & Shucksmith, 2017), and a set of relationships that are continually changing as boundaries shift and blur and as people, capital, ideas move back and forth (Lichter & Ziliak, 2017).

In a developing world context, researchers use the term *peri-urban interface* to describe areas with mixed urban and rural features, where flows of people and materials, commodities, resources, and waste are more important than place, and often characterized by the loss of rural features, such as soil fertility and natural landscape, and by the loss of urban attributes, such as density, accessibility, services, and infrastructure (Allen, 2010; McGregor, Simon, & Thompson, 2005).

Urban-rural space refers to areas that are characterized by rural landscapes but with important urban ties and functions. They are integrated into urban and suburban systems but are not just bland outer commuting zones and agricultural hinterlands. Instead, they are diverse regions of amenity-rich exurban settlements with different economic, ecological, and cultural histories and with unique development assets and trajectories (Irwin, Bell, Bockstael, Newburn, Partridge, & Wu, 2009; Olson & Munroe, 2012). *Translocal* is a term used to describe the networks between places – communications, knowledge flows, ideas – that occur as close interdependence between urban and rural areas adds greater complexity to



rural areas as new functions emerge, businesses diversify, and new social groups form (Hedberg & do Carmo, 2012).

All formulations recognize the dynamic nature of rural-urban interactions. International studies show these take different shape depending on the level of economic development, industrial and demographic structure, natural geography, and political traditions, leading to the emergence of a differentiated countryside (Andersson, Eklund, Lehtola, & Salmi, 2009). In a U.S. context, rural areas along the urban edge are multi-dimensional and plural, and their current status represents the outcome of negotiations between multiple and divergent interests. These can include long-time residents versus newcomers, production-oriented rural land users versus consumption-based rural stakeholders, and community-minded change agents versus 'good ol' boy' power structures (Hiner, 2014).

Rural-Urban Interactions

A long and rich history of scholarship has accumulated on the relationship between cities and their hinterlands. It can be traced back 200 years to von Thünen's production location theory, Christaller's central place theory in the 1930's, and to subsequent developments by Lösch, Hoover, Isard and others. (see Irwin, Isserman, Kilkenny, & Partridge, 2010).

Hoover & Giarratani (1999) synthesize this thinking to three 'foundation stones' that underlie the complex location patterns of economic activity. The first of these is *comparative advantage*, which stems from the uneven distribution of climate, minerals, soils, topography and other natural features and helps to explain the location of economic activities. These natural resources are immobile and convey locational advantages to some areas over others. The second refers to the *economies of spatial concentration or agglomeration*, which describe the benefits of lowered costs and increased revenues when labor pools, infrastructure, and specialist services are concentrated in certain locations. The third foundation stone is the *cost of transport and communication*, which places limits on comparative advantage and concentration, and focuses attention on the balance of locational costs and benefits of being near to suppliers or customers.

In their assessment of the current applicability of central place theories, Mulligan, Partridge & Carruthers (2012) place stress on consumer choice, firm agglomeration, and functional hierarchy. Firms offering goods and services locate centrally to their markets to minimize transport costs while clustering together for mutual advantage. The result is a hierarchy of places where a place's importance is determined by the number and type of other places which are dependent upon it and the number and types of functions it performs and services it provides. The market area for each place is the distance people are willing to travel for these functions and services; the more specialized the function the further people must travel.

Substantial literature on rural-urban interaction exists where researchers employ econometric models to estimate the economic dimensions of commuting, trade, and other linkages between urban areas and their rural hinterlands (sometimes termed core and periphery). One focus of these studies is to gauge whether population growth (and jobs and income) associated with urban concentration of economic activities yields net benefits for the surrounding rural areas (spread or spillover effects) or drain people and capital out of rural regions into the urban centers (backwash effects). Three themes are evident. Firstly, the twin processes of urbanization and urbanism are central to most discussions. *Urbanization* refers to the shifts of population out from urban areas into the rural fringe, and *urbanism* to the rural adoption of urban values and attitudes (Hiner, 2014). Powerful external economic, social, political, and technological forces impact all places, urban and rural but which manifest themselves differently along



the rural-urban continuum (Castle, Wu, & Webber, 2011; Dabson, 2018). The economic dominance of cities is a strong and continuing centralizing force, but significant counterforces can be seen as households and firms move out to less congested and less expensive areas on the urban fringe. Falling transportation and communication costs, technological change and economic restructuring, rising incomes and changing tastes for natural amenities all drive this process of decentralization (or deconcentration) (Castel, Wu, & Weber, 2011; Irwin, Bell, Bockstael, Newburn, Partridge, & Wu, 2009).

Secondly, the benefits of urban-rural interactions generally favor urban centers. Urban cores attract income and investment flows that tend to stay within these cores and less likely to be distributed to the rural periphery. Income generated in or attracted to rural areas tends not to stick there but pass to the urban cores or to external owners (Dabson, Johnson, Miller, & Robinson, 2009; Balamou & Psaltopoulos, 2006). Over time, trade linkages between urban cores and their rural peripheries are found to diminish as both export a larger share of their goods and services outside the region than with each other (Lewin, Weber, & Holland, 2013) with likely disproportionate negative impacts on the rural economies. Growth in urban employment has the effect of promoting rural population growth, but with rural communities competing for a share of that growth on the strength of their local communities. However, growth of rural employment has little impact on urban population growth (Feng & Patton, 2017).

Thirdly, the most visible urban-rural interactions are commuting flows. The literature tends to stress the positive benefits for certain rural communities of rural-to-urban commuting as rural workers gain access to urban employment opportunities while retaining their homes in a rural location (Partridge, Ali, & Olfert, 2010). Such flows are strengthening both in numbers and in proportion to their respective labor forces (Lewin, Weber, & Holland, 2013) with the scale being a function of the size of the urban center and the distance of the rural community from that center (Ali, Olfert, & Partridge, 2011). The spread effects are estimated to be in the range of 75 miles (Partridge, Ali, & Olfert, 2010) to 125 miles (Wu, Weber, & Partridge, 2017) for those rural communities that can offer high quality of life and services for commuting residents. The larger the urban center, the greatest its impact on outlying rural economies (Partridge, Ali, & Olfert, 2010), but at least one study suggests the greatest benefits for rural communities come from interactions with medium-sized cities rather than the larger ones (Berdegue & Soloaga, 2018). The literature is silent as to whether such long-distance commuting is harmful to personal, family, and community life.

Partridge, Ali, & Olfert (2010) discuss economic development strategies that are most appropriate to the spatial relationship between a given urban center and the surrounding rural region. Rural areas within 75 miles of an urban center may be best served by strategies that seek integration with the urban economy, whereas for more remote rural areas, where commuting is minimal, strategies to stimulate local employment opportunities, often based on assets associated with natural resources and amenities, are likely to be more effective. The central point is that rural development strategies must be based on a realistic assessment of opportunities and constraints, which will determine whether improving integration with the urban economy through infrastructure improvements and supply chain management, or place-based development through enhancing amenities and entrepreneurship (or some combination) are the right priorities (Olfert & Partridge, 2010). Partridge, Rickman, Olfert, & Tan (2013) warn that place-targeted interventions that inhibit spatial mobility may trap people and firms in uneconomic regions or industries, sometimes at great expense, both directly through taxes and through sacrificing economic growth.

Entrepreneurs can be change agents when rooted in the rural context while possessing strong urban linkages (Mayer, Habersetzer, & Meili, 2016). These rural-urban connections help entrepreneurs



understand core market demands and trends through incremental expansion into national and international markets, through work experience at export-oriented firms, and through having lived in cities. They use this understanding to add value to rural assets, identify urban needs for rural values, and create authentic branding for rural products (Mayer, Habersetzer, & Meili, 2016). Some evidence suggests that rural areas with higher levels of well-educated in-migrants see entrepreneurial growth through connection to non-local markets, especially where already a culture of entrepreneurship exists (Kalantaridis, 2010). One study indicates that self-employment in rural counties is fostered by growth in nearby small metropolitan areas but is hampered by growth in the nearby larger metropolitan areas (Tsvetkova, Partridge, & Betz, 2017) reinforcing the necessity for understanding economic relationships along the rural-urban continuum or urban hierarchy.

Discussions about rural-urban interactions often raise the importance of geography, particularly in the west. Vast expanses of public-owned lands and the significant distances between towns and cities have suggested the need for a different way of classifying counties that recognizes the value of accessibility to airports. One proposal (Rasker, Gude, Gude, & van den Noort, 2009) is a three-level classification: *metropolitan counties* and their commuter sheds, *connected counties*, non-metro areas with population centers within a one-hour drive of the nearest major airport with daily passenger service, and *isolated counties* with no such air service and which are truly remote. The connected county denotes the importance for entrepreneurs attracted to high amenity areas to be able to travel readily to visit with colleagues, clients, and suppliers.

Rural-urban interdependence is a term that implies more than connection or interaction. Dabson (2007) identifies the unique assets and contributions that rural America makes to metropolitan America, which in turn provides the markets, resources, jobs, and services necessary for rural sustainability and competitiveness. In this formulation, recognition of rural-urban interdependence, of rural and urban needing each other, is deemed essential for national prosperity. A somewhat less normative view of interdependence is presented in Reimer, Barrett, & Vodden, & Bisson (2019). Here rural-urban interdependence is defined as “changes in one place that affect the other,” where the changes can be either positive or negative, and indeed where interdependence can be an underlying cause of many rural-urban conflicts.

The authors describe four “spheres” of interdependence. *Trade and exchange* refer to economic interdependence, the most commonly recognized, with exchanges of goods, services, labor, and finances. This includes commuting, supply chains, and issues of *where* value is added to raw materials and *who* benefits. *Institutional interdependence* is where seemingly geographically neutral policies may differentially impact urban and rural places, usually to the detriment of rural residents. *Environmental interdependence* focuses on the impact of urban growth and development on air and water quality, productive farmland, and quality of life. The fourth sphere is *identity* where attachment to place through language, dialect, traditions, architecture, music, and values, can be upended by insensitive interactions, developments and investments.

Importance of Place

As cities expand outwards converting farmland and open countryside into suburban residential and commercial development, rural communities and people living in the changing locations are brought into close and continuous contact with the urban economy and society. Lichter & Brown (2011) suggest that conceptually suburbs represent a rapidly growing ‘associational bridge’ between urban centers and the surrounding rural areas. Suburban residents operate daily on either side of the rural-urban divide



and as such blur conventional spatial and social boundaries. For a comprehensive discussion of suburban definitions and their implications, see Airgood-Obrycki & Rieger (2019).

Arguments have been made that small towns or micropolitan areas play a unique role in facilitating urban-rural connections. Small towns can enable beneficial economic development while conserving the environmental assets of the open countryside. They have concentrations of community and institutional capacity, acting as ‘sub-poles’ for focusing rural development investments to take advantage of agglomeration economies and allow benefits to spread to rural areas (DETR, 2000). However, one econometric study finds that small towns do not in fact act as poles, because flows of goods and services do not generate spillover effects into the hinterland (Courtney et al, 2007).

Nevertheless, research shows that small towns do make significant contributions to certain types of connection in certain places. They supply labor particularly for farming and service industries and remain important for shopping, but the greatest impact is for lower-income households and long-time residents (van Leeuwen, 2010). They do provide an employment function although the associated income levels are lower than for in-commuters and for those commuting out to larger centers (Courtney et al, 2007). One study finds that the presence of small- and medium-sized cities within some rural-urban territories enhances economic growth and reduces income inequality compared to deep-rural and metropolitan territories (Berdegue, Carriazo, Jara, Modrego, & Soloaga, 2014).

Some micropolitan counties can serve as small urban cores in rural regions enabling upward mobility in ways that take advantage of their density and scale. Others are relatively low-density transition zones between remote rural counties and metropolitan centers, supporting upward mobility of low-income youth in ways that both exploit the opportunities and reveal weaknesses associated with small size, lack of density, and limited technological capacity in rural communities (Weber, Fannin, Cordes, & Johnson 2017).

Arnosti & Liu (2018) make the case that one of the best ways to help rural America is to support a distributed network of economically vibrant small and mid-sized cities across the United States. They argue that cities matter to rural revitalization because prosperity in cities and metropolitan areas subsidizes public investments in rural areas; access to cities – and their markets, specialized industries, and capital – increases rural prosperity; and cities provide opportunities for ambitious rural residents to gain new skills and experiences, benefitting workers and their home communities. The argument continues that state and federal policymakers could target effort to small, and mid-sized markets by helping them strengthen commercial corridors and modernize existing industries “rather than sprinkle limited resources across every rural county” (p.6). “[M]id-size cities, if they can continue to serve as places of growth and opportunity, are better positioned to offer social and economic benefits to rural communities than distant, high-cost cities.” (p.6).

A recent phenomenon is the springing-up of new housing developments beyond the urban fringes but still accessible to big cities. These exurban¹ communities, often relatively prosperous, transcend traditional geographical classifications that distinguish rural from urban. Woods (2009) calls them “hybrid spaces, in which rural and urban values, cultures, and landscapes have become fused” (p.853). They have emerged as a result of city people choosing a rural landscape as a setting for their home, not necessarily as an escape from urban living nor an embrace of the rural idyll, and not simply a geographic

¹ The term ‘exurban’ is attributed to Auguste Comte Sectorsky in his 1955 book, *The Exurbanites*.



zone, but a different way of life with an array of social, economic, and environmental interconnections (Hiner, 2014). Exurbia brings with it many challenges such as loss of productive farmland, greater proximity of humans and animals and the associated health risks, wildfires, habitat fragmentation, and conflicts over land use changes and visions of productive or consumptive landscapes (Hiner, 2014; Lichter & Brown, 2011).

In areas of high amenity, pressures for new residential development and subdivisions have exposed overlapping and competing interests of landowners, economic developers, farming and forestry practices, new residents, and different levels of government (Abrams, 2016). These may lead to conflicts between landowners who want to develop their land and those who want to preserve, between farmers and producers and other non-agricultural users, between external and local ownership and interests, between local government and state and federal agencies, and between Tribes and governments and landowners over issues of sovereignty. Such conflicts represent struggles over identity and competing visions for the future and require new models of land management as a 'landscape of reconciliation' (Abrams & Bliss, 2013).

It is often forgotten, or conveniently ignored, that history places a huge part in shaping a place and its development, not just in its physical form, but in the deeply embedded ideas, norms, and values that local people take for granted in their daily lives (Berdegué, Escobal, & Bebbington, 2015). All places are subject to the same external economic, political, cultural, and environmental forces that may restrict their options. However, each place, with its structures, institutions, and actors, processes the ideas, shocks, and incentives that come from elsewhere in its own way. Therefore, the same law, policy, or economic shock, can have very different effects in different places, and seemingly benign changes can produce unexpectedly divisive responses.

Regional Equity

Regional equity has been defined as a framework for social change that is nestled within, and inseparable from the quest for economic and social justice in America. Regional equity brings a unique perspective about how development patterns structure the life chances and social and economic opportunities of residents, and the ways in which uneven spatial development reinforces old racial and class divides, while creating new ones. (Rubin, 2011). The goal, Rubin (2011) argues, is to ensure that everyone, regardless of where they live has access to the essential ingredients for economic and social success. Regional equity offers an analysis of the root causes and dynamics that create and perpetuate inequity as well as a toolkit of strategies, principles and methods for advancing equity and opportunity in regions.

Chapple (2015) suggests that regional governance strategies which seek to change the spatial distribution of population through land use planning and growth control or to reduce service disparities through government consolidation, special purpose districts, state equalization aid, or tax base sharing, have the potential to be effective ways of addressing disparities even though they remain little discussed in the United States.

Pastor, Benner, & Matsuoka (2011) regard regional equity as being fundamentally about scale: if problems are created at a regional scale, then policies should focus at the regional level and the power analysis and power-building that can change things should also be pursued at the regional level. They suggest an analytical frame that has three components. *Community development regionalism* refers to approaches that provide an 'outside game' to make traditional local efforts to provide jobs, affordable housing, and family supports more effective by tackling taxation, planning, investment, and other



policies and rules that undermine these efforts. *Policy reform regionalism* describes the activities of policy entrepreneurs who work outside formal government structures and levels to identify and define problems, build networks, and offer research, strategies, and frames for understanding and solving these problems. *Social movement regionalism* is about building power at the regional level to mobilize politically to address social issues, and specifically to scale-up neighborhood and community-based efforts to effect change.

Evaluations of the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development have yielded some important findings. The program was created to support locally led collaborative efforts that bring together diverse interests from the many municipalities in a region to determine how best to target housing, economic and workforce development, and infrastructure investments to create more jobs and regional economic activity. One evaluation focuses on the conditions under which regional collaboration is most conducive to incorporating equity (Frick, Chapple, Mattiuzzi, & Zuk, 2015). The first finding is that regional collaboration is stronger when partners have a reason to stay at the table and negotiate, particularly when dollars are at stake or key decisions are being made. However, even with optimal levels of collaboration, process, form, and function it may breed unintended consequences that deepen existing divisions or create new silos.

Second, equity and inclusion can strongly feature in regional collaboration if there is strong leadership and nonprofit organizational capacity. Otherwise, they may appear only indirectly, for example as part of a requirement for fair housing assessment or may be disconnected from core programming. A third finding is that it is advisable to build-in adequate time before and during collaborative processes to take stock of, and even revisit, historic tensions and institutional structures. To superimpose a planning effort without directly confronting these issues could lead to a resurfacing of past challenges in expected and unanticipated ways throughout the process, particularly in highly fragmented regions. In doing so, full consideration of the key actors and resources needed for implementing tangible products also is critical. A final finding is that partners should confront and set aside “optimism bias” in gauging potential transaction costs of implementing planning efforts, recognizing that participants are typically resource challenged, with limited bandwidth to attend meetings (Frick, Chapple, Mattiuzzi, & Zuk, 2015).

In another evaluation study, Arias, Draper-Zivetz, & Martin (2017) observe that as a result of their previous experiences, communities and advocates tend to be skeptical and lack trust in the authenticity of regional players. They also question the way in which equity considerations are incorporated into the overall process, and how the notion of equity is interpreted. The researchers noted that stakeholder engagement efforts with both communities and businesses can magnify existing regional dynamics (good or bad) rather than change them. The participation of local jurisdictions was uneven, exposing different priorities between local and regional actors, and cities and suburbs, with local elected officials often unwilling to act in the interest of the broader region.

A new initiative focused on metropolitan regional equity may offer both framing and practical insights for regional equity across the rural-urban continuum. The Strong, Prosperous, and Resilient Communities Challenge (SPARCC) (Choi, 2019) is an effort in six metropolitan regions to promote collaborative leadership to advance changes in policy, practice, and investment that promote equitable regional development. It is founded on the recognition that regions are shaped by their historical context that produced policies, practices, and investment patterns that conferred benefit to some at the burden of others. The resulting systems serve to reinforce entrenched poverty and racial inequities that worsen health outcomes and climate vulnerability with each successive generation. SPARCC sets out



ensure that both the benefits and burdens of future development are responsibly shared across all groups to promote more equitable regions.

The implications of rural-urban interaction on poverty and race highlight both historical inequities and the rapid changes underway. Poverty is to be found in all places, rural and urban, to varying degrees, but rural areas have suffered stubborn disparities in income and poverty rates for decades, with the gaps increasing with remoteness from urban areas (Castle, Wu, & Weber, 2011). Urbanization can have differential impacts on low-income rural households, as poorer rural areas are treated as ‘dumping grounds’ for urban functions such as prisons, toxic waste sites, and polluting industries, and for malodorous industrial food production and processing plants (Allen, 2010). The questions of environmental justice raised by these developments are compounded by issues of vulnerability to flooding, loss of soil productivity, public health, and contamination of drinking water (Allen, 2010) in peri-urban areas.

The likelihood that where someone lives helps determine their safety, susceptibility to chronic health conditions, and life expectancy, underscores the critical importance of place in seeking better health outcomes. The drive to create healthy communities provides opportunities to think and act at a regional level (Rubin, 2015). Rubin (2015) argues that healthy communities are a product of regional patterns of growth, change, and investment, and that when regional strategies are motivated by principles of sustainability, a natural connection to health outcomes can be seen as communities strive to be more livable, walkable, environmental sustainable, and thus healthier.

One continuing part of the rural-urban divide narrative is that urban areas are heterogenous in terms of race and ethnicity, whereas rural areas are homogenous. The assumption here is that rural America is predominantly white, conveniently ignoring historical concentrations of African Americans and Native Americans. However, a recent study of diversity along the rural-urban continuity (Lee & Sharp, 2017) finds that diversity now spreads across rural and suburban spaces in all types of context, further blurring rural-urban boundaries. The challenge, however, is the recent nature of this phenomenon along with the limited capacity of rural communities to deal with the educational, healthcare, and housing needs of a diverse population. A recent study suggests that whites and minorities are sorting themselves into different types of rural places, with growth in black and other minority populations occurring disproportionately in the most racially diverse places (Lichter, Parisi, & Taquino, 2018). The potential benefits of demographic, economic, and cultural revitalization will not be realized (Lee & Sharp, 2017) if intergroup avoidance and conflict outweigh integration. Lichter & Brown (2011) note that the blurring of rural-urban spatial boundaries is being accompanied by a hardening of other boundaries, especially class and race, and that as rural and urban America are more interdependent, future discussions about social change in rural (or urban) will be more difficult without acknowledging the other.

Fragmentation and Regional Governance

The complexity and dynamism of rural-urban interactions raise questions about the ability and capacity of existing governance structures. According to Partridge & Olfert (2011), a lack of awareness of the realities of these interactions and interdependencies means that there has been little in the way of institutional and governance response to regional change. These result in local governments competing with their neighbors rather than working together in their mutual interests using “governance designed in the ‘horse and buggy’ era to compete in the 21st century” (Partridge & Olfert, 2011, p.144).

However, a review of the public management literature on regional governance reveals both that this is a subject of some longstanding contention and that numerous and diverse approaches have been



explored to tackle regional challenges. At the heart of the contention is the issue of government fragmentation. It should be noted that much of the discussion focuses on regionalism and integration in a metropolitan context. Savitch & Adhikari (2017) provide an overview of the two main schools of thought. *Monocentrists* (for example, Miller 2002; Orfield 1997; Pierce 1993; Rusk 1993) see fragmentation feeding inequities and favor putting power in the hands of central decision-makers. They see metropolitan governments as standardizing policies, raising revenues, and planning across a whole area. This helps to reduce or absorb negative spillovers of uneven development and more equitably distribute positive spillovers of wealth generation.

Polycentrists take their cue from Tiebout (1956) who argues that people make location decisions based on their preferences for a pattern of local government revenue and expenditure and therefore value maximum choice. He sees competition between governments as resulting in allocative efficiencies – the extent to which governments supply the level and quality of services expected by citizens. Ostrom (1990) and others argue that decentralized, autonomous jurisdictions, rather than being chaotic, have a heterogeneous and voluntary coherence of their own, able to forge cooperative agreements and ad hoc arrangements across metropolitan regions. Moreover, they believe that fragmentation of policymaking and service delivery across multiple governments and authorities reduces concentration of powers and promotes innovation and competition (Feiock, 2009).

Between these two broad views is to be found a substantial literature on what Savitch & Adhikari (2017) call ‘back-door regionalism’ which accepts that fragmentation cannot be reversed but can be circumvented by people and organizations working at multiple levels and across multiple issues.

Feiock (2009) notes that fragmentation creates inefficiencies, costs, externalities, and conflicts, particularly in metropolitan areas where authority is fragmented horizontally among competing local governments and vertically among overlapping federal, state, and local agencies. He presents a typology of tools for regional governance that are being used to meet these challenges. These include multi-lateral mechanisms where decisions are made collectively and networked bi-lateral exchanges and a high level of individual choice is exercised over whether and how to participate. They also range from mechanisms that are imposed by higher-level governments and/or resourced externally, to those where local units delegate some level of authority by voluntarily entering into organizations or mutually binding contractual agreements, to those based on informal relationships that depend on trust and familiarity.

Feiock (2009) describes six such tools, the most formal being *regional authorities* and *managed networks* where a higher-level government provides funding and mandates the formation of collaborations among local governments or designates a lead agency to coordinate intergovernmental service provision. At the other end of the spectrum are *collaborative groups and councils* formed to help information exchange, program coordination, and joint action based on shared understandings and expectations, and *policy networks* that provide opportunities for regular face-to-face interactions between leaders and peers.

In the middle ground are regional organizations and contract networks (Feiock, 2009). *Regional organizations* are those designed to collectively and voluntarily manage regional problems across jurisdictions. They include regional councils of government (focusing on comprehensive planning, community and economic development, land use, and services for the elderly), metropolitan planning organizations (primarily focused on transportation), and regional partnership organizations (most commonly public-private economic development efforts). *Contract networks* refer to joint ventures,



interlocal agreements, and service contracts between governments for service delivery and resource sharing across a wide range of functions.

The interlocal agreement is one of the oldest and most common collaborative instruments (Chen & Thurmaier, 2009). These can take the form of an informal “handshake” agreement or an elaborate contract structured according to statutory requirements and filed with a state agency and county recorder. They exist in myriad forms across the United States between cities, counties, a city and a county, between cities and school districts, between school districts, and in many other combinations.

Bel & Warner (2015) offer a typology of cooperative agreements based on the degree of institutionalization, the tasks performed, the quantity of functions performed, and the type of governance. Thus, agreements range from the informal to the formal, with the latter including both standing bureaucratic organizations and contractual agreements. Some are operational in nature, engaged in service delivery, while others are mainly coordinative. Some are single purpose and others are multi-purpose. Governance may be through a single entity or be multi-governmental, with boards comprising elected representatives or appointed managers (Bel & Warner, 2015).

Aldag & Warner (2018) find that different motivations for such agreements. Those of a longer duration tend to be driven by cooperation and reciprocity, with the aim of improving service quality and coordination using formalized agreements and low transaction costs. However, those of shorter duration while intended to achieve cost savings often have high transaction costs.

Obstacles to Regional Collaboration

Whatever the form governance and collaboration might take, Feiock (2009) argues that the challenge for those that are not externally imposed or resourced is to overcome the transaction cost barriers for participants. The higher these are, the less likely it is that regional collaboration will be embraced. Feiock (2009) identifies four sources of transaction costs. These are rules imposed by states that determine the specific authority and the strategies available to local governments to participate in collective agreements; the extent to which outcomes are easy or difficult to measure; the spatial and demographic characteristics of the participating areas – the more homogeneous the easier the collaborative potential; and whether legislators see collaboration as a positive or negative in delivering benefits to their constituents.

Another obstacle is the residential sorting and segregation across metropolitan areas that result in asymmetries in service preferences, resources, and political power that create cumulative disadvantage to some areas (Lowery, 2000; Dowding, John, and Biggs 1994; Howell-Moroney 2008).

Fowler (2018) notes that local governments will seek networks, collaboration, or partnerships when they cannot solve problems on their own and when they see the possibility of available resources. When need and opportunity meet, local governments will join networks and expand public service delivery efforts to create better outcomes through joint action. However, the result will likely be uneven across a region as need and opportunity for each government will be a function of its goals, operations, and constraints. Depending upon the goods and services to be shared or delivered, dilemmas arise over a local government actor’s choice of actions (i.e., whether to enter into agreement or not) and its partner choice (i.e., with whom to establish contractual ties) (Andrew, 2009). Decisions about entering into a contract are predicated on the success of previous interactions, the behavior of current partners, and expectations for the future. Andrew (2009) raises the importance of preferential attachment, especially where activities are complex, and outcomes are not easily determined in advance. Specifically, this



means a preference to collaborate with those who are similar in characteristics. Other studies have found that the common ground on which governments can forge and sustain agreements, minimize conflict, and lower costs of collaboration, is substantially reduced where regions have populations of jurisdictions that are homogeneous internally but heterogeneous relative to each other (Hendrick & Shi, 2014).

This challenge of heterogeneity is highlighted by Herrschel (2009) and Jones (2000) who argue that the stark social and ethnic contrast between ‘core city’ and ‘suburb’ is an important determinant of, often hostile, attitudes to region-building. Core cities are characterized by strong party-political contacts and linkages and more redistributive policies, whereas the suburbs seek to keep ‘their’ tax dollars to themselves, and have a more technocratic, public choice-oriented “business-friendly” approach. Herrschel (2009) also points to a dislike in some parts of the United States to concentration of governmental power at other than the local level. He associates this with an inherent individualism and distrust of governmental interference with private lives, going back to the pioneering days and a strong sense of self-reliance. This translates to regionalism as “usurping” more political-administrative power by a bigger governmental machinery and reducing local self-determination in policy choices.

Emerging Forms of Regionalism

Regionalism is an umbrella term for a range of perspectives and processes, which can be described in three broad categories (Hurrell, 2007). *Regionalization* refers to processes of social and economic integration that occur without formal direction or intervention. Examples are the U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada, where flows of people, goods, and capital back and forth drive the regional economies in the border states. *Regional awareness and identity* relate to the strong sense of cultural and historical attachment to place and to group, such as can be found in ‘The South’ and the Pacific Northwest. The third category, *regional cooperation*, describes the variety of formal and informal arrangements where governments and communities come together to address common issues and challenges. These include regional development organizations, public-private partnerships, and federal-state-local initiatives.

Hurrell (2007) suggests that regionalism is a complex and dynamic process based on several interacting and often competing factors. Globalization and technology are driving economies at every level, penetrating all geographies and cultures, both diminishing the importance of place, while opening opportunities for the exchange of ideas and norms. Similarly, regionalism can be both a way of mediating or moderating political interests across place and space, and a means for projecting power. Another important factor is the ongoing struggle between the need to adopt regional perspectives to tackle large-scale issues and the desire to associate with a community or place. Often, this may reflect the crises of identity in the face of demographic, economic, social, and environmental change.

Over the past forty years, there has been much written about “new regionalism”, a somewhat fluid concept to describe an evolution of thinking beyond regional development as top-down, government-driven, highly structured approaches focused on defining boundaries and jurisdictions. The impetus for new regionalism has been as a recognition of the economic self-interest of governments to overcome their divisions, in spite of the political constraints that have held them back in the past (Friskin & Norris, 2001), and as a response to urban sprawl, traffic congestion, characterless development, and geographic inequities (Wheeler, 2002).

New regionalism embodies five connected themes according to Daniels, Douglas, Vodden, & Markey (2019): multi-level collaborative governance, place-based development, integrated development



approaches, rural-urban interdependence, and innovation and knowledge flows. While each of these themes are still debated in academic circles, with skeptics critical of a lack of definitional and methodological clarity, they do represent a useful framework for analysis. *Multi-level governance* refers to “a process of coordination and coordination, and steering of interests involved in decision-making, including community, voluntary, and commercial interests within an area, across economic, social, and environmental sectors” (Daniels et al, 2019, p. 33). Governance does not imply an absence of government but a better structuring of relationships within and outside government.

Place-based development recognizes ideas such as regional identity, the identification and use of local assets (whether social, economic, physical, cultural, financial, or natural), and integrating these into competitive advantage and local control. *Integrated development approaches* emphasize the value of multi-sectoral approaches across social, economic, and environmental issues, and to the balancing of such questions of regional economic development and social equity. The theme of *rural-urban interdependence* will be returned to later in this review. Finally, *innovation and knowledge flows* refer to processes of learning and adaptation that influence systems, structures, and policies.

According to Herrschel (2009), growing evidence shows that new forms of regional thinking are emerging not as a new phase of territorial governance but as extensions to existing structures and strategies. He refers to “virtual regionalization” that provides a new strategic, policy-focused dimension to existing administratively and technocratically centered arrangements such as interlocal agreements. Planning for infrastructure and environmental projects, for instance, must go beyond technical considerations and incorporate political and strategic leadership and visioning that transcend established institutional and jurisdictional boundaries.

Herrschel (2009) continues by noting that these new approaches seem to highlight the differences between “winners” and “losers”, with city-regions in economic core areas generating new flexible institutions, and more rural, peripheral localities being represented through more rigid technocratic-administrative regionalism. While bottom-up regional efforts seem to promise more relevant forms of region building, he sees a “danger of inter-local competition, driven by localist ambitions, setting the agenda, rather than attempts at finding outwardly-directed responses to the shared challenges of global economic competition” ...[Stronger] localities are reluctant to engage with apparently inferior partners within a region, as there seems no obvious advantage. Instead, they seek to emphasize their relative strength in relation to regional weaknesses, in the belief to be able to boost their own apparent competitiveness” [p.283].

Nevertheless, Herrschel (2009) concludes that the solution to policy challenges at the regional level does reside at the local level. The task is to establish a system that rewards collaborative and innovative policymaking, while both embracing local interests and structures and promoting institutional inter-actor collaboration across governmental, private sector, and civic sectors. This formulation appears regularly in recent literature. Brown & Shucksmith (2017) see a requirement for new hybrid structures that combine place-based interests and engagement with the need to establish relationships and networks across the rural-urban continuum. These must link businesses, communities, and institutions at a variety of scales to fulfill the purposes of deliberative governance, territorial ‘place-shaping’, institutional capacity-building, and sharing of responsibilities.

Caffyn & Dahlstrom (2005) suggest that existing separate rural and urban policies must be supplemented by alternative approaches to addressing the movement of goods and people across space, promoting social inclusion, and recognizing commonalities across the rural-urban continuum.



Andersen & Pierre (2010) discuss the concept of ‘strategic regions’ that emerge bottom-up to solve collective action problems and to exploit economies of scale in service delivery. These, they argue, are complementary to the institutional arrangements for local and regional governance more than alternative solutions and represent a flexible system applying a wide range of tools of governance, while being adaptable to fluctuations in the range and depth of collaboration. Savitch & Adhikari (2017) talk about “fragmented regionalism” which marries the desire for local autonomy with the necessity for collective action. Fragmented regionalism is a condition of piecemeal, partial, and selective processes that induce a metropolitan-wide action while guaranteeing local prerogatives.

Over the past 20 years there have been several non-academic studies and reports that have sought to draw lessons, policy prescriptions, and practice recommendations from rural and regional efforts across the United States (for example, Kubisch, Topolsky, Gray, Pennekamp, & Gutierrez, 2009; Dabson & Meyers, 2015; McFarland, 2018; Community Strategies Group, 2019).

The recognition that a growing number of urban challenges – environmental, social, and economic – call for action at a regional scale, led the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy to convene a forum of practitioners, advocates, and academics to share insights on several regional experiments underway across the United States. The report of the forum (Porter & Wallis, 2002) summarized 18 regional initiatives and presented a set of common issues that such efforts must address. The focus was on what was termed “ad hoc regionalism,” intending to convey a spirit of improvisation and invention in addressing pressing issues where existing structures and approaches were shown to be ill-equipped and unresponsive.

Porter & Wallis (2002) drew out four important insights. First, regional identity (and boundaries) can be rooted in *place*, particularly where strong geographical or cultural characteristics distinguish it from surrounding areas, or rooted in *function* such as commuter, air, and water sheds; or some combination. Second, the driving forces for regionalism can be a response to an immediate crisis, a perceived threat to existing quality of life, or a way of capturing a competitive opportunity. Third, effective regionalism requires leadership, institutional, fiscal, technical, and civic capacities. Finally, regional efforts typically progress through three main stages – growing awareness, initiating action, and sustaining efforts.

More recently, Liu & Arnosti (2018) offer three principles for modern regionalism. They stress the importance of unifying leaders around economic growth and inclusion, building on past successes in land use and infrastructure, municipal revenue sharing, and governance reforms, of relying on an expanded network of actors and voters to create change, including ballot initiatives for regional assets such as parks, transit and airports, and of recognizing that regionalism is not always regional – some regional challenges are grounded in specific places.



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Methodology

This literature review is structured in three parts, the first two of which are based on a systematic search of primarily peer-reviewed academic research from the year 2000 to the present date using Articles+ and Google Scholar search engines. In a few cases materials published before 2000 have been included to provide essential context for current research.

Search terms for the first part include ‘rural urban connections’ and rural urban linkages’ and generated 99 articles, book chapters, and reports. A second stage review of abstracts resulted in the selection of 50 articles for full reading, of which 48 are referenced in this review. The review draws from several disciplines, primarily regional science, political and social science, international development, and sustainability/land use, and from several countries, mainly the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Europe, and Latin and South America.

For the second part, search terms included ‘regional collaboration’ and ‘regional governance’ and generated 37 articles, book chapters, and reports. A second stage review of abstracts resulted in 25 articles for full reading, of which 21 are referenced in this review. The review draws from disciplines of urban affairs and studies, public administration, politics, and public policy, primarily from the United States and Europe.

The first two parts were conducted in the period October-December 2018. The third part was completed in October 2019 which included additional materials recommended from stakeholder and expert interviews and newly published articles and books. This resulted in 26 additional more references for the review.



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