Rural Development (the Americas)

Rural development refers to substantive improvements in life quality for residents of nonmetropolitan areas. Often rural development is understood as synonymous with economic growth when, in fact, it refers to equitable growth in addition to meaningful improvements in public and emotional health, social networks, empowerment, and the environment. A variety of theoretical approaches have been developed since the 1960s to explain why some places experience more development than others.

Rural development, and the assessment of its key economic and social considerations, is an important and widely debated phenomenon. There are historical, theoretical, and contextual distinctions between rural development in North America and Latin America. Often Mexico is identified as part of North America, but for organizational purposes here, Mexico will be included in the discussion of Latin America, while "North America" will refer to the United States and Canada. Rural tourism is used in promoting rural development in these areas, and social capital and community assets also play an important role in sustaining rural development.

Definition

Development is a term that means different things to different people. All too often, development is used as shorthand for economic growth. Policy makers and representatives of the global development industry generally have the promotion of economic growth as one of their primary objectives, and development therefore becomes a euphemism for strictly economic activities such as increasing commodity exports, improving household income levels, and alleviating poverty. The economist Herman Daly (1993, 268) questions this conflation of growth and development and offers a simple but important distinction. "When something grows, it gets bigger. When something develops it gets different." Development is not growth, although growth may constitute one aspect of development. Development, simply put, is improvement in the quality of life of individuals in a locality, which includes environmental concerns such as clean water and air as well as the equitable distribution of environmental burdens.

In the United States, there is also some question about what precisely constitutes rurality. Is a place determined to be rural by virtue of its culture, demography, economy, or some mix of these? Most often we define rurality in terms of population density. The US Census Bureau, for example, defines settlements as rural if they have fewer than 2,500 residents (USDA 2007). But the economic activities that predominate in a place, such as agriculture, and the agrarian culture of certain communities also commonly define rurality.

These questions regarding the definition of rural have become increasingly salient in recent years in the Americas. In Latin America, urban growth has driven metropolitan areas outward into previously rural zones at a rapid rate, changing the rural landscape. In the United States, as retirees and vacationers flock to the lakes and mountains of, among other regions, the Intermountain West, real estate development explodes, and the rural character of these places changes. Not only do such real estate booms transform local culture, but they also have contradictory impacts on the natural environment. On the one hand, the importance of natural amenities as a draw for visitors can lead to the protection and enhancement of these features of the landscape. On the other hand, real estate development can degrade the air and water quality and fracture ecosystems. Also in the United States, tourism and service industries are increasingly supplanting traditional rural industries such as mining and agriculture, and much of that investment capital in mining and agriculture is moving south into Latin America. So while the mining sector is shrinking in the United States, it is growing in Latin America, transforming agrarian communities into mining communities. In short, many rural places in the Americas, for different but related reasons, are undergoing cultural, economic, and demographic transformations that drive social scientists to question our old, simple typology of the terms *urban, suburban,* and *rural.*

Despite demographic trends that might suggest otherwise, rural underdevelopment is still a major issue that requires redress in the Americas. In Latin America, the majority of the population still lives in rural areas, whereas in the United States only about 20 percent of its citizens live in rural zones (World Bank 2008). On both continents, however, populations are rapidly urbanizing, and by 2020, Latin America is projected to be predominantly urban (World Bank 2008). Furthermore, since the 1990s, poverty has grown faster in urban settings than in rural settings in North and Latin America, reversing a long-standing trend (Brown and Swanson 2003; World Bank 2008). This change has more to do with unchecked urban growth than it does with substantive poverty alleviation in rural areas. Despite these trends however, rural residents on both continents still tend to have lower average incomes and lower educational attainment. Further, by virtue of the relative isolation of rural places, rural residents lack the access to the resources of upward mobility that their urban counterparts possess. Finally, since rural areas contain fragile ecosystems, biodiversity, and immense natural beauty, environmental protections in rural areas are particularly important.

In addition to economic growth and the satisfaction of basic needs (e.g., nutritious food in sufficient quantities, clean water, shelter, and basic material satiation), there are seven key criteria for evaluating rural development: (1) public health, (2) emotional ties to friends and family, and general emotional health, (3) civic strength, (4) empowerment, (5) educational attainment, (6) social equity, and (7) environmental sustainability.

For the purposes of this article, these criteria have been collapsed into three broad areas, which will be dealt with individually: economic, social, and environmental development. But first, for a theoretical understanding of development, it is important to briefly discuss the legacy of Latin American scholars.

Theories and Policies of Development in Latin America

Latin America has bequeathed us most of our theoretical interpretations of underdevelopment. Underdevelopment (sometimes referred to as uneven development) refers to the simple observation that some countries have lower development indicators than other countries—lower literacy and educational attainment rates, lower rates of maternal and child health, lower per capita incomes, and the like. Within one country, some communities often have lower development outcomes than other, similar communities. Explaining the simple fact of uneven development has proved a complex matter, and experts have introduced many theories since the 1950s to explain this phenomenon.

The earliest explanations for underdevelopment blamed environmental aspects of places for poor development performance. They argued that poor countries lacked the soil, climate, hydrological, mineral, and fuel resources to initiate the development process. In the 1950s, modernization theory emerged, which suggested that nation-states undergo a linear process from subsistence to industrial modernity, and that development was a matter of will and intelligence. In the late 1960s, scholars in Latin America began to develop a set of ideas known as dependency theory. These *dependentistas,* as they were called, were responding to the modernization theory's explanations for underdevelopment at the time, which blamed poor countries themselves for their poverty.

The Latin American *dependentistas* felt that these formulations did not capture their experiences and sought to formulate an alternative explanation. Dependency theory suggests that underdevelopment was a product of forces external to the nation-state—that the countries of Latin America were being kept poor by imperialist neighbors to the North rather than by simply having poor soil and lack of drive. World-systems analysis, emerging in the 1970s, suggested, like dependency theory, that dynamics external to the nation-state were principal causes of underdevelopment. World-systems analysis suggested that underdevelopment stemmed from the tendency in the world-system for disproportionate profits in the manufacture and marketing of commodities to accrue to the more advanced processing stages, rather than the extractive and early processing stages. Therefore, economies predicated on primary industries were prevented from industrializing and, in effect, were kept poor.

This set of ideas led these thinkers to suggest that the solution to underdevelopment in Latin America was to replace importing goods from other countries with domestic production. This policy approach became known as *import substitution industrialization* and was widely implemented in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. In many of the larger economies of Latin America such as Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico, this approach was generally effective at producing independence and industrialization. Across the board, however, it led to a great deal of borrowing and high levels of indebtedness, a major factor in the economic recession in Latin America in the 1980s, known as the "lost decade." Inflation during the late 1970s and early 1980s caused these loans to become more expensive. At the same time, falling prices for primary commodities made it more difficult for Latin American countries to repay these loans. These conditions set off a chain reaction throughout Latin America of epidemic unemployment, stagnant growth, and dropping real incomes. Rural communities in particular felt this economic crisis most sharply, and the rural development gains of the previous decade were lost.

At the same time, the United States was enduring a farm crisis for many of the same reasons. In the 1970s high commodity prices had encouraged US farmers to take on large amounts of debt to expand their acreage and update their agricultural technology, but high inflation and dropping commodity prices in the 1980s meant that when those debts came due, farmers were unable to pay. The 1980s saw a net population loss in US rural areas as a result.

In Latin America, the so-called lost decade led to the abandonment of import substitution industrialization and the adoption of policies derived from another theoretical approach to underdevelopment—the liberal economic approach. This idea suggests—in stark contrast to dependency and world-systems formulations—that more trade and more engagement with the world economy, rather than less, will improve development performance. According to the liberal approach—also referred to as neoliberalism or the Washington Consensus—governments must allow for unrestricted trade between their countries and other nations, encourage foreign direct investment, privatize any government-owned companies, limit social programs, and encourage decentralization. This set of policies was widely implemented with mixed success. In Latin America a growing middle class began to enjoy newfound affluence, but scores of rural peasants saw disproportionately modest gains or were left out altogether.

Starting around the year 2000, yet another transformation in development thinking and policy in Latin America has taken place. The uneven results of the neoliberal turn have led to a more recent turn toward stronger state intervention in the market economy, state-led planning for development, and expanded social programming. This change has been referred to as the "new developmental state."

Despite the variety of contradictory theories that have been mobilized to explain underdevelopment, economic growth and per capita income remain universally important.

Economic Considerations

Economic development is a key part of rural development more generally construed. Economic development is the expansion of opportunities for people to participate in the formal economy along with increasing returns to workers from economic production. There are three traditional sectors of the rural economy: agriculture, extractive industries, and tourism. The agricultural sector historically has dominated rural economies. These sectors vary in importance between North America and Latin America. The service sector, such as "big box" retail and restaurants, is also becoming increasingly important in many rural areas of North America.

In Latin America, agriculture is still the predominant economic activity in rural areas, and most agriculture is still smallholder agriculture. Smallholder agriculture is household-owned and -operated small-scale farming, primarily intended for subsistence and secondarily to sell surplus in local markets. Returns to peasant smallholder agriculture are minimal, and this sector does not offer a meaningful path out of poverty for peasants in Latin America.

In the 1980s, through government rural education programs—known as the Cooperative Extension Service—and initiatives of international development cooperation, peasant farmers in Latin America were encouraged to cultivate so-called nontraditional agricultural exports as an alternative to subsistence farming. The idea was that peasant farmers should use their agricultural know-how and land to produce export crops of higher value than the subsistence crops they traditionally cultivated. In particular, decorative flowers and high value vegetable crops, like broccoli and snow peas, were targeted. The results were uneven, and although this shift did result in high rates of short-term economic growth in some cases, over the longer term, the growth was not sustained. In the end the transition created opportunities for large landholders and agricultural elites to further consolidate their market power by capturing disproportionate shares of the nontraditional export markets (Barham et al. 1992).

In North America, over the past half century, however, the importance of agriculture in contributing to rural economic development has declined. In part, the globalization of agricultural commodity markets has driven prices down for these products. Also, in part, the mechanization of agriculture has made small-scale farming less competitive and has meant that industrial farming requires fewer workers and thus contributes less to job creation. This has meant that even as agricultural yields in the United States have increased, the number of farms and people farming has fallen precipitously. The number of farms in the United States dropped from 7 million in 1934 to 2 million in 2002 (Vias and Nelson 2006, 75–102). Because of the low price for agricultural goods and the high cost of labor, farming is not a profitable activity in the United States. Therefore, the federal government channels massive subsidies to farmers, without which most farmers would not stay in business.

The extractive industries—mining, logging, fishing, quarrying, and petroleum extraction—make up the second sector of the traditional rural economy. Again, this sector does not lend itself to equitable rural economic development. First, because extraction works only where there are resources to extract, not all rural areas can capitalize on this sector equally. Second, these extractions are often nonrenewable resources or resources that do not renew as quickly as they are drawn down, which means that eventually they will stop producing, so rural economies predicated on extraction will suffer. Economists refer to this dilemma as the boom-and-bust cycle. North America—both the United States and Canada—has historically been a world leader in mining. Since the 1990s, however, the amount of investment in mining in North America has diminished, while in Latin America mining has increased dramatically as a result. The growth of mining in Latin America has had mixed results, providing new employment opportunities to rural residents but also transforming their economies and landscapes and threatening the natural environment.

Rural parts of Latin America have witnessed a great deal of social conflict in recent years around the growth of the extractive industries. In Chile, Peru, Ecuador, southern Mexico, and much of Central America, social movements have arisen to oppose mining. In El Salvador and Costa Rica, governments have even gone so far as to effectively ban metal mining (Collins 2009; Reuters 2010).

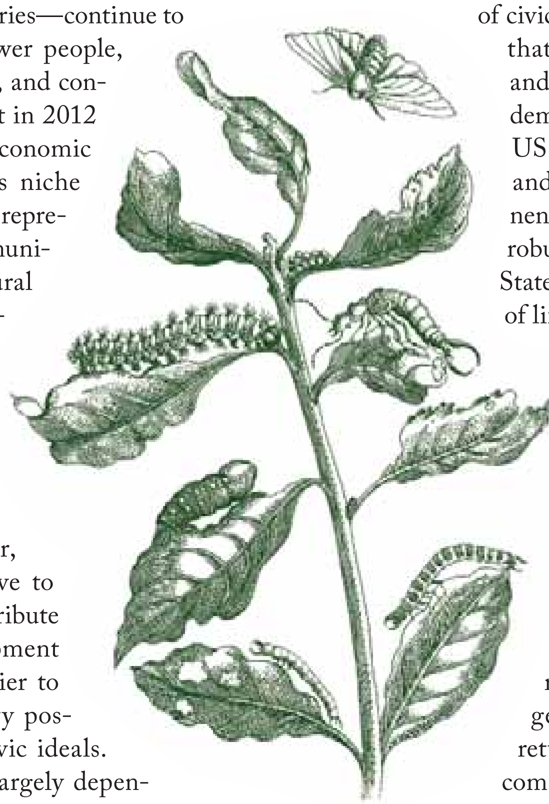
As agriculture and mining have lessened in importance and productivity, rural communities have begun to look to varying forms of rural tourism to diversify their economies and improve their incomes. Rural tourisms, what the US ecotourism expert Martha Honey (2008) refers to as "experiential tourisms," have increased dramatically since the 1990s. Residents of urban areas increasingly seek rural environments as a means of leisure and a way of getting "back to nature." This interest presents an economic opportunity for certain rural areas. These rural tourisms include agricultural tourism (or agritourism), ecological tourism (or ecotourism), and culinary tourism. Agritourism—farm recreational experiences such as farm meals, corn mazes, and pumpkin picking—is most popular in rural parts of the United States. Similarly, culinary tourism—travel to experience culture and cuisine together—is growing in popularity in the United States as well. Wine tourism in California is a good example of this phenomenon.

Latin America has not witnessed significant growth in agritourism or culinary tourism, but ecotourism has grown considerably. Many of the world's most popular ecotourism destinations are in Latin America—places such as Costa Rica and the Galapagos Islands, for example. Ecotourism is rural tourism intended to address issues of rural underdevelopment and ecosystem degradation simultaneously. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as: "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the wellbeing of local people" (TIES 2012). Ecotourism has become a common term over the past two decades, which has caused large tourism operators and real estate developers to appropriate the term as a marketing tool for tourism that does not qualify. For these reasons, ecotourism researchers advocate third-party certification strategies, like those for organic food and fair trade products, to guarantee the legitimacy of ecotourism destinations (Honey 2008). Some scholars criticize ecotourism for having negative cultural impacts on host communities and privileging local elites over the general population (King and Stewart 1996).

In addition to agriculture, extraction, and tourism, remittance income has also become a pillar of the rural economy in certain parts of Latin America. A significant percentage of rural residents in Mexico and northern Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) have emigrated to the United States, and to Canada to a lesser extent, in search of work. These immigrant workers regularly remit a percentage of their income back to their families and communities in their source countries. This process is referred to as *remittances,* and in some places remittances constitute the majority of income. Northern Mesoamerica sources a disproportionate number of immigrant workers from Latin America to the United States simply because of the push/pull of proximity and need. Furthermore, formal government programs, such as the US government's Bracero Program, which imported

Mexican agricultural guest workers from the 1940s until the 1960s, helped develop social networks that have continued to facilitate emigration, both legal and illegal, from Mexico through the first decade of the twenty-first century. In El Salvador, the introduction of the US dollar as the predominant official currency has facilitated greater numbers of emigrants to the United States, and as a result of US dependence on immigration, remittance income is now nearly 20 percent of the gross domestic product.

In sum, although traditional rural enterprises—agriculture and extractive industries—continue to expand yields, they employ fewer people, face diminishing profit margins, and contribute less to rural development in 2012 than in the past. Alternative economic development strategies such as niche agriculture or rural tourism can represent a meaningful path for communities with the right amenities. Rural residents should strive to diversify their economies so that they are not too dependent on just one industry and are therefore less vulnerable to the boom-and-bust cycle and the price fluctuations of primary commodity markets. Further, these communities should strive to put programs in place that distribute gains from economic development evenly. These processes are easier to put in place when a community possesses strong social ties and civic ideals. Additionally, rural tourism is largely dependent upon the availability of natural amenities in a locality, an environmental issue.



Social Considerations

Research on rural development indicates that economic development initiatives have the most broadly based and long-lasting impacts in communities with strong civic networks in place (Hunt 2000). Where social linkages are strong between individuals and associations in a locality, the gains to economic growth are distributed more evenly, which allows for more capital to circulate through the local economy, further promoting equitable development. Additionally, in civically active communities—communities where a wide swath of the population participates in community affairs—political institutions are more democratic and more effectively represent the interests of the community at large rather than the interests of a few powerful individuals (Putnam 1993). There are two general ways of conceptualizing the importance of social ties and civic activity for rural development—the concept of social capital and the asset-based approach to community development.

These ideas about civil society and its value for democracy and development come predominantly from the United States. Alexis de Tocqueville, a French aristocrat who traveled the United States in the early nineteenth century, was struck by the richness of civic life. His best known work, *Democracy in America,* documents the forms of civic life peculiar to the United States that he observed during his travels and their connection to equality and democracy. In the twentieth century, US philosophers such as John Dewey and, later, Jane Jacobs wrote prominently in this tradition regarding the robust forms of civic life in the United States and their bearing on the quality of life.

Social capital is the value embedded in social networks. It is made up of social obligations, expectations, and sanctions as well as norms of trust and reciprocity. The denser and more extensive the social networks in a locality, the better the prospects for rural development. This is the case for several reasons. First, social capital can generate financial and material returns to both individuals and whole communities. Individuals can benefit from the transmission of information regarding economic opportunities, and communities can benefit because strong social networks insulate places from the challenges of economic downturns. When commodity prices plunge or the factory leaves town, individuals with dense social networks can rely on one another to weather the storm. Second, high levels of social capital can reinforce collective identity, which can boost self-esteem and provide a basis for collective action on behalf of rural development. Third, social capital, because it promotes more involvement and engagement, can improve democratic institutions and promote equity.

Despite the fact that this intellectual tradition was codified in the US context, this set of ideas is applied effectively to Latin America. Mobilizing social capital is a particularly apt rural development strategy in Latin America because many of the primary destroyers of social capital are more pronounced in the developed countries. There may, therefore, be greater levels of social capital in rural parts of Latin America that simply require operationalization. Additionally, social capital is inexpensive. Unlike large-scale development projects that require substantial investments of financial capital, social capital, although it takes time to generate, requires no hardware for it to be actualized. In this sense it constitutes an ideal strategy for rural communities that are cash poor but possess rich social networks. Many rural communities in Latin America are embedded in transnational social networks that provide paths for emigration and job acquisition abroad. This is another key way in which social networks facilitate rural economic development.

Like social capital, the asset-based approach to community development suggests that local capacity and self-help are the most effective means to equitable and sustainable rural development. For decades the standard community development approach was outside technical assistance based on a needs assessment. Outside experts would conduct an inventory of deficiencies and problems to develop programs to address these needs. In the early 1990s, some researchers began to advocate an asset-based alternative to the needs assessment (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). They argued that the focus on needs manufactured a culture of dependency on outside experts and a sense of inadequacy on the part of residents. Social service (e.g., literacy, nutrition) organizations made up of outside experts treated residents like clients, for example, whereas locally driven associations saw residents as citizens. They further argued that the needs-based approach overlooked the valuable local assets that could be effectively leveraged for community development. These assets, for researchers John Kretzmann and John McKnight (1993), focused on civic organizations (social capital), and the skills and capacities of locals (human capital).

In North America, the asset-based approach has generally been applied in urban areas, although it translates effectively to rural areas as well. The best known case of sustained asset-driven development in the United States is the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in the Roxbury area of Boston, Massachusetts, which brought together diverse groups of residents, using participatory methods and savvy political engagement to achieve a dramatic transformation in the community, particularly with respect to the environment. Their first success was convincing the city to clean up illegal dump sites that created a public health hazard in their neighborhood (Medhoff and Sklar 1994).

Building on the work of Kretzmann and McKnight, but specifically with rural regions in mind, rural sociologists Cornelia Flora and Jan Flora (2004) elaborated the community capitals framework in which they identify seven types of community assets that are important for rural development: social capital, human capital, built capital (infrastructure), cultural capital, natural capital (natural amenities), financial capital, and political capital (power and influence). As the "stock" of one of these asset pools increases, it potentially flows between stocks of other community capitals, increasing stocks of other capitals as well. This process can create a beneficent upward spiral, enhancing community vitality in three key areas: economic development, environmental quality, and public health (Emery and Flora 2006).

In rural Latin America traditional natural resource management techniques such as polycropping (planting a variety of types of crops together), common-pool forest management, and gravity-flow irrigation systems persist and complement more modern, technological approaches to natural resource management. The persistence of traditional resource management techniques, particularly in rural areas with large indigenous populations such as southern Mexico, western Guatemala, the Andean region, and parts of Colombia, exemplifies the asset-based approach to sustainable rural development in Latin America.

In addition to the ideas of social capital and local assets, *grassroots development* is another common term that conforms to the self-help ideal of most rural development approaches. In the 1980s, there was a great deal of attention to the so-called grassroots approach to rural community development in Latin America—an approach in local beneficiaries, rather than outside experts, developed and carried out initiatives. The Inter-American Foundation (IAF), an institution funded by the US Congress that promotes grassroots development in Latin America, was a leader in publishing research and case studies on grassroots development throughout the 1980s. Shifting priorities and budget cuts, however, have meant that since 2000 the IAF focuses principally on funding proposals for local grassroots development. The IAF continues to publish its journal, *Grassroots Development,* but it is not as widely read today as it was in the 1980s and 1990s.

In addition to economic factors, then, important social factors contribute to sustainable rural development. These include high levels of public involvement on the part of residents, dense social networks, and a recognition and willingness to capitalize on the various social assets or community capitals present in a locality.

Environmental Considerations

A variety of environmental issues are crucial considerations in rural development. These include the variability of natural amenities between localities, the tensions between resource conservation and resource development, and solid waste disposal.

As discussed earlier, much of the success of tourism-led rural development is contingent upon the availability of natural amenities in rural places. Natural amenities include unique, nonreproducible aspects of localities such as rivers, lakes, mountains, forests, and climate, which draw in visitors or in-migrants. Culture, history, and tradition, while not strictly natural, are also important amenities. Most of the rural areas in the United States that have experienced population and economic growth since the 1990s have been high amenity regions. This means that not all rural localities are equal in terms of their ability to capitalize on tourism as a development strategy.

Although mineral and timber resources do not draw tourists and retirees like beautiful landscapes, these resources are an important source of rural development for many rural regions—often regions that have lower tourism potential. In such places, there are often tensions between efforts to exploit natural resources to promote rural development and efforts to protect the biophysical environment. In rural Latin America, where peasant agriculture is still quite common, this tension is particularly pronounced because peasant agriculturalists derive their livelihoods from the natural resources in their communities, yet many of these communities are in biodiverse and/or fragile ecosystems that should be conserved.

These tensions usually manifest themselves as conflicts between conservationists and locals regarding resource use, often referred to as the "people in parks" problem. In many of these biologically diverse areas, governments and conservation organizations have sought to declare protected areas to guard unique ecosystems, thus limiting local peoples' access to forest resources. In some cases rural peoples are prevented from harvesting timber and firewood, hunting, fishing, farming, and foraging for medicinal plants in areas to which they have historically had access. This creates significant social conflict and often results in "invasions" of parks and protected areas.

Much research has been devoted over the past two decades to addressing this issue (Terborgh et al. 2002). On the one hand, it is crucial to protect biodiverse, fragile, and unique ecosystems. On the other hand, impoverished and marginalized rural peoples should not be penalized with their livelihoods because of where they happen to live. One of the more recent solutions, which has had some success in Latin America, is called *payment for ecosystem services*. In effect, rural peoples are compensated, through cash transfers, for agreeing to give up access to parks and protected areas. The logic of this model is that the forest itself provides services such as carbon sequestration, water retention, erosion prevention, and the like, all of which have an economic value, and because the forest cannot spend the money it earns sequestering carbon, neighboring settlements should be compensated. The problem with this model, like many rural development approaches, is that it solves only short-term conflict. It does not address the root issues of the global population–resources mismatch and the added pressure on natural resources from multinational extractive companies. Further, it can create economic dependencies on the part of beneficiaries.

A third key environmental consideration in rural development, which is particularly pronounced in Latin America, regards managing and disposing of the additional solid waste and wastewater that accumulate during periods of high development. Responsibility for solid waste collection and treatment falls generally to the municipal government. In many countries of Latin America, however, collection is intermittent and incomplete, and treatment is minimal. Many rural hamlets are still inaccessible by motor vehicle, making waste collection impossible. Further, waste collection is an opt-in service that confers an additional fee, which many residents are unwilling or unable to pay. Therefore, informal dumping of solid waste in ravines or other clandestine locations is commonly practiced and widely accepted. This problem is exacerbated by the rugged, craggy, and highly eroded terrain that characterizes many rural areas of Latin America as well as the fact that potable water often comes directly from springs or rivers and receives little treatment. This means that clandestine dumps often contaminate already tenuous water sources and create public health problems.

Outlook

Rural development refers to any variety of processes that work toward the substantive improvement of life quality for residents of rural places. Rural development poses particular challenges compared to urban development. These challenges include the limited variety of economic activities available, which makes rural regions more vulnerable to economic downturns, the social isolation, the geographic distance from the resources and opportunities of the urban environment, and the lower returns to the primary industries that characterize rural regions. These factors can lead to underdevelopment of rural areas, in which incomes, educational levels, and public health indices are all lower, on average, than in cities.

The populist legacy of civic networks in the United States allows rural areas to rely on social networks and social capital effectively in the face of economic downturns. The shift away from agriculture and mining and toward the service sector in rural America, however, has meant a greater degree of differentiation between capitalists and wage workers. This separation occurs because service jobs are largely "bad" jobs in the sense that they do not provide many opportunities for advancement. Rural communities in the United States possess many underdeveloped social resources and assets, or community capitals, that can serve as the basis for rural revitalization, but that must be formalized and further developed. Natural amenities or natural capital are present in certain rural regions more than in others in the United States. The economist David McGranahan (1999) documents the extent to which amenities such as climate, varying topography, and proximity to surface water drive population growth in the United States. This phenomenon has taken place disproportionately in the western and southwestern regions of the country, while low amenity places are at a disadvantage in the new rural economy.

In Latin America, rural regions are still largely dependent on agriculture and also increasingly on investment in the extractive sectors, particularly metal mining, petroleum, and natural gas. The tourism and service industries are diminutive in Latin America compared with North America, although ecotourism is growing in certain amenity-rich localities. Additionally, since the 1990s, remittance income has become profoundly important. In Mesoamerica, this income comes from emigrants to the United States and Canada. In other parts of Latin America, south-south migration into middle-income countries or internal migration from rural to urban areas drives this trend. While emigration does signal substantial income growth for migrant source regions, it also confers a "brain drain" on the sending communities. Emigrants are disproportionately well educated and well capitalized, which allows them to emigrate. Their departure, however, means that their entrepreneurial contributions to local development are missing. In general, rural areas in Latin America are less stratified by income level than their North American counterparts. Therefore, gains to rural development accrue more evenly. Finally, social assets and resources receive less attention in Latin American rural development than they do in the United States. They nevertheless constitute a meaningful set of resources for development, and development practitioners in Latin America should capitalize on these assets.

Rural areas must continue to diversify their industry mix by encouraging (but not depending on) tourism, developing niche agricultural markets such as fair trade, organic, or biodynamic products, and developing small-scale industry to process and add value to agricultural products. Additionally, rural areas must focus on developing systems that distribute gains from economic growth evenly and on capitalizing on the rich social assets and social networks of their regions.

Michael L. DOUGHERTY
Illinois State University

See also Agriculture, Tropical (the Americas); Amazonia; Brazil; Canada; Caribbean; Central America; Ecotourism (the Americas); Fair Trade; Labor; Marine Preserves; Mining (Andes); North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); Parks and Protected Areas; Sanitation; Small Island States; Southern Cone; Travel and Tourism Industry; United States

Further Reading

Barham, Bradford; Clark, Mary; Katz, Elizabeth; & Schurman, Rachel. (1992). Nontraditional agricultural exports in Latin America. *Latin American Research Review, 27*(2), 43–82.

Brown, David L., & Swanson, Louis E. (2003). *Challenges for rural America in the twenty-first century*. University Park, PA: Penn State Press.

Collins, Denis. (2009). The failure of a socially responsive gold mining MNC in El Salvador: Ramifications of NGO mistrust. *Journal of Business Ethics, 88*(2), 245–268.

Daly, Herman. (1993). Sustainable growth: An impossibility theorem. In Herman E. Daly & Kenneth N. Townsend (Eds.), *Valuing the Earth: Economics, ecology, ethics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Emery, Mary, & Flora, Cornelia. (2006). Spiraling-up: Mapping community transformation with the community capitals framework. *Community Development. 37*(1), 19–35.

Flora, Cornelia Butler, & Flora, Jan. (2004). *Rural communities: Legacy and change* (2nd ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Honey, Martha. (2008). *Ecotourism and sustainable development*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Hunt, Robert W. (2000, November 18). Civic action and sustainable communities. Paper delivered to the Annual Meeting of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA). New Orleans, LA.

King, David A., & Stewart, William P. (1996). Ecotourism and commodification: Protecting people and places. *Biodiversity and Conservation, 5*, 293–305.

Kretzmann, John, & McKnight, John. (1993). Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets. Chicago: ACTA Publications.

McGranahan, David. (1999). Natural amenities drive rural population change (Agricultural economic report no. AER781). Washington, DC: USDA Economic Research Service.

Medhoff, Peter, & Sklar, Holly. (1994). *Streets of hope: The fall and rise of an urban neighborhood*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Putnam, Robert. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Reuters. (2010). Costa Rica lawmakers vote to ban open-pit mining. Retrieved on May 15, 2012, from http://af.reuters.com/article/metalsNews/idAFN0912629920101110

Terborgh, John; van Schaik, Carel; Davenport, Lisa; & Rao, Madhu. (2002). *Making parks work: Strategies for preserving tropical nature*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES). (2012). What is ecotourism? Retrieved April 4, 2012, from http://www.ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). (2007). Measuring rurality: What is rural? Washington, DC: USDA Economic Research Service. Retrieved February 24, 2012, from http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Rurality/WhatIsRural/

Vias, Alexander C., & Nelson, Peter B. (2006). Changing livelihoods in rural America. In William A. Kandel & David Louis Brown (Eds.), *Population change and rural society*. Dordrecht, Germany: Springer.

World Bank. (2008). World development report: Agriculture for development. Washington, DC: The World Bank.