

Overview of Rural Issues: Search for an Appropriate Policy

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Overview of Rural Issues

AND

Challenges for the FUTURE

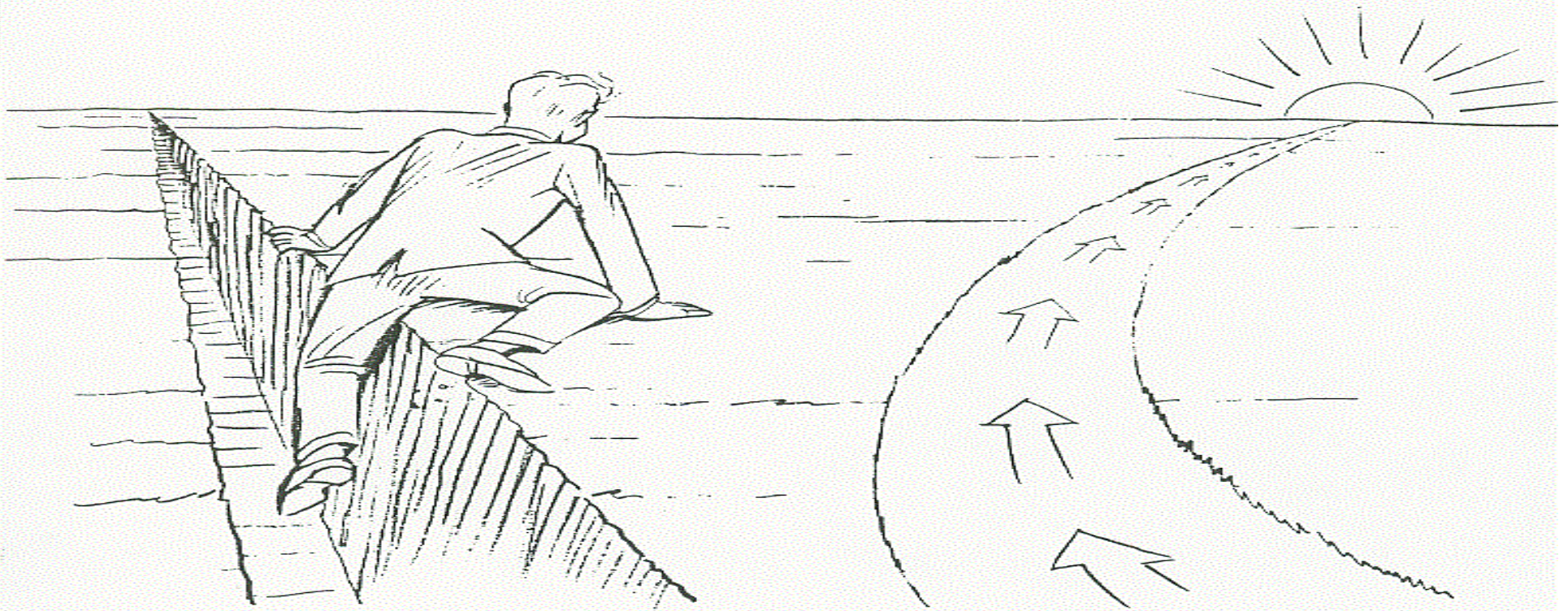
I. Challenges We Face (SWOT's)

- Global Economy
- Environmental Degradation
- Land Use—Sprawl
- Fiscal Disparities / Capacity
- Economic Disparities
- Social Disparities
- Energy

II. Challenges We Face

- Institutional Rigor Mortis
- Partisanship and Ideology before Policy
- Political Calculus of Majorities
- Leadership by Polls
- No **SHARED VISION**
- Civic Disconnect

Policies and Programs for Rural America



Are we in a groove, or are we in a rut?

Rural America in the 21st Century: Two Futures

two roads diverged in a wood, and I --

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference

● Robert Frost

**Perhaps the most descriptive
title for today is:**

**“The Road Not Taken:
Changing the Paradigm”**

Basic Premise of the Presentation is that:

Our paradigms inform our decision making and produce policies that fit the paradigm.

Our perceptions, decisions, and policies reinforce our paradigms.



What is Rural America?

Where is Rural America?

**For many Americans, Rural America lies
down memory lane--a tranquil and
shaded lane with an idyllic life, far away
from the pace, pressures and troubles of
urban and suburban life.**

Can we get beyond the images?

- **Idyllic Life**
- **Tranquility and Serenity**
- **Green Acres**
- **Dogpatch**
- **Beverly Hillbillies**
- **Mayberry**
- **Bonanza**
- **Dukes of Hazard**

Rural America comprises 2,052 counties, contains 75 percent of the Nation's land, and is home to 17 percent (49 million) of the U.S. population based on the 2003 Federal definitions of non-metropolitan counties. (ERS, USDA)



...in a nation where the population is booming, development is sprawling and the economy is globalizing, the most distant places are becoming the closest of neighbors. (USA Today)

Big cities are bumping into small towns, stretching into rural areas, gobbling up farmland and merging into big urban blobs: megapolitan areas. (USA Today)

Ten megapolitan areas have more than 10 million residents or will have that many by 2040, according to a new study by Virginia Tech. They extend into 35 states and include parts of every state east of the Mississippi River except Vermont. They incorporate less than a fifth of the land area in the continental USA but house more than two-thirds of the population. (USA Today)

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE U.S.

Type of Government	1967	1987	1997	2002
COUNTIES	3,039	3,042	3,043	3034
MUNICIPALITIES	18,048	19,200	19,372	19,429
TOWNSHIPS	17,105	16,691	16,629	16,505
SPECIAL DISTRICTS	21,264	29,532	34,683	35,052
SCHOOL DISTRICTS	21,782	14,721	13,726	13,506 (1,508)
TOTAL	81,238	83,186	87,453	87,526

(U.S. Census of Governments)

1942 = 155,116

1952 = 116,807

1962 = 91,235

1972 = 78,269

Rural America

Seventy to eighty percent of the land in America is rural.

The geo-political landscape of Rural America is fractured and fragmented.

Little has changed in the structure of government in Rural American during the past century.

What do rural residents want?

**Rural residents seek the same things as
urban residents.**

**Both populations are searching for a
satisfying
Quality of Life**

Rural Residents Seek

To Preserve the “Rural Character” of
their Communities,

And,

To gain access to “some” of the urban
goods, services, and opportunities.

From Dark Continent to Lost World

Dark Continent—H.S. Gilbertson, 1917

**Little Change—Mid Century review Clyde F. Snyder,
1952**

Lost World—Lawrence J. R. Herson, 1959

Baker V. Carr—shift of political power to urban areas

Urban Discovery in the decade of the 1960's

Rural America Discovered in the decade of the 1980's

What paradigms frame our decisions?

How do they differ?

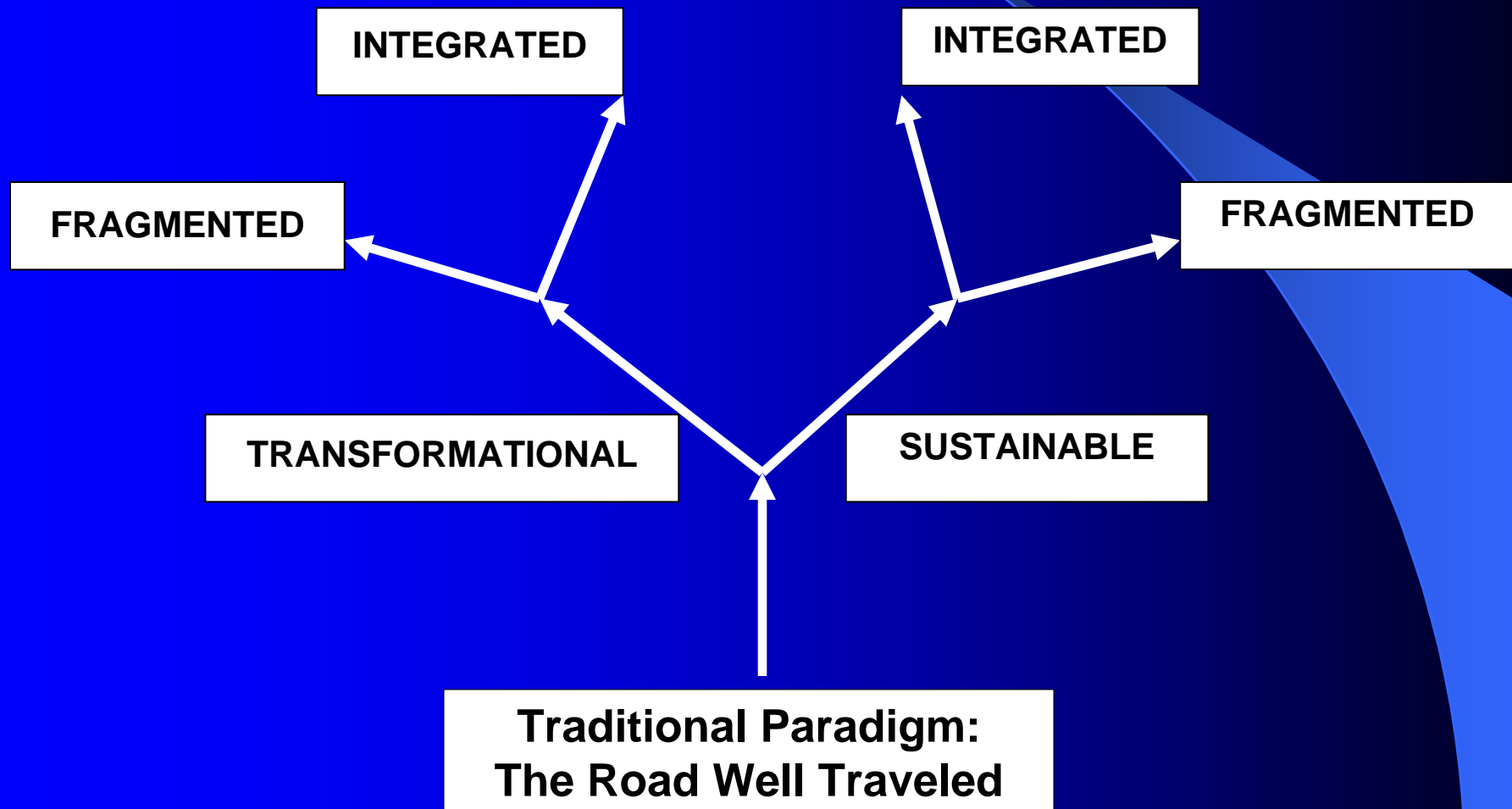
Prevalent Decision Making Pattern

- **Band aids—fix specific problems**
- **Sector Focus**
- **Goals and Objectives—fix problem**
- **Outcomes—Short-term problem orientation**
- **Planning—Sector, at best**
- **Vision—What vision? Visions often are Interest Specific**

Most common forms of planning in the public policy arena are:

- **Sector Planning**
- **Integrated Community Strategic
Planning**
- **Thematic Planning**

Choosing Decision Paradigms for the Future of Rural America



Traditional Paradigm

- **Geo-political Fragmentation—Balkanization**
- **Policy Fragmentation—Conflict & Competition**
- **Agency Fragmentation—inadequate coordination**
- **Sector Planning**
- **“Beggar Thy Neighbor”**
- **Win / Lose Gamesmanship**
- **Parochialism and Isolation**
- **Regionalism Somewhat Ineffective**

Transformational Paradigm

- ❖ **Focus on Economy and Efficiency**
- ❖ **Move from fragmentation and isolation to sub-state regional cooperation and collaboration**
- ❖ **Regional win / win strategies**
- ❖ **Create mini-metros**

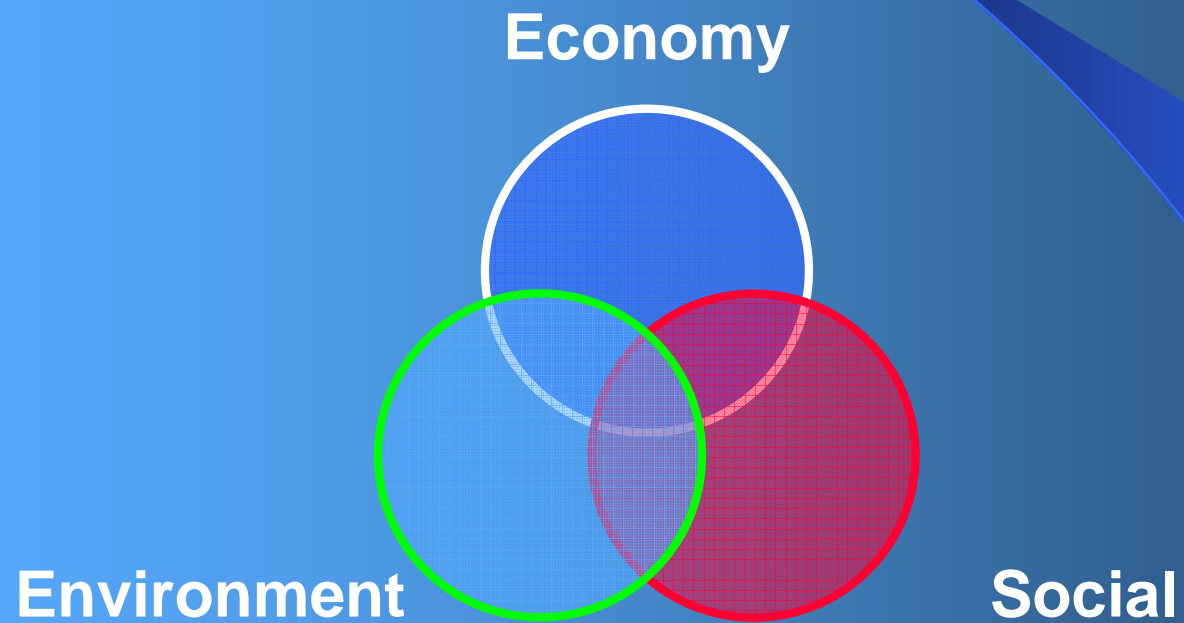
Challenging Question for Transformational Strategists

- How many mini-metros do we need?
 - What happens to the ones “left behind”
 - Does a rural economy need to be global?
- or
- Can it support a successful position for the U.S.?
 - Can a rural economy be successful w/o being global?
 - Who will run the Eco store and the food pantry?
 - How much more of our farm land, open space and “Eco system” can we afford to loose?

Sustainable Paradigm

- **Holistic—national and / or state focus**
- **Rural and Urban fully linked**
- **Inter-governmental and inter-agency teamwork and collaboration**
- **Long-range planning based upon assets**
- **Extensive utilization of indicators and benchmarks**
- **Uses a modified UN Sustainable Development model**

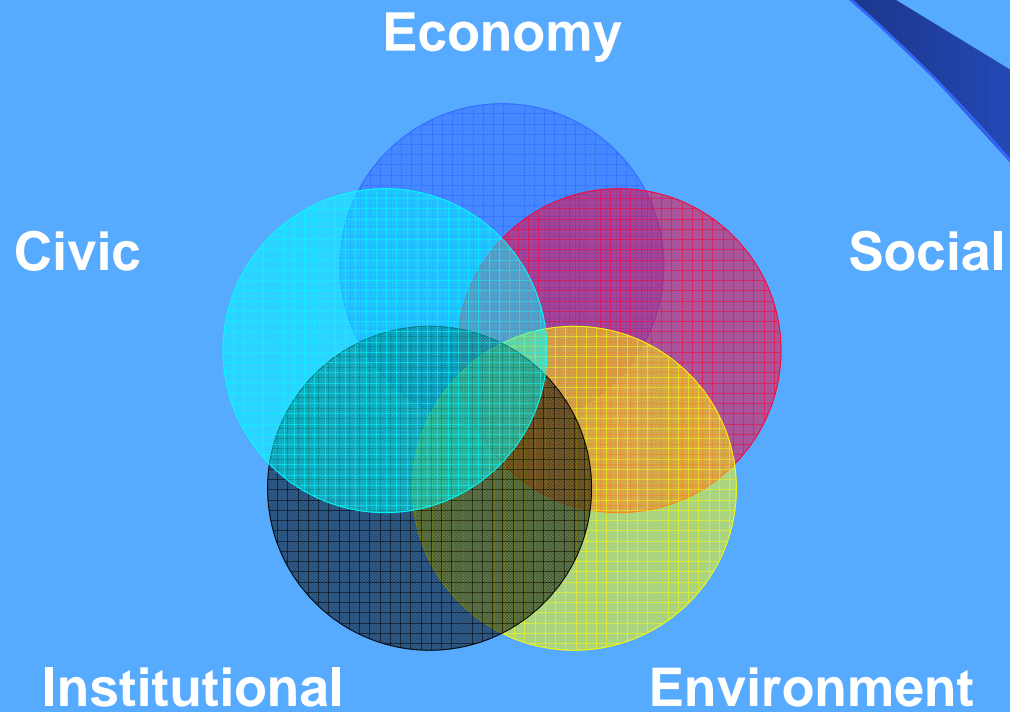
Sustainable Development



Sustainable Communities Paradigm

- **Policies based upon strategic planning**
- **Requires holistic approach to planning**
- **Does not separate rural from urban**
- **Focuses upon assets of each community**
- **Uses a national perspective on asset assessment**
- **Protects and supports rural assets**
- **Vision driven**

Sustainable Communities



**What conditions must change in
order to facilitate better
utilization of the Sustainable
Communities paradigm?**

Obstacles and Challenges to Sustainable Paradigm

- **Structural Obstacles**
- **Fiscal Challenge**
- **Economic Challenge**
- **Land Use and Development Challenge**
- **Infrastructure / Economy of Scale Challenge**
- **Leadership**
- **Governance Challenge**
- **Quality of Life Challenge**

Structural Obstacles

The most significant structural obstacles are:

- **geo-political fragmentation (State / Local)**

Solution: Leave structures alone, shift functions to regions and fund sub-state regional programs.

- **policy / agency fragmentation**

Solution: require participation in joint planning and program coordination. Reduce funding for those who do not participate

Fiscal Challenge

- **Resource allocation to sustain rural and urban America is an important fiscal challenge**

Solutions:

- ✓ **Assess Development Fees
(Federal, State, Local)**
- ✓ **Assess Impact Fees
(Federal, State, Local)**
- ✓ **Create PILD payments to
support rural services needs**

Economic Challenges

- **Providing sufficient income to rural residents to provide some of the QOL amenities of urban areas**
 - **Build economies based upon rural goods, services, and assets**
 - **Create Time share office condos for telecommuting**
- **Infrastructure deficiencies**
 - **Funding for Rural Communications Administration**
 - **Greater utilization of package technologies**

Land Use and Development Challenge

Sprawl

Solutions: PILD Payments
Improve Urban QOL
Redevelop Urban Areas
Create more city greenscapes
Do not subsidize development in rural areas.

Infrastructure / Economy of Scale Challenges

- **Sprawl**

Solutions: Rebuild Urban Areas

Do not subsidize Development

Regional Land Use Planning

- **Farm Land Conversion**

Solutions: No public subsidies for conversions

- **Environmental Degradation**

Solutions: Reduce Sprawl

**Greater Utilization of Package
Technology**

Education, Education, Education

Leadership Challenges

- Much of the current leadership system is based upon myopic visioning.
- Where there is no vision a people shall perish (Proverbs 29:19) We have no Shared Vision

Solutions: Develop a comprehensive national vision for Sustainable America

National Summit of Rural / Urban agencies and organizations to begin to craft a Sustainable America Vision

Governance Challenges

- **Calculus of Majorities creates the need for coalitions and interest group politics**
- **Policies are driven by narrow visions, goals and interests.**

**Solutions: Civic Engagement
Civic Education
Sweat Equity**

Quality of Life Challenges

- **Take it seriously—It matters**
- **Understand and measure the objective and subjective dimensions of QOL**
- **Community by community assessment**
(One size does not fit all)
- **Replace those who leave with new residents.**

One Size Does Not Fit All

One Paradigm Will Not Fit All

A Sustainable Paradigm is important for every part of rural America as well as urban America.

**Transformational Paradigms should be applied,
BUT, carefully and with foresight.**

Closing thought:

This presentation has been an adventure in “Wonderland.” The purpose has been to stimulate your thinking in the next two hours, and after you leave here, about an alternative future.

The presentation has been futurism at its blatant worst or best (depending on your perspective.) My purpose has been to address a current environment, a future that may never exist, and one that you might believe should not exist.

But we need to have this conversation on a broad national basis. Today was a good time and place to begin.

An idea to remember

I believe in the beloved community and in the spirit which makes it beloved, and in the communion of all who are, in will and in deed, its members. I see no such community as yet, but nonetheless my rule of life is: Act so as to hasten its coming.

Josiah Royce (Cited in Roland Warren)