Title

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# IN THE SHADOW OF URBAN GROWTH: BIFURCATION IN RURAL CALIFORNIA COMMUNITIES

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## I. Introduction

California is an urban state on a scale of its own. Some 95 percent of the state's 30 million persons live in metropolitan areas, yet it is the nation's leading agricultural producer; the population has doubled every 20 years from gold rush days through 1970; the California economy is the sixth largest in the world; one of every six new jobs in the nation since 1979 has been in California;[2] during the 1980s the population increase of 5.4 million was equivalent to moving the state of Massachusetts to the west coast; and one of every three refugees and immigrants ends up in California.[3]

But behind the urban front is a significant, though often forgotten, rural backwater that has 2.2 million persons (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). If rural California was a state by itself its population would be larger than eighteen other states, and it would have four congressional representatives. The people in this rural state would be settled on about 95 million acres out of a total state area of 100 million acres, a land from which the urban population could obtain virtually all its water, recreation, and natural resources including agricultural products, timber, energy, and minerals (see California Department of Forestry, 1988). Yet, rural Californians compared to urban gain about 25 percent less personal income per capita,[4] and their poverty rate is a whopping 62 percent higher than the urban rate (California Department of Economic Opportunity, 1989). Rural communities are on average subject to more industrial plant closures, county governments are on the brink of bankruptcy, hospitals struggle to stay open (Bradshaw, 1987), and people worry about rising crime statistics. In addition, urban areas make many demands on the dispersed part of the state, establishing an urban agenda for their development. Yet rural areas receive few special resources, and usually lack local leadership to structure their own future. Thus, the "forgotten California" is a vulnerable but valuable resource.

Looking ahead 20 to 25 years, what will happen to rural areas like Firebaugh, Borrego Springs, Oakhurst, Patterson, Weed, or Crescent City? Will they become collecting places for displaced people who cannot make it in changing and growing communities? Will they become overrun by commuters and urban refugees who bring their urban culture with them? Will they become resort playgrounds for the wealthy, or open communities with opportunities for all social classes? When ethnic homogeneity is replaced by diversity will there be accommodation or tension? Will outside corporations set the terms of development or become local partners in community development? These are some of the questions that the people in rural communities are asking, and often they neither have the answers nor the ability to determine their future. In short, California's rural communities are presently disadvantaged, and they will not find the transition to the twenty-first century easy.

Behind the gross statistics, however, lies a more challenging problem in that a new urban-based rurality is transforming parts of rural communities as a sort of overlay, leading to a bifurcation of resources and opportunities. The traditional rural culture runs the risk of remaining in dependency and poverty in spite of new urban-based development and greater rural access to urban culture. If the rural development lessons learned from the last several decades of experience worldwide hold true in California, the urban will dominate the rural with little "trickle-down" benefit to rural communities. Rural development continues to require targeted assistance programs even in growing areas (Bradshaw, 1990). In the absence of this assistance, urban growth will be overlaid on rural poverty, and indigenous rural persons will not participate in the benefits to be gained from development.

The purpose of this essay is to identify the development challenge facing rural communities in California and to show how policy decisions made within the next few years will lead either to an increasingly depressed and dependent rural region, or to a region interdependent with other areas, and contributing to mutual well-being. The next section examines the most important trends that shaped the development of rural communities in California, and how rural communities through most of the state are becoming increasingly bifurcated with (1) continued population increases that force indigenous populations to the margin, (2) increased ethnic diversity, (3) declining rural industries, (4) transformed economic base, and (5) deepening and spreading poverty. Following the discussion of these trends, a set of policy concerns will be identified and options will be discussed. These options will show how growth can be managed, rural resources and industries protected, and the rural economy enhanced.

## II. Trends Shaping California's Forgotten Rural Communities

Rural development problems are complex and interrelated, joining concerns about population growth, economic transformation, local needs, and global dynamics. The development problems of the indigenous rural population and their agricultural and forest resource industries stand in sharp contrast to the problems of containing new growth based on urban spillover and a new economy. For all of this, the existing governmental arrangement is hopelessly inadequate.

The interdependence of these changes can be illustrated by developments in Watsonville and the El Pajaro Valley in southern Santa Cruz County, some 75 miles south of San Francisco. This area is on the rural edge of the expanding Bay Area, but it figures minimally in the regional consciousness. Most people were not aware that the October 17, 1989, earthquake that damaged homes and bridges in San Francisco and Oakland actually caused worse damage to the small towns like Watsonville, located within miles of the quake's epicenter. These towns were so isolated and destroyed that no one knew how extensive the damage was for several days. While the media focused on the expensive homes damaged in San Francisco, thousands of destroyed rural homes went unnoticed and their occupants camped in the town square.

Watsonville and its neighboring rural communities are really caught between too little and too much urban attention. Once a sleepy little agricultural city bypassed by growth and fortune, Watsonville longed for modernity. Agriculture has been successful in a region known for some of the world's most fertile soils and an attractive microclimate for specialty crops such as artichokes and summer lettuce. Agricultural employment and wages have been good, but the gap between the field and packing shed workers who are largely Latino and the rest of the community (largely of European origin) has continued to grow.

Watsonville's industrial base started to diversify in the 1980s from packing agricultural products to light manufacturing and electronics. Indeed, the relative proximity of Watsonville to Santa Clara County some 25 miles east has produced intense pressure both for industrial sites that can utilize low-wage assembly labor and for lower-cost housing for people who commute an hour or more across the hills to Silicon Valley jobs. This new urban pressure threatens the agricultural base with development on prime land and adds further tensions to the bifurcated community.

Housing is symptomatic of the bifurcation caused by urban growth. The local low-wage workers and their families are crowded into older houses. It is not uncommon to find multiple families living in the main house, another family living in the garage, and a third in a backyard shed, connected by hoses and extension cords. The extent of the need for low-income housing in Watsonville is so great that it would be virtually impossible under current federal and state programs to construct enough new low-price housing to meet the needs of these people, and any enforcement of standards for existing housing would displace many low-income families.

On the other hand, market pressures for new housing development are so intense that the vacancy rate is practically zero. New housing is purchased as fast as it can be constructed, and commuters are buying and renovating many existing units because the price is much lower than housing in the city of Santa Cruz or Santa Clara County. As a consequence, the newcomers are driving up the price of all housing in Watsonville and eliminating many rental units. The dilemma is that new housing development is needed to relieve pressure on the existing housing market especially for the indigenous population, but new housing will be quickly absorbed by outsiders. Construction of new housing units will thus lead to a rapidly increasing population base with virtually no improvement in the availability of units for the workers in agriculture and the traditional rural industries, and probably with a significant loss for them. Development will also dramatically reduce agricultural land and jobs in related industries, further limiting opportunities for less advantaged people. In short, there are two development problems in Watsonville: a more traditional rural problem of poverty and displacement from resource industry jobs, and a new problem of preserving a rural heritage and rich farm land in the face of rampant urban growth.

Watsonville is not alone in facing bifurcated development. Small towns and cities throughout rural America are experiencing the overlay of urban growth and well-being on rural poverty, hiding the rural problems from view and the policies that might help them. Furthermore, the dilemma plays out at a regional level, with boom-town-type growth occurring alongside lagging resource communities in forest, fishing, mining, and manufacturing areas as well as agriculture. Growing rural communities and small cities continue to struggle with problems of balancing their new popularity and wealth with developing an opportunity structure for the indigenous population and preserving their communities' rural character, which made it attractive in the first place. This dynamic of bifurcation is played out in five important trends.

### 1. Population Growth

California's rural areas have not experienced the population depletion characteristic of most other rural states. The rural population has remained relatively constant, with major increases in the 1970s (Bradshaw and Blakely, 1979). This stability does not mean that all communities have grown, because some have not,[5] or that all rural communities have been affluent and stable. Simply, it means that among the list of California's rural problems, huge population loss has not been a major concern.

*Recent Growth Patterns*

Recent population data indicate that California's rural areas are growing at a rate considerably higher than that of the state as a whole, but more slowly in the late 1980s than in the 1970s. The most recent estimates show a rural revival in the 1990s.

California has 58 counties, many of which are very large and awkward mixes of urban and rural development. As such, most data do not capture the extent of low-density development outside the sphere of influence of large cities. In this analysis counties will be classified not by their current status as metropolitan statistical areas, but by their long-term role as rural or minor metropolitan areas. For example, Butte County was made a SMSA after the 1980 census; the largest city is Chico, which now has 40,000 persons, but unincorporated areas include over two-thirds of the county population. In spite of the well-established urban core, most of the county is still rural and we have considered it as such. Even this does not solve all data problems; for example, Fresno County is a SMSA dominated by the city of Fresno with 350,000 persons, but it also is the nation's largest agricultural county and has 160,000 persons living in unincorporated areas. This rural population in an urban county is a larger part of California's rural landscape than the total population of many rural counties without a large city. While exact statistical portraits of rural California are difficult without additional new census data, we can proceed to give a reasonable overview by taking as the rural base of California the 33 counties that were classified as nonmetropolitan in 1975; five of these counties are now metropolitan (see Map 1).

The rural counties in California grew by 35 percent during the 1970s, a decade of rural reverse migration throughout the nation. However, during the 1980s the rural counties in California slowed slightly to 29 percent. In both cases the rural counties had a higher growth rate than urban —during the 1970s urban areas grew by only 17 percent, increasing to 25 percent during the 1980s. Thus, during the 1970s rural growth was especially fast and urban growth was slow. But by the 1980s the difference between the two had narrowed considerably— rural areas continued to grow at a brisk pace, while the urban areas resumed historic growth rates (see Map 2). Also, during the 1980s California's most remote counties experienced essentially no growth; while they did not lose population, the northern timber counties failed to gain as they did during the 1970s.

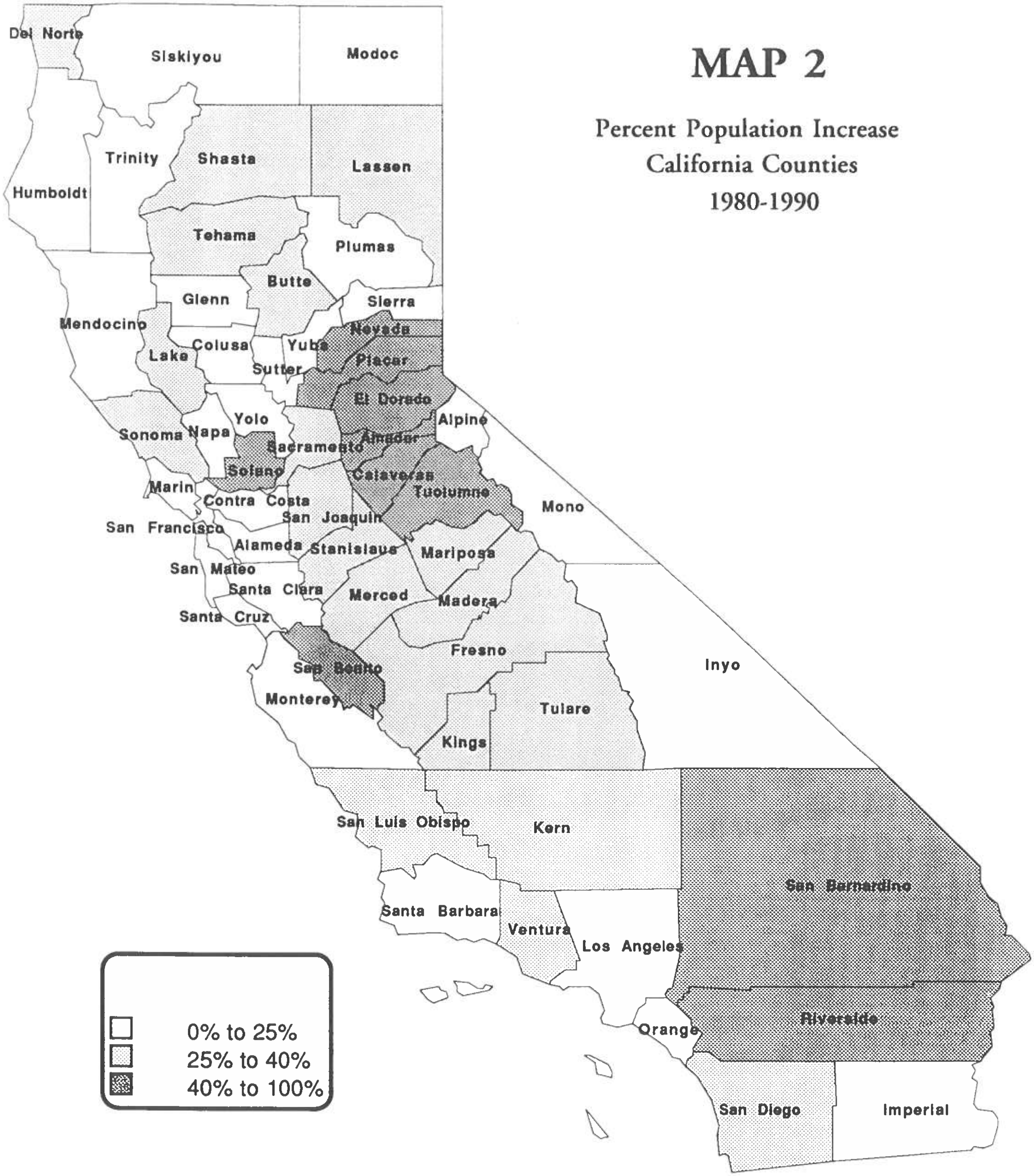
The most recent estimates show that the 1990s may begin a pattern of growth more similar to the 1970s than the 1980s. Between 1990-1991 the rural counties grew 3.92 percent, an annual rate faster than that of the 1970s. The major metropolitan counties in California grew by 2.58 percent during this same period. While it is difficult to make trend predictions based on only one year, there are signs of rural growth well in excess of urban growth. Seven of the top ten counties ranked

# MAP 1

**California's 33 Rural Counties**
**(1970 Non-SMSA's)**

# MAP 2

Percent Population Increase
California Counties
1980-1990



by population growth during the year were largely rural counties: Del Norte, Madera, Calaveras, El Dorado, Amador, Mariposa, Placer, and Mono (California Department of Finance, May 1991). The only large urban counties included were Riverside, San Bernardino, and Solano. In contrast, the ten slowest growth-rate counties included San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Matec, Santa Clara, and Alameda —counties that account for nearly half the state's population.

While various rural areas are growing in the early 1990s, they are not necessarily the same rural counties that were growing so rapidly a decade ago. For example, Lake County led the list in the early 1980s and is now ranked 25th. Many urbanizing counties with a strong rural orientation have slowed their population growth by initiative or growth control. For example, Santa Cruz, Napa, Marin, and Monterey have strong growth control programs and would be expected to grow faster in the absence of such measures.[6]

While growth dominates the discussion of California's demographic change, the more remote and forested counties have overall slow rates of growth and development. For example, 1980-90 census data show that the northern tier of counties had generally slow growth, with the exception of Del Norte county, which had a one-shot infusion of population due to completion of a large state prison — a measurable impact due to the small population base in the county (23,460). The remoteness of these areas and their dependence on forest industries continues to suppress growth.

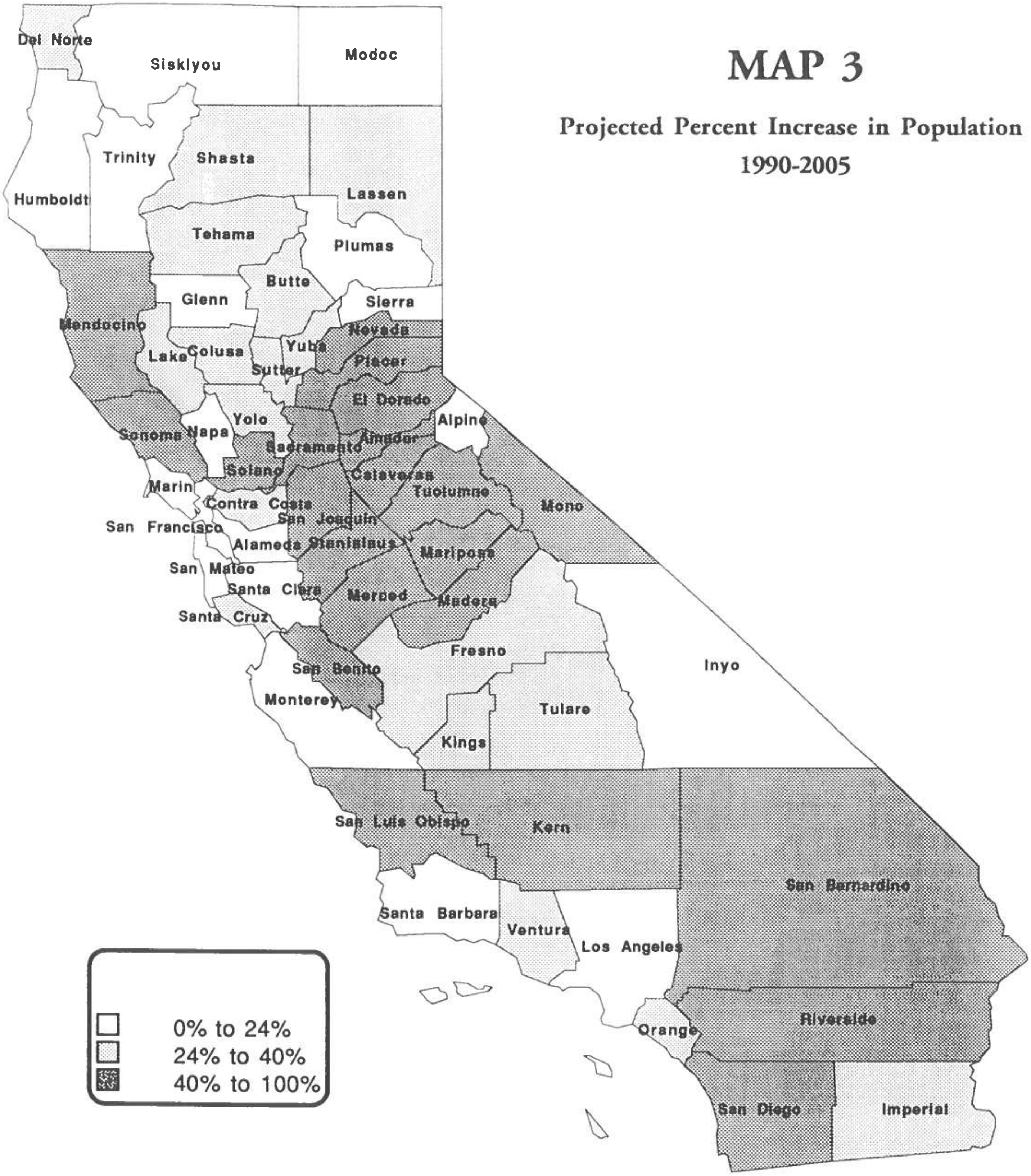
*Projections*

The parts of the state with the strongest rural and agricultural roots will be the fastest growing economic regions through the 1990s (California Department of Finance, April 1991). Map 3 shows the state population projections for 1990-2005. Along with exurban Los Angeles, growth will be concentrated in the central Sierra and Central Valley. Slow growth is anticipated for the already urbanized areas and the most remote rural counties.

Data from the Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy (CCSCE) show that the fastest projected job growth in the state from 1986 to 1995 will be in the Mountain region (30.32 percent), the Sacramento region (28.9 percent), the San Diego region (28.5 percent), and the San Joaquin region (25.1 percent), compared to a state growth rate of 20.7 percent. Existing urban areas as well as the more remote rural regions (e.g., North Coast at 14.1 percent) are projected to be below the state average in job growth (CCSCE, 1988: 90). For the most part economic growth tends to follow population growth in rural areas, though this relationship is not as empirically established as would be desired. However, the projections for job growth support the trend of continued exurban pressure on California's rural areas.

# MAP 3

## Projected Percent Increase in Population 1990-2005




Source: California's Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit, Report 91 P-1, *Interim Population Projections,* April 1991

*Impact of Growth*

Population growth in rural areas of the state has vastly more local impact and significance than its share of the state population growth The total rural growth between 1980-90 was some 528,446 persons out of a state growth of over 6 million, and well below the 636,000-person increase in San Diego County alone. Yet in some small towns populations doubled, new housing developments circled what used to be the town, property values rose speculatively, schools had to be constructed, sewage treatment plants upgraded, and stoplights installed in town. While minor in urban areas, these accommodations to growth in small rural towns stretched capacity, resulted in conflict, and set in motion development agendas foreign to small town politics and administration.

## 2. New Diversity in Rural Areas

California's rural communities have received a significant population boost from the large number of immigrants who have settled in the state.

*A Diverse State*

California has the most diverse population in the United States with the exception of Hawaii. While there are differences, rural communities are beginning to share the overall trends of increasing ethnic diversity in California. In 1970 Spanish surname or Hispanic origin and non-Caucasian racial groups made up 22 percent of the state's population, but by 1985 they constituted more than 37 percent. Accurate data are hard to obtain, but illegal migrants may make up six percent of the state's total population, and may be at least a third of the migratory stream entering the state (Fey and Fey, 1990: 39-42). Refugee settlement and resettlements in California now total about 500,000; in 1988, 35,500 settled in California —45 percent of the national refugees for that year.

Projections indicate that by 2010 today's minorities will be a majority (California Department of Finance, 1988); Bovier and Martin estimate, based on trend analysis, that minority groups could be 62 percent of California's population by 2030 (1985: 13). While these patterns clearly depend on international economic and political conditions, as well as U.S. immigration policies, there is little doubt that the Latino and Asian populations will continue faster growth because they have a much higher birth rate than the rest of the population and immigration is not likely to stop.

*Rural Diversity Increases*

The largest numbers of immigrants settle in the Los Angeles area, but significant numbers settle in rural communities. Still, the rural population of California is dominantly white, leading many to suspect that a motive for the migration to rural areas rests in "white flight." While California as a whole in 1990 was 57.2 percent non-Hispanic white, the rural areas were 73.3 percent white, with the vast majority of the minority population being Hispanic. This is changing rapidly, however.

One of the most interesting patterns is the growth of refugee groups in Central Valley communities. For example, Merced County has the largest per capita refugee population of any county in the United States. Some have come directly from Laos, but the largest number have come as secondary migrants from other areas of the United States. It is estimated that there are 10,880 refugees in Merced County (total population of 178,000), and in the town of Merced refugees constitute 15 percent of the population. Nearly 70 percent of Merced County's refugees are Hmong tribespeople, former hill-country residents of Laos. English language skills are so limited that one of four students in the Merced City School District is classified as limited English proficiency. Few have skills that could be translated into jobs. Nearly 90 percent of the Hmong were on welfare in 1988, swelling county welfare rolls to unmanageable proportions, and assimilation was hampered by their tight clan structure.[7] Customs such as squirrel hunting provoked local antagonism; indeed the challenge for social service workers was to help integrate people from a 13th century culture into 21st century California (Speizer, 1985).

The Hispanic population has been an important part of rural California for decades. In California, Rochin and Castillo noted that in 1980 there were 21 communities with over 70 percent Spanish-origin residents. The highest community was West Parlier in Fresno County with 98.2 percent Spanish-origin population. In these highly "Latino" communities the median age is only 22.7 compared to a median of 26.6 years in similar-size communities with low Latino populations and a statewide median of 29.9 years (Rochin and Castillo, 1990: 8). These communities also are places with high proportions of single, young, migrant workers who live in very large households. The Latino communities, which are called "rural colonias," are located largely in the rich agricultural areas of the state and are believed to have higher incidence of poverty with poorer access to social services than urban Latino neighborhoods. Finally, Rochin and Castillo show that the number of dominantly Hispanic communities is increasing and within each the number of Hispanics is growing very rapidly, leading support to a "Networking Hypothesis, i.e., communities with relatively high numbers of Latinos attract more Latinos" (Rochin and Castillo, 1990: 2).

*Elderly*

The elderly population is also increasing in rural areas. Motivated by lower housing prices and pleasant safe communities, retirees are taking their social security and pension incomes with them as they move from urban homes to rural communities. This has led to a greatly increased elderly population in rural areas. In 1990 the rural counties' population over age 60 had increased to 17.6 percent. This is well above the state total, where only 14.2 percent were over 60 years old. Data from the California Department of Finance project that 22 percent of the population will be over 60 by 2020, and rural areas will undoubtedly be higher.

*Many Cultures, Many Visions*

The changing origin of the people in rural California provides one roadmap of the difficult challenge facing less advantaged persons today. At the same time, the overlays of different people and their economic ties provide another map because with each group and each cultural perspective lies a different vision of the future. The diversity of cultures is in fact much less than the diversity of visions about what the community should be, what uses should be made of the natural environment, who should be allowed in and for what reason, and what should be restricted. Between the newly arrived professionals, retirees, commuters, farm workers, and Hmong refugees there is not only a gap in experience and opportunity, but a vast gulf of vision. A critical problem is comprehending and developing this diversity into a sense of community rather than allowing it to fragment and evolve into conflict.

### 3. Declining Role of Traditional Rural Industries

Rural communities are growing partially because people want to live in less congested rural environments, but location decisions are closely coupled with increased opportunities in some expanding sectors of the rural economy. While the composition of rural economies is incredibly complex and diffuse, the broad-brush picture is one of the declining relative importance of traditional rural industries such as forestry and agriculture. With the continuing deterioration of opportunity and income in primary industries, greater economic bifurcation is accelerated as new industries either exploit the displaced labor or introduce high-profile growth industries linked to urban or international markets rather than to local labor markets or suppliers.

*California Agriculture*

The agricultural industry in California remains the nation's largest, and eight of the top ten agricultural counties are in California. One-third of the crop land is planted for export, and the state supplies some 50 percent of the nation's fresh vegetables. California agriculture has expanded during the post-war period due to increased acreage coming under irrigation, and this has led to stable or increasing employment. In addition, labor savings from mechanization have been more than offset by the persistent conversion from commodity crops to more labor-intensive specialty crops such as berries, fruits, nuts, and gourmet vegetables (see Rosenberg, et al., 1990: 30).

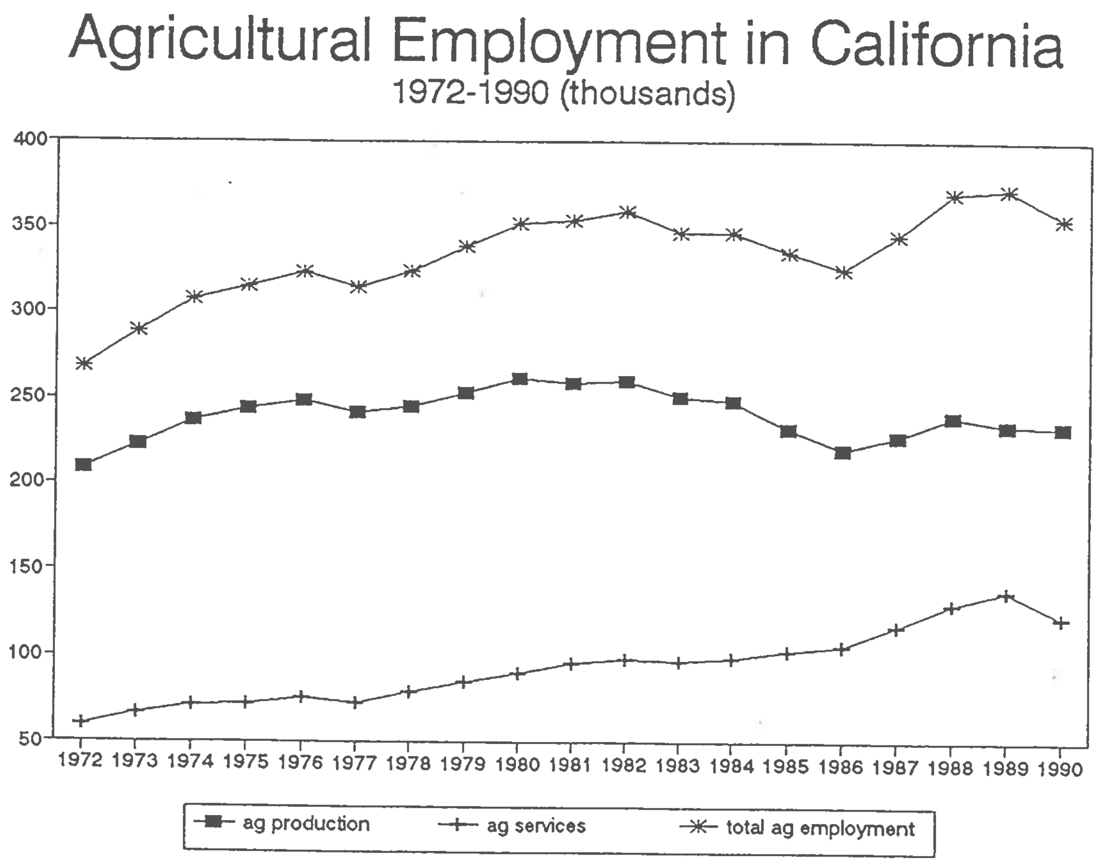
In California the change in agricultural employment has generated a modest increase in the absolute number of employees, but a significant decline in proportion of the work force. Production agricultural employment increased from 208,000 employees in 1972 to 262,000 in 1980 as new land was irrigated and more specialty crops were planted (see Figure 1). Since peaking in 1980, employment in agricultural production decreased to a low of 220,000 in 1986, though it bounced back to 239,000 in 1988. At the same time, agricultural services have shown a steady employment increase, going from about 60,000 workers in 1972 to 137,000 workers in 1989. As a consequence, total agricultural employment has increased from 268,000 in 1972 to 355,000 workers in 1988, though employment reached nearly this level in 1980 and dipped in the middle years of the decade. The changing levels of agricultural employment during the 1980s are partially due to how workers are counted; some of the production work has been shifted to contract labor which is counted as agricultural services. For example, in 1986 contract labor supplied 65,000 workers in 1986 (California Governor, 1991).

*Overall Growth*

As a component of the total economy, changes in agricultural employment have become increasingly dwarfed by other changes in the economy. Based on data from the California Employment Development Department (1972, 1986), agriculture, forestry, and fishery employment dropped from 3.9 percent of total statewide employment in 1972 to 3.3 percent in 1986. Similarly, in the Central Valley where the greatest number of farmworkers are employed, the share of employment dropped from 15.7 percent in 1972 to 11.7 percent in 1986. During this period, average farm employment levels increased in the Central Valley by about 20,000 workers from 165,000 to 186,000; however, employment in other industries added 521,000 new jobs, mostly in trade and service industries. These other industries created 26 times as many new jobs as agriculture created, and the *new* jobs during this 13-year period in the Central Valley were three times as large as the *total* agricultural, forestry, and fishery jobs at its peak (Bradshaw and Willoughby, 1989).

Data from the Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy show major projected job changes by industry. In rural areas the expansion of jobs and economic vitality is closely associated with the diversification of the rural economic base, especially in services. From 1979 to 1995, according to CCSCE projections for "basic industries" in the "rest of the state" outside major urban areas, resource-based jobs will decline by 13,200, while diversified manufacturing jobs will increase by 13,600; basic services will increase by 78,600 jobs. Total job growth in the rest of state region will be some 538,000 new jobs, a growth of 31.1 percent. Government employment, which

# Figure 1


Agricultural Employment in California
1972-1990 (thousands)
400
350
300
250
200
150
100
50
1972 1973 1974 1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990
ag production
ag services
total ag employment

provided a significant boost to rural economies during the 1970s, is projected to grow at a rate of 29.5 percent, slightly below that of the total (Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy, 1988: 90, 186, 187).

*New Sectors*

In fact, most of California's dynamic rural growth appears to be the exurban economy of the advanced industrial society — professional services, wholesaleing, clerical, and small manufacturing. New employment in the service industries accounts for the largest share of employment expansion in rural areas. Some jobs are in personal services that reflect a purely local transfer of income from one person to another, but the majority are in industries that draw some or most of their income from outside the local area. For example, trucking, utilities, wholesale trade, insurance, tourism, and retirement services bring outside money into rural areas. In most cases manufacturing is not the driving force in rural development, but it is usually one component.

*Resource Industry Communities*

One of the most significant aspects of decline in resource industries is felt by communities that are almost singly dependent on one firm or industry. For example, substantial rural small town employment losses have occurred in forestry and the number of mills has been reduced from nearly 1,000 in the 1950s to less than 100 today (California Department of Forestry 1988: 190-191), a loss magnified by the fact that a majority of these closed mills were a major employer in their respective communities. Today 70 of the remaining mills are in 60 small towns that remain vulnerable to further mill closures. In 1972 California employed 52,000 workers in lumber, which increased to nearly 60,000 by 1976; a decade later lumber employment remained at 60,000 in 1986, though this industry is strongly affected by the business cycle's effect on housing starts. A significant consequence of industry consolidation is that larger mills are located in more central urban communities. In addition, this static employment is a smaller proportion of a growing employment base. In 1972 employment in the lumber industry was 0.7 percent of total state employment; by 1986 it had fallen to 0.5 percent (computed from California Employment Development Department, 1972; 1986).

## 4. Restructuring the Rural Economy

The restructuring of the rural economy parallels that of the overall economy of California, though some forces occur later in rural areas and some have unique rural applications.

*Competitiveness*

Some branch plants and manufacturing industries are locating in rural communities to take advantage of lower production costs and available labor, but on average manufacturing accounts for only about 20 percent of California rural employment, and most of this is concentrated in lumber or food processing (see Belzer and Kroll, 1986). Most theories of rural development assume that traditional manufacturing plants in mature industries provide the economic base for rural communities; manufacturing production plants relocate from cities where innovation takes place to rural areas where they can gain a competitive advantage from low labor costs in the routine mass production of goods (see, for example, Moriarty, 1981). This is happening at a very slow pace in rural California, however, with few large plants relocating in the state; most relocations go out-of-state or to foreign countries. Industrial expansions, however, do produce new plants and jobs for rural communities.

*Employment Generation*

Self-employment is necessary because there are few large employers; the fact is that large numbers of migrants and others living in rural areas find that they must create their own jobs or else they will have nowhere to work. More centrally, as David Birch has pointed out (1987), small business is increasingly responsible for most job gains and product innovation. Rural small firms, frequently founded by rural residents, are the backbone of the economy in most California rural communities. In some cases the small firms make use of natural resources found in the area, and they often provide services both locally and for a wider market. In a survey of five rapidly growing rural communities, Bradshaw and Blakely (1981) showed that over 50 percent of recent (one- to five-year) migrants into the communities started their own business or were in the process of doing so. These businesses included a wide range of industries and skills, and their failure rate was surprisingly low.

Government is a major employer in many rural communities. Several rural communities have over 25 percent employment in government, including military bases, forest service, state government facilities (including prisons), schools, and local government facilities. Indirectly, the expanding number of social security recipients who can locate anywhere they like has led to extensive retirement migration to small towns where people enjoy both lower costs of living and an attractive life style (Bradshaw and Blakely, 1988). However, the reduction of federal and state funding to local programs since the mid-1970s has substantially reduced the role of government employment as a stimulus for rural population growth and economic development.

*Ties to Global Economy*

Economic growth, and with it population growth, is increasingly dependent on national and international patterns, and these determine regional dynamics. The electronics industry in Silicon Valley, electronics and aerospace in Orange County, and numerous other growth nodes have shaped regional fate, and with it the fate of surrounding rural areas (Storper and Walker, 1989). The fate of local communities is often determined by how a region competes internationally as much as by how it sets zoning or taxes, or how it struggles for economic development.

International markets determine the price received for agricultural products and for lumber. This is well understood because of large fluctuations in the demand for California rice, cotton, and other crops. Much of the Third World has become self-sufficient in basic commodity crops, and some developing countries are even exporting agricultural products. Within the developed world, fresh fruits and vegetables are now available year round, taking advantage of different seasons and growing conditions at the extreme corners of the earth, reducing the domestic consumption of frozen and canned produce. California's agriculture has long been attentive to export opportunities, and some $3.34 billion worth of products were exported in 1987, up from $2.84 billion in 1986 (American Farmland Trust, 1989: 59). But this was well below the peak export of $4.3 billion recorded in 1981 and was the clearest evidence for the deep financial problems faced by farmers throughout the nation, including California.

What is happening now is that other countries and areas are competing for this export market, and as production in other parts of the world increase and markets diversify, some California producers will fail to find good markets for their crops. A variant on this dynamic is the expanding number of Japanese food firms that are producing and packing in California for export to their own country; higher trade quotas for food exports to Japan may not affect the open market as much as many hope. In addition, imports are starting to erode markets that were once locally controlled. One indication of this is the expansion of fresh fruit and vegetable production in Mexico and South America for California consumption. Imported produce is also being used in canning and frozen food packing. For example, packing houses in Watsonville now receive a substantial amount of their broccoli from Mexico. Frozen broccoli from Mexico imported to the United States was a virtually negligible 6.1 percent in 1980 (compared to the California share at 92.4 percent); by 1987 the Mexican share had increased to 32.4 percent while the California share had dropped to only 51.6 percent. The net result in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties alone has been the loss of at least 5,000 jobs (Ferriss and Sundoval, 1991).

International markets are also determinate in forestry. At present there is a bitter conflict over the shipment of logs to Japan and other foreign countries (rather than cut lumber), and the differential between domestic lumber prices and that of Canada where government subsidies give Canadian companies an unfair advantage, according to U.S. industry claims.

Rural isolation has given way to intense global interdependence — reaching firms in the most remote rural communities. In Trinidad, along the Northern California coast, International Cable News is produced, giving the programming for satellite television broadcasts received by cable stations and private dishes throughout the world. In a remote Mendocino county valley, a small specialty dental-equipment manufacturing company makes products that are sold worldwide. Lawyers and investors in small towns deal with international issues by phone, and travel is not that much more difficult from a small town than from many suburban locations.

Blakely has argued that rural development must proceed by "building a new future for rural Americans as partners in the emerging global economy" (Blakely 1991: 70). The globalization of the economy directly affects rural communities by restructuring the way wealth is generated away from natural resources, and toward the manipulation of money. In addition, a new breed of professionals is operating in rural areas not bound by past urban institutional forms. These professionals are already working in a global economy from rural locations, participating in the information economy. While participation in the global economy may build new forms of community based on lifestyle rather than place, Blakely argues that rural communities can benefit from finding their role in the emerging world order (Blakely, 1991: 68-69).

Participation in the global economy, however, is another aspect of the bifurcation that is affecting rural California. Global interdependence is an increasingly complex dynamic that is centered in urban rather than in rural business practices, and international ties come slowly to rural industry. Most of the expertise in global business comes not from local businesses but from outsiders bringing their contacts with them.

### 5. Rural Areas Are Poor and Getting Poorer

Despite the economic vitality of much of rural California and the general strength of its agricultural industry, poverty is concentrated in rural areas (and center-city neighborhoods), and it is increasing. For example, in Stanislaus County the Department of Social Services estimates that they provide some form of assistance to 20 percent of the population in that county. This does not include an additional 10 percent who receive Social Security or disability. At the same time, the economy of the county has never done better; population is increasing at rates that cause alarm among many who want to protect the agricultural land and the rural character of their county. From a "jobs" perspective, major new employment efforts would tend to fuel the forces of residential growth. The problem is that the rural poor are often working but earning too little, are unable to work, or can only find seasonal work.

Taking as a base the 28 nonmetropolitan counties in 1989 and the 5 that were reclassified at the time of the 1980 census (total 33 rural vs. 25 urban; see Map 1), the following indicators show that rural California is in need of economic development:

- 16 of the 33 rural counties had unemployment rates in 1990 of over 10 percent, while only 3 of the 25 urban counties had unemployment rates this high, at a time when the total state unemployment was 5.6 percent. The three urban counties (Fresno, Kern, and Stanislaus), with nearly double the state unemployment rate, were all urban farm counties (California, Department of Finance, 1990: Table C-2).

- All of the 33 rural counties had median household incomes below $20,000, while only 12 of the 25 urban counties had median household income that low (Fey and Fey, 1990:247).

According to the most recent data from the California Department of Equal Opportunity, there were 176,752 California rural poor in 1987, and the rural poverty rate of 19.66 percent was 62 percent higher than the urban rate of 12.11 percent (California Department of Equal Opportunity, 1988: 10). The total rural poor are about the same as the number of Californians working in production agriculture (or about 60 percent of the total working in agriculture).[8]

In California there is a strong correlation between resource industry domination within the economy and poverty. The highest poverty rates are in the counties with the largest agricultural or forestry bases. This is the result of many factors, including the declining ability of agriculture to sustain the economic base of rural communities. In addition, high unemployment in many industries, seasonality, and low wages create conditions under which large families, even with dual wage earners, might not earn enough to be above the poverty line.

These conditions appear to be mitigated in communities with a larger number of small family-size farms. MacCannell (1986) has replicated the classic work of Walter Goldschmidt (1978), who argued that rural poverty increases and community vitality decreases as the size of farming operations increase. MacCannell found higher poverty in agricultural areas with large-size farms relying on hired labor, as well as higher incidence of:

> agricultural pollution, labor practices that lead to increasing social inequality, restricted opportunity to obtain land and start new enterprise, and the suppression of the development of a local middle class and the businesses and services demanded and supported by such a class (1986: 2).

MacCannell reports that in the Westlands Water District, poverty levels are three and four times that of the state level, reflecting the pressures toward low wages in large corporate farming operations. Not only is income low, but housing conditions are poor and social services such as health care are unavailable. The improvement of income levels, especially at the lowest rungs of the job ladder, is thus critical for dealing with rural poverty.

The most disturbing fact about the present rural poverty problem is that it includes a diverse and growing group of people whose needs are vast.

- *The Homeless.* The gap between wages and financial resources available to rural poor and the price of housing has continued to grow. Housing costs are exceeding by a large margin the resources available to low-income groups in rural communities, forcing poor people to live in parks, under bridges, in cars, and wherever they can find a little shelter. A *Los Angeles Times* story reported that

> Monterey County officials found 200 farm workers living in hand-dug, hillside caves and plastic lean-tos north of Salinas. In northern San Diego County, workers sleep in holes scooped out of the brush not far from $300,000 homes (Corwin, 1991).

Some rural homeless are taken care of by social service programs that provide beds in shelters or locate inexpensive motel rooms. Single poor men find few rooms in hotels, and in Modesto the two hotels that used to serve this population have both closed. Urban renewal has eliminated hundreds of residential rooms in poor sections of many rural farm towns. Public policy and planning are thus not only unable to respond to the rural homeless problem, but they may inadvertently cause it.

- *Family Distress.* Nearly half of all rural children are poor, and among the black population nearly three quarters are poor. In many cases these children never had a stable family life, and for others divorce forced hardship. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) is by far the largest program supporting poor people, generally single women and their children.

- *Mentally ill.* The cities are not the only places where people with various psychological problems are found as outcasts; they are prevalent in many small communities as well. State assistance programs that eliminated centralized care facilities and turned these people back to their communities have generally not met their needs.

*Bifurcation and Rural Development*

The process of bifurcation has perpetuated poverty conditions in generally affluent rural California. Bifurcation has produced two vastly different opportunity structures within rural communities. New growth communities and affluent newcomers are able to take advantage of one set of opportunities, while poor rural communities and the indigenous rural base that remains in growth communities have limited ability to participate in the overall development taking place in modern society. Of course, the two opportunity patterns are prototypes, and they are not exclusive, producing in actuality more of an opportunity continuum stretching from dependence and stagnation to development.

Development is problematic in both rural and urban areas. Development requires inputs of economic resources as well as human and organizational resources, which some groups and communities possess and some do not (Bradshaw, 1990). It is my thesis that rural areas, and particularly the indigenous rural populations, have identified and mobilized fewer of the resources that are needed in the modern economy, and they fail to develop in spite of the fact that outside development is coming into the community. I believe that rural underdevelopment in modern society is caused less by conscious exploitation than by benign neglect; underdevelopment is the failure of less advantaged segments of the society to obtain or mobilize both economic and organizational resources necessary to trade what they have for what they need. In the case of rural bifurcation, resource mobilization and organizational strategies are set by newcomers rather than by the traditional rural population.

## III. Policy Concerns

The challenges and prospects of the 21st century for California's rural communities pose a dilemma. Is it possible to simultaneously assist the traditional rural base in small towns and rural places, while at the same time accommodating and controlling the exurban growth that is taking place? To assist rural areas it is usually assumed that they need to expand their industrial base, attract outsiders, and build infrastructure. On the other hand, this growth does not trickle down to the rural poor, and growth may in fact lead to the erosion of existing local values.

### 1. Statewide Growth Agenda

If state projections are even remotely correct, California will add some 10 million persons within the next 20-25 years, reaching 40 million persons by 2005 (California Department of Finance, April 1991). This new growth is the same total as the 10 million population that

California had in 1950, a population explosion that covered the first 100 years of statehood, including the boom during and after World War II. During this period all the major cities were laid out, the statewide physical infrastructure was built to support urban growth, and plans were made that charted preeminence in both social and economic spheres. Then, in the 1960s, a bold master plan for public higher education, an extensive network of highways, and a far-reaching water system were designed to serve a growing state. By 1970 the population reached 20 million, but few foresaw the sustained urbanization that has developed in California.

However, the planning process did not continue into the 1970s and 1980s, and the infrastructure has not been maintained, let alone expanded to meet the needs of a much larger population. And there is no design, even vaguely articulated, that is far-reaching enough to envision where the projected 10 million new Californians will locate, what water they will drink and pour on their lawns, where they will work and how they will get there, and what industries will employ them. Planning and local politics have tended to be dominated by fiscal issues and by opposition to unwanted developments, including low-priced housing.[9]

The state population will inevitably expand into many rural areas. Some urban density increases will be possible, but present urban areas have nearly covered all buildable land and usually resist higher densities. Consequently, the Central Valley is ripe for expanded growth, and it is already feeling the pressure caused by high growth rates. Most critically, the standoff grows each year between developers with strong interests in developing specific parcels of land and public interest groups who want to resist every possible encroachment. Thus, each new development becomes highly uncertain; standards for negotiating development are established on a site-by-site basis after extensive and expensive legal maneuvering; and the planning process is buckling under the weight of challenges it was not designed to manage. Although we cannot accurately identify where the future growth will concentrate, state or regional policy has no agenda by which the growth could be channeled into areas which either need or desire it, or where it will do the least harm and the most good.

Although growth is now a statewide issue, the tools to manage it are all in the hands of county and city officials who have generally failed to consider the statewide and regional implications of their actions. Fragmentation is rampant, and regional influences are not managed. Development interests cite the need for new housing and industrial locations to reduce existing pressures on the state's urban areas, but the local urban infrastructure is often inadequate to accommodate expanded demands on it. Locally, developers have to pay development fees to cover their own immediate infrastructure impacts, but these fees to not cover more than local impacts in most cases. The impact on the regional infrastructure is rarely considered, leading to a haphazard pattern of development — stopped in one place and ballooning out in another. The state has a responsibility. As columnist Dan Walters recently wrote:

> It's simply ludicrous that certain areas of the state should be trying to cope with overdevelopment while others suffer from underdevelopment. Left to their own devices, private interests and local governments can not resolve that imbalance. It's the Governor and the Legislature which should be imposing some broader development policy on the state (Walters, 1989).

### 2. Regional Realignment

Rural areas need an expanded regional capacity to respond to problems and opportunities that are shared by several nearby communities. Small communities share many interests with each other that are different from those shared with the central cities. Recent efforts to split California into two states are receiving a favorable response in Northern California. In addition, small cities and their counties often find differing perspectives. Since Proposition 13 tax cuts, counties have experienced significantly more difficult financial problems, leading to revenue sharing strategies in some cases (Sokolow, 1991).

Similarly, problems faced in rural California do not stop at county lines. For example, the Central Valley growth pattern crosses at least eight counties along a north-south axis. The existing county configuration is lined up on an east-west axis that mixes diverse types of needs and interdependencies. TheCentral Valley is becoming a new 200-mile-long urban strip city between Sacramento and Visalia, formed by cities and towns that share much more in common with each other than they do with the new commuter towns at the base of Altamont Pass, the farm communities on the west side of the valley, or the foothill communities to the east. Yet the administrative structure fractures the urban strip and fails to adequately represent the interests of the rest. For some issues there is a great need to have coordination and action involving up to a dozen counties (such as air quality or transportation corridors), whereas for other issues (such as health care provision) a much smaller jurisdiction is feasible.

Flexible regional structures are available to meet these varying demands, but they have not been imaginatively used. For example, councils of government (COGs) are able to coordinate the efforts of one or several counties and their cities in a number of activities. Since COGs are limited by their lack of revenue-producing authority, they must rely on voluntary assessments from member units. When there are difficult coordination problems, communities that do not like the COG's decisions, even when for the overall good of the region, are liable to withdraw their participation in the COG. In general, COGs also lack a specific mandate, and they must rely on good will and cooperation among units for success. The perception that the COG is an additional intermediate level of authority between the state and the local community also hinders the support given them by local interests who feel that some of their authority is being reduced. In spite of these limitations, COGs may be a vehicle for cooperative planning in rural parts of the state.

Special districts are also useful in rural regions to meet specific local needs. In California there are over 5,000 special districts providing some 60 kinds of services. Special districts lack the scope open to COGs; since they are generally established for a specific purpose (e.g., waste disposal, public transportation, water, schools, etc.), they cannot easily develop a more comprehensive perspective. They often are established within counties, with the Board of Supervisors constituting the district's board. However, special districts have a great deal of flexibility because they can have an independently elected board, can generate revenue, and can even represent jurisdictions in more than one county (Bell and Price, 1984: 349-50). The advantages of special districts are that they can be established to meet specific needs for a selected regional configuration, and a set of these districts can provide the administrative structure needed for regional coordination.

### 3. Protection of Farming not Just Farmland

The reason the incentive for residential development in farm and wildland areas is so high is primarily because the economic return from the natural resource industries is generally lower than the return from development. Most of the mechanisms in place today to protect farm, forest, or range land from conversion have done little to assure that the economic return to the farmer or forest owner is adequate to keep the land in its present use. Land near growing urban areas is a particular problem because it assumes a speculative value far in excess of its productive value. Even if zoned for agricultural uses, the land prices reflect the potential of development. In order for agricultural and forest zoning to work, land owners and purchasers must believe that the land will not be rezoned, thus removing all speculative value. Research has shown that the speculative value of land can be reduced by firm zoning policies (see Nelson, 1987; Doherty, 1984).

Another problem for farm and forest land owners stems from adjacent lands being in very different uses, especially residential development (Healy and Short, 1981). For example, ranchers complain that pet dogs from adjacent housing developments frequently chase or kill their livestock, as well as carry disease. Crops have been vandalized and farm equipment stolen. On the other side, urban residents complain about aesthetic damage from logging operations, tractor noise, pesticide drift, farm odors, and dust — side effects of normal operations which are largely unavoidable. These conflicts between urban and rural industrial uses not only produce bad feelings but also constrain the possible economic activities on the land. It is ironic that many of the same people who complain about farming or logging are against any conversion of these lands for more development because of its "open space" quality. This problem means that land desired for agricultural o. forestry use needs to be viable for its intended use, not just available.

A number of strategies can alleviate the tensions between competing pressures on farm and forest land (see Schiffman, 1989). One strategy is to promote "right-to-farm" legislation that assures the farmer's rights by obtaining acknowledgement from an urban neighbor (as part of the deed) that the farmer has the right to use normal practices. Similar programs assure forest owners that they have the right to harvest trees. To some extent this resolves open conflict between land uses, but right-to-farm legislation just stops some legal action instead of resolving differences between neighbors. In some more progressive areas a buffer strip strategy is used whereby the developer either purchases land or obtains use rights to a strip of land which serves as a buffer on which either no farming or minimal farming is allowed. The buffer is sometimes used for recreation or other purposes. Buffers are expensive and require substantial planning, but they are effective.

More supportive programs go further than just assuring that farmers and timber owners can go about their normal business. The most farsighted programs actually mobilize urban interests to act decisively to promote the well-being of the farm and lumber opportunities nearby so that the land has productive value. Various forms of direct and indirect assistance to farmers in the rural urban interface may increase the viability of these operations. For example, cooperative purchasing and marketing ventures, additional technical assistance, community education programs, and similar programs can be carried out by extension personnel to improve agriculture in proximity to urban areas.

## 4. Rural Areas Need Development Assistance

When left on their own, rural communities and the rural interests in growing small towns often lack the capacity set or to be part of the development agenda. Although many are aware of the prevalence of rural deprivation in terms of income, jobs, social programs, and community control, dominance and control of economic and policy dynamics by urban organizations or interests leads to ineffective efforts for rural development. Some type of intervention is usually necessary for rural interests to develop in competition with this urban domination. The basic community development model in rural areas has responded to this situation by providing both leadership development and economic development assistance (see Christenson and Robinson, 1989). A strategy to assist rural areas does not necessarily entail substantial infusions of money, but it should compensate for the unavailability of many resources and organizational capacity in rural areas (Bradshaw, 1990).

Rural programs too often are small versions of urban programs not specially suited to rural needs. Because of the low density and small scale of rural efforts, programs often fail when they are not specially attentive to rural needs. Rural hospitals, for example, like all hospitals, are required to have a separate maternity delivery room not used for other operations. These rooms are rarely used in rural hospitals since most births now take place in "alternative birthing rooms" and there are fewer births due to demographic patterns. These rooms should be made into multipurpose surgical units in rural hospitals, improving the economic viability of the hospital.

The key to rural economic development largely lies in the smooth transition of traditional rural firms into competitive industrial units that will continue in their rural community. The loss of one rural employer that puts people out of work is more than a loss of a certain number of jobs. Lumber mill closures, for example, displace people who lack transferrable skills to fit into other growing industries. There are simply not enough employers who might need the skills of lumber workers; growth is usually in light manufacturing or service industries.

*Local Economic Development*

Local economic development strategies are effective in rural areas because they build on local resources. It is a myth that rural communities have nothing with which to compete in the world market, or that their only hope is outside factories or businesses. Many projects in rural California and elsewhere have built on local opportunities to develop creative enterprises that employ people (Blakely, 1989). For example, California economic developers have learned that working with existing businesses is more effective than recruiting new ones: an ongoing effort to support and expand rural business through reaching new markets, creating new products that can be produced from local resources, and retaining as much of the processing locally as possible are efforts that are usually easier than replacing firms that close.

Inadequate infrastructure for industrial development is a pervasive rural problem. The construction of industrial parks is one of the most common efforts to deal with the infrastructure problem because industrial developers generally believe that developed industrial parks are necessary to attract new industry and jobs. Rural industrial parks were built throughout California with federal economic development grants in the 1970s, but Belzer and Kroll (1986) reported that in the forest region about 90 percent of the parks still have no major tenants. In fact, research throughout the country has shown that rural industrial parks generally fail to attract tenants and are an ineffective rural infrastructure program (Blakely and Bradshaw, 1982). In California, the governor proposed a Rural Renaissance program in 1986 that included at least $30 million in loans and grants for what became known as the Rural Economic Development Infrastructure Program (REDIP). Unlike grant money that went to build rural infrastructure that may never be used, the REDIP loans and grants are for public works projects targeted to a specific business on a specific site. Projects targeted to a specific business that is planning to locate in an area have a much greater chance of benefitting rural communities compared to the industrial park approach because they are linked to businesses that have already negotiated to locate in the rural community. The Department of Commerce, which administers the REDIP program, reports that they have committed a substantial proportion of the money and that there are many good projects involved that deserve funding. But with recent state budget problems, new funding for Rural Renaissance projects has been eliminated.

Federal and private development efforts have also been important to assisting rural development. The most important are human resource programs, ranging from training and skill development to health services. Rural areas can compete in the advanced industrial society as long as they are not disadvantaged solely on the basis of their rurality. Skill and expertise in making transactions is probably the most needed rural development item. For example, rural businesses often face difficulty in arranging for financing. However, rural development specialists generally accept the fact that high-quality business proposals will get funded regardless of whether the business is located in rural or urban areas, providing it is presented in the right way. The rural disadvantage is not that there is no money available in rural areas — indeed, California banks are part of a national, if not global, money supply network. Good-quality rural business proposals falter because they cannot get access to the right people to evaluate their proposal. Rural bankers used to promote the good business projects coming from their community, but today rural bankers are low-level officials in major statewide banking operations and they lack the expertise to evaluate their client's business plans and to broker or package it properly. These functions are typically centralized by banks and used more easily by urban customers. Thus, economic development specialists who can review and broker rural loan applications are especially critical to overcoming the disadvantage of a lack of proximity to mall business financing services.

## IV. Conclusion

In the rural advanced industrial society, a striking reality is that development flows to areas with abundant human resources and a strong organizational structure to utilize talent and skills. Rural communities should not depend on external resources to unlock their latent potential. In most cases there is no outside firm or group willing to provide what is needed without extracting too high a toll and creating a pattern of dependency. A much better strategy for rural community development is to organize to improve the local condition with local resources.

A common development fallacy is that communities need to recruit outside industry to provide the impetus for development. However, in case after case, communities that develop local leadership, provide competent and ample training programs and facilities, organize local civic activities, and improve the community well-being are the ones that attract development; whereas those communities that emphasize attracting outside firms are generally unsuccessful. Firms prefer to locate in communities that have a vibrant social structure that is not dependent on finding an outside firm. In short, a socially underdeveloped community has only one thing to offer a firm seeking a potential location— low-priced labor and land. In contrast, a community that has taken seriously the development of its social structure can offer workers who will need less training, a proven community government that can solve problems, and a high quality of life for people the company will transfer to their new plant.

The bifurcation of California's rural communities means that the future will involve both a) supporting the sectors linked to the advanced industrial society and b) developing the sectors lacking access to opportunities and resources of the modern society. Because of the growth of the first, which is inherently attractive and positive, the plight of the latter is often forgotten because it is a "problem." However, the hope for California's forgotten communities lies in policies that integrate the underdeveloped sector with the growing one through targeted projects that enrich both human resources and the organizational access of less advantaged persons. Thus, in spite of bifurcation, development strategies can benefit both the newcomer with their network of urban resources and the rural person who inherited the rural environment.

## NOTES

[1]Research for this paper was supported by the University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the Central Valley Project of the Agricultural Issues Center, University of California at Davis.

[2]Data for 1979-1988; (Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy, 1988: 5).

[3]U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service data; see Fay and Fay, 1990: 40.

[4]Data are per capita personal income by county, 1989, calculated from *Survey of Current Business*, April 1991: 41.

[5]For example, between 1980-1990, all counties had an increase in population, and only four cities in non-metropolitan counties showed decline (1990 US Census).

[6]Growth control measures are generally more intensively used in the urban fringe areas (see Bradshaw, Willoughby, and Blakely, 1991).

[7]Data provided by Karen Prentiss, Office of Economic and Strategic Development, Merced County, and Lao Family Community Inc. Original data from "Profiles of the Highland Lao Communities in the United States," U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, November 1988.

[8]This comparison shows that the California rural poor population represents a large loss in human resources, not that the poor should work in agriculture.

[9]Edward Blakely made this point in a speech to the Agricultural Issues Center, University of California, Davis, 1990. Many expressed concern that planning is dominated by strategies referred to as "NIMBYism" (not in my back yard), and government has been largely paralyzed by the task of dealing with such changes.

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