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Reconsidering Territorial Governance to Account for Enhanced Rural-Urban Interdependence in America

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Abstract

The urban-rural interface is structured by intense social, economic and environmental interdependencies among urban and rural places. It is a space of interpenetration, not a binary division between urban and rural. Accordingly, governance at the rural-urban interface should be shaped by a hybrid of place-based and relational concepts. This approach respects the realities of places and the relationships linking places to one another in a networked society. The United States lacks a coherent, coordinated approach to multi-jurisdictional planning and governance at the national level. However, multi-jurisdictional governance can, and often does succeed through cooperation at the state and local levels. To illustrate this point, and to ground our theoretical discussion, we review three examples of multi-jurisdictional planning that are effective at the local level, and one example that has failed to accomplish such goals. Governance of the zone of rural-urban interactions will be more effective and accountable if policies and programs involve not only the constituent municipalities located in this space, but also the social, economic and environmental relationships in which these communities are embedded.

Key Words

Urban-rural interface; Territorial; Relational; Multi-jurisdictional governance; Mobilities turn; Soft spaces; Spaces of engagement

Bio Statements

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INTRODUCTION

'Taking back control' has become a populist theme in US politics. But how do local communities and their governments engage with forces of change which transcend their boundaries? Rural and urban communities all face the challenge of territorial governance in an ever more interdependent world, where many people feel increasingly powerless in the face of forces beyond their democratic control.

America's new rural-urban interface is a case in point, structured by ever more intense social, economic and environmental interdependencies among urban and rural places, and an inability individually to address the broader forces of change. Without cooperation, or coordination at a higher level, local governance is unable to respond effectivity to the challenges of an increasingly interdependent world. Focusing on one community at a time deflects attention from the collective needs and opportunities that exist in the broader field of multi-jurisdictional relationships. The result is waste and inefficiency, redundant programs, and missed opportunities for more strategic, effective and accountable governance. Moreover, competition and conflict between neighbouring places reduces the possibilities for cooperative solutions to challenges in the rural-urban interface (OECD 2013).

This paper develops a conceptual framework for examining the dynamic organization of communities located in the rural-urban interface; a conceptualization that provides guidance for more effective governance of interaction and interdependence. Castells wrote in 1997 of the "annihilation of space" brought about by advances in information technology, modern transportation and other societal and global transformations facilitated by deregulation, devolution of authority, ever more mobile capital and labor, and heightened corporate penetration throughout national and global space. Interestingly, much the same language was used in 1852 by Frederick Douglass to describe how the railway, steamship and telegraph incubated and intensified new patterns of spatial interaction. Our paper examines what such a networked and interdependent world, and associated developments in social science theory,

namely a 'relational turn' (Massey 2004) and a 'mobilities turn' (Urry 2007), implies for the ways we understand the interface between rural and urban space and its governance. More generally, we explore the challenges and opportunities of governing at the urban-rural interface which, we argue now requires a more cooperative logic rather than the traditional logic of nested hierarchical, spatial governance (Gualini 2006).

Our goal is to illustrate how current definitions and thinking about political geography represent a conceptual roadblock to spatial integration and governance at the rural-urban interface. We begin by explaining the 'urban-rural interface'. We then examine emerging patterns of social and economic organization in the rural-urban interface, along with a hybrid conceptualization that acknowledges growing interdependence among bounded places located hierarchically along the rural-urban continuum. We consider the current status of multi-jurisdictional governance at the regional and local levels, and illustrate how our hybrid approach contributes to more effective and accountable solutions to problems facing people and communities in the rural-urban interface. Our theoretical discussion is grounded in four examples of multi-jurisdictional governance, which effectively highlight a new perspective on spatial planning shaped by a relational understanding of space and place (Graham and Healey 1999; Healey 2007). This new perspective challenges our current understanding of autonomous bounded territorial entities, and proposes instead that spatial and social boundaries are increasingly porous - hence the term "soft spaces" introduced later in this paper (Paasi and Zimmerbauer 2016, 76). We conclude with some observations about the challenges and opportunities of using a hybrid territorial/relational lens to conceptualize and implement rural-urban governance.

THE NEW RURAL-URBAN INTERFACE

Social scientists, policy makers and social commentators have long observed that a growing amount of social, economic, demographic, political and environmental activity occurs in the rural-urban interface.[2] Until recently, this urban-rural space (e.g., peri-urban, urban fringe, or urban) has been thought of as almost entirely under urban control—political and economic influences that radiate outward from the urban core or city. Early regional economic theory, and much contemporary thinking, conceptualized metropolitan regions as an asymmetric set of social and economic relationships whereby the center dominates the hinterland, and places in the hinterland possess little or no collective agency. Shucksmith (2008, 63) has characterized this mode of thought as "cities as the locomotives of economic development, and rural areas as carriages being pulled along in the wake of the great modern metropolis." Ward (2006, 52) has

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[2] While this paper focuses on the US, the general framework we develop is relevant to highly developed, capitalist economies in general. The framework we propose is largely influenced by the European, the UK in particular, planning and social geographic literatures.

argued that such thinking "reproduces a rural development problem. It establishes and reinforces out-of-date notions of geographical centrality and hierarchies, and it actively marginalises places, consigning them to the periphery, dividing and polarising." This city-centric thinking is the legacy of central place theory (Christaller 1933; Losch 1940) as synthesized, enhanced and imported into American research on regional economy and society by Bogue (1950), Berry (1967) and many other scholars. Previous research has documented the growing demographic and economic dominance of the nation's large cities (Fischer and Hout 2008). Moreover, central place theory continues to form the fundamental basis of the American system of statistical geography, especially the core-based concepts of metropolitan statistical areas, micropolitan statistical areas, and non-core areas (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2013).

Recently, however, scholars have reconsidered the hierarchical nature of spatial relationships constituting US metropolitan regions. The urban-rural interface is conceptualized as a space of social and economic interdependence and interpenetration rather than a social or symbolic boundary separating urban from rural life (Lichter and Brown 2011; OECD 2013). The demographic and economic hegemony of the nation's large cities is unmistakeable, along with the asymmetrical nature of the power relationship between central cities and hinterland communities. Yet, recent scholarship has observed an acceleration in the volume of urban-rural transactions, but has begun to question the extent of asymmetry, and the relative lack of autonomy possessed by peripheral places, at least in certain types of transactions such as food security, waste management, recreation and leisure, and environmental services (Lichter and Brown 2014). Similarly, Scott (2011, 857) has argued that the interstitial spaces lying between metropolitan areas are undergoing significant transformation "as they become increasingly articulated with the rhythms and cultures of the modern metropolis," and scholars such as Harrison and Heley (2014, 18) and Cloke (2006, 19) suggest that this "urbanisation of the rural" is accompanied by 'ruralisation of the urban' as processes of deconcentration, decentralisation and gentrification lead the urban form to adopt very strong rural characteristics.

In this paper we employ a relational[3] perspective to examine the spatial organization of the rural-urban interface. We see the interface as a space that is produced and reproduced by social, economic, environmental and other types of transactions that occur on a regular basis, and are part and parcel of a metropolitan region's essential organization and structure. We see these rural-urban relationships whether they involve commuting and labor market mobility, land use changes, direct marketing of urban services or agricultural produce, or the hauling of urban trash to rural landfills as providing possibilities for collaboration on the one hand, and conflict on the other. These relationships are infused with power, the deployment of which is often opaque and obscured. The rural-urban interface is not neatly bounded by governmental

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[3] A 'relational perspective' means we focus on the relationships between people which may stretch across space. These include, for example, market relations, power relations, gender relations.

or politico-administrative borders. It is a multi-level, polycentric space where governance flows across units and jurisdictions (Homsy and Warner 2013), a "space of flows" as Castells (1989) terms it.[4] In this paper we critique approaches that unduly privilege governmental units and fail to engage with the social, economic, political and environmental relationships in which places are embedded.

In principle, an approach which addresses both relational and territorial aspects of the settlement system could be achieved, as noted above, either by hierarchical coordination from a higher level of government or by horizontal cooperation. The next section explains why we believe that the coordinated approach is decreasingly possible in contemporary America. We then set out an alternative, cooperative conceptual framework to help policy makers consider how to design and implement effective and accountable governance structures in support of people and communities in the rural-urban interface. Our framework is derived from the new spatial planning literature, as articulated by scholars such as Allmendinger and Haughton (2009), Gualini (2006), and Paasi (2013). While it embraces relational thinking, it also acts within legally sanctioned spaces (Allmendinger et al 2014; Shucksmith, Brown and Vergunst 2012; Cox 1993). Hence, our framework features a hybrid of territorial and relational thought – addressing both bounded political and administrative territories and the social, economic and environmental relationships in which these communities are enmeshed and embedded.

A LACK OF COORDINATION: THE RISE AND FALL OF NATIONAL-LEVEL REGIONAL PLANNING IN THE USA

 The U.S. federal government does not have an overarching regional development policy (OECD 2010). A 2009 World Development Report background paper contended that regional policy in the US is comprised of "…a complex web of (often poorly) integrated programs…that operate at different and often overlapping scales." (Hewings, Feser and Poole 2009, 2). The report goes on to observe that the "degree of coordination across spatial governance regimes is often ad hoc at best." Moreover, Drabenstott (2006) has shown that only a small fraction of US development-oriented programs actually focus on either place-specific development, for example HUD's Community Development Block Grant Program, or broader area and regional development, for example the Commerce Department's network of multi-county economic development districts (EDD). Instead, the majority of development-related funding and program effort is focused on physical infrastructure, education, and housing programs that occur in specific, bounded places. These observations are consistent with Storper et al's recent study of San Francisco's and Los Angeles' differing fortunes since 1970. They conclude that "it is

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[4] Flows of people, workers, capital, information, waste, etc.

not realistic to propose that regions devise formal strategies for regional economic development in the US. There would be no agency to implement them even if they were well designed… In addition, existing interests in fragmentation and overlap are entrenched and supported by a widely shared ideology of community economic development and local control." (Storper et al. 2015, 227)

The relative lack of national level programs promoting and supporting multi-jurisdictional planning and development was not always the case in the US. In fact, as late as the early 1980s the US had a robust system of sub-state regionalism. At that time, a wide variety of regional councils and agencies was supported by federal grant programs. These councils operated in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. Nonmetropolitan regional councils tended to place more emphasis on general management, planning, and policy advice to local governments, while metropolitan councils devoted more attention to planning in such specific areas as environmental quality and transportation (Stam and Reid 1980). Most of the programs assisted regional organizations that performed specific functions such as transportation, land use planning, or economic development. Some of the Federal programs, however, such as those focusing on health care planning, only assisted sub-state regional organizations devoted to particular functions.[5] Most, but not all, of these Federal programs were available nationwide.

Sub-state regionalism began after World War II in the US, and accelerated greatly during the early 1970s. For about a decade, the federal government had a significant impact on the growth of sub-state regionalism. According to research by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR 1977), only five Federal planning grant programs for community development used an area wide approach in 1964. By 1972, there were 24 such programs, and 32 by 1976 (ACIR 1979). Beginning in the late sixties, the Federal Government coordinated general purpose regional development programs through a network of A-95 regional clearinghouses. In addition, regional planning and service delivery for single functions such as health care, transportation, mental health, and environmental quality management also developed during this time. Federally mandated planning in general, and sub-state regionalism in particular, dwindled by the late 1970s. Neither the Carter nor the Reagan administration nor Congress was willing to sustain it (Bowman and Franke 2008). The Reagan Administration was especially hostile to the idea of federal planning. With its supply side view of the market, the culture of planning was seen to limit the reach of market mechanisms, and to substitute

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[5] For example, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) were established under the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1973 to respond to the needs of those 60 and over in every local community. There are currently over 670 AAAs around the country.

professional for consumer judgment (Melhado 2006). Accordingly, nationally managed sub-state regionalism virtually disappeared in the US after 1980.[6]

TOWARDS COOPERATION: A TERRITORIAL FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING GOVERNANCE OF THE RURAL-URBAN INTERFACE

Without regional or sub-regional governance, atomised local government is likely to lose its capacity to perform effectively in an increasingly interdependent, networked and neoliberal world (Lewis et al, 2013), in the face of market and other forces which transcend spatial or place boundaries. Jobs are off-shored, services centralized or withdrawn, and decisions taken far away in boardrooms and offices without knowledge of or commitment to the places concerned.

Some scholars have characterised these transformations in terms of the differential mobility of people in places, arguing that this difference is becoming an increasingly potent stratifying factor of life-chances in our late modern or postmodern times because the differential mobility of people in places constrain some while enabling others, whether in urban or rural settings (Urry 2007). These ideas have become widely adopted in sociology to the extent they are referred to as a 'mobilities turn'. Complimentary with this is the 'relational turn' being explored by geographers and planners, both in Europe and America. They focus on the social and networked nature of space and scale (Friedmann 1993; Amin 2004; Massey 2004, 2005; Thrift 2004), and the increasingly "porous" nature of boundaries and borders. (Amin 2002, 391). These writers dispute "the idea that space can be understood as a 'container' and scales as nested hierarchies of bounded and partitioned spaces" (Allmendinger et al 2014, 2703). Nevertheless, there is a recognition that portraying relational and territorial spaces as unduly dichotomous may be unhelpful, and that both may be significant.

This raises many questions for both rural and urban studies. Most fundamentally, recognition of the networked nature of space and scale and the porous nature of boundaries and borders might call into question the notion of 'place' itself, place-based development, the rural-urban binary implicit in rural or urban studies and importantly for this paper, the liminal space that comprises the rural-urban interface. However, we argue that, while the extent and nature of

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[6] Two exceptions to the demise of multi-jurisdictional planning and development programs in the US should be mentioned: (a) The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and (b) The US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA). The ARC's purpose is to ameliorate regional underdevelopment through "…the coordinated effort of a regional development organization working with state and local development units" (Hewings, Feser and Poole 2009, 7; Isserman and Rephann 1995). The EDA is one of the only US programs explicitly tasked with promoting sub-state regional planning and development. EDA's top three priorities include: (a) supporting long term coordinated economic development, (b) supporting innovation and competitiveness, and (c) encouraging entrepreneurship (US EDA 2007).

mobility have increased in contemporary society and new forms of mobility are restructuring people's social and economic lives, people still solve the challenges of everyday life in places which are meaningful for them (Shucksmith, Brown and Vergunst 2012; Beynon and Hudson 1993). Accordingly, we reject a simple territorial vs relational dichotomy, and see the rural-urban interface as a synthesis of place-based relationships and broader relational processes, both of which must be addressed. In other words, local governance might draw upon and employ a range of relational networks that stretch beyond the local jurisdiction, but these are still simultaneously lodged within their territories (Allen and Cochrane 2010).

To this end, "local and regional actors construct 'spaces of engagement' (or networks of association) that link them to regional, national or supranational institutions in order to secure their local 'spaces of dependence' – areas in which their prosperity, power or legitimacy relies on the reproduction of certain social relations" (Mackinnon 2010, 5). Other attempts to overcome the territorial/relational dualism have drawn on a range of theories, or revived the concept of localities in terms of absolute, relative and relational space (Jones and Woods 2014; Anderson and McFarlane 2011). Jones and Woods make the important point that to have analytical value any locality must have both material coherence and imagined coherence. In other words, there must both be institutional structures that hold a locality together and provide vehicles for collective action, and there must also be a shared sense of identity which makes that place meaningful as a space of collective action.

So while increasing mobilities and global flows are restructuring the nature of rural-urban and global-local relationships, places still matter. Many institutions such as councils are still place-based and places still have meaning for those who live there. The challenge for governance in the rural-urban interface is to simultaneously acknowledge the legitimacy of place-based interests while also engaging with transcendent inter-place relationships through constructing spaces of engagement.

This combination of relational and territorial insights has implications for multi-level governance in many spheres, and not only with respect to the rural-urban interface. First of all, this calls into question how we conceive of place-based policies, whether characterised as 'bottom-up' (endogenous) or 'top-down' (exogenous) in rural studies; 'place-shaping' in urban studies and planning (Forester 1999); and 'asset-based community development' or 'community capitals' approaches (Flora and Flora 2008).

Our perspective on governance in the rural-urban interface is shaped by the notion of networked development (Shucksmith 2012; Lowe et al., 1995; Ray, 2006). This proposes that social and economic development processes combine bottom-up, internal (endogenous) forces and top-down, external (exogenous) forces. The local necessarily interacts with the extra-local in contemporary networked society, with importance attached to both vertical (hierarchical)

and horizontal networks. Critical to the socio-economic development process are those institutions, actors and networks that have the capacity to link businesses, communities and institutions involved in governance at a variety of scales. Networked development therefore involves not only deliberative governance and territorial place shaping, but also institutional capacity building and sharing of responsibilities with an enabling state and other external actors (Shucksmith 2012). Places need to be integrated within wider networks and structures so that external resources can be readily appropriated when they are absent or damaged in the local setting, and to secure their wider spaces of association in a networked world.

Challenges to fundamental spatial concepts such as territory, border and place have also been central to recent developments in planning theory, notably the emergence of a new 'spatial planning' founded upon a relational understanding of space and place (Graham and Healey 1999; Healey 2007). While planners "have traditionally thought and practiced with and through clearly bounded scales (national, regional, local), in this century the new spatial planning is imposing relationally inscribed concepts… into the lexicon of spatial planners" (Heley 2013, 1325). "Relational thinking has challenged the understanding of the world as a simple continuum of bounded territorial entities and suggests that regions are social constructs and results of power struggles, and that their borders are increasingly porous,…" (Paasi and Zimmerbauer 2016, 76). Nevertheless, consistent with our contention that interface governance should reflect a combination of relational and territorial thinking, the legitimacy and accountability of planners is still seen to reside in bounded territories, with their electorates, laws, and regulatory codes. For this reason, Cochrane and Ward (2012, 7) argue that "policy-making has to be understood as both relational and territorial, as both in motion and simultaneously fixed, or embedded in place. Rather than seeing this as an inherently contradictory process, however, what matters is to be able to explore the ways in which the working through of this tension serves to produce policies and places, policies in place."

In the absence of hierarchical coordination at regional or sub-regional level, cooperation between local jurisdictions offers, in principle, an alternative approach to engaging with the relational forces of change which transcend political and administrative boundaries. But can they succeed in practice in enabling policy-making which is both territorial and relational?

Practical attempts to govern the rural-urban interface more effectively through a hybrid of relational and territorial thinking at state and local level have indeed emerged in the US. We have seen in the previous section that the decline of national-level coordination of regional planning in the US frustrates the need to address both territorial and relational aspects of governance, and this section has advanced an alternative conceptual approach which lends itself to cooperation. We turn now, in the next section, to concrete examples of relational governance in action at the state and local levels, suggesting that such cooperation may be more feasible and appropriate to the American context than hierarchical coordination. These

examples ground the more theoretical discussion, and show how the relational and territorial perspectives help US planners and policy makers reassert the promise of multi-scalar governance and planning in the rural-urban interface.

MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND PLANNING IN THE US: COOPERATIVE APPROACHES

While we have seen that the US lacks a coherent national approach to multi-jurisdictional governance, many states, and some metropolitan areas have developed thoughtful and innovative approaches to assist in regional planning and development. These schemes can be comprehensive and multi-functional in nature, or focused on a particular function such as waste management, fire protection or water supply. We provide three examples of effective state-level comprehensive planning and development schemes to show that multi-jurisdictional planning and governance exists and succeeds in the US today, and to describe their similarities and differences of focus and organization. These examples are all consistent with the hybridized territorial and relational approach to rural-urban interface governance proposed above. We also include one example of a lack of cooperation frustrating effective governance.

Walworth County's Comprehensive Plan: In 1999, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted the "Smart Growth" law that provided a new framework for the development, adoption, and implementation of comprehensive plans by counties, cities, villages, and towns (Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission 2009). A good example of this was developed by Walworth County. Walworth, located in the southeast corner of the state, comprises the Whitewater-Elkhorn Micropolitan Statistical Area. Its 102,000 persons are spread across 15 towns that include 5 small cities, 10 villages and open country. In addition, it is contiguous to both the Milwaukee and Racine metropolitan statistical areas. Accordingly, Walworth County is squarely in the rural-urban interface. In response to the State's requirements, Walworth County, in cooperation with 13 of its 15 towns, prepared a multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan that includes issues and opportunities; housing; transportation; utilities and community facilities; agricultural, natural, and cultural resources; economic development; intergovernmental cooperation; land use; and implementation (Walworth County, Wisconsin 2010). The plan was developed, and is governed, by a Smart Growth Technical Advisory Committee that includes one elected representative from each participating town, and five Walworth County Board representatives at large. The Technical Advisory Committee, the County Board, and the participating towns designed a public participation plan at the onset. This essential part of the process seeks to obtain a high level of public input throughout the course of the planning effort. Hence, the Walworth plan exemplifies the territorial and relational thinking proposed in this paper.

Flagstaff Arizona's Fire Suppression Initiative: Flagstaff Arizona is located in the middle of the world's largest contiguous ponderosa pine forest. According to forest ecologists at the University of Northern Arizona, decades of putting fires out has caused the forest to get too dense, making it more susceptible to big, hot, devastating fires. Without action, unnaturally large and severe wildfire exacerbated by climate change will destroy the forests and put communities at risk. Faced with this probable fate, the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (FFRI) was established to conduct landscape-scale restoration planning and implementation to protect critical wildlife habitat, safeguard communities, and create jobs. The goal is to restore a vast set of forests, grasslands, and springs in Arizona's high country.

After decades of devastating wildfires and a year of discussions, the US Forest Service, other natural resource agencies, community leaders, environmentalists, scientists, and private industry leaders established the Four Forest Restoration Initiative to restore forest ecosystems on four national forests in Arizona. The initiative includes a multi-party monitoring effort to share diverse perspectives between multiple interests and stakeholders thereby fostering understanding, and incorporating the latest scientific evidence concerning environmental and forest management. The FFRI is a collaborative effort involving over thirty individual public and private entities. This diverse group includes the city of Flagstaff and other municipalities, the county, the state, the timber industry, the National Park Service, and the US Forest Service. These Stakeholders meet monthly, do research, and work with the Forest Service to create small controlled fires, and remove brush and weeds that can lead to large uncontrolled fires that endanger communities, housing and wildlife. This is a collaborative process. FFRI differs from many past forest management schemes in that it pays attention to both territorial entities such as local government, but also the relationships that link them together in a socio-biological ecosystem. In other words, the initiative's organizational model is consistent with the hybrid territorial/relational model put forth in this paper. Coincidentally, the urban-rural interface that envelops Flagstaff and its environs is part of the ecosystem being managed by FFRI.

New York City's Watershed: Watershed management is a clear example of successful multi-scalar governance of natural resources (Bloomquist and Schlager 2005). Watersheds are often located, at least in part, in the rural-urban interface. Hence, this is a good example through which to examine how the [cooperative and competitive] relationships joining urban and rural communities can be mobilized to structure and regulate the use of water located in the hinterland of large cities. Since individuals and groups struggle over decision making related to the control of water, developing unified authorities involving multiple jurisdictions is especially challenging. We examine this process through the lens of the New York City Watershed.

New York City obtains its water from a system of reservoirs located in the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River Valley (See figure 1). The water is of exceptionally high quality, and requires less treatment and filtration than other urban water systems. Hence, social and

economic activities occurring in the vicinity of NYC's water sources increase the risks of contamination, and the need for expensive filtration and other kinds of treatment. Not surprisingly, NYC seeks to control land use in the vicinity of its reservoirs by purchasing conservation easements and by restricting economic activities such as dairy farming in the vicinity of its water sources. In the early 1990s, NYC proposed regulatory actions that aroused fears that agriculture and other economic activities in the watershed would be significantly curtailed. Specifically, NYC's proposed regulations would have produced buffer zones around water sources, restricted construction of new sewer connections, and led to significant land purchases by the city around reservoirs and water courses. This dynamic generated a contentious process of negotiation between NYC and 41 communities located in the watershed.

Figure 1: The New York City Watershed

(Place figure 1 here)

In the early 1990s, when NYC unveiled its planned regulations, most observers expected the City to overwhelm the watershed communities and implement its development limiting regulations. To begin with, the watershed was comprised of 41 separate localities each of which had strong individual interests, but which lacked a collective "regional identity." NYC's proposed regulatory actions awakened a long held and widespread view of NYC as an "oppressor" of rural towns that dated back to the early part of the 20th century when the City constructed the *West of Hudson* water system (Pfeffer and Wagenet 2003).This oppositional view helped spur a community development process among the 41 towns in the New York City watershed that resulted in the establishment of the *Coalition of Watershed Towns.* This community of interest enabled the Watershed Coalition to negotiate a mutually advantageous memorandum of agreement with NYC in 1997. The MOA permitted the purchase land or conservation easements if NYC agreed not to exercise eminent domain to acquire land for watershed protection. In addition, a Watershed Protection and Partnership Program involving NYC and the 41 watershed towns was established as a mechanism to protect the watershed's ecology, while at the same time protecting the social and economic vitality of the watershed communities. Hence, this multi-scalar governance process "encompasses the interests of both water quality protection for downstream consumers, and the social and economic well-being for upstream residents" (Pfeffer and Wagenet 2003, xx) This integrated, regional watershed management system provides a mechanism for accountability that sets performance standards and responds to diverse community interests (Bloomquist and Schlager 2005). As a result, NYC has avoided costly infrastructure and operating expenditures while upstate communities have been able to seek development initiatives consistent with the MOA.

Lexington Kentucky: The OECD's recent (2013) report on rural-urban partnerships shows that despite the potential advantages of a more cooperative approach, substantial obstacles to

cooperation remain in their case study, Lexington Kentucky. The report showed trust is lacking between the county governments and that, on top of that, the nature of the local tax system stimulates aggressive competition between local authorities for economic development and adds to existing rivalries among counties, making cooperation and partnerships more difficult. Lexington and its surrounding counties also have radically different perspectives on future growth. The OECD concludes that "While virtually all local officials recognize that in principle, regional collaboration could improve collective well-being, they fear their jurisdiction would lose in the process. In this environment, absent a compelling reason to collaborate, it is safer politically to act autonomously… " (OECD 2013, 329). The key impediments are lack of trust, the perceived economic self-interest of local government, differences in culture and values, and a lack of sub-regional coherence. This example shows how a lack of cooperation often hampers effective multi-jurisdictional governance.

'SOFT SPACES' AS A COOPERATIVE MODEL FOR PLANNING IN THE RURAL-URBAN INTERFACE

These examples from the US show that it is possible to transcend the territorial/relational dichotomy, but also reveal some of the cultural and structural challenges and obstacles involved. The central concern, we have argued, is that the legitimacy and accountability of elected politicians and their executives still rests in bounded territories, but they must now confront relational processes and porous boundaries which transcend but also inhabit territories. Meeting these challenges requires conceptual and theoretical development from academia as well as innovations in practices of governance.

In this final section we raise the question of whether the concept of 'soft space', inspired by developments in European and UK planning and economic development practice might offer potential in both these respects for America. Indeed, Allmendinger and Haughton (2009) introduced this concept to show how relational thinking can influence not just research and spatial analysis, but also spatial policy and practice. They noticed that spatial planning, while still tied legally to set boundaries for formal plans, was in practice also operating beyond its formal jurisdiction through extending over 'soft spaces' beyond its borders, in order to reflect the complexity of relationships which stretch further afield (Allmendinger and Haughton 2009, 619). In other words, they observed in practice an increasing use of strategic and delivery interventions at scales other than those of individual jurisdictions in order to work within complex multilayered, fluid and sometimes fuzzy scales of policy and governance arrangements, with a broad range of public, private and civil society actors.

In short, planners are found to have begun already to work at new policy scales of multi-area sub-regions which do not conform to politico-administrative boundaries, through the pragmatic device of fuzzy boundaries, often in city-regions[7] or in other urban-rural interfaces such as

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[7] A city-region is the functional region around a city, consisting of several areas of local government.

around London. This responds to a policy impetus to break away from the shackles of pre-existing work patterns which are viewed as slow, bureaucratic, or not reflecting the real geographies of problems and opportunities (ibid: 619). Allmendinger et al (2014, 2705) therefore conceptualize soft spaces as new spaces for governance that can be relatively enduring or ephemeral, formal or informal, centrally sanctioned or locally driven. They argue that these provide an opportunity to address mismatches between administrative and functional areas by creating bespoke spaces for dealing with specific issues such as regeneration, integrating different sectors such as transport, infrastructure, education, etc. in such processes operating at various scales. The bottom line, and why we think these concepts are critical to American thinking about governance and policy development in the rural-urban interface, is that soft spaces are hybrids of territorial and relational space, both conceptually and in practical application, enabling (bounded) municipalities or communities and their executives to engage with relational flows and processes which transcend boundaries. For this reason the developing literature on soft space and fuzzy boundaries may be an avenue worth exploring for US practitioners and US political and social scientists.

To that end, a brief introduction to that literature is sketched here. The 'soft space' approach has some practical advantages which enable cooperation to proceed even where there are significant obstacles to more formal collaboration. Perhaps its most attractive feature is its informality and the scope afforded for creativity and experimentation (alongside political deniability). Indeed, it is this experimental and political dimension to multi-jurisdictional schemes that allows them to be used politically, testing strategies and approaches to an issue without ceding ultimate authority (Allmendinger et al 2014, 2706). This, of course, is double-edged and has its dangers alongside these advantages.

Thus, a potentially serious criticism of such informal approaches, and a challenge both for practice and academia, is what we characterize as the dark side of multi-jurisdictional governance, i.e., the potential of such practices for obscuring power arrangements, and being non-democratic. Soft spaces may allow experiments and initiatives to escape democratic scrutiny to the benefit of powerful actors, while obscuring where power actually resides. For example, Allmendinger and Haughton (2009) argue that the development of (so-called) sustainable communities in the Thames Gateway in the spaces between formal agencies and plans and strategies has been used to overcome resistance to new housing development. Olsen and Richardson (2011, 361) see such use of multi-jurisdictional governance as a means to camouflage contested spatial politics, while Paasi and Zimmerbauer (2016, 88) emphasize that power in such processes derives not from one electorate or its officers but is embedded in a complex assemblage of actors, interactions, interests, negotiations, struggles and events that occur through networks, perhaps facilitating capture of democratic processes by social elites.

This raises the question of how to enjoy the advantages of working in this informal, creative way while also ensuring transparency and accountability.

From an analytical perspective we offer two further criticisms of the concept of soft space, neither of which may impede its practical governance application to rural-urban interaction. First, the soft spaces may only loosely be said to create hybrids of territorial and relational space, since they only seem to apply to contiguous territories and relations which overspill administrative boundaries, rather than in circumstances where it is harder to map relational space on to territorial space. In this sense soft spaces may be more akin to Jones and Woods' (2014) lens of *relative space* than *relational space.* This may matter less when focusing on sub-regional or regional rural-urban interdependencies than if we were concerned with the non-contiguous urban-rural interdependencies of the global agri-food complex, for example. Second, because soft space derives from planning theory it still privileges governments (local, regional and national) as social and political actors, despite the diminished role of local governments under neoliberalism in an interconnected world.

These emerging approaches to transcending the territorial/relational dichotomy have advantages and dangers, therefore, some of which may be inherent but others may be avoidable. The concepts of soft space and fuzzy boundaries emanate from a substantial international literature from which American academics and practitioners can draw in developing appropriate approaches to conceptualizing and addressing pressing issues in the rural-urban interface.

CONCLUSIONS: THE PROMISE OF RELATIONAL GOVERNANCE AT THE RURAL-URBAN INTERFACE

In this paper we have conceptualized the rural-urban interface as a social and economic space that is produced and reproduced by social, economic, political and other kinds of relationships between urban and rural communities. Rather than being a boundary that divides rural from urban space, the interface is a zone of intense interaction that links rural and urban people and communities. We drew on ideas from European planning and geography to develop a conceptual framework for examining the dynamic structures and processes that construct the interface, and as a basis for multi-scalar governance of rural-urban space where diverse processes are structuring and restructuring everyday life. The dynamic model we propose is a hybrid of territorial and relational spaces which enables (bounded) electorates and their executives to engage with relational flows and processes that transcend political and municipal boundaries. This hybrid of territorial and relational thinking identifies the real geographies of problems and opportunities thereby minimizing the mismatch between administrative and

functional areas. Places, with their institutions, governments, histories and legacies matter in present day America, but these entities are embedded in complex multi-scalar networks where much social, economic, and political life is transacted. Hence, governance in the rural-urban interface can be more effective, responsive, and accountable where both territorial and relational aspects of rural and urban space are considered and accounted for in policy development and program administration.

We have proposed that the 'soft space' approach is flexible and dynamic, but that it carries a risk of obscuring power relationships and undermining democratic governance. Instead we propose a hybrid, cooperative approach which, while still flexible and experimental, can help to minimize the anti-democratic tendencies of soft space because concrete communities have histories, legacies, and identities, or what Jones and Woods (2014) have called material and imagined coherence (see above). We used diverse examples to ground our discussion of the hybrid governance model, and demonstrate that these theoretical concepts can be translated into real world practice, so long as we also learn from experiences and studies in the UK and Europe as well as those in the US. Our perspective includes not only the network society of enhanced connectivity and interdependencies, but also the changed role of governmental and administrative borders and place-based actors.

Consistent with our contention that a hybrid approach can be effective and accountable, Storper and his colleagues (2015) showed that San Francisco's superior performance compared with that of Los Angeles is at least partly related to its adoption of multi-jurisdictional governance. They observe that while neither San Francisco nor Los Angeles has a single regional development agency with powers to coordinate regional development policies, "nevertheless, many regionally important projects are carried out by either the biggest cities in the region or by special-purpose agencies created by political coalitions among the cities and counties," including for example water supplies and transport infrastructure (Storper et al 2015, 145). However, the study concludes that San Francisco has learned more about the benefits of multi-scalar cooperation, and has built more effective institutions for cooperation since the 1950s with the councils in the Bay Area learning how to collaborate effectively while "Los Angeles county inspires competition and rejection by its neighbor counties" (ibid, 168).

These authors draw attention to the relational processes which cut across administrative territories: "metropolitan regions rarely have agencies whose role is to promote regional economic development but instead rely on a patchwork of cities and counties and their many departments and agencies… this is a problem because economies operate at regional scales, with causes and effects that do not respect the borders of cities and counties or the different powers of their dizzying array of agencies and policies" (ibid, 226). Indeed, while many factors are involved, Storper and colleagues find that networks and relational landscapes are far more significant to the divergence of these regional economies (ibid, 169-170; 201-208) than the

usual factors used to explain urban growth. Entrepreneurs in San Francisco were better able to draw on boundary-spanning economic and social networks, enabling them to recombine knowledge from different fields as well as facilitating the emergence of an innovative organizational ecology and an open source culture.

In conclusion, we believe that governance of the rural-urban interface will be more effective and accountable if policies and programs involve not only the constituent municipalities located in this space, but also the social, economic and environmental relationships in which these communities are embedded. This hybrid approach can produce effective governance of such potentially contentious areas as waste management, infrastructure development and changing land use patterns including but not limited to the location of housing, economic activities, municipal facilities such as transportation and waste water treatment plants, environmental protection and natural resources management, and local food systems, all of which are increasingly located at the urban-rural interface.

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