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Review of *Forgotten Places: Uneven Development in Rural America* Edited by Thomas A. Lyson and William W. Falk

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Forgotten Places: Uneven Development in Rural America. Edited by Thomas A. Lyson and William W. Falk. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993. 278 pp. Maps, tables, notes, references, index. \$35.00 cloth (ISBN 0-7006-0592-4), \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0-7006-0593-2).

The editors and authors of this fine collection of articles, though mostly sociologists, demonstrate how geography is in a sense destiny to the rural poor. By focusing on nine regions spanning the country from New England to the Rio Grande Valley to the Pacific Northwest, they show how social as well as spatial isolation has created common problems among a rural underclass that is "forgotten" by mainstream America.

Socio-spatial isolation may take many forms, but the outcome for all the places studied is the same: lack of full participation in American economic life. Educational isolation in the Black Belt of the South has produced a population only half of which has a high school education. In Mississippi, traditional paternalistic society and attendant race and class separatism has produced dependency and small spheres of opportunity for the region's blacks and single-parent families, and thus some of the lowest poverty rates in the nation. Per capita earnings in the Lower Mississippi Delta region are a full 20 to 25% lower than the rest of the nation. Isolation may also be more explicitly physical, as in the Missouri Ozarks where the decline of the backwoods timber and mining industries has produced an underclass of low-wage service workers in the now flourishing tourist industry. The Ozarks article documents a type of informal economy working in Douglas County, Missouri, that is far removed from the experience of most of us working in a post-industrial society. Families have found ways to survive without cash (some better than others), by gardening, stock raising, food preservation, and trading and sharing of all types of goods and services, all that defy quantification: "The value of orange-yolked, fresh eggs is different from the retail store price of factory eggs. The value of giving them is different from the value of selling them" (p. 44).

The book has much to recommend itself generally, but probably less to recommend it to scholars of the Great Plains. It appears as part of the series on Rural America from the University Press of Kansas, with names of familiar western scholars as series editors (such as Donald Worster). The essays provide a helpful and wide range of theoretical frameworks for studying how rural places move outside the economic mainstream, applying human ecology, dependency, and world systems theory to argue that the places studied are akin to colonies of an East-coast ruling elite. The places

chosen are “illustrative rather than definitive” of the types of underdevelopment present in the U.S., so that places in the Plains such as the Pine Ridge Reservation, which suffer some of the worst extremes of poverty in the country, are not included.

Depending on your definition of the Great Plains, the Lower Rio Grande Valley bordering Mexico in the southernmost tip of Texas is the only Plains site discussed in the book. “Industrial Development and Persistent Poverty in the Lower Rio Grande Valley,” by Saenz and Ballejos, examines how historical relationships between Anglos and Hispanics have produced a region of Hispanic shantytowns, high population growth and attendant low age structure, high levels of out-migration, and environmental problems such as poor water supplies contaminated by such “third world” diseases as tuberculosis and hepatitis. In contradiction to modernization theory, the many new industrial plants along the Texas-Mexico border have not improved the region’s socioeconomic problems. Rather, the region has become a virtual labor colony for U.S. capitalists and low wages have kept profits from “trickling down” to the local population.

In each of these specially commissioned articles the authors were asked to assess local attempts at improvement, and suggest ways to bring these regions into mainstream America. Beyond the rhetoric of “the need for more federal intervention,” the many suggestions should stimulate the intended discussion among policy makers, planners, and government administrators. The book will also undoubtedly garner a wide readership in the academic social sciences, for research as well as teaching purposes. The book certainly could have used more maps, particularly as it focussed on the territorial dimension of rural poverty. And it didn’t make sense to have the “theoretical” chapter appear at the end of the book. But overall this is a very worthwhile read for anyone concerned about the future of rural America. **Karen Morin**, *Department of Geography, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.