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Pressures of Hybridity:

An Analysis of the Urban-Rural Nexus

by

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Abstract

As cities expand their boundaries into surrounding territories, it has created a dilemma in how we understand the spaces on the outskirts of urban centres. Urban analysts and the general public are equally disenchanted with traditional dichotomies of urban and rural to describe these hybrid areas. Existing scholarly literature has addressed this shift through the use of concepts like suburbs, exurbs, and edge cities which represent the invasion of urban forms into rural areas. However, these concepts fail to capture the contested nature and hybridity of this territory where rural and urban confront each other through opposing values, interests and perceptions of the land.

Rocky View County, surrounding the city of Calgary in Alberta, provides a significant case study of the clash between urban and rural. Following a mixed methods research protocol, this thesis moves the literature in new directions by utilizing discourse analysis and social constructionism to reveal the range of pressures, internal conflicts and competing interests within the county. Instead of the traditional distinctions between urban and rural, the term urban-rural nexus is proposed and described as a hybrid space that must be viewed as a distinct settlement type. Hybridity is understood as the coexistence of opposing urban and rural land uses and values that create conflict among multiple constituent groups holding different social interpretations of this shared space. This thesis breaks new ground by offering an alternative analytical framework through the dimensions of conflict approach to identify and investigate the multifaceted nature of conflict in the urban-rural nexus.

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Chapter 1: Introduction - The Urban-Rural Nexus

As cities around the world not only increase their densities but expand their boundaries, the urban setting has become much more than the city core with its surrounding residential rings. In the past, research on cities has focused on the space contained within city limits, designating spaces within the boundary as urban and those on the outside as rural. This black and white distinction blurred into grey as the burgeoning growth of cities pushed into what were formerly rural spaces. Urbanization has created metropolitan regions that envelope spaces outside the traditional borders of cities, incorporating distinctly different lands, people and functions.

A superficial assessment of urbanization portrays a clash between city and country where traditional rural ways of life are destroyed and replaced with urban interests. It assumes an urban-rural continuum or progression of stages involving challenge, loss and displacement whereby the rural landscape is altered by the relentless march of urbanization into formerly agricultural regions. From this view of urbanization, there is a clear distinction between urban and rural until the point where one takes over the other. There is no room for each to adapt to the other. By this logic, rural spaces will cease to exist as we move along the continuum towards the end state of urbanization. Through this focus on end points of a continuum or ideal types in a dichotomy, there is no recognition of the spaces in between urban and rural.

The grey zone between urban and rural areas has historically been analyzed as an extension of urban pressures, resulting in concepts such as the urban-rural fringe, suburbs, exurbs and edge cities. Yet this territory needs to be understood in terms of its hybridity where rural and urban confront each other through opposing values, interests and perceptions of the land. This is a space where land use change has transformed a single-minded community into a socioeconomically diverse assemblage of subgroups. What began as a trickle of out-migration of

urbanites from cities in search of more pastoral residences has grown over time into a wave of conflicting interests competing for hybrid spaces. In the gap between city and country, these hybrid spaces have become the point of convergence, or nexus, for both urban and rural interests. It is the contested space of the urban-rural nexus where conflicting social imaginings of place result in multidimensional conflicts.

The urban-rural nexus plays host to a variety of interest groups or stakeholders, including farmers, acreage owners and land developers. Hybridity in this space is defined as the mutual existence of different physical uses of land, as well as different perceptions of how the land should be used. Unlike developing nations where city periphery regions house the underclass, many cities of the Western world tend to valorize their adjacent hinterlands and develop elite rural satellite communities with urban ties. For some small acreage owners, it is the appeal of creating a hybrid lifestyle that offsets the pressures of urban employment with the haven of pastoral residence. For others, moving to the urban-rural nexus is for reasons of affordability and opportunity for homeownership. Exurbanite migration into periphery areas is also accompanied by capital expansion of commercial interests as developers take advantage of greenfield development opportunities at the city's edge. With so many different activities taking up residence in the urban-rural nexus, traditional agricultural interests are challenged by individuals with alternate images of the same space, resulting in complex pressures of hybridity that must be analyzed as more than an extension of urbanization. Finally, the hybrid zone may envelope smaller urban satellites in a metropolitan region so that pressure is felt from both the adjacent big city and smaller incorporated urban municipalities within the broader rural area.

An urban-rural dichotomy is no longer adequate in describing this complex space where social groups are in conflict with each other over the value of land, preservation of opposing

ways of life, and social imaginings of place. The significance of the urban-rural nexus has increased over time, to the point where practical implications of providing servicing and managing growth have become top of mind for policy makers. Additionally, the diverse expectations of life in the urban-rural nexus lead to conflicts among constituent groups that must be mediated by governing bodies. Clashing interests and perceptions of stakeholders in the urban-rural nexus are represented through conflicts over land use.

Further adding to the complexity of relations among groups in this contested space is the internalized conflict that results from the clash of the multiple roles a single resident may hold. As the simple agricultural county of the past has become a patchwork of land uses within a complex economy, the present day farmer must balance agricultural pursuits against environmental stewardship, business management and land development. Similarly, longtime residents have seen the meanings attached to old spaces change over time. Many struggle to reconcile the ideological need to act as protectors of the land against the immediate need to secure retirement income, access health care and locate alternative housing. Thus, analysis of conflict in the urban-rural nexus is incomplete without attention to three levels: 1) conflict among constituent groups, 2) conflict within constituent groups, and 3) conflict within individuals.

This research project addresses and analyzes the hybrid nature of the urban-rural nexus, as well as the complexities of its conflicts, by discarding traditional analytical frameworks that rely on a dichotomy between urban and rural. By recognizing the urban-rural nexus as a distinct settlement type, there is a need for a new approach to investigate this space. New conceptual tools are required for an analysis of the hybrid spaces that are undergoing transformation as a result of proximity to major metropolitan centres. In challenging traditional ways of

understanding the nexus, this project offers alternative frameworks for analysis based on the different meanings attached to space and the conflicts among those meanings. As part of the multimethod approach employed in this research, discourse analysis is used as an innovative method of analyzing conflict through the claims that are made by stakeholders in the urban-rural nexus. Further, a major original contribution of this research project is the use of the dimensions of conflict approach to identify and analyze the multifaceted nature of conflict in the urban-rural nexus. Thus, empirical investigation of the nexus offers modifications for future study of hybrid spaces based on identifying the values that underlie conflict among groups and individuals. The contribution to the literature involves identification and introduction of the concept of the hybrid urban-rural nexus, as well as a framework to understand this territory in a new way.

I. The Significance of Studying the Urban-Rural Nexus

Contemporary urban sociology must look at how the city is only one part of the greater metropolitan region, and analyze how growth within the city places pressures on outlying areas. Municipalities on the fringes of cities struggle to find their identity as urban growth pressures change land uses and community profiles over time. However, we cannot continue to view changes in these periphery areas solely from the position of urbanization pressures. The analysis of the urban-rural nexus must also examine the pressures and conflicts that result from separate ways of life and value sets attempting to co-exist in the same space. Within the traditional schemas of dichotomies or continuums of urban and rural, there has been little room for contextual interpretations of how life in the nexus has changed for people over time.

This research project is designed to answer the question: What are the meanings attached to space in the urban-rural nexus, and what are the dimensions of conflict over land use among and within constituent groups in the urban-rural nexus? In the spirit of social constructionism,

this study challenges the habitual categorization of people and spaces into dichotomous boxes of urban or rural. There is contemporary relevance in this analysis of the urban-rural nexus as a rapidly changing zone of conflict that is home to many longtime residents, yet also continues to be a destination for exurbanites and a variety of urban-type land uses. The research will demonstrate that the meanings attached to land are diverse and conflicting based on values that differ not only among constituent groups in the urban-rural nexus, but also within those groups and individuals themselves. By focusing on the values and perceptions of the people within the hybrid space, this project challenges the limited scope of research that considers these regions solely from a demographic perspective, and instead offers an understanding of the dimensions of conflict within the nexus.

Rocky View County in Alberta (Figure 1.1) offers a timely case study of a formerly rural area that is now an urban-rural nexus impacted by external pressures from its urban neighbours, as well as the internal pressures arising from different resident groups with distinctly different ways of life. Located within the Calgary metropolitan region, Rocky View County forms a horseshoe around the city of Calgary and also surrounds several smaller urban centres. This proximity to multiple urban pressure points is further compounded by the reality of existence within a region that has no collaborative partnership among adjoining jurisdictions. Understanding the dynamics of conflict within metropolitan regions is the primary scholarly focus of this project, based on the research question seeking insight into the dimensions of conflict over land use. In this research project, a variety of data are used to provide an analysis of the current situation facing Rocky View County as an example of the urban-rural nexus undergoing transformation as an evolving hybrid region.

Figure 1.1: Context Map of Rocky View County

Source: www.yourmovetoalberta.com/rural.ubr

Land use change as the variable to measure conflict serves a dual purpose: 1) perspectives on land use assist in basic categorization of individuals to further investigate subgroupings, and 2) changes to land use offer a tangible example of conflict in the urban-rural nexus. For the purpose of this study, land use is transformed from a planning principle into the issue around which social groups come into conflict with each other. With relentless urban expansion moving forward on a global level, this research becomes increasingly significant as a study of the social processes that characterize the conflicting interests and ideologies of competing groups in the urban-rural nexus. Land use changes will form the cases from which conflict among and within social groups will be analyzed.

While this research project is designed to explore the meaning-making processes and dynamics of conflict in the urban-rural nexus, there still exists a need to differentiate between urban and rural to provide direction for sampling and data analysis. The integrity of sociological inquiry into stakeholders' perspectives is maintained by developing categorical guidelines of urban and rural rather than precise definitions of each term. The underlying principle for both categories is attachment to the land. Urban is considered to be an aesthetic or leisure-use attachment to the land. This may include viewing the land as open space for sensory appeal, space for leisure pursuits like hiking or horseback riding, and as a place to connect with nature. Alternately, rural is considered to be an attachment to the land as a means of production. This may include grain farming, cattle ranching, creation of grazing space and preservation of irrigation sources. Land is central to both perspectives, with relationship to the land as the key difference between urban and rural. The clash in the urban-rural nexus is between those who use the land to produce a commodity and those who view the land as a commodity for consumption. Hybridity is the result of both perspectives converging in time and space to create altered states of being either urban or rural.

Perspectives on the value of land as a commodity or as a means of production are the theoretical underpinnings of the sociology of land use. Logan and Molotch (2007) analyze these conflicting positions from a political economy perspective and offer the concepts of use value and exchange value as oppositional views of land. Using the example of the farmer, the greatest value of land is the ability to run an agricultural operation that generates a commodity which is in turn sold to market. In this way, the use value of the land is of primary significance. On the other hand, speculators view the same land from a very different perspective. For them, the value of land is based on the profit that can be generated from its sale. Because the exchange value of

land is the primary concern for speculators, agricultural lands are purchased with an eye to the subsequent land uses that will increase monetary value. These different perspectives also mean that indicators of land value will differ between the two groups. Individuals who prioritize use value seek land that will aid in livelihood (like farming), facilitate ease of daily routine or promote sense of community. Those who seek exchange value will look for property that potentially offers access to consumers, has a sense of prestige, or can be sold for a use that is highly prized by purchasers and their consumers. In this way, a single piece of land can offer very different value to different parties.

The difference between use value and exchange value of land takes on elevated significance in the urban-rural nexus where residents and other stakeholder groups co-exist yet hold competing ideologies of land use. In cities, the image of the city is laid out according to approved land uses in designated areas, or through zoning principles. There is a structure to the segregation of land uses to accommodate the diversity of activities that are prevalent in an urban centre, such as residences, industrial areas, places of worship, retail centres and recreation facilities. Formerly rural areas were largely single land use, that being agricultural, until exurbanites changed the landscape with small acreages. The first stage of transformation for rural areas neighbouring urban centres was a change from single land use to dual land use. Over the years, the duality of identities and social imaginings of the land slowly changed again to include some industrial and commercial uses. Within the recent past, however, change has come much quicker and has been much more dramatic in scale. Shopping malls, casinos, multifamily buildings and warehouses are being proposed and constructed on what was previously farmland. Thus, competing social constructions of space are clashing in the urban-rural nexus and creating conflict among and within constituent groups.

To analyze the different social constructions of space in the urban-rural nexus, this research project identifies the subgroups that exist within Rocky View County and begins to understand them through community analysis. Following the demographic analysis and secondary data analysis of recent Rocky View County community needs surveys, the focus turns to the claims that are made by different groups at public hearings to advance their specific positions on appropriate land use for the county. Individual meaning-making processes are then uncovered through interviews with representatives of different constituent groups, with utilization of two specific cases of land use in the county to draw out reactions from respondents. The findings highlight the multidimensional nature of conflict in the urban-rural nexus based on differing social constructions of space and exposure to social transformation of the county over time. Based on expressed perspectives of land use change and the values related to those positions, the complexity of layered issues within and among groups is discussed in the context of the urban-rural nexus.

In terms of contributions to our scholarly knowledge of hybrid spaces, this research project moves beyond conceptualizing the urban-rural nexus and enters into an empirical investigation of the complexities of conflict in this hybrid zone. First, there is identification of the urban-rural nexus as a space that is both distinct and significant within a metropolitan region, followed by the assertion that internal and external pressures have both triggered conflict. Positioning Rocky View County as a case in point further advances our understanding of land use change in the western Canadian context, particularly in an area where regional planning is optional rather than mandated like other major urban centres in the country. Next, social constructionism as the theoretical foundation of the research project is a departure from more traditional studies that investigate predetermined concepts of urban and rural. This research

project explores the differences between urban and rural from the perspectives of those who live there, privileging the meaning-making process over researcher-developed definitions.

Methodologically, the interweaving of multiple methods allows for each analytical step of the research project to be supported by supplementary analyses. Gaps in the data from one methodological inquiry are addressed in different ways, resulting in a more rigorous and robust analysis. Finally, the dimensions of conflict approach is presented as an alternative to the traditional dichotomous or continuum models of defining urban and rural. By examining the multiplicity of issues that exist in the urban-rural nexus, this study reveals the cross-cutting cleavages in the dimensions of conflict, further supporting the hypothesis of three levels of conflict (among groups, within groups, within individuals).

II. Moving Past Dichotomies: A Sociocultural Examination of Urban and Rural

The traditional view of urbanization and its pressure on rural areas is unidimensional and troubling because of the undefined reliance on the dichotomy between what is urban and what is rural. Challenging the sociological relevance of the urban-rural dichotomy, Pahl (1966) argues that "(i)n a sociological context the terms rural and urban are more remarkable for their ability to confuse than for their power to illuminate," (p.299). If we are only to look at the geographic definitions of the terms, there can be no urban-rural hybrid zone as both urban and rural are clearly defined as one or the other by their densities. In Canada, an urban area has historically been defined as one with a minimum population of 1,000 people and a density of 400 persons per square kilometer (Statistics Canada 2012a:121). As of 2011, however, the term *urban area* has been changed to *population centre* to allow for greater consistency in presentation of data and to create subcategories of small, medium and large population centres. This change in definition was prefaced on two significant points: 1) individual experiences and perspectives create diverse

interpretations of the term *urban*, and 2) "(g)iven the widely accepted view that a more dynamic urban-rural continuum exists, the use of the term 'urban area' could lead to misinterpretations," (Statistics Canada 2012a:121).

If we are to move forward with the argument that urban and rural are open to interpretation, and are two ends on a continuum as suggested by Statistics Canada, we require more than a geographic or density-based definition of the terms. The staggered density measures of rural, small, medium and large population centres does provide a measurement-based urban-rural continuum, but understanding what is urban and what is rural from different perspectives demands a social definition of the terminology. By refocusing on *how* people live instead of *where* they live, sociocultural definitions of urban and rural emphasize ways of thinking and engaging in social activity (Hiller 2010:xii). Through a sociocultural lens, urbanization is "viewed not just as an outcome but as a catalyst producing consequences," (Hiller 2010:xii). To be a catalyst, a concept like urbanization must induce change when it is applied to a specific context. Given the dramatic changes to rural physical environments over time, as well as the marked change in how people live their lives in rural areas, sociocultural definitions of urban and urbanization are well suited to provide another dimension to the urban-rural continuum.

Yet we have managed to address only half the question: if we know that urban has an effect on rural, what are the ways in which they are different? Turning to sociocultural definitions allows us to consider the perspectives of people who classify themselves to be urban or rural. For example, urbanites may place value on diversity of social ties while people in rural areas may stress closeness of those ties. While urban people may thrive on the element of surprise around every corner when exploring the city, rural dwellers may place a higher premium on having an intimate familiarity with their spaces. Building upon Wirth's (1938) definition of

urbanization based on size, density and heterogeneity of a given space, sociocultural definitions allow us to appreciate urban and rural from the perspectives of the occupants of these areas. However, utilizing a sociocultural approach to defining urban and rural involves acceptance of Bakhtin's polyphony of voices and the infinite diversity of experiences within our world (Shields 2007:48). The task of defining urban and rural through a sociocultural approach holds the potential issue of creating an unmanageable inventory of definitions based on personal perspectives.

To resolve the issues inherent to the qualitative approaches that are better suited to development and measurement of sociocultural definitions, many researchers have tried to strike a balance by creating measurement tools that incorporate a range of variables that represent urban or rural typologies. Champion and Hugo (2004) have developed a list of "widely accepted traditional stereotypical differences between urban and rural populations," (p.8) The nine dimensions of difference include economic sectors, occupational structures, education levels, politics and ethnicity. However, the rapidly changing rural populations of today do not easily fit into traditional stereotypes. For example, an area outside city limits that includes a fully serviced subdivision next to farm operations and non-farm acreages will not be comprised of a homogeneous population, yet this situation abounds across Canada and North America. How do we measure and define rural now that it is so mixed up with urban?

The argument of whether a distinction exists between urban and rural, particularly in the contemporary age, has not been resolved methodologically because a clear definition for the terminology does not exist. In order to appreciate the present situation of hybridity in regions that border cities, researchers may choose to carry on with measurement tools that attempt to highlight the differences between subsets of the population and then apply labels based on

common understandings of the terms. However, variables like occupation and education may prove problematic in present day due to the changing economics and demographics of traditional rural areas. To address the issue, special scales could be developed that include lifestyle-oriented variables like amount of work day spent outdoors or number of meals eaten outside the home. By incorporating variables that reflect traditional values, perhaps new definitions of urban and rural will emerge. The problem remains, however, that researcher bias through labeling, stereotyping and/or value judgements are driving the definitions of the terminology and the conclusion that a dichotomy exists between urban and rural.

Issues of stereotyping and value judgements give rise to another critical point: the definitions of urban and rural in this research project are focused on how those definitions are applied to the areas that border urban centres. To be clear, the goal is not to create ideal types of urban and rural. Rather, the research project is designed to understand the ways in which people utilize the terms urban and rural to describe the people and ways of life within their changing urban-rural nexus. Urban and rural in this context are used as concepts to define the way the area in question is viewed by a given constituent group, creating a foundation for calling this bordering area an urban-rural nexus or hybrid zone.

Chapter 2: Urban and Rural - Critiques of Analytical Typologies

To understand the dimensions of conflict among and within constituent groups in the urban-rural nexus, this research project first asks what meanings are attached to space within Rocky View County as an example of a hybrid zone. Rather than starting with fixed definitions of urban or rural, or an assumption of stakeholders' social imaginings of space, this study offers a new way to understand the urban-rural nexus through the meaning-making processes of those who have ties to the land. As a starting point, however, it is important to establish how others have conceptualized this hybrid space, and how they have incorporated definitions of urban and rural into their understandings of the nexus.

Rooting this research project in the literature requires a review of converging themes that offer an understanding of the places and people within the urban-rural nexus. First, the tendency to identify places and people as urban or rural will be examined in a manner that demonstrates dichotomous definitions and notions of an urban-rural continuum are not appropriate. Next, the history and evolution of suburbs, exurbs, small towns and the fringe will offer a starting point to understand how distinctions between urban and rural blurred over time to create hybrid zones. Finally, a discussion of the urban-rural nexus as both segregated and contested space will bring forward the conflicts among constituent groups.

A review of the relevant literature will allow for an appreciation of the historic struggles over defining urban and rural in sociology, and will illustrate theoretical and methodological rationale in favour of and against the dichotomous usage of the terminology. Major concepts developed over time will be presented largely in chronologic order to show how attitudes have changed in some ways and stayed the same in others, ultimately highlighting that the debate remains circular and still relevant to this day. Before delving into the specifics of the debate from

urban and rural sociological perspectives, a review of the classic theoretical positions on the subject will provide a starting point.

I. The Theoretical History of Urban versus Rural

Marx, Tonnies and Weber all had positions on the distinctions between urban and rural society with differing perspectives on the applicability of a continuum-based approach to measure differences (Bonner 1998). For Marx, rural and feudal societies represented social organization that was closed to change, marking urbanism as a means to release human beings' potential for greatness (Bonner 1998). While some viewed country life as relaxed, it was deemed "slothful" by Marx (cited in Bonner 1998:170) whose only goal in comparing locations was to identify the one that best allowed for wealth accumulation through liberation of human potential. To that end, the city was the ideal type to which all societies should strive. In the opposite manner, Tonnies' perspectives on gemeinschaft and gesellschaft painted a very different picture. Bonner (1998) suggests that Tonnies' focus on social systems and ways of life instead of spatial location encouraged a preference for the sense of community produced in smaller, closer-knit societies. Thus, the town was viewed as the highest form of social life with a critical mass of people to form a community of interdependence, but not the density to cultivate "rational means-end attitude(s)" (Bonner 1998:175) where competition trumps cooperation.

Departing from both Marx and Tonnies, Weber was more aware of the sociological significance of the distinctions between urban and rural in their "capacity to socialize a unique character and community," (Bonner 1998:180). However, Weber concluded that people in either setting formed their identity based on variables other than spatial setting, relying instead on class and occupation as identifiers. For Weber, the significance of the rural setting was its ability to offer an alternative culture to capitalism, which was housed in the city (Bonner 1998:180). Also

unique to Weber was his assessment that European and American rural societies were different, with American farmers being more commercially oriented than their European counterparts (Bonner 1998:179). Thus, a universal or global definition of rural was unrealistic for dramatically different places. Finally, Weber recognized the privilege afforded to urban settings through the modernist desire for rationality (Bonner 1998). Essentially, any modernist analysis of ideal type urban and rural societies would deem the urban superior because of its roots in science and secularity. For these reasons, Weber rejected the dichotomy of urban and rural.

With classic sociological opinion divided on the reality of the urban-rural dichotomy, the early part of the twentieth century gave rise to more debate on the issue. Usage of "folk-urban continuum" as a concept derives from Robert Redfield's anthropological work with Mexican communities (Tepoztlan and Chan Kom) and the subsequent publications of his findings in the 1930s and 1940s. Redfield (1947) qualifies that his intention is not to state that an ideal folk society exists in the world, but that by analyzing various folk societies an impression of the ideal type could be formed to compare what would differentiate those societies from the modern city. His goal was to distinguish the characteristic features of modern city living by contrasting them against societies least like our own, using the words folk and primitive as indicators of the most extreme non-urban societies. This desire to demonstrate ideal societal types spurred debate for decades to come, reaching across the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, geography, history and many others seeking to identify an evolutionary process of human settlement and interaction patterns.

According to Miner (1952), however, the folk-urban continuum is problematic for three primary reasons: 1) it involves empirically impossible polarities, 2) it is difficult to operationalize the characteristics assigned to each ideal type, and 3) it provides limited

theoretical insight while leaving itself open for different theoretical interpretations within and outside sociology. By creating polar definitions, the terms urban and rural become large "catchalls" (Miner 1952:534) because of the large number of variables that are employed in their definitions. There is also a tendency to link variables that may in fact be independent of one another, claiming causality where none exists. Additionally, the folk-urban continuum does not acknowledge that forces other than the city can be a source of change for rural communities.

Stewart (1958) further challenges the urban-rural dichotomy by questioning the assumption that the distinction is important for the social sciences. Not only is the idea of a dichotomy promoted without explaining its significance, urban and rural are further measured in ways that bear little fruit for sociology. Size of community and economic function of a spatial setting do not provide the data necessary for enquiry about society and its social ordering. The folk-urban continuum is also flawed on the premise that the two polar points are qualitatively different and not extremes on a linear trajectory. For Stewart (1958), "(t)he length of our yardstick is likely to prove excessive and the units too large," (p.156). Further challenging the folk-urban continuum, Dewey (1960) discusses the propensity for sociologists to use paired terms when examining cultural characteristics in relation to size of community, giving rise to dichotomies like urban-rural, folk-urban, sacred-secular and gemeinschaft-gesellschaft (p.63). Rather than focusing on assumed polarities between communities, Dewey (1960) suggests a refocus on society as a whole to identify the significance of the distinctions between groups.

The question of what the urban-rural continuum is actually designed to measure is raised by Pahl (1966) when he stresses that the social processes involved in creating the differences between urban and rural should be the primary objects of interest for sociologists. Rather than geographic, demographic and economic indices, it would be more appropriate to measure

changing social relationships (Pahl 1966:311). If the continuum is viewed as temporal instead of spatial (Pahl 1966:318), then perhaps the typology focus of the urban-rural continuum is better replaced by analysis of the process that creates difference in spatial settings. Although geographers and urban planners may have an interest in settlement patterns based on population, density and heterogeneity, sociological definitions of urban and rural cannot be supported by the position that difference in way of life dictates spatial location. Class and life cycle are better predictors of settlement than way of life, based on ethnographic work within suburbs and urban villages (Gans 1962; Pahl 1966). Thus, it is not the broader concepts of rural and urban that should be analyzed for distinct patterns of behaviour, but the smaller subgroupings based on social class and stage of life.

In an empirical effort to distinguish between urban and rural, Key (1961) utilized a scale of social participation to conduct a comparative analysis of interactions with family or primary group. The historic belief that rural areas have the highest level of interaction between members of primary groups was refuted through the data that resulted in a V curve as opposed to a continuum (Key 1961:55). For those in remote rural areas and urbanites in densely populated areas, "(i)t is the difficulty of making satisfactory primary contacts outside the family that makes the immediate and extended family more important," (Key 1961:55). Social isolation in rural areas and a limited number of primary contacts in dense urban areas creates stronger ties to those that exist, a situation that is not observed in villages and small towns where the whole population takes on the characteristics of primary groups. Thus, the use of a continuum is refuted methodologically by challenging the convention of social ties.

By turning to anthropology, Benet (1963) highlights the flaws of the continuum by referring to Guatemalan Indians who display "anti-folk characteristics" (p.8). More importantly,

Benet's (1963) review of history clearly demonstrates that the continuum cannot be universally applied when European, Asian and North American experiences with rural and urban societies are dramatically different. Not only is North America missing the feudal epoch which was a large part of the European transition from rural to urban social organization, North American pioneers "were urbanites at heart who did not want more elbow room but… welcomed all the trappings of civilization," (Benet 1963:3). The Canadian context of rural, particularly in the west, is equally incompatible with the ideal type of folk society because original settlers were migrants with an existing hybrid or urban past (Rees 1988). Respecting the variations in societies and histories, transition from rural to urban must be viewed as a process rather than a continuum.

Another assumption of rural life is tied to diversification strategies of agricultural operators. Ellis (1998) and Sandwell (2013) both argue that off-farm work is not a signal of a failed agricultural operation or a move towards a more urban way of life. Occupational pluralism has historically existed in rural areas, but the census category of farmer masks the reality that "rural populations were not always, or more accurately *not only*, agricultural," (Sandwell 2013:29). Household diversification strategies involving paid and unpaid wages were sometimes deliberate decisions and sometimes responses to crisis, with some families seeking financial security and others seeking out capital opportunities through non-farm work. Ultimately, rural households have always been multipurpose and comprised of multiple actors, leading to negotiation of roles and identities based on economics as well as social relations within and outside the household (Ellis 1998:7). The complexity of rural life defies the image of the singularly focused farmer stereotype that has been popularized in public forums.

Mann (1965) cautions against two pitfalls when employing methods to contrast urban and rural: 1) urban and rural must be considered with relation to past and present, and 2) resist the

tendency to promote stereotypes rather than generalizations (p.4-5). These two pitfalls are closely related and often result in methods that are designed to demonstrate superiority of a time period or way of life over another. Bonner (1998) similarly pushes sociology to shed the normative trappings of modernity by not seeking to identify which is better between urban and rural. Rather, we need to reflect on why we seek a distinction and how our sociological inquiry may serve to shape the definitions we create. Knowing why we seek a distinction is as important as understanding whether there is a difference.

Two decades later, after the debates over the appropriateness of the urban-rural continuum were at their height, the debate shifted to best measures of urban and rural differences. Cloke and Edwards (1986) revisited the 1971 index of rurality to analyze whether it was still applicable in contemporary rural studies. The index of rurality was based on an investigation of the nature of small towns and rural areas in England and Wales using an initial set of sixteen variables and subset of nine more to create a quartile classification system ranging from 'extreme rural' to 'extreme non-rural' (Cloke and Edwards 1986:290). Variables measured included population change, population density, in-migration, household amenities and occupation. By 1981, changes to district boundaries, census data formats and the changing nature of growth in rural areas had dated the index. To address the shortcomings, the index was revamped to incorporate measurement changes and also added three new variables to the multivariate analysis. The addition of mobility, second homes and holiday homes was a clear reflection of the dramatic changes occurring in rural areas, leading Cloke and Edwards (1986) to state that while rural is not a static phenomenon, it can still be measured with an index that is updated regularly.

For Hoggart (1988), the index of rurality in its most recent incarnation was simply

repeating the mistakes of the past. If previous analyses (Key 1961; Pahl 1966) have discredited the ability of popular measurements like stronger interpersonal networks in rural areas to demonstrate causality between location and social relations, why were these measures still utilized in a contemporary index? Although Hoggart (1988) agrees that abandonment of the continuum left a theoretical void that must be filled with a focus on different measures, his recommendation is to examine causal processes through the economic roots of change by focusing on evolution of market practices. Through a market focus, sociology can take a sharper look at the "intra-rural" locality (Hoggart 1988:39) differences that are more significant in the study of rural areas than the creation of general typologies.

Rising to the challenge of a renewed focus on markets and the economy, the sociology of agriculture was proposed as an alternative for the issues posed by the urban-rural continuum. This "new rural sociology" was a move away from the continuum's theoretical position that the nature of social relationships could be explained by settlement (Newby 1983:68). With the farm crisis of the 1970s resulting from growing agribusiness ventures and technological advances favouring larger corporate farming operations, smaller family farms and the corresponding rural way of life changed dramatically. Agricultural sociology was deemed the best way to understand rural society through the social organization of work (agricultural production) as opposed to social relations. However, critics felt that agricultural sociology was simply a play for the discipline to be taken more seriously in the institutional setting of agricultural colleges where natural sciences and economics dominated research agendas (Newby 1983). Thus, the pressure to provide policy relevant or applied research drove the new rural sociology agenda instead of a desire to understand the social dynamics of spatial settlements.

In the midst of calls for change, those who believed in the urban-rural continuum

steadfastly employed methodological techniques to demonstrate the existence of the dichotomy. Social network analysis of the 1985 General Social Survey (GSS) for Louisiana provided empirical evidence that personal networks are different in urban and rural settings (Beggs, Haines and Hurlbert 1996). The hypothesis of the research project was that greater intensity and role multiplexity would exist in rural settings, along with greater kinship, solidarity and homogeneity. By showing that distinct differences supporting the urban and rural typologies existed between aspatial communities, this research called for increased focus on social structures and social processes in rural sociology (Beggs, Haines and Hurlbert 1996). Perhaps the methodological solution had been uncovered to allow the urban-rural continuum a revival in the late twentieth century, based on the theory that interpersonal relations were impacted by the effects of industrialization.

Coming from a different methodological approach but equally convinced that the urban-rural continuum exists, Bell (1992) restates the cases for and against the dichotomy, concluding with the belief that the continuum is still relevant as a source of identity for country residents. Although "(t)he difference between country life and city life may only ever be true in the mind… one of the tasks of sociology is to study what is in people's minds," (Bell 1992:66). Ethnographic research provides a solid foundation for understanding what the differences between country and city mean to the people who reside in those locales. Country people organize themselves around a set of values and sense of identity that creates a distinct form of social organization (Bell 1992:79). By living amongst the residents of a commuter village in England, Bell (1992) discovered that residents informally evaluate each other along the lines of commitment to the village, whether through shopping locally, having a rural background or participation in community activities. Through the language of country and city, membership is granted or

denied into the bounded social group based on "realness" of country traits (Bell 1992:72-73). The country identity is critical in attainment of cultural and political capital, so the language of the urban-rural dichotomy is the method by which claims may be laid for the country identity (Bell 1992:76-77).

Supporting the idea of claims-making as an important foundation for understanding urban and rural, Halfacree (1993) examines three approaches to defining rural. First, socio-spatial and socio-cultural definitions are challenged for their inability to empirically demonstrate causality (Halfacree 1993:24-25). Socio-spatial definitions assume the rural exists and set out to prove it using variables that are quantifiable; there is no question of whether rural exists or how it is to be defined before it is measured. Socio-cultural definitions cannot prove their foundational claim that people's characteristics vary with the environment within which they live. Both definitions "demonstrate an erroneous conceptualization of the relationship between space and society," (Halfacree 1993:26). A more postmodern approach to defining the terms is required, one that allows for meaning-making through both discursive and non-discursive actions or social representations (Halfacree 1993:31). This requires a shift from the physical space of locality to the less concrete space of interpretations or representations.

To conclude the summary of the debate, Falk and Pinhey (1978) assert that rural (and urban, by inference) sociology has typically ignored the actor's view of the world. In order to include the actor's perspective, we must be prepared to accept that no one definition of rural will emerge; definitions will be differentially situated (Falk and Pinhey 1978:549). Traditional demographic and socio-cultural definitions that take for granted the distinction between urban and rural only serve to reify the concept (Falk and Pinhey 1978:553) without challenging the presumed static nature of those definitions. "(R)ural is just a symbolic shorthand (as are all

concepts) by which we mean to encapsule something," (Falk and Pinhey 1978:553). To fully understand and appreciate the parameters of what is meant by rural (or urban), Falk and Pinhey (1978) encourage methodology that brings researchers back to the field and allows them to conceptualize the terminology from the perspective of those immersed in rural lives.

II. What is the Urban-Rural Nexus?

Rejecting the classical tendencies to polarize urban and rural, as well as the default position that they exist as ideal types on a continuum, allows us to better engage with the dynamic and rapidly changing urban-rural nexus. By treating rural as a static form of settlement and placing it on a linear path towards urban, there is a supposition that rural will eventually cease to exist. This type of teleological thinking ignores the history of coexistence between the two settlement types as critical in understanding how each has impacted the other to reach our present situation of hybrid regions (Halfacree 2004). The interdependence between rural and urban has long roots, although the degree to which one influences the other varies from location to location and is dependent upon a multitude of other factors that have guided the trajectories of rural areas in different directions across Canada and the world.

In 1932, Sorokin, Zimmerman and Galpin published their signature volumes dealing with urban and rural distinctions, as well as their interrelations. Since that time, theorists have drawn on their findings to present new versions of the urban-rural continuum. Sorokin, Zimmerman and Galpin (1965) set out to measure and interpret the urban-rural relationship, examining numerous variables to determine what differences existed between the two typologies. Physical traits like stature, weight and build were analyzed between the two populations. A comparison of population health was combined with measures of birth rates, mortality and intelligence to determine how people differed between the city and the country. They found that cities do not

"repulse or attract" any specific physical type (Sorokin, Zimmerman and Galpin 1965:32), and asserted that the differences between classes in the city were far greater than the observable differences between residents of urban and rural areas. Rather than endorsing the urban-rural continuum, the concluding hypothesis was a continued coexistence of both approaching a middle type coined "rurban" (Sorokin, Zimmerman and Galpin 1965:639). This middle ground was to come from the increased communication and mobility between urban and rural areas that would decrease isolation between the two ways of life.

Champion and Hugo (2004) discuss the United Nations assessment that the late 19th century began to see "conurbations" form as rural areas became connected by the small towns between them (p.10). This trend continued into the next century as reference to the city gave way to terms like metropolitan regions and urban areas that included the core city and its surrounding urbanized territories. As people began to lead their daily lives between urban and rural spaces, the boundaries began to blur and zones of transition around cities became the places "where urban and rural functions are mixed together," (Champion and Hugo 2004:11). Breaking from the urban rural dichotomy, researchers began to realize that settlement patterns in the 1900s were taking on a new form that did not completely fit within either end of the continuum. The difficulties in defining urban and rural have residual effects on developing clear demarcations between other terms linked to settlement patterns that are not purely urban or rural.

Without a universal definition of the urban-rural nexus, dichotomous measures used by census-takers can only reflect urban or rural growth patterns, missing a very important "rural renaissance" (Nelson 1992:357) that indicates many North Americans have made a significant shift in residential preference. Separate from the core city yet not far enough into the isolated countryside, the urban-rural nexus has become a distinct form for observation and investigation.

The urban-rural nexus is a source of interest and frustration as attempts to define it often seem to contradict themselves. Although there is more mixed use than a purely urban or rural area, the fringe also contains distinct pockets of matching built form. Thus, the urban-rural nexus has been conceptualized in the literature in many different ways, often as interchangeable with terms like fringe, suburbs, exurbs, bedroom communities, boomburbs and edge cities. Multiple methods have been proposed to provide an operational definition of the urban-rural nexus, with competing usage of qualitative and quantitative approaches to measure what qualifies as the nexus.

There has been a tendency to classify urban-rural nexus areas as suburbs (Kurtz and Eicher 1958; Pryor 1968). Yet, definitions of suburbs are not well suited to describe the areas outside the immediate borders of cities. Suburbs have consistent non-farm land use, are residentially homogenous, and possess consistent occupation and location characteristics (i.e. commuters living close to the city) (Kurtz and Eicher 1958). Popular terminology also includes exurbs (Taylor and Valentine Cadieux 2013; Davis, Nelson and Dueker 1994) as interchangeable labels for the urban-rural nexus, implying that residents of these areas are ex-urbanites who have voluntarily left the city. However, exurbs fall short of accuracy in defining the type of diverse residents and daily activities that are found in the urban-rural nexus. Garreau (1991) coined the term “edge city” as a way to describe settlement in the zone of transition between city and country. While it serves as an accurate definition for settlements outside cities that began as industrial or commercial hubs and have now evolved into full settlements with residential presence, edge cities represent an amalgamation of land uses in a concentrated area. An edge city may be part of the urban-rural nexus, but it does not serve the purpose of defining or representing it.

Kurtz and Eicher (1958) discuss the challenges involved in properly defining any residence categories when theoretical and empirical definitions tend to be at odds with each other. While theories remain focused on social characteristics, methodologies turn to physical, geographic and demographic attributes to create measurable definitions (Kurtz and Eicher 1958:32). This becomes particularly troublesome in the urban-rural nexus where mixed uses and multiplicity of actors cannot fit neatly within structured measurement scales. Attempts at analyzing the urban-rural nexus with existing theories and methodologies does, however, stress the fact that these areas are not the same as suburbs. Suburbs have consistent non-farm residential land use, whereas the fringe does not have any discernable pattern or consistency of land use. Municipal servicing and governance structures are also unpredictable in the urban-rural nexus or fringe. As a consequence of the mixed uses in the fringe, "residents of the fringe area may be expected to exhibit mixed rural and urban identifications and integration," (Kurtz and Eicher 1958:37).

Pryor (1968) turned to case studies within and outside North America to determine what commonalities exist between fringe areas in multiple locations, and whether they are distinct from the suburbs. He concludes by stating that the urban-rural fringe is distinct from the suburbs, although its land values tend to be closer to those of urban rather than rural areas. The definition offered for the urban-rural fringe is comprehensive and applicable even in a contemporary setting:

> The rural-urban fringe is the zone of transition in land use, social and demographic characteristics, lying between (a) the continuously built up urban and suburban areas of the central city, and (b) the rural hinterland, characterised by the almost complete absence of nonfarm dwellings, occupations and land use, and of urban and rural social orientation; an incomplete range and penetration of urban utility services; uncoordinated zoning or planning regulations; areal extension beyond although contiguous with the political boundary of the central city; and an actual and potential increase in population density, with the current

> density above that of surrounding rural districts but lower than the central city. These characteristics may differ both zonally and sectorally, and will be modified through time (Pryor 1968:206).

Given the wide scope of Pryor's (1968) characterization and the multiple elements that compose the urban-rural fringe, it is a suitable definition of the urban-rural nexus for the purpose of this research project. More than four decades after it was developed, the relevance of this definition is indicative of the ongoing transformative nature of the urban-rural nexus. Accepting a definition of urban-rural nexus, however, does not diminish the significance of the literature regarding suburbs and exurbs. In fact, suburbs and exurbs are often part of the urban-rural nexus, thereby making it essential to include a review of their emergence and evolution in this research project. Further, suburbs outside city boundaries and exurbs that extend into formerly rural areas are the instruments by which urbanization reaches the hybrid zone between city and country. It is for these reasons that the urban-rural nexus is studied in relation to the suburbs and exurbs that are contained within it. The significance of the urban-rural nexus is based in large part on its constituent parts, therefore, it is critical to understand how those parts came to be. Thus, the literature review for this research project will place an emphasis on these settlement types in an effort to better understand the history, social organization and institutions of the urban-rural nexus, as well as how these settlement types and their residents come into conflict with rural norms.

1. The Decentralization Movement

Research related to the urban-rural nexus has historic roots in the disciplines of planning and geography. From the Garden City and City Beautiful movements of the 1890s and early 1900s, urban planners and geographers have showed an interest in designing cities and their surrounding areas to promote social order and well-being (Relph 1987). Cities have changed

dramatically since the days of pre-industrialism, where mixed uses prevailed and any number of pursuits could be observed simultaneously in a single setting. The "overt heterogeneity" (Lofland, 1973:44) of the preindustrial city made it a space that housed people of different classes, races, countries and occupations in a very open manner, without separation based on appearance or activity. Although appearance or behavioural cues marked distinctions between people, there was little spatial ordering (Lofland, 1973:49). Even the elite who often lived at a distance from the core were still reliant on commonly shared services, like water and communication methods.

It was the early industrial city that began to separate its people and their activities as cities began to cover greater areas, technological advances in servicing moved activities from the public to a private spaces, and the upper classes struggled to insulate themselves from the "dangerous" classes (Lofland, 1973:62-63). The modern city continues to enforce spatial ordering through the official segregation of people and activities with land uses and by-laws. Even in contemporary urban society, it is the need to create "predictability in a world continually threatened with unpredictability" (Lofland, 1973:91) that has routinized the practice of spatial ordering through planning practices. In the post-World War II period, urban planning became the mantra for building better cities. While the goal in some nations was to rebuild cities from the rubble of war, in North America the push was in part to revive the economy and foster a strong sense of community in the urban setting. Relph (1987) notes that Thomas Adams, a well-respected international planner, summarized the philosophy by stating, "the general object of planning must be to promote human welfare – health, safety and convenience, so far as this can be done by securing order and balance in the physical growth of communities," (p.139).

As cities continued to practice spatial ordering, urban populations continued to grow and push out into surrounding areas. Combining the decentralization of activities in the city with explosive growth and diversification of the population in urban settings, the heterogeneity of the city migrated into the fringe. Contemporary literature on the urban-rural nexus is similarly comprised of contributions from planning disciplines that are focused on creating sustainable communities at the edge of cities (Gallent et al. 2006; Thomas 1990). Not everyone, however, agreed with this outward movement or felt that the planning profession had properly utilized built form to positively impact social life. Jacobs (1961) argues that all planners, particularly icons like Howard and Corbusier, were really nothing more than "decentrists" (p.20) whose mission to free people of the city's ills created islands and self-contained units that seemingly protect against the great blight of the city. As a result of the controversy, much sociological attention has been focused on the history of the suburbs and the people who reside within them.

2. History of the Suburbs, Exurbs and Small Towns

From a sociological perspective, case studies of the suburbs, exurbs and rural towns provide a strong starting point for examining fringe areas. Origins of suburbs and evolution of small towns following the industrial age are well documented within the sociological literature (Hughes 1943; Vidich and Bensman 1958; Clark 1966; Gans 1967). Both urban sociology and rural sociology have generated significant volumes that address their respective interests in how society functions in specific spatial settings, but the blended urban-rural nexus raises questions that cannot be answered by one school of thought alone. Recently, there have been efforts made to examine fringe areas sociologically. This type of research emphasizes the controversies around conversion of rural land for urban benefits and the resulting conflicts over impacts on farmland and natural environments (Beesley 2010).

2.1 Suburbs

The abundance of work on suburbs and related concepts provides a strong starting point for this research project. The rise of suburban living has been documented extensively in a variety of disciplines, including sociology (Palen 1995; Lofland 1998), geography (Relph 1987), urban design (Sandalack and Nicolai, 2006) and philosophy (Kolb, 2008). Historically, suburbs need to be understood in relation to: 1) separation of industrial areas from residential areas, 2) the need for post-war housing, 3) government home ownership incentives, 4) the rural background of many city residents, and 5) personal investment strategies. Suburbs provided a relatively inexpensive option for homeownership and led to the migration of many renters from the core city who dreamed of owning their own home. Reliance on mass production for cost effectiveness initially led to the suburban reputation for cookie-cutter houses and bland landscapes, a criticism that still prevails.

Jackson (1985) examined the historic origins of the suburbs by looking first to England and then the United States. Preindustrial cities in Europe and North America shared commonalities like congestion, mixture of functions and residences close to workplaces. In these cities, the most respectable addresses were either those in the core of the city or the country homes of the elite. Core city housing was unattainable to anyone but the elite not only because of cost but because the aristocracy passed their homes down through the generations. With limited ability to take up residence in the elite sections of the city, the newly wealthy merchant class in England emulated the country estate life of the gentry by settling in remote villages as a way to demonstrate their rising status (Jackson 1985:25).

In the United States, similar patterns of outward movement took place in metropolitan regions after the Great Depression and in the post World War II period. With the return of the

troops and the slow climb back to economic prosperity, the United States began to see reinvestment in industry and infrastructure. However, people did not want to wait for cities to rebuild and investors began to see that fresh, greenfield growth was less costly than repairing existing cities (Beauregard 2006). Thus, America rebuilt itself with new jobs and new homes in new places that were not rooted in the central cities of the past.

Improved transportation networks also made it possible for people to commute into the core city for work. While Weber argued that Americans' desire for pastoral living was the impetus for suburbanization, which ultimately led to improved transportation systems (Jackson 1985:43), the causality argument is less important than the fact that separation of residence from employment became the norm for the increasingly affluent middle class. The rise of the automobile and government intervention in homeownership further solidified the success of the suburban residential pattern. Government sponsorship of national programs like Fannie Mae developed a standardized mortgage instrument that allowed banks to lend money to prospective homebuyers (Jackson 1985:216). Assisting the "honest man" (Jackson 1985:193) in buying a home after the Depression in the 1930s facilitated the drift of the white middle class from the core city to the suburbs. Lower purchase costs through mass production of housing, financial aid and vehicular scale of development were the instruments of change in suburbanization.

Similar to the United States, the federal government in Canada introduced the National Housing Act (NHA) in 1938 and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) in 1945 to facilitate the provision and administration of funding for homebuyers in the face of postwar housing shortages (Berry 2010:282). Military personnel returned from the war eager to start families, and developer-led housing projects on the periphery of Canadian cities utilized less expensive land and mass construction of homes to provide homeownership options in the

postwar era. With incentives and dollars available for buying a home, it was a combined desire for homeownership and space that propelled suburbanization in Canadian cities (Clark 1966).

At the same time that postwar housing was receiving a boost from the government, farming as an occupation was facing massive failure as large-scale commercial production and cheap food policies obliterated family-run farm businesses (Walker 2010:4). As farmland was sold off for other land uses, the out migration of urbanites from cities to the country peaked in the late twentieth century (Walker 2010:4). With the transition from a production to consumption economy, the use value of rural land was less significant than the exchange value to be gained from greenfield development (Logan and Molotch 2007). Similarly, the production based culture of rural areas and small towns became consumption based (Zukin 1991:177), creating tension between old and new ways of life.

Perpetuation of the suburbs was further tied to the economic restructuring of North America beginning in the 1970s (Low 2003:21) that saw increased movement away from manufacturing and toward a service economy. The industrial era was the age of the middle class, where mass production and mass consumption fueled the economic engine. When globalization led to the decline of the manufacturing sector in the United States, the emergent symbolic economy of the city was built on its cultural capital. Culture was the property of cultivated people (Zukin 1991) and the mandate was to draw investment and talent (Sassen 1991; Florida 2005). The need for competitiveness on the global stage changed consumption patterns in cities from material goods to cultural experiences, creating a need for urban form and amenities that catered to a cosmopolitan lifestyle.

The economic and symbolic factors of the land were being interwoven to generate a symbolic language of exclusion and entitlement (Zukin 1995). As the city brought the class

differences to light through joint presence in a bounded place, marginalized and upper classes both made claims on the city (Sassen 1994). Lower classes took up residence in declining areas of the city because poor wages and poor mobility limited options for basic shelter. In sharp contrast, the upper classes took up residence in prestigious communities in the core city to maintain elite status and create a security zone from undesirables (Low 2003). Gentrification and new urbanism were efforts to draw people back to the city and allow re-engagement with a cosmopolitan lifestyle (Smith 1996). However, these spatially constructed communities of the elite (Zukin 1995) did not align well with the socioeconomic reality of the contemporary middle class that was afloat between the two extremes of the upper and lower classes. A combination of cultural and economic incompatibility was part of the impetus for the middle class migration to the suburbs and periphery communities of cities.

Clark's (1966) case study of early suburban growth in the Toronto metropolitan area revealed that the opportunity to purchase a home first drove people to villages and towns just outside the city, and later evolved into the planned community models that were more characteristic of modern suburbs. Suburbs became attractive to others only after the "pioneers" (Clark 1966:24) settled the land, and the most attractive settlements were those situated close enough to the city for access to amenities. Gans' (1967) community study of a Levitt subdivision in New Jersey drew similar conclusions to Clark's findings in the Toronto area. Reasons for migration to the planned community of Levittown were the desire for more space and homeownership, with Levittown perceived to be the best value for the dollar (Gans 1967:33). The ability to purchase a home was more important than the quality of the community for most Levittowners (Gans 1967:41). These findings challenged the notion that people had a desire to escape the city; on the contrary, people retained employment and amenity ties to the city while

taking up residence in areas where land and homes were cheaper (Clark 1966:48). For the mass market, arguably the middle class, the desire for homeownership outweighed fleeing the city as a reason for suburban residence.

In addition to the variable of cost, the notion of "escaping" the city is a dominant theme in the migration of people from the city to outlying areas. Momsen (1984) used data from Winnipeg and Red Deer to demonstrate that one third of rural residents in the commuter belt lived in rural areas because they had a "preference for rural living" (p.170), with an equal number reporting they had lived in rural settings as children. It can be argued that people choose rural residence in an effort to reconnect with memories or images of a happier time. In their analysis of the United States General Social Survey (GSS) for the period 1972 to 2008, Berry and Okulicz-Kozaryn (2011) find that levels of happiness are greater for non-urban than urban residents. This research supports their larger work with the World Values Survey for 81 countries that generates the same results for countries in northern or western Europe, as well as those with Western European foundations (like the United States). Berry and Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011) use multivariate analysis (age, income, employment, martial status, family size, ethnicity and American birthplace) to develop an urban-rural happiness gradient based on questions regarding overall happiness and well-being on the GSS. Their ability to break down respondents by locality enables the comparison of happiness levels between four places of residence: 1) small town/country, 2) suburb, 3) city between 50,000 and 250,000 population, and 4) central city of more than 250,000 population. The results indicate a residential cleavage where levels of happiness are between 8 to 10 percent higher for those living in small towns or the country than those living in central cities (Berry and Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011:880).

At this point, it is important to examine definitions of the term "suburb". There is no

common agreement in the literature regarding the precise definition, therefore it is a term that is applied to neighbourhoods within city boundaries, unincorporated areas outside city limits and independent cities that are part of a larger census metropolitan area. Turcotte (2008) finds that in addition to all of these definitions for suburb that are used by organizations like Statistics Canada, there is further differentiation based on variables like density and dwelling type. For example, it is assumed that suburbs generally have lower densities and more single family dwellings than inner city neighbourhoods. However, those assumptions are challenged by new urbanist community designs (Turcotte 2008) that incorporate more mixed uses than traditional suburbs, leading to higher densities and greater variation in housing type. For the purpose of this research project, the literature relating to suburbs is focused upon clustered residential settlements outside city limits. There may be variation in population, average income, number of amenities and a host of other variables. However, the primary understanding of suburb in the context of this research is a settlement outside the political boundaries of the city. Thus, it is used interchangeably with exurb.

2.2 Exurbs

Along with a preference for rural residence based on the desire to escape the city and pursuit of happiness, Nelson (1992) finds that the growth of exurban areas is a result of three other factors: decentralized employment hubs, improved servicing in rural areas and pro-development policies. "Exurbia is really composed of many landscapes. It includes farms, forests, isolated suburban subdivisions, small towns, acreage tract subdivisions, and estates," (Nelson 1992:350). When you consider that exurbanites are socioculturally more like their suburban counterparts than rural neighbours (Walker 2010), and combine it with the marked increase in exurban residence over time, defining and understanding the concept of exurbia is

critical for policy-makers who must manage the servicing and governance issues that accompany growth. However, it is as important to define exurbia statistically so that demographic trends in these hybrid regions can be tracked over time. Thus, Nelson (1992) proposes that quantifying exurbia remains as important as development of sociocultural definitions.

In their analysis of exurban growth in Portland, Oregon, Davis, Nelson and Dueker (1994) identified 4 distinct settlement areas: urban, suburban, exurban rural and exurban small town. The two categories of exurban support their thesis that exurbanites will be a “diverse lot” (Davis, Nelson and Dueker 1994:47) based on the variety of reasons that people choose exurban residence. With hobby farms, country estates, small acreage subdivisions and small towns all available as options for residence and lifestyle, people can choose the aspects of exurban life that they most desire. Reasons cited for choosing exurban residence include the desire for more space, ability to pursue farming as a hobby and affordability of home purchase. Advances in servicing options also make it possible to easily access telephone, cable, internet, water and shopping in exurbia, no longer requiring abandonment of city life to require abandonment of the urban lifestyle. Davis, Nelson and Dueker (1994) conclude that exurbs are not the same as suburbs but are also not truly rural settlements, stating that the primary difference is the rural dependency upon resource exploitation for a living and the exurban desire to enjoy unexploited resources (p.46).

More recent case studies in Ohio (Sharp and Clark 2008) have examined multiple fringe areas through data from three federal census periods and the state agricultural survey to compare urban, suburban, fringe and rural places, as well as compare incorporated and unincorporated fringe areas. The findings support the hypothesis that the urban-rural nexus is a distinct settlement type that lies somewhere between suburb and rural, both in terms of physical form and

way of life. There is also evidence of economic stratification between residents of incorporated and unincorporated areas, indicating that "(unincorporated) townships are faster growing, have had more new housing, have higher value housing, and residents have higher income and more education on average," (Sharp and Clark 2008:71). The desire of many urban-rural nexus municipalities to increase their tax base creates an openness toward suburban and exurban settlements, which has led to consistent growth patterns at the edges of cities. However, unincorporated townships often lack the sophistication and consistency of governance that exists in incorporated locations, resulting in pockets of development that are not planned or compatible with neighbouring uses. With policy-makers and planning professionals seeking recommendations for building relationships and mediating conflict in this diverse setting, sociological research into developing and leveraging social capital that can build trust among the resident groups in the urban-rural nexus becomes increasingly relevant (Sharp and Smith 2003; Libby and Sharp 2003).

Part of the conflict that occurs in the urban-rural nexus focuses on the different servicing preferences of exurbanites and rural residents. A case study of four rural Rhode Island communities (Johnston, Swallow, Tyrrell and Bauer 2003) refutes the assumption that new residents of fringe areas have a preference for more urbanized servicing like sewer and water infrastructure or waste removal. Johnston et al. (2003) quantify the preferences of a sample of rural residents who were asked to consider development options for a hypothetical tract of forested land in a local township and found that little empirical evidence exists supporting the assumption of preferential difference. Data analysis indicates that there is not a significant difference in servicing preference between longtime and newer residents. However, there is statistical significance in attitudes toward clustered development, with longtime residents

providing less endorsement for this type of development. Similar to the reification of urban and rural as dichotomous terms, assumptions about lifestyle preferences between longtime and newer residents cannot be taken for granted.

2.3 Evolution of towns

Community studies examining the influence of urbanization in transitioning rural areas, both old and new, have similarly put forward consistent findings regarding class conflicts between established residents and newcomers. These early studies are significant for the fieldwork employed in examining urban expansion, as well as the findings demonstrating class conflict in transforming towns. Hughes' (1943) community study of a French-speaking Quebec town facing industrialization under English-speaking leadership is a sharp example of the contrast between rural and urban ways of life in the 1930s. The old built form of the town was retained to a large degree with new symbols of the industrial age rising up sporadically, as well as an increasing demand for urban goods and services with the growing English-speaking population. While the French remained connected to each other through multiple social organizations, the English newcomers were less connected to the French and each other. Politically, the French were elected to positions based on community ties while the English were given positions of leadership based on status within industry. These divisions between the French and English were only superficially based on language; the true conflict was the effect of industrialism upsetting the "equilibrium of class" and threatening the formerly rural French way of life (Hughes 1943:219).

Vidich and Bensman (1958) also examined the effects of industrialization and urbanization on small town life through a case study of Springdale, New York. They uncovered rural dependence on the institutions of larger urban society, a relationship where even small

urban change translates into profound effects on the way of life in rural areas (Vidich and Bensman 1958:102). Although small town residents took great pride in being “just plain folks” (Vidich and Bensman 1958:30) and viewed the city as dirty and corrupt, the perpetuation of the town would not have been possible without urban migrants. An influx of urbanites into the town in the postwar period allowed for a “socially reconstituted society” (Vidich and Bensman 1958:15) where class lines still divided the town between old rural values and new urban ones. Even the farming population was divided between the traditional families and those utilizing new technology or economics for greater prosperity. New wealth and conspicuous consumption were frowned upon by longtime residents who favoured a public appearance of equality.

From a political perspective, there was a distinction between the elected officials and the influential leaders in the town. Politics was viewed as largely ceremonial decision-making (Vidich and Bensman 1958:116) based on doing what was right for the ultimate symbol of the community: the farmer. Town councils did not have regular turnover because change was managed behind the scenes by community leaders influencing decision-makers. During times of dynamic change, however, audiences cannot be managed by existing actors and upheaval begins (Vidich and Bensman 1958:288). As urbanites move to small towns across North America, municipal decision-making bodies begin to replace traditional values with more urbanized belief systems. The results are manifest not only in human behaviour but also in the institutions and structures that are created. Impacts of urbanization can be seen across multiple social institutions, reflecting the conflicting belief systems of the old ways and the new.

Building on the classic community studies of rural transformation, Macgregor (2010) conducted ethnographic research in a small Wisconsin town in the twenty-first century to uncover how residents create a sense of community. Among her findings, Macgregor (2010)

identified that income and economic class are not the main categories of distinction between residents. Rather, “it seemed that the only familiar set of social categories that made sense was the newcomer/old-timer distinction,” (Macgregor 2010:26). She found three distinct cultural groups – Regulars, Alternatives and Main Streeters – that show how class is enacted through tastes and preferences as opposed to basic economics. Regulars view themselves as the standard by which to measure others, holding on to the historic core values of the town even through times of change. Alternatives are exurbanites who choose town life as a preferred counterculture to the materialistic tendencies of mainstream urbanites. Main Streeters, however, are an interesting blend between Regulars and Alternatives. They are a combination of old and new residents with a commitment to local community as opposed to some broader, universal vision. Macgregor (2010) demonstrates that while residents make distinctions between themselves based on old and new philosophies or values, it is their consumption patterns that enact class. Through the schools chosen for their children and the shops they frequent, residents make daily decisions that shape their ideals of community. While a review of historic and contemporary community studies demonstrates that class is an integral component in understanding how rural areas transform over time, contemporary researches shows that class must be recognized as a multifaceted identity that transcends economics alone.

Specific to the Canadian context of prairie towns, there is a body of literature that describes how life in towns changed over time. Whereas the early days of prairie towns and villages saw great reliance among members of independent settlements, with limited interaction between neighbouring villages for specialized services, change came with the rise of farm cities of the 1940s (Zimmerman and Moneo 1970). “The big changes were in the growth in the prairie cities and the decline on the farms,” (Zimmerman and Moneo 1970: 27), a time when economic

needs began to be served by small cities while towns and villages still provided basic social institutions. In moving from self-sufficient smaller settlements to a regional model of interdependency, the late 1960s situation was that "(a)s one approaches a prairie city the question as to where the city begins and the country leaves off is presently difficult to decide," (Zimmerman and Moneo 1970:63).

In discussing western Canada as a cultural unit or region with a distinct past, Perry, Morton and Jones (2013) explain that "places and people's relationship to them are variable, and they are frequently uncomfortable and conflicted," (p.3). The cultures and traditions of the past are not stable, and prairie towns are constantly transforming in relation to the urban centres that surround them. Sandalack (1999) examines Olds, Alberta as an example of a prairie town that has undergone dramatic change over time based on the evolution of ideas and ideologies. Located about halfway between Calgary and Red Deer, Olds was established in 1890 as a railway town like many others on the Canadian prairies. The railway station acted as the hub of the town, with much of the economic district and public realm also situated in close proximity. In time, this "inside-out" model of the town was replaced by an "outside-in" planning philosophy (Sandalack 2013).

The "inside-out" model with a central business district ringed by residential areas was the norm when Olds was established. However, once the railway ceased to act as an economic and transportation hub, the central business district and railway gardens that constituted the heart of the town in earlier times fell into a state of disrepair and obsolescence after the automobile and related highway network became more logistically significant. With the automobile came the renewed focus on the outskirts of prairie towns, places that had previously been reserved for the private realm of housing. An "outside-in" model saw strip malls and shopping centres on the

edge acting as the commercial areas to draw consumers into the town. Further, these commercial strips became the landmarks to replace the grain elevators that previously marked the place of towns on the otherwise bland prairie landscape. “The potentially disorienting vastness of the Prairies was made human and tolerable” by the grain elevators that rose up from otherwise flat lands (Sandalack 2013:281). With no clear marker from the highway that a town was present, travellers and towns alike faced the loss of a significant piece of prairie life. It is this loss of the “physical encounter with the landscape” (Calder 2013:170) combined with the recognition that “(p)resent-day prairie dwellers are likely to engage with the environment in terms of recreation or aesthetics rather than economics” (Calder 2013: 172) that fuels contemporary research into prairie towns.

3. The Role of Class

More significant than the differences between newcomers and longtime residents in the urban rural fringe is the role of class. One of the major findings from the Levittown community study (Gans 1967) is the role of class in conflicts between community groups. Social class within Levittown was primarily lower middle class (3/4 of the population), with a small but strong upper middle class presence as well (Gans 1967:25). Using the example of education reform, Gans (1967) discusses the ability of the upper class to organize and vocalize a point of view that was not shared by the majority, reflecting the power held by a small yet influential group. The formation of a citizens’ coalition for education reform highlighted the different values between classes, with one group happy with the public education system and the other demanding higher quality. Unlike the relative class homogeneity of the traditional city neighbourhood, the suburbs accommodate a wider range of classes and are thus open to greater incidents of conflict (Gans 1967:417). Establishing a sense of “community” is made difficult by class diversity, a reality that

is buried beneath the rhetoric of suburban sameness and conformity. In other words, the uniformity of the built form does not result in uniformity of human behaviour.

The Levittown community study brings out the issue of children's schooling as an example of conflict between classes. Gans (1967) identifies family typology as the root of the conflict, with the "child centered" philosophy of the lower middle class clashing with the "adult directed, child centered" philosophy of the upper middle class (p.25). The latter is viewed as more focused on preparing children for their future than playing with them in the present. In Canada, a community study by Seeley, Sim and Loosley (1956) examines how the suburb of Crestwood Heights grew around a school where the pursuit of the American dream was not for one's self but for one's children. The speed and scale of technological change in an increasingly dynamic economy led the families in Crestwood Heights to make school their primary social institution, replacing church and family in preparing children for future success (Seeley, Sim and Loosley 1956:233). Homeownership in Crestwood Heights was not only a symbol of status as a rising class, but also a reflection of class values linked to children's education. Such revelations reinforce the proliferation of the suburbs as a complex process with deep roots in class aspirations.

Filion (2003) connects the expectations and preferences of residents to their choice of residence as a rationale for the rise of suburban growth. "It is in the suburb, where they have been raised, that the values of a majority of North Americans have been shaped. As expected, many of them aspire to reside in the type of environment with which they are most familiar," (Filion 2003:57). Examining class in the exurban fringe, Walker (2010) first defines class as not only the interactions of individuals with the economy, but also the complex association with intermediate institutions (education, religion, ethnicity) that further create collective class

identities (p.3). Class identities are fluid and temporary, changing and evolving as they are impacted by other institutions. Changes to class are also impacted by the presence or absence of different groups in a bounded area, a reality that has played out over time in the urban-rural hybrid zone. In sharp contrast to the duality of relations between the agricultural and mercantile classes of the past, urban migration into the urban-rural nexus has created a plurality of relations between different constituent groups and classes.

Peck's (2011) examination of suburbs paints a picture of residents who leave the city in an effort to create subgovernance models that better reflect their values through increased attention to schools, property values and differential taxation models. By voting with their feet and choosing to live in areas outside the city, suburbanites practice a form of "property rights activism" (Peck 2011:904) whereby their investment in their homes serves as a right to keep taxes local and separate from the central city, as well as placing limits on further growth to maintain status of residents. This model of the suburbs seems better suited to the terminology of exurbs as used in most Canadian contexts, given that Canadian suburbs generally tend to refer to neighbourhoods within city limits yet outside the city core. Peck's (2011) thesis is also dramatically different from assertions that suburban life is less a free choice and more a matter of affordability in homeownership (Clark 1966; Gans 1967; Jackson 1985).

Just as suburbanization in the postwar era was partly fuelled by the desire for homeownership, urbanization of formerly rural periphery areas has been in part for reasons of homeownership. However, there are divisions between exurbanites who seek modest homes in greenfield developments that are less expensive than the city, and those who desire status through exclusivity of address. There has been a persistent duality to the image of suburban life, meaning affordability for some and reflection of affluence for others (Palen 1995; Lofland 1998;

Johnson and Schmidt 2009). This has created differentiation between suburbs, with exurbs (Palen 2008) and boomburbs (Lang and LeFurgy 2007) often being touted as the elite version. These exclusive elite exurbs are often located in settings that have majestic views of nature, are located away from highways and require minimum acreage lots upon which estate-style homes are built. For some members of the elite class, exurban life allows them to acquire capital to secure status for themselves and their children (Walker 2010:5). Locations in exurbia are chosen as far from the city as possible and estates are built that can be handed down through the generations. In contrast, members of the middle class utilize the rationale of escaping the city and seeking a more rural lifestyle to disguise the reality of housing affordability options (Walker 2010:4). Combined with the desire to raise a family in a safe environment with small town values, the justifications for living outside the city are presented as choices rather than economic circumstances. Thus, exurbanites differ in their decision for pastoral residence.

4. Urban-Rural Nexus as Segregated Space

Fringe communities and rural areas have become a residential haven away from big city stresses, impacting urban-rural relations through extended commuting patterns surrounding urban centres (Ali, Olfert and Partridge 2011). Rural residents with agricultural roots, however, continue to view their land as both a means of production and an investment. Social cohesion of the urban-rural hybrid zone is in jeopardy from the conflicting interests of the many different people and constituent groups with divergent interests in the land. As the urban-rural nexus has been influenced by urbanization patterns (Seeley, Sim and Loosley 1956; Clark 1966; Garreau 1991; Beauregard 2006), it has also mirrored the city in becoming a segregated space with conflicts over land use, way of life and definition of space. In the same way that cities in the industrial age segregated land uses, the urban-rural nexus is a space with distinct pockets of

dissimilar activity. The fringe is home to agricultural operations, estate homes, recreation spaces, shopping malls and many other uses. Through annexation and land development on the edges of the urban areas, cities have seeped into areas that were traditionally considered part of the countryside (Sandalack and Nicolai 2006). Longtime residents of the urban-rural nexus have seen their land and way of life change dramatically in a short period of time, creating crisis of meaning and belonging.

The most significant spatial segregation in the urban-rural nexus is between agricultural and non-agricultural lands. From a landed property perspective, farms bring together both the productive and reproductive spheres through containment of the agricultural operation and homestead on the same parcel of land. Although some small acreage residents may own as much land as a small farming operation, there is a marked absence of any agricultural activity in favour of a stately home with professional landscaping. Just as it is common to see pockets of prestigious estate communities, rows of expansive farming operations are commonplace in this hybrid environment. Similar to the land use zoning policies of the city, the urban-rural nexus employs zoning as a means of controlling growth and managing the diversity through designations that may include agricultural, residential, leisure and commercial (Hanna and Noble 2010; Bunce 2010; Caldwell 2010; Gayler 2010; Taylor 2010; Bryant and Marois 2010). Segregation in the urban-rural nexus is both formally and informally structured, very much like the city with which it shares a border.

Not unlike the city, the urban-rural nexus is a segregated space, divided by function and by class. For some members of the elite class, migration out of the city is both a symbolic and economic act. Relocation to expensive exurban communities acts as a marker of arrival in some elite circles (Garreau 1991), and also allows further accumulation of second circuit capital in the

form of real estate (Gottdiener and Feagin 1988). For middle class migrants, however, relocation is generally to less expensive areas where they purchase existing homes, small acreages or build in moderately priced new developments. Thus, residential built form varies dramatically between small farm homes to expansive mansion-style homes on small acreages and clusters of high end homes in country-residential areas. The visual representation of status in the urban-rural nexus is similar to the city, with estates clustered in specific sections and more affordable homes relegated to other areas with lesser views and amenities.

Second circuit capital also plays a role in segregation in the urban-rural nexus as increased consumption has created a demand for leisure activities and corresponding accommodations (Butler 1984; Whitson 2001; Koster, Lemelin and Agnew 2010; Senese 2010; Eberts 2010). It is not uncommon to see condominium developments near PGA-rated golf courses or major ski resorts, with many of the units acting as secondary residences for seasonal enjoyment of leisure activities. Also, many urbanites purchase cabins or cottages in lakeside settings in the urban-rural nexus to "get away" from the city and partake in idyllic natural surroundings for summer weekends (Seeley, Sim and Loosley 1956; Halseth 2010; Luka 2010). Along with the classic Canadian example of Ontario's cottage country, the Cottage Club development near Ghost Lake, Alberta is a recent example of this second home phenomenon.

Butler (1984) discusses how various recreational pursuits - hobby farming, cottage ownership, timeshare properties, off-road vehicles, hunting – all create a very different usage pattern in the rural setting. The trend toward lifestyle-oriented development (Whitson 2001) in the Canadian Rockies creates a recreation-focused population migration, where urbanites establish recreational cottages or permanent residences that allow for access to urban amenities (e.g. employment, social events) as well as rural leisure attractions (e.g. skiing, hiking). Space

for "shoppertainment" is another distinct form of land use in the urban-rural nexus (Hannigan 1998). Vast spaces on the edges of cities have been appropriated for theme parks, nature-based tourism, farmers markets, golf courses and factory outlet malls (Koster et al. 2010). Rocky View County boasts the Calaway Park amusement centre and CrossIron Mills mall as tourist destinations. Additionally, small hamlets and villages with natural appeal are transformed into tourist hot spots (Judd and Fanstein 1999), with Bragg Creek as a prime example in Rocky View County. Interdependence between the city and its hinterlands is also demonstrated by the phenomenon of leisure spaces providing residual benefits of tourism flow to the city.

5. Urban-Rural Nexus as Contested Space

The issue of contested space within the urban-rural nexus can be viewed in two ways. First, there are lifestyle conflicts, like those that arise between farmers with grazing cattle and exurbanites whose landscaping suffers at the hooves of a neighbour's animal. These rural conflicts are representative of the deeper issue: the clashing perspectives of what the urban-rural nexus should look like and what activities are acceptable there. From this difference in perspectives over land use, we see the rise of conflict between those who favour use value of land against those who wish to realize full exchange value potential. The dynamics of change are visible in the urban-rural nexus, particularly when the issue revolves around development of traditional agricultural lands. Many farmers take the position that their farms constitute their livelihoods, through agricultural income or through sale of the land (Hanna and Noble 2010; Gayler 2010). Using the argument that agriculture has become a devalorized industry (Sassen 1994; Sassen 2002), farmers cite hardship from low resale value of land for agricultural purposes and prohibitive operating costs as contributing to increasing poverty. Thus, many farmers support land development in rural areas to capture the exchange value of lands they no longer

perceive as valuable for farming.

On the other side of the argument is the conservationist position taken up by small acreage owners and activist groups. There are also farmers who take this position, illuminating the conflict that exists among members of a seemingly homogeneous constituent group. From the conservationist perspective, agricultural lands and green space must be preserved in the interest of sustainability and environmentalism (Lee 2009; Schmidt and Paulsen 2009; Caldwell 2010; Gayler 2010). Each side is suspicious of the true intent of the other: conservationists feel farmers are interested only in profit from their land, while farmers feel that conservationism is being used as an argument to protect residential exclusivity and property values. Which argument will carry the day depends upon the audience, and as rural elected officials with long-standing community ties are being replaced with exurbanites, power struggles are challenging the longstanding status quo (Vidich and Bensman 1958; Mitchell 2010).

Alongside the conflicts that take place among residents in the urban-rural hybrid zone, there are conflicts among jurisdictions. The pressure for development and revenues increases competition between city regions (Weiher 1991; Ghitter and Smart 2009; Johnson and Schmidt 2009) and perpetuates the inefficiencies of the decentralized approach to governance (Savitch and Vogel 2004; Ghitter and Smart 2009; Lindstrom 2010). Cities compete with outlying areas for tax dollars, infrastructure grants and economic development initiatives. Further complicating matters is the end result of many economic development initiatives that take place in the urban-rural hybrid zone: the emergence of edge cities. Edge cities (Garreau 1991) are often mall-centered, privately managed developments that have no legal or civic jurisdiction (Palen 2008: 99-100). These entities have a direct impact on the population patterns of a given region as people migrate toward them as employment hubs (Ding and Bingham 2000).

6. Current State: Post-Suburbanization and Holistic Approaches

In asking whether traditional settlement patterns - like the suburb - remain relevant today, Phelps and Wu (2011) examine global case studies to determine whether we have transitioned into a period of post-suburbanization. An empirical analysis of North American cities demonstrates trends towards out-migration of both people and businesses from the city core to outlying areas. Resulting settlement patterns reflect edge cities (Garreau 1991) that may or may not be incorporated but serve as urban periphery hubs for employment, retail and residence. Also, regionalism has created "in-between cities" (Keil and Young 2011:56) that try to balance spillover effects from large metropolitan areas with demands for infrastructure in a political grey zone where no jurisdiction is clearly responsible for growth management. New regionalism (Jonas 2011:82) reflects how regions are now governed from an economic standpoint, resulting in self-organized and competitive fringe areas that display radically different development patterns than those of classic metropolitan centres. These trends point towards an era of post-suburbanism where "historic cities, their suburbs, outer suburbs, edge cities and the like are specialized locales within wider multi-nodal metropolitan systems," (Phelps and Wu 2011:5).

At the same time, Phelps and Wu (2011) assert that post-suburbia is not a clean break from suburbia, but it illuminates the multi-faceted and multi-scalar nature of transformations that are affecting metropolises (p.245). Transitioning to the use of post-suburbia oversimplifies the processes of change at work on the edges of our cities, and encourages the idea of a continuum that perpetuates ideal states of settlement. If we shift our focus to the processes of change rather than the resultant forms of settlement, we have more to gain in understanding the complexities of social transformation in urban-rural hybrid zones. Thus, present day research continues to support the decades old perspective that urban and rural must not be viewed on a continuum, but

rather as ways of life that impact each other and create hybrid forms over time. The "post-suburbia" of the contemporary age is really no more than a new conceptualization of the ever-evolving urban-rural nexus that has taken on greater diversity of land uses and people over time.

Another significant point of note for contemporary sociologists is the call for a refocusing on social processes rather than geographic, demographic and academic divides. Sampson (2011) states that the "division of labour in the academy is one of specialization" and targets his own research to examine "everything social about the city" as a challenge to this unproductive and divisive practice (p.22). Although concentrated on Chicago as an urban setting, Sampson's (2011) work is still relevant to the urban/rural debate as he delivers a social and spatial empirical investigation that provides a contextual analysis of the holistic city instead of focusing on its separate parts (Goering 2013). Reviewers have declared his work a "new standard for social scientific inquiry" (Wilson 2011), a body of research that will "change the discipline and set a new research agenda," (Denton 2013). If urban and rural sociologists examining hybrid spaces can similarly set aside the dichotomies that divide them, there is hope that future investigation into the urban-rural nexus will be equally holistic in its approach.

III. Conclusion

As evidenced by the literature, the historic debate over defining urban and rural still rages on and demonstrates little agreement between opposing sides. While the dichotomy and continuum advocates continue to develop theories and methodologies to support their claims, members of the social constructionist and interpretive camps rally behind their assertion that urban and rural cannot be defined objectively and must be examined from the perspective of the actor. At the same time, the built form and social relations within the urban-rural nexus are in a rapid and constant state of change as non-traditional uses continue to invade the hybrid zone.

While sociologists wage wars over terminology, residents and other interested parties in the urban-rural nexus face massive changes to their physical environments and ways of life.

Describing the urban-rural nexus as either urban, rural or something in between with multivariate analyses and indexes is a valid task that assists us in creating both spatial and characteristic definitions. However, it does not accomplish the sociological task of understanding the social structures, processes and relations at play in this hybrid area. This research project undertakes a sociological investigation of the urban-rural nexus by placing the focus on the people and perspectives that reside within it. The research position is that although definitions of urban and rural are not opposite ends of a continuum, there is a marked difference between the two that allows residents to create a sense of place and identity. Usage of the terms urban and rural is strategic. When the labels are applied to self, there is generally a positive connotation that invokes a particular understanding of social and spatial order. However, when applied to the other, the label is one depicting difference and often intended to make a normative judgement in favour of one's own grouping. Thus, urban and rural are used by laypeople to label self and others in order to make distinctions between the value sets that underpin social organization. In addition to uncovering the discursive nature of these definitions, this research project strives to illuminate the ways in which urban and rural are positioned by groups within the nexus when seeking power in periods of conflict.

Chapter 3: Analytical and Interpretive Models of the Urban/Rural Construct

Examining the urban-rural nexus in this research project requires identification of subgroups to investigate the meanings these groups attach to the land, and how those meanings come into conflict with other groups. The social constructionist model and discourse analysis methodology are well suited to analyze the conflicts that exist within contested spaces. Social constructionists argue that studying meaning-making processes should also address the ability of powerful groups to impose their constructions upon those with less power (Hannigan 2010:54). In the urban-rural nexus, examining meanings attached to place and the role of power can illuminate how formerly rural areas undergo significant change through urbanization and the mandates of the powerful to transform those areas.

This project is also rooted in community studies, utilizing Rocky View County as a case study of conflict over land use in the urban-rural nexus. It recognizes and builds upon existing research that examines changing social structures and processes in formerly rural areas. The theoretical and methodological approaches follow the tradition of social constructionism and discourse analysis, giving weight to the talk that is used to convey perspective during times of conflict. Accepting that people confer meaning to space, this research project adds to the collection of sociological community studies like those examining New York and Vancouver's Chinatowns (Zhou 1992; Anderson 1991), skid row (Huey and Kemple 2007) and urban Aboriginal communities (Newhouse and Peters 2003) to analyze both the meanings that are attached to place and the role of power in advancing certain constructions of space over others.

Before embarking on the review of the analytical models incorporated in this research project, it is important to note that theories of hybridity have not been included in this work. While there is a significant body of literature dealing with hybridity (Bhaba 1994; Ashcroft,

Griffiths and Tiffin 2001), the focus tends to be on post-colonial theory and cultural globalization. While some research has been conducted into urban hybridity (Baker 2007; Ismail 2013), the examination of evolving built form or social spaces is prefaced on culture or ethnicity in the post-colonial era. Hybridity has been called "one of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in post-colonial theory," (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2001:118). Thus, for the purpose of this research project, hybridity in the urban-rural nexus is defined as the mutual existence of different physical uses of land, as well as different perceptions of how the land should be used.

I. Interpretations of Space and Creating Sense of Place

The notion of creating place is one that crosses many disciplines, including the incorporation of sociological concepts with those of urban design. "The structure of a place never exists on its own; it results from larger social practices and decisions received into local processes of interpretation and embodiment," (Kolb, 2008:45). Dynamic and memorable places are created for multiple uses, lending themselves to ongoing relevance by adapting to the changing interaction patterns they facilitate. Civic plazas and city squares play host to multiple users and events, often at the same time, much like preindustrial cities. The interconnectedness of diverse spatial and social realms brings to light the dramaturgical position that residents of the city are involved in "enticing real-life dramas" (Lofland 1998:91), "an intricate sidewalk ballet" (Jacobs 1961:50), all while "on the stage with the other participants" (Lynch, 1960:2). Built form provides the places where people live their lives, and each impacts the other equally as physical environments guide human action and individuals attach meanings to spaces.

To have meaning, places must be useful and memorable to the user (Lynch 1960). Because life in the city involves successful negotiation of human contact within the built

environment, the user's image of place is vital based on recognizable cues in daily interactions and in the landscape. In his study of three American cities, Lynch (1960) asked groups of individuals to draw maps of their cities which he then compared against maps created by urban professionals in each location. Significant portions of the city were often omitted from citizens' maps and connectivity between parts of the city were simplified to mirror individual travel patterns. Lynch (1960) referred to this as the legibility of cities (p.2) and how they become knowable to an individual. Cities should have form that allows individuals to structure and identify important elements, with multiplicity and complexity in that form that creates a cohesive sense of place. "By the intensity of its life and the close packing of its disparate people, the great city is a romantic place, rich in symbolic detail," (Lynch, 1960:119).

Cities are socially constructed places where different interpretations are perpetually at odds and power has the ability to alter built form in ways that accommodate some and marginalize others. Community studies have uncovered the many conflicting interpretations of place in segmented urban spaces. Whyte's (1943) investigation of the inner workings of an Italian neighbourhood (Cornerville) in north Boston and Gans' (1962) examination of Boston's West End both describe communities with a high degree of social order and cohesion among their residents. To outsiders, however, both neighbourhoods appeared unstructured and disorganized. When community leaders could not effectively rally their people or convey their way of life to outside decision-makers, the future of both communities was left to planners and social caretakers with different values and interests than residents. Castells (1983) presents case studies of Paris, San Francisco and Madrid to further demonstrate that urban structure is an expression of institutionalized domination. For Castells (1983), the development of social movements demonstrates that institutionalized interests of dominant groups can only be

challenged successfully when support can be gained and voiced across class lines. In other words, social movements are successful when the dominant ideology is called into question only by groups deemed legitimate by those in power.

These community studies highlight the need for an in-depth understanding of the meanings attached to space by its inhabitants, as well as the conflicts that result when other more powerful interpretations are applied to the same spaces. More recent community studies continue to illuminate the conflicting meanings attached to space in cities. Zhou's (1992) community study of Chinatown in New York reveals that the persistent perception of the ethnic enclave as a slum ignores the reality that self-selection of residence in an ethnic enclave is not the same as forced segregation based on lack of opportunity. A full offering of social and economic organizations, institutional completeness (Breton 1964) and a concentration of collective resources (Hou and Milan 2003) allows some ethnic groups to choose segregated neighbourhoods for reasons of wanting to be with like people, either culturally or socioeconomically (Fong 2010). The clash between outsider interpretations of forced segregation and insider understanding of self-selection offers more evidence that urban areas are contested spaces. Aboriginal experiences of the city are similarly part of the literature on contested social spaces. Because public discourses have long defined urban and Aboriginal cultures as incompatible, a return to urban areas from the reserve is viewed as a desire to assimilate (Newhouse and Peters 2003:6-7). This perception leads to conflict when urban Aboriginals attempt to maintain their own cultural norms in a space that expects uptake of host norms.

Urban case studies with various subsets of the population further advance the position that there is no single common experience simply by virtue of classification within an identifiable grouping of people. Thus, the range of urban experiences is vast and creates multiple

interpretations of the city based on diverse experiences. To build arguments that support their interpretations of urban life, social groups must challenge ethnocentric, racist, classist and sexist definitions of the city to create legitimacy for the meanings they attach to urban spaces. Because the city is constructed of segregated spaces that invite or hinder meaning-making processes, viewing the built form of the city as a "benign backdrop" (MacGregor 1995:26) instead of a force acting upon our lives makes us blind to the effects of spatial segregation that reinforces ideologies of the dominant class.

The meanings attached to ethnic enclaves, slums or other spatial communities are not inherent to those areas; these are definitions and interpretations that have been assigned by those with the power to impose labels. For the people within these areas, life is structured around a very real daily routine and sense of community that may not mesh with outsiders' expectations, but is important to insiders' sense of place and community. Through research into communities that break from the norm (Huey and Kemple 2007; Bourgois and Schonberg 2009), we are able to learn more about the conflicts that make urban areas contested and segregated spaces.

II. Interpretive Schemes of the Urban-Rural Nexus

1. Social Constructionist Model

The social constructionist model places an emphasis on how people interpret spaces, the meanings they attach to those spaces and the subsequent conflict that ensues from incompatible interpretations of the same space. Meanings are not inherent to a given space; meaning must be assigned and negotiated between interested parties. In this discursive war of meanings, the victor is ultimately the group with the power to impose its construction over all others (Hannigan 2010). The literature provides examples of competing identities and constructions in different geographic settings that show how power can be gained and wielded in a variety of manners.

Community studies of urban places provide a foundation for understanding urban and rural as socially constructed identities. Recent studies of hybrid areas demonstrate that identities evolve over time and ideal types of urban and rural are no longer valid. Based on the findings of existing research, the definitions of urban and rural developed for this research project reflect that identities are tied to the land, and hybridity is created when meanings attached to the land change over time through exposure to different people and experiences.

The use of social constructionism as the theoretical base for this research provides a way to understand the conflicts in the urban-rural nexus from the perspectives of residents and members of constituent groups with an interest in land use. Unlike other research projects that have first defined urban, rural and/or the fringe in order to then study it (Harris 2010), this approach aims to uncover the definitions and identities of urban and rural that individuals have constructed themselves. Analyzing conflicts over land use serves a dual purpose. First, examining the discourse involved in the conflicts will reveal commonly understood language used in portraying typologies of urban and rural when making claims about what or who is urban or rural. Second, understanding what is deemed to be appropriate land use in the urban-rural nexus identifies how groups and individuals perceive their hybrid space. The degree to which the fringe is considered to be urban, rural or some combination is conveyed in the discourses of conflict, and also demonstrates the extent to which social relations have changed in the area. Further, land use is a critical focal point in this research as it is the physical representation of an actor's social construction of the urban-rural nexus.

Exploring the urban-rural nexus from a social constructionist approach addresses the issues of reification raised in the literature, thereby preventing the treatment of urban and rural being treated as "object(s) whose meaning is independent of any human subject" (Harris

2010:13). “Reification implies that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world, and further, that the dialectic between man, the producer, and his products is lost to consciousness,” (Berger and Luckmann 1966:89). While a constructionist approach to defining urban and rural does not seek an objective truth, it does allow for an understanding of interpretations. Urban and rural cannot be viewed as dichotomous terms based on an assumption that we share a universal understanding of their meaning; there must be an understanding of how the terms are interpreted and constructed. Otherwise, the fringe becomes by default an even combination of urban and rural, which is proven false by the level of conflict that exists among constituent groups in the hybrid area. Essentially, a social constructionist approach examines the experiences and meanings that shape our interpretations of urban and rural, rather than attempting to box the terms into measureable indexes. There is a greater reliance on the process of assigning meaning than to the end product of that process, which is the definition. Taking the social constructionist approach to understanding urban and rural follows Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) suggestion that social analyses can benefit from added attention to the “‘human factor’ behind the structural data,” (p.186).

As humans, we are socialized in a manner that involves cognitive learning as well as emotion; in addition to what we are taught, we take cues from our teachers and take on the roles and attitudes we see enacted through the socialization process (Berger and Luckmann 1966:131). The most successful socialization occurs in societies with simple division of labour, where the “degree of symmetry between objective reality and identity” is at its highest (Berger and Luckmann 1966:163-164). These are societies where there are limited options of what one can be, and each person is aware of his or her role in the society. Unsuccessful socialization occurs in societies with the greatest heterogeneity in the “socializing personnel” (Berger and Luckmann

1966:167), where dissimilar teachers provide differing objective realities to an individual. When people from different worlds are charged with the socialization process of individuals, those individuals come to learn how multiple identities coexist in the same space. While the primary social group will assign the main identity, individuals who experienced a heterogeneous socialization process are able to draw upon different identities as circumstances require.

Identity is formed by social processes operating in a given social structure, but it is further maintained or altered by social relations. At the same time, evolving identities influence change within social structures and social processes over time. Thus, temporal social structures contain identity types that are "observable" and "verifiable" through common sense and experience (Berger and Luckmann 1966:174). Changing social structures generate different identity typologies, but the ability to recognize different identities remains possible for individuals within society. It is the "commonsense world" (Berger and Luckmann 1966:41) of daily life that contains the bodies of knowledge which allow individuals to enact their own identities and recognize those of others. Typification schemes are formed that encourage reciprocal identification among individuals, with social structure as the product of these typifications and recurrent patterns of interaction (Berger and Luckmann 1966:33).

In the urban-rural nexus, social structures have changed over time. These areas have transformed from agricultural regions with kinship-based ties to hybrid zones that have maintained agricultural operations but have also taken on more urban social relations. With the in-migration of exurbanites, the urban-rural nexus is now also home to a variety of professions with a diverse set of social networks between its residents. Activities in the fringe are no longer solely focused on the land as a means of production; recreational and leisure pursuits abound in formerly agricultural areas. Even responsibility for socialization processes within the urban-rural

nexus has moved from families as teachers to multiple experts who impart diverse and specialized knowledge. The socialization process itself has changed, making the family and community "consumption units" for values and perspectives that are produced elsewhere by specialized personnel (Seeley, Sim and Loosley 1956:344). The introduction of different identities into what was a simple society has had the result of changing the social structures, social processes and social relations in the urban-rural nexus.

Individuals within the nexus possess multiple identities that can be enacted in appropriate circumstances. However, for the facilitation of everyday life, each has a primary identity that is recognized by self and others. The typification schemes utilized to make sense of situations involving others necessitate primary identities. Identification as farmer, acreage owner, developer, commuter and tourist are necessary to make sense of interactions and understand the reciprocal expectations in the situation. In addition to the typologies that are created within social structures, language is a critical component of interaction and negotiation with others. "Language provides me with a ready-made possibility for the ongoing objectification of my unfolding experience(s)… in terms of which they have meaning not only to myself but also to my fellowmen," (Berger and Luckmann 1966:39). Simply stated, language allows for a common understanding of a situation, as well as expectations of self and other. It is within this language exchange or dialogue that an individual has the ability to shift identities as required by the situation and provide his or her own social representation.

2. Discourse Analysis

The theory of social representations attempts to explain how people "understand, explain and articulate the complexity of stimuli and experiences" that come from their daily social and physical environments (Halfacree 1993:29). Social representations are akin to interpretive

repertoires (Wetherell and Potter 1988) and interpretive practices that refer to an individual's ability to draw upon certain discourses to make sense of a given situation. "(P)re-constructed cultural discourses" (Shields 1991:31) about spaces and places allow people to convey ideas that have shared meaning in common conversation. Using urban and rural as the example, these terms act as an "intellectual shorthand whereby spatial metaphors and place images can convey a complex set of associations without the speaker having to think deeply and to specify exactly which association or images he or she intends," (Shields 1991:46). Just as urban conjures up highrise buildings and density, rural brings up images of fields and tractors. Within social representations and interpretive repertoires, there is a place for the dichotomy of urban and rural as perceived by the individual.

Both social representations and interpretive repertoires allow actors to interpret experiences and express their interpretations in a dynamic manner over time, allowing for adjustments to perceptions as required by changing events. The combination of image of experience (social representation) and the language used to describe it (interpretive repertoire) creates an actor-based definition of rural and urban, reflecting the lay definitions that are more accurate sociologically but troublesome empirically (Halfacree 1993). Further, the polarity between the terminology is less problematic if we accept that places or regions mean something only in relation to other places as a constellation of meanings (Shields 1991:199). If the academic discourse of urban and rural draws upon the lay discourse, definitions of the terminology take on a postmodern treatment, where the "referential moorings" (Halfacree 1993:34) are released and meanings are more robust with actors' characterizations of space.

3. Social Transformation Model

In addition to the social constructionist and discourse analysis studies of meaning-making and claims-making, there is an emerging body of literature focused on the multiple conflicting meanings at play in the transformation of formerly rural spaces into urban-rural hybrid areas (Parkins and Reed 2013; Taylor and Valentine Cadieux 2013; Phelps and Wu 2011; Goddard 2009). This research project will analyze the transformation of a formerly rural area by examining the social constructions and power dynamics that lead to conflicts over land use in Rocky View County, an urban-rural nexus that borders three of Canada's most rapidly growing population centres.[1] By virtue of its geographic position, Rocky View County is mired in debate over growth management and appropriate land uses as Calgary and other urban satellites pressure the county to prepare for absorption of increasing populations. The recent literature on social transformation of rural areas supports the community study methodology, observation-based discourse analysis and in-depth interviews that this research project employs to understand conflict in the urban-rural nexus and to analyze power relations between constituent groups.

Parkins and Reed (2013) discuss the difference between social change and social transformation as a critical turn in how we consider rural communities. Social change is viewed as a set of responses to external forces that pressure rural communities to operate in a different manner, while social transformation examines the dynamics of change within the rural area from the perspective of how people live and view themselves in rural regions (Parkins and Reed 2013:6). Social transformation is a way of understanding change in rural areas through deeper insight into how residents are regularly reconstructing and reconceptualizing their lives rather

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[1] According to Statistics Canada census data over time, Calgary was the fastest growing city in Canada from 1996 to 2011, while Chestermere and Airdrie ranked fifth and eighth (respectively) for Canadian census subdivisions with the greatest growth between 2006 and 2011.

than focusing exclusively on presumed urban pressures that cause communities to change. The social representation approach endorsed by Parkins and Reed (2013) describes rural through the "meanings imposed on it by residents and visitors," (p.13) instead of limiting the definition to the descriptive approach of population size and density. Many of the values and ideals in contemporary debates – like alternative energy production, environmental protection and food production – position the term rural as a "proxy or heuristic" (Parkins and Reed 2013:389) to advance certain interests.

Reimer (2010) refers to the definition of rural as "a struggle between interested parties wishing to champion their vision for particular outcomes," (p.63). If rural is defined as an area of natural amenities, then conservation and preservation efforts will be given greater weight than if the definition is focused on the commodification of the land's natural resources (Reimer 2010:63). Thus, the battle between farmers, small acreage owners, villagers, developers and government officials for supremacy of their respective constructions of the urban-rural nexus is really about attaching a singular vision to a fractured space. While all groups have an interest in the land and each group may be able to realize its vision within a segregated space in the urban-rural nexus, the overarching image that drives decisions related to land use and future development is the result of one vision trumping all others.

The notion of debate suggests that interested parties are ideologically at odds and in competition for limited resources. However, there is a lack of understanding for the interdependence that exists between urban and rural interests (Reimer 2013:91). Most easily comprehensible are the shared dependencies on environment and trade. Both urban and rural areas must attend to resource issues involving quality of water and air, as well of supply of food. Also, each must play an interactive role in the production and consumption of commodities like

grains, timber and energy. What is less obvious is the interdependence urban and rural areas share through identity (Reimer 2013:100).

Bryant (2013) states that the social transformation of agriculture is based on much more than just the changes in technology and production that have enabled farms to become larger and operate as corporations rather than family businesses. Change in farming areas over time has also seen the introduction of hobby farms, exotic farms and organic farms among the traditional grain and livestock operations. These changes in production and farm type reflect the changing values of the "dominantly urban and metropolitan consumer market," (Bryant 2013:296). Thus, interactions between longtime rural residents, newly arrived non-farming residents and urban consumers have transformed the way each group views the land and lifestyle in the urban-rural nexus based on interdependency. While rural residents have changed their production and consumption patterns to meet the needs of urbanites, urban people have become more aware of how agriculture and rural land plays a role in their quality of life. The social transformation of the rural area must be seen through how it has acted upon urban areas as much as it has been acted upon by urbanization (Parkins and Reed 2013:8).

The transformation of agriculture is also evidenced by the commercial extensions of agriculture (Friedland 2002:354), such as the merchandise sales, cooking classes and tastings that accompany vineyard operations in North America. Case studies of Napa Valley and Sonoma County in the United States demonstrate that constituent groups are at odds over what constitutes agriculture, and what the corresponding landscape should look like. When winemakers tore out hillside trees and replaced them with grape vines, cellars and sales centers, residents in the counties argued for their rights to protect the land even if they did not have rights to the land (Friedland 2002:367). Landowner rights come head to head with environmentalist claims to

preserving landscapes in the transitioning agricultural economy.

Advocating for a sociological approach to understanding determinants of land use, Form (1954) argues that both ecological and economic approaches to understanding land use change should be abandoned in favour of social analyses of economic behaviour. Essentially, Form's (1954) position is that examination of the power situation between "pressure groups" (p.320) involved in influencing land use decisions provides a better method for understanding conflict and compromise. The ways in which social groups (developers, real estate professionals, builders, residents, governments) organize themselves and interact with each other when faced with proposed land use change reflect how dissimilar groups may form alliances that represent primary value orientations and land interests. A case study of land use change in Lansing, Michigan demonstrates that cultural, ecological and economic analyses could not predict the success or failure of applications for zoning changes (Form 1954:321). Sociological analysis of the process, however, provided an understanding of the social structure and relations between interest groups that dictated success or failure of zoning applications.

4. Social Imaginings Perspective

Within the urban-rural nexus, there is exposure to different values and meanings that support multiple land uses in a shared space. At the same time, this exposure leads to new experiences and causes interpretations to change over time, resulting in hybridization of identities, meanings and values attached to the land. Interaction with unlike groups not only changes the meaning-making process, it results in increased dependency as ways of life are changed in areas that move from single land use to multiple. Shared reliance on water sources, environmental resources and employment centres are just some of the ways that those who define themselves as urban or rural also see themselves in between any ideal types associated

with the definitions. According to Reimer (2013), changes to economies and social structures may impact urban and rural areas differentially, but both will be involved (p.101). The ways in which urban people accept the smells and sounds of neighbouring farms, and the ways in which rural people accept the inevitable influx of immigrant populations, exemplify the changing perceptions of other and reconceptualized perception of self in the urban-rural nexus. No matter how we attempt to define or categorize urban and rural, people's experiences and value-laden interests lead them to their own interpretations and subsequent behaviours (Reimer 2013:100).

Goddard (2009) describes the metropolitan mind's creation of a "hybridized leisure countryside" (p.431) to escape the trappings of the city. The concept of creating a countryside according to a mental image has ties to the urban design literature that focuses on the importance of the "image of the city" (Lynch 1960) in creating meaning and enabling negotiation of the urban landscape. Similarly, the rural landscape conjures up different images for the diverse residents who occupy it. Goddard (2010) coined the term "penurbia" to capture the clash between metropolitan and rural residents' images of the urban-rural hybrid zone and defines it as:

> Penurbia is a term that refers to countryside regions located close to metropolitan America which are largely settled by metropolitan émigrés. These penurban areas are difficult to qualify precisely as places with a start and a finish, as they blend the look of the countryside and the mentality of the metropolis. The term penurbia has two roots: penumbra from the rays of the "solar" or "galactic" metropolis, and peripheral as in visual awareness without focus.

Within penurbia, one can find hobby farms, country homes, agricultural fairs and horses – all indicators of the city-dweller's imagined countryside. This metropolitan view of the landscape is in direct contrast to the perception of the longstanding agricultural resident who views the land "as a factory" (Goddard 2009:417), placing value on the production value of the land over the aesthetic appeal.

In her analysis of public land management in Alberta between 1930 and 2009, Hanson (2013) finds that land management is a contest over social imaginings of rural lands as they relate to changes in the meanings of concepts such as conservation and environmental protection. Landscapes are thus cultural because they are actively constructed; landscapes are not merely physical environments where human activity plays out. They are symbolic environments created by conferring meaning to space based on participants' worldviews and beliefs. Meanings invested in landscapes become social imaginings, which in turn means that "defining a landscape is ultimately a political act of social power," (Hanson 2013:151). Through the merging of the mental image of the land with the interpretive repertoires used to convey meaning, "social imaginings of land are discourse materialized," (Hanson 2013:163).

Valentine Cadieux (2013) further discusses exurbanites' "tree fetish" (p.252) and the manner in which landscape is used as text, giving meaning to the practice of tree-planting as an attempt to create the forest that nature intended (p.259). Life in exurbia is viewed as a chance to experience more "intense interaction with nature" (Valentine Cadieux 2013:254), but nature takes on an image that is inextricably linked to trees. Exurbia is thus a material place that is also a conceptual and ideological space (Valentine Cadieux 2013:295) where people try to do something for the environment instead of being overwhelmed by it. In this way, the desire for exurban living is not necessarily a need to "get away" from the city but a desire to "get to" nature (Valentine Cadieux 2013:277). However, the nature that exurbanites are "going to" is altered to better fit an image that is based on social imaginings.

Taylor and Valentine Cadieux (2013) tackle the definition of exurbia by describing it as "green sprawl", a residential settlement pattern that is intended to connect people with nature and the "desire for authentic experience of the natural environment with modern, fundamentally

urban living habits of North Americans," (p.2-3). Alexander, Ishikawa, Silverstein, Jacobson, Fiksdahl-King and Angel (1977) advocate for strips of urban areas to extend into the surrounding countryside, called "city country fingers" (p.21), to accommodate the human biological necessity for nature. Examining the changes to Calgary's urban edge over the past century, Sandalack and Nicolai (2013) describe how the edge has moved from within one mile of the city center in 1910 to four miles in 1958 and eleven miles in 2003 (p.212). Further expansion was predicted and has been realized by Calgary's most recent annexation of surrounding lands in 2011. Part of the rationale is the desire for country estate lots that allow residents to enjoy the balance between a rural life with urban services and amenities. However, the rural or "natural" environment "has been replaced with a generic development, its landscape a product of myth and invention," (Sandalack and Nicholai 2013:213). Thus, social imaginings of rural have resulted in fringe communities that do not necessarily embrace the natural surroundings but recreate them to best represent the image of nature.

5. Competition and Convergence of Identities Approach

Bourne, Bunce, Luka, Maurer and Taylor (2003) examine the peri-urban fringe around Toronto to identify conflicting and competing meanings regarding the landscape, largely driven by the productionist interests of traditional rural society running into the conservationist agenda of newcomers. Battles over preservation of farmlands are increasingly focused on greenspace rather than agriculture, and diverse built form settlements are scattered throughout the peri-urban landscape as the social imaginings of different groups are reflected in architecture and community design. This makes the nexus neither urban nor rural, but a combination of the two as it is perceived by the heterogeneous population. "Pragmatically, given the uneven competition between urban and rural uses, the urban will increasingly dominate the fringe, but in so doing the

rural will transform the urban," (Bourne et al. 2003:266). Thus, the peri-urban fringe resists categorization through dichotomous definitions of urban and rural, and similarly rejects placement on a continuum as urban and rural perceptions are simultaneously impacting one another to create a jointly imagined and constructed place.

The village of Albernoa in Portugal is an example of an urban-rural nexus that has experienced an evolving identity as a result of contact with the city over time. do Carmo (2010) analyzes the results of a 2003 survey with residents to demonstrate how treatment of urban and rural as dichotomous concepts masks the realities of transformation that rural residents undertake over time. The decreasing economic significance of the agriculture sector creates a need for increased links to the city for employment and trade. As the population moves away from traditional rural activities, the concepts of rural and urban are constantly being reinvented. Moreover, do Carmo (2010) finds that because younger residents have lived their lives in the "interstitial space" (p.84) between village and city, it creates a very different experience of rural than that of older generations that have come to enjoy "both worlds" (p.86) over time. Urbanization did not come to this village as a wave; rather, urbanization reached this village through constant contact of residents with the city. Thus, do Carmo (2010) supports the social constructionist view that urban and rural cannot be characterized without first establishing social analysis of place and the interpretation of the people who live in it (p.82). Urban and rural are contextual concepts, and their definitions are social constructions based on the discourses woven by the people who experience parts of both in their daily lives.

Similarly, Weaver and Lawton's (2001) study of resident perceptions toward tourism in the urban-rural nexus of Australia's Tamborine Mountain revealed that three distinct attitudes prevailed. Based on exposure to newcomers and tourists, there are divisions between the

perspectives of residents in this fringe area. Supporters, neutrals and opponents were classified based on their responses to a household survey that asked residents about the impacts of tourism in their community. Newer residents tend to be supporters, based in part on their more frequent contact with tourists and perceptions of the social and economic benefits of tourism. The neutral group comprises half the sample and essentially feels that the positives outweigh the negatives of tourism. In the opponents group, residents have less contact with tourists and also feel a greater connection to Tamborine Mountain than supporters or neutrals. Opponents are also likely to have lived in Tamborine Mountain longer than other residents, suggesting that their way of life is most impacted by changes to the urban-rural nexus. At the same time, opponents' limited contact with tourists is reflected in their rejection of the positive discourse supporting tourism.

III. Conclusion

Social constructions, interpretive discourses, social transformations and competing images or identities are collectively a way of understanding urban and rural that does not require standardized definitions or a continuum. The interpretive schemes outlined in this chapter allow for an understanding of the values, identities and interpretations that converge to create social imaginings of urban and rural. By understanding the social structures and processes that create identities, we can gain appreciation for the values that guide perceptions of spaces and places. Social interactions are the situations that allow actors to convey perceptions to others, drawing upon common language and concepts to deliver the message. This research project examines those situations where actors draw upon discursive strategies to make claims and influence others to buy into their perspectives. Specifically, public hearings are used to understand how members of subgroups within the urban-rural nexus convey their values and social imaginings of space to influence the land uses that will reflect their belief systems. Further, interviews with

members of interested subgroups allows for an opportunity to explore the ways urban and rural are perceived and described on the respondents' own terms, as well as the perceptions of what is appropriate in the urban-rural nexus. There are opportunities to draw upon existing research, and there are ways in which this research project challenges conventional understandings of the urban-rural nexus.

Although existing research indicates rejection of non-traditional land uses by longtime residents in fringe areas (Weaver and Lawton 2001; Johnston et al. 2003), another possibility exists based on the social constructionist approach. If we accept that socialization processes in areas with complex division of labour differ dramatically from areas with simpler structures, we understand that multiple actors with diverse backgrounds play a role in socialization of individuals. This produces actors with a primary identity[2] linked to their closest ties (generally the familial unit), but it also creates multiple subsurface identities that can be summoned to interpret situations and interactions as needed. For this reason, while residents who have lived in the urban-rural nexus the longest may not have been exposed to a heterogeneous socialization process in their early years, over time they have been exposed to a great diversity of people and perspectives as the fringe undergoes dramatic change. Further, children of longtime residents have been through heterogeneous socialization and are able to invoke different identities as situations present themselves. The social interactions between longtime residents and their children are also important in the ongoing socialization process that influences individual meaning-making and interpretation. In summary, if we consider socialization to be a process that

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[2] It is important to differentiate between the sociological use of "identity" and the common understanding in general vernacular. Identity is the understanding of the role one plays in a society or situation, which can change as situations change. This is different than the popular usage of "multiple identities" to describe multiple personalities, a decidedly psychological approach.

extends beyond early childhood, the argument can be made that longtime residents of the fringe have greater opportunity to be in contact with and influenced by different people and perspectives over time. Thus, longtime residents may be more accepting of change because they have been exposed to it for a longer time and have had the opportunity to adapt.

Following this logic, it stands to reason that in-migration over time will create a critical mass of newcomers who have the ability to congregate with like-minded others and establish social institutions that are reflective of their way of life. The presence of estate homes, hobby farms, equestrian facilities and leisure activity in the urban-rural nexus came only after exurbanite migration (Bryant 2013; Goddard 2010) to those areas. For those arriving in the fringe at a time of critical mass, there is a sense of pseudo institutional completeness (Breton 1964) in that familiar institutions and identities are present in this new location. Therefore, the arrival of this group of newcomers strengthens the collective social imagining of the fringe in a very specific manner that may be at odds with longtime residents' perspectives. Combined with the spatial segregation that occurs with clustering activities in the fringe, it is possible that this group of newcomers will have limited exposure to different experiences and individuals as compared to longtime residents.

This raises an important point about longtime residents: there is a difference between those with generational ties to the land through agricultural operations and those who migrated from urban areas into rural spaces to establish residence without taking up agricultural professions. There are differences between the two, both in terms of occupation and social imagination. One is of the categorization that land is a means of production, while the other is more attached to the aesthetic value of the land as open space. However, the similarity between the two is the mutual reliance upon other for basic social relations. Longtime residents,

regardless of background or occupation, created the basic social institutions that brought together all groups in the urban-rural nexus. While there may have been differences in places of worship and service clubs (Vidich and Bensman 1958), there was still a shared set of values between the groups. With the critical mass of newcomers, however, there is a marked shift in values that is expressed through development of a landscape that portrays a very different image of the fringe.

Land uses in the urban-rural nexus are a reflection of the values and social imaginings of the group(s) in positions of power. In rising to Bell's (1992) challenge for sociologists to study what is in people's minds, this research project focuses on physical form (land use) and discourse to understand what is in the minds of residents and interested parties in the urban-rural nexus. Social imaginings of appropriate land uses are expressed through talk and enacted through claims-making activities designed to influence decision-makers. One of the original contributions of this research project is an examination of meaning-making processes utilized by different subgroups within the urban-rural nexus. When other studies have attempted to use scales and indexes to evaluate respondents' tolerance for urban and rural land uses, they have started with definitions of urban and rural that were set by the researcher. In this project, urban and rural are loosely categorized as aesthetic and production-based uses for ease of discussion, but the definitions are examined with respect to the ways they are socially constructed by individuals. Further, this research moves from a conceptual discussion of the urban-rural nexus into an empirical exploration of the complex social relations in the hybrid zone. It is an analysis of the common stocks of knowledge that are used by interested groups to formulate and articulate specific versions of urban and rural as they apply to the fringe.

Chapter 4: Research Methods

This research project is designed to add to the literature about the urban-rural nexus at a time when these regions are growing in an unprecedented manner and dealing with the conflicts that accompany divergent interests and meanings attached to land. What began as preliminary research into the metamorphosis of a rural western Canadian municipality (Hiller and Gondek 2011) evolved into this multivariate and multimethod research project about the urban-rural nexus and its conflicts. Struggles among and within distinct groups, as well as evolving land use policies in Rocky View County, are examined and explained using the literature and principles within urban and rural sociology. By providing an understanding of the causes and consequences of conflict in the metropolitan region, this research advances our scholarly knowledge and contributes to the literature on urban regionalization. Urban and rural are viewed as socially constructed concepts, allowing for an exploration of the ways in which interested parties utilize situations of conflict to convey their perceptions of appropriate land uses in the nexus. The focus on land use allows for an understanding of physical form as reflection of values related to urban and rural ways of life. Essentially, discussion of land use enables interested parties to work up their claims about the activities and people that belong in the urban-rural nexus.

Using Rocky View County as a case study offers an important contribution to the literature by demonstrating that contemporary urban-rural periphery areas are complex, contested spaces that must be understood in terms of the conflicting pressures of hybridity. Although a great deal of research on suburbs, exurbs and edge cities demonstrates the pressures of urbanization, the hybrid nature of the urban-rural nexus requires different sociological attention and analysis. There are many complexities within the urban-rural hybrid zone, based on diverse interests and ideological conflicts. It is simplistic and erroneous to view these fringe areas as a

single unit. Through a multi-method analysis of Rocky View County, this urban-rural nexus is broken down beyond its geopolitical boundaries into its more sociologically significant component parts. The research goal is to reveal the series of communities that comprise the larger entity of Rocky View County, as well as the contentious relationships that exist among and within those communities.

The literature review suggests that while the urban-rural nexus is not the only place in metropolitan areas where conflict exists, this area is different because of the nature of conflict. In order to better understand the urban-rural nexus and its conflicts, research was conducted in two stages. First, an assessment of the characteristics of the area and its residents was required to understand the constituent groups that make up the mosaic of Rocky View County. With the research question asking what are the conflicts among constituent groups in the urban-rural hybrid zone, the natural starting point for the research project was to first identify those groups. Guided by the community studies model used in classic urban studies (Vidich and Bensman 1958; Clark 1966; Gans 1967), this research project begins with a community analysis to describe the land, people and political environment of Rocky View County. Understanding the context of the county with its social and physical components is critical to identifying and analyzing the existing conflicts.

Second, the project identifies meanings attached to land and analyzes the conflicts among stakeholder groups. Review of demographic composition of the county suggests that a very diverse and complex group of residents occupies this hybrid area. Agricultural operations are interspersed with country estates, and ties to the urban centres within the metropolitan area further complicate the social patterns of living and working within Rocky View County. Political and economic changes over time have also diversified the economic nature of the county,

transitioning from primarily agricultural and mercantile economies to complex mixed-use areas of commercial, industrial and residential land use. The second part of this research project shifts to a focus on understanding how residents employ the terminology of urban and rural, as well as how their interpretations are transferred into discursive strategies that address land use changes.

Because Rocky View County covers such a large land area and contains many diverse constituent groups, this research project begins by looking at the county as a whole and then uses the community analysis as a means of identifying which constituent groups are examined in greater detail. The community analysis also drives out further case studies within the larger case of Rocky View County. Utilizing community analysis as the basis for secondary sampling, two cases of dramatic land use change are identified and the corresponding impacted stakeholders comprise the sample for interviews.

To create a baseline for this project, the first stage of research examines: 1) demographic character of the county, 2) perceptions and attitudes of county residents, and 3) changes to land uses and the political environment over time (Chapter 5). This baseline research describes the people who live in Rocky View County, uncovers their attitudes about life in the county, and identifies the shift in speed and scale of land use change in the county. Following the baseline research, the second stage of the project identifies the perspectives of stakeholders regarding land use and sources of conflict within the county.

The second stage of research demonstrates how conflict in urban-rural hybrid zones is more complex than indicated by existing literature that deals only with urbanization pressures. Participant observation at a series of public meetings regarding growth in Rocky View County identifies the constituent groups and conflicts in the area, confirming the appropriateness of the proposed case studies in land use change (Chapter 6). Additionally, in-depth interviews with

select stakeholders provide insight into the meanings attached to land and the perceived conflicts in Rocky View County (Chapters 7 and 8). Confrontation over land use in Rocky View County provides a representation of the pressures faced by constituent groups in urban-rural hybrid areas located adjacent to big cities (Chapters 7 and 8). Two distinct planned development mega-projects (one commercial and one residential) are examined to demonstrate that these recent land use changes stand in stark contrast to the gradual land use shifts of the past, creating urbanization tensions within Rocky View County (Chapter 9).

I. Stage One – Community Analysis

1. Demographic Profile

In order to create a baseline from which to investigate social conflict, the demographic analysis of Rocky View County relates social composition to areal location. Using publicly accessible Statistics Canada community profile data, the following variables are analyzed over time and/or across jurisdictions within the Calgary census metropolitan area (CMA): population, land area, density, age, number of private dwellings, family structure, structural dwelling type, number of farms, number of farm operators, age of farm operators, and proportion of farm to non-farm work. By providing a comparison within the Calgary CMA, Rocky View County can be better understood in relation to its neighbouring municipalities.

While it is possible to analyze the listed variables up to the 2011 census period, there are others that are only comparable up to the 2006 census reporting period: homeownership, mobility, income, employment, labour force participation, education and commuting patterns. However, the 2011 National Household Survey includes some variables that are similar and are therefore incorporated. Because the methodology is different between the long form census pre-2011 and the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), variables are compared directly between

jurisdictions but not between census years. Thus, some trends can be accurately observed up to the present census reporting period while others are inferred based on a combination of census and NHS data. Comparisons over time are generated for all possible variables. This demographic analysis creates a picture of the residents of the urban-rural nexus and demonstrate where people live and work within the Calgary census metropolitan area (CMA).

2. Perceptions and Attitudes of Residents

To create a more complete profile of residents, results of the 2010 Rocky View County community needs assessment survey are used to analyze behaviour and attitudes related to life in the county and leisure activities. These community surveys supplement the census data by focusing on qualitative variables such as why residents chose to live in the county, their assessment of sense of community within the county, family stage of life and location of leisure time activities. The 2010 community survey also dedicated a series of questions to measure social capital, a concept that indicates a sense of cohesion and belonging (Putnam 2000; Sharp and Smith 2003; Libby and Sharp 2003). Sports, leisure and cultural activities were also analyzed by location in the survey, complementing the data on place of work to paint a picture of where Rocky View County residents live, work and play.

The community needs assessment was commissioned by Rocky View County in 2005 and 2010 to understand where county residents access recreation, culture and social support services. This assessment was undertaken to determine whether type and level of service provision is adequate in the county, or if further services are required. Residents' perceptions of two distinct services were measured: 1) Recreation, Culture, Library Services and Historical Buildings/Areas (REC), and 2) Family and Community Support Services (FCSS). At the time of the 2010 assessment, the research project team identified population statistics in the county as

11,604 households or 34,597 residents according to the 2006 federal census. Rocky View County provided researchers with contact information for 15,017 registrants on the County tax assessment system. About half of the registrants (7,510) received a questionnaire focused on REC while the other half received a questionnaire about FCSS. Although the focus of the questionnaires differs, questions about reasons for living in the county and perceptions of social capital were asked of both groups, as well as the basic demographic data that constitutes the community profile section of both studies. It is also possible to compare general demographics and attitudes over time as the 2010 research reports compare the data to 2005 community needs assessment survey results.

There were 880 completed questionnaires for the REC study and 1,075 completed questionnaires for the FCSS study, for a total of 1,955 completed questionnaires received in 2010 (N=1955). Although not indicated in either report, rough calculations indicate that 1,955 completed surveys out of 15,017 sent out to registrants in the tax system resulted in a response rate of 13%. This calculation does not account for any duplication (i.e. respondents who own more than one taxable property in the county) or undeliverable questionnaires. It is also important to note that all questions do not appear to have been answered on each questionnaire. There are smaller samples indicated for specific questions. For example, responses range from n=1924 when asked about reasons for living in the County, to n=1788 when asked if comfortable using facilities, programs and services in the community.

Reliability of the data was summarized only in the FCSS report, indicating that a response of 1,075 completed questionnaires provided an estimated margin of error of ±2.9% within a 95% confidence interval for the survey sample population (Rocky View County 2010:3). The calculation of a 95% confidence interval in the FCSS report is premised on the

assumption that those who returned the questionnaires constitute a random sample of the population. Plainly said, the calculated confidence interval means that samples of this size give the same result as if the population was surveyed, to within plus or minus 2.9%, 19 times out of 20. It was also stated, however, that the margin of error was computed for the entire sample, thus limiting the ability of subset analyses to achieve the same level of confidence.

While Rocky View County used the community needs assessment survey results to guide decisions on further social infrastructure requirements within the region, these results only comprise a portion of the data that is used to understand residents' perspectives of life in the urban-rural hybrid zone for the purpose of this research project. The results of the community needs assessment surveys contribute to building a baseline understanding of Rocky View County and the perspectives of its residents, but they are not meant to stand on their own. Further investigation through participant observation and interview methods paints a more robust picture of residents' perspectives on land use and conflict in the county.

3. Land Use Change and Political Environment

Changes to land uses and the political environment in Rocky View County are examined through the evolution of governance structure, changes to industry in the region and resulting redesignation of land uses. The physical landscape of the county changed dramatically with advances in agricultural technology, transportation infrastructure and perpetuation of a leisure-consumption lifestyle. Lands that were originally designated as agricultural have been redesignated into multiple districts such as residential, business, commercial, industrial and recreational business as the population and industry within the county have transformed. Continued demands for servicing, diversification of the economy and growth of urban satellites within the county also create a changing political landscape that requires managing

intermunicipal relations with multiple partners.

A review of land use change over time in Rocky View County demonstrates how it has adapted to increasingly diverse constituencies with conflicting expectations for living and working. County records for number of development permit applications, dwelling and non-dwelling building permits, and value per building permit are analyzed as a representation of the speed and scale of development over time. A twenty-five year comparison is possible, extending from 1986 to 2011. Although scale of individual projects is not identifiable through the available data[3], volume is used as a measure of scale of total development projects. From a political perspective, the history of regional planning in the Calgary metropolitan area is discussed and comparisons drawn to other major metropolitan centres.

II. Stage Two – Land Use Conflict Analysis

1. Participant Observation

To complement the analyses of Rocky View County's demographics and history, this research project is designed to uncover and analyze the perspectives of stakeholders toward land use change. In order to answer the research question of what conflicts exist among constituent groups in the urban-rural hybrid zone, a participant observation methodology was employed to identify different viewpoints on growth within Rocky View County. Much like the classic community studies that began with researchers immersing themselves in the environment, attendance at a series of public hearings was designed to facilitate data collection as well as establish relationships with administrators, residents and other stakeholders who would potentially become respondents for the interview portion of the research project.

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[3] Interviews with key members of Rocky View County administration will be used to determine examples of large-scale individual developments that break from the traditional development applications received.

Rocky View County hosted six evening public hearings between September 1 and 30, 2010 in different parts of the county to gain an understanding of residents' perspectives on growth in the county. This was the result of then Rocky View County Reeve Lois Habberfield launching the Reeve's Task Force on Growth Planning in July 2010. A panel of experts representing a cross-section of Rocky View County communities was commissioned to seek out feedback from residents and other stakeholders, and consolidate it into a master document that could guide council in building a growth management strategy for the next fifty years. By 2010 year end, the Reeve's Task Force was expected to discuss growth management issues and options within the group, complete the public engagement process and prepare a final report of recommendations for council.

Community halls or similar venues were chosen in Balzac, Indus, Springbank, Bearspaw, Bragg Creek and Irricana to host the public hearings. This list of locations also represents the order in which the sessions were held over the course of the month. The beginning of each hearing involved the chair outlining the mandate of the Reeve's Task Force, reviewing the process for the forum and explaining the broad categories that would be utilized to guide public comments. He also set the tone by stating that three overarching questions were being posed by the Reeve's Task Force to stakeholders in Rocky View County:

- What do you want to preserve and protect in Rocky View County?
- What do you want to change or avoid in Rocky View County?
- What do you want to achieve for the future of Rocky View County?

From there, each hearing was divided into seven categories created to guide participant feedback: 1) the future of residential development, 2) the role of agriculture in Rocky View County, 3) managing future development, 4) servicing future development, 5) financing development,

servicing and debt reduction in the future, 6) the importance of open spaces, and 7) communication needs.

Researcher attendance at four of the six hearings facilitated an understanding of the challenges and conflicts in Rocky View County as perceived by residents and other stakeholder groups. The intent of this participant observation was to document the themes that emerged from the participants' presentations and evaluate the sources of conflict in the county using discourse analysis. Each hearing lasted between two to three hours, with participants taking approximately three to five minutes each to make their points. A total of 205 presentations were made over the course of the six public hearings, with an estimated 1,000 people attending the sessions. In the four sessions attended for this research project, there were 137 presentations on how Rocky View County should manage issues related to growth, including rapid urbanization and densification in the face of projections that an estimated twenty percent of the Calgary metropolitan area's future population growth could be housed in Rocky View County by 2060 (Municipal District of Rocky View 2009:17). Presentations provided a variety of perspectives from numerous stakeholder groups, including longtime residents, recently migrated residents, developers and business owners.

Field notes from the four sessions serve as the data for the discourse analysis in this research project. The notes are a reconstruction of individual presentations and not intended as a verbatim account. By analyzing the themes, claims and stories that emerge during these public hearings, different perspectives of the constituent groups in Rocky View County come to light. In their prepared presentations before the Reeve's Task Force, residents and other stakeholders demonstrate that understanding conflict within the county is much more than an exercise in identifying sides of a given argument. For example, the complex contested nature of the county

is revealed through the opposing perspectives presented by members of the same constituent group. Further, there is an indication that conflict extends to the multiple roles played by individuals living within the county. Because this research strives to understand a complex county and not just a single subgroup, exposure to the multiple constituent groups and their members was a means to identify the viewpoints that form the basis for conflict over land use.

The field notes lay the groundwork to identify the claims and counter-claims made by different stakeholder groups to advance their respective positions. Analysis of the claims-making process and the claims themselves is critical for this project as "the definition of rural becomes a struggle between interested parties wishing to champion their vision for particular outcomes and a focus for examination of the political and social processes supporting these visions," (Reimer 2010:63). Content analysis of the final Reeve's Task Force report further assists in identifying the rhetoric employed in claims-making. Recommendations of the Reeve's Task Force following the public hearings and their own deliberations are further used to demonstrate which claims were ultimately successful in influencing decision-makers.

From the discourse analysis methodology that was planned for this research project, the data allow for a supplemental analysis. While discourse analysis is appropriate to analyze the power struggles between different parties, or even within constituent groups, it excludes the fragmented presentations of residents who are conflicted about how growth should be managed in the county. Specifically, it is impossible to choose just one perspective from the presentations where residents feel divided about the future of the county. Reanalysis of the data resulted in a decision to incorporate narrative analysis as a method of highlighting the significance of these internal struggles for two reasons. First, there is an ethical obligation to explore the perspectives of participants who could not choose a single claim to advance. It is not the place of the

researcher to favour one perspective over another if a participant is not prepared to do the same. Second, analysis of role conflict within a single actor in the urban-rural hybrid zone makes a valuable contribution to the literature as existing research mainly deals with conflict among interest groups. A new dimension of conflict in the contested space of Rocky View County is highlighted through narrative analysis of seemingly disjointed presentations.

2. Identification of Subsamples

As mentioned earlier, the community analysis component of this research project was designed to not only describe the evolution and current state of Rocky View County, it also isolates subsamples for analysis. The sheer size of the county and the diversity of its constituent parts limits the ability of this single research project to fully explore each subsample on an in-depth level. Based on the data from the community analysis and participant observation methods, two cases of land use change and several constituent groups were identified for further examination. First, it was possible to determine the two most dramatic examples of land use change in the county based on understanding the proposed developments in the larger geographic, political and economic context of Rocky View County. Interviews with county administration and analysis of the data collected at the Reeve's Task Force public hearings further support the selection. Second, demographic analysis combined with participant observation data supports the choice of certain stakeholders for the interview component of this research project.

2.1 Exemplars of land use change

Land use changes provide the context for analyzing social conflict among constituent groups in the county. The research design of this project seeks to identify and examine illustrative cases of contentious development in Rocky View County. Because the land use

change in two distinct development projects stands in stark contrast to the gradual shifts of the past, they were chosen as representative cases of the tensions in Rocky View County.

As an example of commercial development and land use change in Rocky View County, the Balzac East Area Structure Plan (BEASP) was chosen because it contains the most vivid example of urban form intruding into a rural community: CrossIron Mills shopping centre or mall. CrossIron Mills opened near Balzac in fall of 2009 as a private development that has since grown to include numerous box stores and light industrial facilities. It is marketed as being located in "Rocky View, Alberta", a manufactured non-place for the purposes of attracting consumers, workers, investors and businesses to the area. If the theoretical position that people follow jobs proves true, it will mean a dramatic change to the landscape and population of surrounding areas as employees in the CrossIron Mills complex seek out desirable residential locations.

The approval process for the development of the mall was hotly contested and current applications for supplementary development will likely be equally contentious. This retail, entertainment and hospitality hub is a perfectly suited addition to the literature on "shoppertainment" districts (Hannigan 1998), while also providing insight into the pressures and tensions experienced by rural areas adjacent to major urban centres. However, the BEASP can also be understood as an emergent edge city (Garreau 1991) when one considers the residential, business and leisure land uses within the overall plan. The literature on edge cities is divided between proponents who feel that complete communities are being constructed, and those who feel that periphery development contributes to unsustainable sprawl. For these reasons, the BEASP is a prime illustration of land use changes driving social conflicts among constituent groups in Rocky View County.

From a residential perspective, the Harmony Conceptual Scheme (HCS) was selected primarily for its focus on creating a sustainable mixed-use community within parts of three area structure plans, all with very different expectations for agricultural, residential and industrial land uses. Between the industrial land uses at the Springbank Airport, the country estate residential character of the East and North Springbank Area Structure Plans, and the delicate balance of residential and agricultural operations of the Rocky View County Municipal Development Plan, the HCS is an illustration of development that faces the conflicting perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups. Additionally, the HCS is a response to the county's Growth Management Strategy that considers future population growth in the greater Calgary metropolitan area. This conceptual scheme incorporates significantly higher residential densities than the norm in Rocky View County and includes a village core, golf course and business park as part of its holistic vision of community. Through its design, the HCS offers an example of urban sustainability ideologies coming into direct conflict with rural lifestyle preservation models.

Both the CrossIron Mills (BEASP) and Harmony (HCS)[4] are cases that illustrate how Rocky View County is a contested space under pressure from urban intrusion. The speed and scale of these developments is in sharp contrast to the slower, incremental changes that created pockets of country-estate living in the past. These are examples of large scale, intrusive developments that evoke strong reactions from stakeholders as evidenced by presentations at the Reeve's Task Force public hearings. Interviews with county administrators further substantiate the data from the participant observations, with senior officials stating that the county has not seen development applications of this magnitude in the past. Both CrossIron Mills and Harmony

[4] Because the participants in both the public hearings and the interviews used the less formal descriptors of the development projects, this research project does the same. From this point forward, the BEASP is called CrossIron Mills and the HCS is called Harmony.

are used as cases to draw out stakeholder perspectives on land use change and conflict within the county in the course of the in-depth interviews. While other developments are mentioned in the Reeve's Task Force public hearings, CrossIron Mills and Harmony are most often cited by participants and are the most current examples of dramatic land use change. Timeliness of these two cases is also a reason for their selection, with the rationale that respondents would have top of mind awareness of these recent examples.

2.2 Representative constituent groups

The community analysis of Rocky View County reveals that the following constituent resident groups are impacted by the two cases of development: 1) longtime agricultural operators (farmers and ranchers) in the Springbank and Balzac areas, 2) longtime small acreage owners in the Springbank and Balzac areas (both commuters and non-commuters), and 3) new residents in country estate subdivisions in the Springbank and Balzac areas (both commuters and non-commuters). For the purposes of this research, longtime residents are those who have lived in the county for ten or more years. New residents are those who have resided in the county for less than ten years.[5] Commuters are those who travel into an urban centre for employment. Springbank and Balzac area residents have been selected as they border the two cases of development.

For background into the development projects, representatives from the developers, designers, investors and decision-makers who were involved in the two development projects were contacted to gain insight into the rationale and process for each case. As this is publicly available information, direct contact was made with the appropriate representatives and referrals were requested for other potential participants when required. As a result of attendance and

[5] Chapter 7 elaborates on the suitability of length of residence assumptions, but the sampling process was guided by these categories.

networking at the Reeve's Task Force public hearings, as well as a meeting with the County Manager, a Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) request was completed and access was provided to respondents and existing data within Rocky View County administration offices.

2.3 Semi-structured interviews

Because this research project is designed to understand the conflicts within Rocky View County from the perspectives of the constituent groups within the region, a qualitative research strategy was utilized to identify two cases of dramatic land use change and generate robust data through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with representative members of impacted constituent groups. In choosing CrossIron Mills and Harmony, the rationale and processes behind land use change, as well as the responses to the proposed change, are examined. By looking at both the processes and perceptions involved in land use changes, this research project makes an important empirical contribution to the literature on the pressures of hybridity by identifying the manner in which decision-makers' reasons for change were perceived by residents in the urban-rural nexus.

To understand the reasons why land use changes were proposed and what type of research supported the decisions, the developers, designers, investors and decision-makers who created and approved the concepts for development in each case were interviewed. The processes that led to land use changes were explored to assess whether existing policies were sufficient for decision-making with such dramatic land use change proposals, or if new approaches were required. These interviews are important in understanding whether dramatic land use change within the county was based on a shared vision and common rationale from the perceived pro-growth advocates and decision-makers.[6]

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[6] Interview questions for non-resident and resident groups can be found in Appendix A.

Additionally, interviews were conducted with residents in areas impacted by the two developments to analyze the meanings they attach to the land, as well as their perspectives toward the specific land use changes. To gain an understanding of the diverse population's response to change, residents interviewed include farmers and small acreage owners, longtime residents and relative newcomers, those who live and work in the county as well as commuters. The interview process began with a focus on residents immediately adjacent to CrossIron Mills or Harmony because they would be the ones impacted by land use change. During one of the first interviews, however, a participant's challenge to the meaning of "impacted" led to a revised respondent selection strategy.[7] If the intent is to understand the perspectives towards land use change in the county, participants could not be excluded based on geographic boundaries that are imposed by the researcher. Regardless of location within the county, consideration is warranted for any participant who self-identifies as being impacted by either of the cases. Thus, the data became more robust with the understanding that ideological impact of land use change could be as meaningful as geographic impact.

Using purposive and snowball sampling methods, participants were recruited for the research project. The County Manager assisted by circulating the recruitment notice to administration and council members. During interviews with administration and council, names of other potential participants were provided in response to the question of whether others should be interviewed for the project. Ethics protocol was maintained by potential respondents contacting the researcher directly either by voice mail or e-mail after learning about the project through posted recruitment notices or contact by an existing participant. The recruitment notice was also circulated electronically by the researcher to any existing contacts within Rocky View

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[7] Chapter 7 details the rationale behind this change to the sampling process.

County, who in turn forwarded the information or physically posted the notice in high visibility locations. Through these recruitment methods, 43 individuals were interviewed between December 2, 2011 and April 17, 2012.

Based on primary descriptors of how participants presented themselves when responding to the recruitment notice, interviews were conducted with: 12 agricultural operators (farmers or ranchers), 16 acreage owners (non-agricultural residents), 6 Rocky View County administrators, 3 developers, 5 members of Rocky View County council, and 1 intermunicipal affairs professional. Ten of the total interviews conducted focus on background information regarding land use and development, making this a non-resident group of stakeholders. Of the residents interviewed, there are many who represent multiple roles within the county. For example, Council members are responding both as residents and elected officials. Some residents are also small developers. It is important to recognize the dual nature of many of the respondents as the resulting interview data often speaks to conflicting roles, a theme that bears the potential to provide an original contribution to the literature.

From a geographic perspective, 8 participants can be identified as part of eastern Rocky View County where CrossIron Mills is the case used to guide the interview. Nineteen participants are from western Rocky View County where Harmony is the guiding case for the interview. One participant was able to speak to both cases through past and present experiences. The remaining 10 interviews are considered non-residents and are comprised of county administration, developers and the intermunicipal affairs professional. Of the 33 residents interviewed, 17 have lived in the county for more than twenty years, 12 have been residents for ten to twenty years and 4 have lived in the county for less than 10 years. In five of the resident interviews, both spouses requested a joint interview. Informed consent was obtained in all

interviews with all participants, documented with a signed consent form.

The interviews were conducted at the location determined by each participant. Typically, participants found it most convenient to be interviewed in their homes in the evenings or at their offices during work hours. Three interviews were conducted in coffee shops. Interviews varied in length from about 25 minutes to 90 minutes, with the average interview lasting about an hour. In addition to taking notes on a laptop computer during each interview, a digital recording device was used to create audio files for further record of participants' responses. Transcripts of the interviews are based largely on the notes taken during each meeting, with playback of the audio files serving to clarify points when required.

Consistency in themes emerged from the interviews with 43 respondents, and significant variation in responses would only be possible by expanding the research to dramatically different constituent groups. For example, it is possible that the resident of a hamlet or an individual with less than five years of residence in Rocky View County will have different perspectives than those captured in the project data. However, the constituent groups chosen for this research project are drawn from the community analysis and the two cases of land use change. Thus, the sample accomplishes the goal of gaining depth of data in the manner specified for this research project.

"The credibility of research results comes from the power of methods used in measurement and sampling," (Bernard 2013:176). This research project uses an interconnected multi-methods approach to investigate a vast region made up of diverse individuals and groups. By combining the data from the community needs assessment with the data from the 137 observed presentations at the Reeve's Task Force public hearings, this research project is informed by a larger sample before in-depth data was collected from the more concise sample for

interviews. Finally, it has been noted in the literature that a small number of knowledgeable respondents can provide the data to "understand the core categories in any well-defined cultural domain or study of lived experience," (Bernard 2013: 175). The cases for this research project are well-defined and as a result the interviews focused on gathering the data required to answer the research question: What are the conflicts among and within constituent groups in the urban-rural hybrid zone?

Chapter 5: Community Analysis of Rocky View County

In order to investigate the meanings attached to space in the urban-rural nexus, this research project begins with a community analysis of Rocky View County that outlines the demographic profile, resident attitudes, land development trends, and geopolitical environment of the county. This first stage of analysis assists in identifying the characteristics of residents and allows for categorization of individuals into constituent groups that can subsequently be explored through further methodologies. It also demonstrates how the county has changed over time from built form and governance perspectives. By establishing a baseline understanding of the hybrid region through an examination of what the county and its people look like, the next analytical steps can address the social imaginings of space and dimensions of conflict over land use among and within constituent groups.

Rocky View County, which surrounds the city of Calgary, is used in this research project as a timely and dynamic example of the urban-rural nexus. It is a rural jurisdiction layered with complexities that result from being situated within a growing metropolitan region (Figure 5.1). Within the Calgary census metropolitan area (CMA), which is comprised of nine jurisdictions, Rocky View County is the sole municipal district. Along with Rocky View County and the city of Calgary, the CMA includes the city of Airdrie, four towns, one village and one Indian reserve. Shaped like a horseshoe and surrounding Calgary to the west, north and east, Rocky View County envelopes but does not govern the following independent jurisdictions: the city of Airdrie; the towns of Cochrane, Chestermere, Irricana and Crossfield; and the village of Beiseker. Also located within the CMA and governed by Rocky View County are several hamlets including Langdon, Conrich, Balzac, Delacour and Bragg Creek, as well as the prestigious communities of Springbank, Elbow Valley and Bearspaw (Figure 5.2). Just as

Calgary has experienced Canada's highest percentage growth of any major city between 1996 and 2006, pushing its population past one million residents (Hiller 2010:33-34), the county's population has grown equally dramatically in the past ten years, largely as a result of pressure from Calgary's urban growth. The population in Rocky View County has grown 21.8 percent between 2001 and 2011, rising from 29,925 to 36,461 in the ten-year period (Statistics Canada 2012b).

Figure 5.1: Regional Map of Rocky View County

Source: www.airdrierotaryfestival.org 2013

Figure 5.2: Communities within Rocky View County Jurisdiction

Source: Rocky View County 2013

Apart from the residential communities contained within Rocky View County, there are recent developments that demonstrate the changing constituencies of the municipality. CrossIron Mills shopping and entertainment complex opened near the hamlet of Balzac in fall of 2009 as a private development that has since grown to include numerous box stores and light industrial facilities. Another example is the Cottage Club subdivision which began selling lots in 2009 for a gated recreational community on the northwest edge of Rocky View County, bordering the

Municipal District of Bighorn. Similar to the suburb style cottage communities of Ontario's cottage country (Luka 2010), this development provides secondary homes for residents of Calgary, Rocky View County and neighbouring towns. This planned development has introduced a new kind of owner who is not a permanent resident.

Rocky View County has become part of a metropolitan galaxy, where smaller urban centres like Airdrie, Chestermere and Cochrane combine with Calgary to encapsulate surrounding regions and squeeze the rural spaces in between. Growth of satellite urban centres influences changes in the county, including the intrusion of urban institutions and commercialization of land. With land uses changing significantly over time and new residents moving into the county, multiple constituencies have emerged in this urban-rural periphery. Such dramatic changes to the constituent groups in the county led to this research project involving the analysis of a place with different meanings attributed to land in the midst of urban growth and metropolitan regionalization.

The purpose of this community analysis is to describe the land, people and political environment of Rocky View County in an effort to better understand the subgroups that exist within this urban-rural nexus. In addition to the demographic analysis, results of the 2010 Rocky View County community needs assessment survey will be used to supplement census data by focusing on behaviour and attitudes related to life in the county and leisure activities of residents. Finally, changes to the political environment and land-based activities in Rocky View County will be examined through evolving governance structure and redesignation of land uses over time.

I. Demographic Profile of Rocky View County

With the Calgary CMA extending over 5,107.55 square kilometers, Rocky View County covers 3,885.41 square kilometers of the CMA and the city of Calgary covers another 825.29 square kilometers. Density for the CMA is 237.9 persons per square kilometer, compared to the median density of 249.58 persons per square kilometer for all Canadian CMAs. In the city of Calgary, urbanization is reflected by the density measure of 1,329 persons per square kilometer. Airdrie also has a density over 1,000 persons per square kilometer, while the towns of Chestermere and Cochrane are both over 450 persons per square kilometer. These jurisdictions are considered "population centres" (formerly called "urban areas") according to Statistics Canada (2012b) criteria of having a population over 1,000 and a density measure over 400 persons per square kilometer. On the other hand, Rocky View County has a density of 9.4 persons per square kilometer, which is comparable to the neighbouring Municipal District of Foothills (5.8/ km^2) and Wheatland County (1.8/km^2). The province of Alberta has a density of 5.7 persons per square kilometer.

Population change over time in the Calgary CMA shows a trend toward growth in urban satellites (Table 5.1). The total population of the Calgary CMA grew by 135,529 people between 2006 and 2011, reflecting an increase of 12.6 percent for a total population of 1,214,839. Calgary as a city grew by 10.9 percent to 1,096,833 while Rocky View County increased its population by 9.9 percent to 36,461. While Rocky View County covers 76.1 percent of the land area in the Calgary CMA, it houses only three percent of the total population. Quite the opposite, the city of Calgary covers only 16.2 percent of the land area but contains 90.3 percent of the CMA's population.

Three urban satellites within the Calgary CMA also saw increases in population between

2006 and 2011. The town of Chestermere grew by 49.4 percent to 14,424 people, the city of Airdrie grew by 47.1 percent to 42,564 people, and the town of Cochrane grew by 27.8 percent to 17,580 people[8]. Population growth rates have remained strong for the Calgary CMA since 2001, with populations increasing most dramatically in the urban satellites from 2001 to 2011. Thus, the four most populous centres in the Calgary CMA act as home to 96.5 percent of the total population.

Table 5.1: Population Change (2001-2011)

	Population				
	2001	2006		2011	
Calgary CMA	951,494	1,079,310	+13.4%	1,214,839	+12.6%
City of Calgary	879,003	988,812	+12.5%	1,096,833	+10.9%
City of Airdrie	20,407	28,927	+41.8%	42,564	+47.1%
Town of Chestermere	3,856	9,923	+157%	14,824	+49.4%
Town of Cochrane	12,041	13,760	14.3%	17,580	+27.8%
Town of Crossfield	2,399	2,668	+10.4%	2,853	+6.9%
Town of Irricana	1,043	1,243	+19.2%	1,162	-6.5%
Village of Beiseker	838	805	-4.1%	785	-2.5%
Rocky View County	29,925	33,173	+14.2%	36,461	+9.9%
M.D. of Foothills	16,602	19,736	+18.9%	21,258	+7.7%

Source: Statistics Canada 2001, 2006 & 2011 Census of Population

1. Agriculture in Rocky View County

In the debate over defining urban and rural, there is a call for researchers to shift from rural sociology to agricultural sociology. The rationale is to focus on rural through the social organization of work around agricultural production (Newby 1983), or to assess degree of

[8] As mentioned earlier, Chestermere, Airdrie and Cochrane are all geographically enveloped by Rocky View County but do not belong within its political jurisdiction. Combined with Calgary, these urban satellites add multiple sources of urbanization pressure on the county.

rurality by occupation (Cloke and Edwards 1986). For this research project, variables related to farms and farm operators were analyzed over time to see if Rocky View County remains an agricultural municipality or if changes can be seen in the occupational make-up of the region.

To begin, it is important to understand the geographic context of agriculture in Canada. The 2006 Census of Agriculture highlights the hybrid nature of urban-rural nexus areas by finding that over 15 percent of Canadian farms are headquartered in one of the country's CMAs, a figure that has remained constant since 2001 (Statistics Canada 2006b). In terms of size, the average farm in Canada has increased from 676 acres in 2001 to 728 acres in 2006 and 778 acres in 2011 (Statistics Canada 2006b; Statistics Canada 2011a). However, the total land area of farms is 160,155,748 acres, a decrease of 4.1% between 2006 and 2011 (Statistics Canada 2011a). There has also been a downward trend in total number of farms both nationally and locally. Table 5.2 shows the number of farms in Canada, Alberta and Rocky View Canada between 1991 and 2011 based on five census periods. During that twenty-year period, there was a 26.5% decline in number of farms nationally and a 24.5% decline in Alberta. For Rocky View County, data is available from 2001 to 2011 and shows a 21.8% decline in number of farms. The loss of a quarter of all Canadian farms in the last two decades, and more than one-fifth off all county farms in the last ten years, reflects dramatic changes to agriculture in recent history which is due to amalgamations and commercialization of farming operations.

Table 5.2: Change in Number of Farms (1991-2011)

	Total Number of Farms				
	1991	**1996**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**
Canada	280,043	276,548	246,923	229,373	205,730
Alberta	57,245	59,007	53,652	49,431	43,234
Rocky View County	n/a	n/a	1,625	1,551	1,271

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 & 2011 Census of Agriculture

A complete picture of agriculture in Rocky View County also requires an understanding of farm operators over time (Table 5.3). For the county, the 2011 Census of Agriculture counted 1,850 individuals as farm operators, a decrease of 19.4 % from 2,295 farm operators in 2006. Similarly, number of farm operators decreased by 10.1% in Canada and 13.4% in Alberta during the same five-year period. The change is even more impressive between 1991 and 2011, with 24.8% less Canadian farm operators and 23.8% less farm operators in Alberta during that twenty-year period.

Table 5.3: Change in Number of Farm Operators (1991-2011)

	Total Number of Farm Operators				
	1991	**1996**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**
Canada	390,875	385,610	346,195	327,060	293,925
Alberta	81,415	82,460	76,195	71,660	62,050
Rocky View County	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,295	1,850

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 & 2011 Census of Agriculture

As shown in Table 5.4, the average age of farm operators continues to increase over time in Rocky View County, from 47.8 years in 1996 to 56.5 years in 2011. Nationally, the same trend is observed as the average age of farm operators rose from 47.5 years in 1991 to 54.0 years in 2011. Provincially, Alberta saw an increase in average age of farm operators from 47.3 years in 1991 to 54.5 years in 2011. In 2011, operators over the age of 55 years represented the largest share of total operators in Canada, accounting for 48.3% of all farm operators compared to 40.7% in 2006 and 32.1% in 1991 (Statistics Canada 2011a). This trend toward older farm operators suggests that agriculture has not been taken up as an occupation by younger generations.

Table 5.4: Change in Median Age of Farm Operators (1991-2011)

	Median Age of Farm Operator (in years)				
	1991	**1996**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**
Canada	47.5	48.4	49.9	52.0	54.0
Alberta	47.3	48.2	49.9	52.2	54.5
Rocky View County	n/a	47.8	49.8	54.0	56.5

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 & 2011 Census of Agriculture

In terms of farm work and paid non-farm work, there is consistency in the changes at the national, provincial and local levels. For the 1996 census period, 48.9% of Canadian farmers and 49.7% of Alberta farmers reported working more than forty hours a week on farm work (Table 5.5). By 2011, the numbers decreased to 40.1% nationally and 37.8% provincially. Rocky View County saw full time farm work decrease from 35.5% of all operators in 2006 to 29.5% in 2011. Mirroring the trend in decreasing numbers of farms and farm operators, the number of full time farm operators is similarly in decline.

Table 5.5: Change in Operators Working 40+ Hours for Farm Work (1996-2011)

	Operators working 40+ hours for farm work			
	1996	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**
Canada	188,580	165,200	152,630	117,985
Alberta	40,960	35,285	31,225	23,480
Rocky View County	n/a	n/a	815	545

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996, 2001, 2006 & 2011 Census of Agriculture

The decline in number of operators working full time doing farm work would suggest that there may be an increase in number of operators working full time doing paid non-farm work. However, the data in Table 5.6 indicate that this is not the case at any level. In Rocky

View County, the number of operators doing paid non-farm work decreased from 25.5% in 2006 to 21.9% in 2011. Nationally, the numbers decreased from 20.2% to 18.0%, and Alberta saw a similar decline from 24.2% to 20.7%. Coupled with the decreasing number of operators engaged in full time farm work, as well as the decline in total number of farms and operators overall, this suggests that farm operators are either blending farm and non-farm work in a different manner or leaving farm operations altogether.

Table 5.6: Change in Operators Working 40+ Hours for Non-Farm Work (1996-2011)

	Operators working 40+ hours for paid non-farm work			
	1996	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**
Canada	38,345	60,865	66,160	52,970
Alberta	8,800	15,345	17,355	12,865
Rocky View County	n/a	n/a	585	405

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001, 2006 & 2011 Census of Agriculture

By reviewing the agricultural profile of Rocky View County, it is possible to see that farms and farm operations have been in decline over the past decade. If the urban-rural continuum model is invoked and the occupation-based logic of measuring rural is used, the logical conclusion is that Rocky View County is transitioning from a rural setting into something more urban. This assumption also offers some insight into the nature of conflict within the urban-rural nexus, with rural lifestyles being replaced with more urban ways. To be thorough, however, it is necessary to examine more than just the agricultural character of Rocky View County. In keeping with the index of rurality (Cloke and Edwards 1986) and the commonly accepted stereotypes of urban (Champion and Hugo 2004), this research project offers a comparison of

two urban centres and two rural municipalities within the Calgary Region[9]. The goal is to determine whether Rocky View County is a rural municipality being affected by urbanization of bordering cities, or if it is a hybrid region that shares both urban and rural characteristics.

2. Population Characteristics – Urban or Rural?

While a snapshot of Rocky View County in any given period of time is useful in terms of understanding the people who live there and the geographic positioning of the municipality, it is more valuable to provide a comparison that demonstrates how population and corresponding lifestyles have changed over time. For that reason, this research project conducts a comparison of Rocky View County to a neighbouring rural municipality and two cities within the Calgary CMA to provide contextual positioning of the county in a metropolitan setting. By comparing the county and its neighbouring municipalities over time, the urban or rural nature of Rocky View County can be assessed.

Urban and rural population characteristics within the Calgary Region are analyzed based on census period data for four jurisdictions: Calgary (urban), Airdrie (urban), Rocky View County (rural) and the Municipal District of Foothills (rural). These four jurisdictions were chosen to represent both large and small cities, as well as rural municipalities that border urban centres. Rocky View County is within the Calgary CMA, and the M.D. of Foothills is considered a strong metropolitan influenced zone (MIZ) according to the Statistics Canada criteria that at least thirty percent of the CSD's employed labour force commute into any CMA or CA for work (Statistics Canada 2012a:70). Because both Rocky View County and the M.D. of Foothills are classified as rural municipalities while also recognized as regions that have strong urban

[9] The Calgary Region is not the Calgary CMA; Calgary Region refers to the jurisdictions that include and surround the city of Calgary to make up the Calgary Regional Partnership. Calgary Region is used for this analysis because it includes another municipal district for comparison purposes.

influences, they are used as examples of the urban-rural nexus. For the purpose of this research project, the urban-rural nexus is analyzed here according to the literature on urban and rural differences, literature on fringe or hybrid areas, as well as commonly held beliefs about urban and rural areas.

In order to analyze the characteristics of rural and urban populations in the Calgary Region, four groupings of variables were created to reflect different aspects of life. Each grouping contains multiple variables that reflect the following: 1) family and household characteristics, 2) dwelling-based characteristics, 3) population characteristics, and 4) education and employment characteristics. The variables within each grouping are detailed in the tables included in this section, and comparisons are made between census periods wherever possible. Family and household characteristics are comparable for three census periods (2001, 2006, 2011), noting that data for average number of people per household and median household income were not collected in each period. For dwelling-based characteristics, type of dwelling was not tracked in 2001, and homeownership and value of home was not tracked in 2011. Most importantly, many variables in 2011 were not measured by the standard census questionnaire but through the National Household Survey (NHS).

Unlike census data, NHS data is based on voluntary completion of the questionnaire, and data suppression standards differ from those used for census data. Therefore, the data are included in the tables with the disclaimer that direct comparisons to previous census years are not possible. Variables included in the analysis from the 2011 NHS are: immigrant population, visible minority population, mobility, post-secondary education, labour force participation, employment rate, non-primary occupations, location of workplace and commute patterns. Thus, some trends can be accurately observed up to the present census reporting period while others

will be inferred based on a combination of census and NHS data.

Prior to analysis of the data, assumptions are made for the four groupings of variables based on understandings of urban and rural found in the literature, as well as commonly held perspectives. In the sections that follow, the assumptions are presented, followed by the data in table format, and concluding with an assessment of whether assumptions are supported by the data. The assessment of Rocky View County as rural, urban or hybrid zone will be offered based on the findings and comparison to the other three jurisdictions.

2.1. Family and household characteristics

2.1.1 Assumptions

Because rural areas are often cited as better or safer places to raise children, there will be a greater presence of families with children in the two rural cases, which will also result in higher average number of people per household. Traditional values will be reflected in the presence of more married couples in rural settings. Finally, median household income will be lower in rural settings based on assumptions of lower education levels and less participation in non-primary sector occupations[10].

2.1.2 Findings (detailed in Table 5.7)

In Rocky View County, 45.1% of couple households had children living at home in 2011, slightly more than Airdrie which had 41.8%. Calgary and M.D. of Foothills were both lower, with only 32.0% and 37.0% of couple households having children at home in 2011. The average number of people in the household was not much different across the four jurisdictions, with Rocky View County and Airdrie at the high end with 3.1 people and M.D. of Foothills at the low

[10] For this research project, primary sector occupations are those related to agriculture, natural resources, manufacturing, utilities, transport and equipment operations, and trades. Non-primary sector occupations are those related to management, administration, professional, sales and service roles.

end with 2.9. Both Rocky View County and the M.D. of Foothills had much higher rates of married couples than the two urban centres. The incidence of married couples was about ten percent higher in the rural jurisdictions. Median household income was not only higher in both rural jurisdictions, the rate of growth was also greater. While the median household income in Calgary and Airdrie increased by about 16% to 17% from 2001 to 2006, the rural municipalities posted median household income growth between 24% and 27% in the same period. Of the four assumptions made about the rural nature of Rocky View County and M.D. of Foothills, the presence of a high rate of married couples and couples with children at home are both consistent with the literature. Surprisingly, median household income being dramatically higher in the rural municipalities is the most inconsistent with traditional characteristics of rural areas.

Table 5.7: Family and Household Characteristics (2001-2011)

	Calgary			Airdrie			Rocky View County			M.D. of Foothills		
Family Characteristics	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**
Married	73.1%	72.9%	72.8%	77.5%	76.7%	73.6%	86.9%	86.7%	85.4%	85.4%	85.1%	83.8%
Common Law	11.7%	12.3%	12.7%	9.4%	11.8%	13.9%	6.3%	7.0%	7.8%	8.6%	8.6%	9.4%
Lone Parent	15.1%	14.8%	14.5%	13.2%	11.5%	12.5%	6.7%	6.4%	6.7%	5.9%	6.4%	6.7%
Household Characteristics												
Couple w/children in home	31.0%	30.0%	32.0%	49.1%	43.0%	41.8%	46.6%	44.3%	45.1%	38.4%	38.3%	37.0%
Couple w/out children in home	26.5%	26.4%	24.1%	23.8%	27.3%	25.4%	34.6%	36.6%	34.9%	40.2%	40.7%	40.3%
One person household	23.8%	25.8%	26.0%	12.0%	16.5%	17.4%	9.8%	10.5%	10.8%	13.5%	13.2%	13.7%
Avg # people in household	n/a	2.5	3	n/a	2.9	3.1	n/a	3	3.1	n/a	2.8	2.9
Median household income	$57,879	$67,238	n/a	$66,667	$78,097	n/a	$84,358	$104,838	n/a	$71,801	$90,890	n/a

Source: Source: Statistics Canada 2001, 2006 & 2011 Census of Population

2.2 Dwelling-based characteristics

2.2.1 Assumptions

Traditional rural values can be expected to favour homeownership and permanence over renting and moving from place to place. This is based on a desire to establish roots in a community and build strong ties with other residents. The rural jurisdictions will thus be expected to have greater rates of homeownership and less mobility among residents. Single detached family dwellings will also be overrepresented in rural settings as the traditional housing

option for most families. Home values will also be lower in the rural areas, as the literature indicates affordability and homeownership as important reasons for migration from cities.

2.2.2 Findings (detailed in Table 5.8)

While rates of homeownership are almost twenty percent higher in the rural jurisdictions than in Calgary, homeownership in Airdrie is similar to that of the rural municipalities (about 90% in 2006). Mobility rates are similar across all four jurisdictions for the last census reporting period in 2006. Over three quarters of residents in all four jurisdictions remained at the same address in the past year during that period. For a five-year period, 2006 data indicate that rural residents were less likely to have moved than their urban counterparts. Overwhelmingly, there is a preference for single detached homes in the rural jurisdictions, with over 90% of the population reporting this housing option. Conversely, while apartments are reported as the housing option for 22% of Calgarians in the 2011 census, there is less than 0.2% of the population living in apartments in the rural municipalities. Finally, the average value of homes in Rocky View County was more than double that of Calgary and Airdrie. The M.D. of Foothills average home value was also more than double that of Airdrie and over 70% higher than Calgary. Thus, while homeownership and type of dwelling assumptions were accurate, mobility rates were not significantly different for the rural jurisdictions. Most importantly, the average home value in rural areas being double that of urban was an unforeseen result that implies Rocky View County may cater to residents of high socioeconomic status who choose “country” life for reasons other than affordability.

Table 5.8: Dwelling-based Characteristics (2001-2011)

	Calgary			Airdrie			Rocky View County			M.D. of Foothills		
Type of Dwelling (% pop)	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**
Single detached	n/a	57.8%	58.7%	n/a	72.6%	71.6%	n/a	93.6%	93.3%	n/a	94.1%	94.9%
Semi-detached	n/a	5.8%	6.0%	n/a	6.2%	6.1%	n/a	4.3%	3.9%	n/a	2.6%	2.2%
Row house	n/a	9.1%	8.8%	n/a	10.0%	11.7%	n/a	0.5%	1.0%	n/a	0.0%	0.0%
Duplex (apartment)	n/a	4.2%	3.9%	n/a	0.4%	0.6%	n/a	0.1%	0.2%	n/a	0.1%	0.1%
Apartment: <5 storey bldg	n/a	15.8%	15.0%	n/a	10.1%	8.0%	n/a	0.1%	0.0%	n/a	0.2%	0.2%
Apartment: >5 storey bldg	n/a	6.8%	7.0%	n/a	0.0%	0.6%	n/a	0.0%	0.0%	n/a	0.0%	0.0%
Homeownership												
Owned home (% pop)	69.3%	72.3%	n/a	88.9%	89.4%	n/a	89.8%	91.6%	n/a	85.9%	89.6%	n/a
Average value of home	$196,628	$372,487	n/a	$158,415	$279,053	n/a	$379,681	$751,175	n/a	$347,951	$639,661	n/a
Mobility												
Same address 1 year ago*	80.7%	79.6%	84.2%	82.2%	78.8%	82.2%	87.2%	86.3%	90.6%	90.9%	86.9%	89.1%
Same address 5 years ago*	45.4%	47.7%	53.4%	40.3%	40.8%	42.1%	53.0%	61.4%	68.6%	59.3%	63.2%	64.2%

Source: Statistics Canada 2001, 2006 & 2011 Census of Population; *National Household Survey 2011

2.3 Population Characteristics

Earlier in this chapter, population densities were reported that support demographic definitions of urban and rural. The urban nature of Calgary and Airdrie was shown with over 1,000 people per square kilometer. Rocky View County and the M.D. of Foothills demonstrated their rural nature through densities of less that ten people per square kilometer. Population growth rates, however, were not entirely in keeping with expectations that urban areas would have higher growth rates. While Calgary's population grew by 10.9% between 2006 and 2011, Rocky View County and the M.D. of Foothills were not far behind with rates of 9.9% and 7.7% respectively. Between 2001 and 2006, both Rocky View County and the M.D. of Foothills outpaced Calgary's population growth. The exception is the city of Airdrie which saw a population increase of 41.8% between 2001 and 2006, and 47.1% between 2006 and 2011. Therefore, while population density clearly demarcates urban from rural in the four cases used for this analysis, the difference between urban and rural is less evident through an examination of population growth rates.

2.3.1 Assumptions

Turning now to characteristics of the population, this section deals with age, immigrant status and visible minority status. Based on the assumption that more families migrate to rural areas for reasons related to child-rearing, the percentage of the population under the age of fifteen years will be greater in the rural municipalities. Also, the median age of the population will correspond and be lower than the urban areas. Based on the literature suggesting that rural areas have more homogenous populations, and recognizing that rural areas cannot always offer the social institutions that attract different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, both the immigrant and the visible minority[11] populations in rural areas will be lower than the urban areas.

2.3.2 Findings (detailed in Table 5.9)

The population of the two rural jurisdictions has the highest median age among the four cases. Residents of Rocky View County have a median age 17.9% greater than residents of Calgary, while the median age in the M.D. of Foothills is 24.7% higher than Calgary. Airdrie boasts the lowest median age at 32.4 years, and also has the greatest population under the age of 15 years (24.3%). These results are radically different than the assumption of younger families and populations residing in the rural municipalities. The data for immigrant and visible minority populations are more in keeping with assumptions, but the city of Airdrie again proves to be an exception. While Calgary's immigrant population was 24.8% of all residents in 2006, Rocky View County and the M.D. of Foothills had only 14.1% and 10.2% of their respective populations reporting immigrant status. Similarly, Calgary's visible minority population was 23.7% of the total population in 2006, much higher than Rocky View County at 7.3% and the M.D. of Foothills at 2.2%. However, Airdrie reported a significantly lower percentage of

[11] The category "visible minority" does not include Aboriginal populations.

immigrants in its population compared to all three other jurisdictions. The visible minority population in Airdrie in 2006 was similar to that of the M.D. of Foothills, less than half that of Rocky View County, and only 13.8% of Calgary's visible minority population. For this set of variables, Airdrie appears to be more rural than urban based on the initial assumptions.

Table 5.9: Population Characteristics (2001-2011)

	Calgary			Airdrie			Rocky View County			M.D. of Foothills		
Population Characteristics	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**
Median age	34.8	35.7	36.4	31.9	32.6	32.4	38.4	41.2	42.9	40.6	43.1	45.4
% pop 15+ years	80.8%	81.9%	82.1%	74.0%	75.7%	75.7%	77.1%	79.0%	80.6%	79.4%	81.9%	83.0%
Immigrant (% pop)*	21.8%	24.8%	27.6%	8.0%	6.8%	9.8%	12.3%	14.1%	13.8%	10.5%	10.2%	11.4%
Visible minority (% pop)*	18.7%	23.7%	30.1%	2.5%	3.1%	8.6%	2.9%	7.3%	8.8%	2.2%	2.2%	3.7%

Source: Source: Statistics Canada 2001, 2006 & 2011 Census of Population; *National Household Survey 2011

2.4 Education and Employment Characteristics

2.4.1 Assumptions

Because rural areas have traditionally been locations of agricultural occupations, the expectation is that rural populations will have less post-secondary education than urban populations. For the same reason, a greater percentage of the population will hold primary sector occupations. However, recognizing that agricultural operations have decreased over time and the number of operators has similarly gone down, it is assumed that both post-secondary education and non-primary sector occupation will be on the rise over time in rural areas. This trend will also see an increase in percentage of the rural population that commutes to work outside the CSD, with commutes from rural areas being longer than within the urban centres.

2.4.2 Findings (detailed in Table 5.10)

Labour force participation and employment rates are included in the data table to demonstrate that all four areas have comparable employment markets. From the 2006 census data, Rocky View County has the highest percentage of population with post-secondary

education (59.0%). In comparison, 56.3% of Calgary's population in 2006 also has post-secondary education, as well as 52.5% for the M.D. of Foothills and 52.2% for Airdrie. It is difficult to compare between census years as 2001 data was collected differently and 2011 data comes from the NHS. Even without a comparison over time, the pattern shown in the 2006 and 2011 data indicates that all four areas have equivalent portions of the population with post-secondary education. The M.D. of Foothills saw the greatest increase in non-primary sector occupations between 2001 and 2006 census years, but all four jurisdictions have at least 70% of the population in non-primary sector occupations in 2006. Less than five percent of the population in the rural municipalities worked in the CSD in 2006, while just over one quarter of Airdrie residents worked within the CSD. More than three quarters of Calgarians worked within their CSD in 2006. Commuting by vehicle, either as a passenger or driver, is still the preferred method of transportation in all jurisdictions but the rural municipalities and Airdrie have more than 90% of the labour force relying on private vehicles for transportation. One-way commute times for the urban centres are about twenty-five minutes, while the rural jurisdictions average about thirty minutes.

It is interesting to note that post-secondary education and non-primary sector occupations are as prevalent in rural areas as urban centres, dispelling the notion that there is an occupational difference between urban and rural populations. Also, while the belief that the vast majority of the rural labour force travels outside the CSD for work is supported by the data, there is also evidence that about 20% of the rural population works from home. In terms of commute times, there is only a five minute difference between urban and rural one-way commutes, which is considered minimal for the purpose of this research project. Moreover, the context of the commute is as significant as the length. If we assume an average work week of forty hours plus a

daily one hour commute, about fifty hours per week of the rural worker are spent in transit and within a workplace in an urban setting. Allowing for an average of six hours sleep per night, this amounts to about 40% of a the rural commuter's waking time being spent pursuing an urban occupation.

Table 5.10: Education and Employment Characteristics (2001-2011)

	Calgary			Airdrie			Rocky View County			M.D. of Foothills		
Education & Employment	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**
% pop w/post-secondary educ*	n/a	56.3%	60.3%	n/a	52.2%	56.0%	n/a	59.0%	59.8%	n/a	52.5%	56.8%
Labour force participation*	74.9%	75.4%	74.1%	79.9%	79.3%	80.1%	78.6%	75.7%	73.4%	77.2%	77.1%	72.9%
Employment rate*	71.2%	72.3%	69.7%	76.3%	76.8%	76.3%	75.9%	73.7%	70.7%	74.7%	75.1%	69.7%
% pop in non-primary occup*	80.8%	80.9%	82.6%	73.9%	73.7%	78.0%	72.4%	75.9%	79.8%	64.7%	70.0%	76.4%
Work from home*	6.6%	6.6%	5.8%	6.2%	6.8%	5.5%	21.5%	19.3%	18.5%	27.1%	23.1%	18.7%
Work within CSD*	n/a	77.7%	n/a	n/a	27.2%	n/a	n/a	4.9%	n/a	n/a	4.4%	n/a
Work outside CSD, within CD*	n/a	1.6%	n/a	n/a	48.4%	n/a	n/a	60.6%	n/a	n/a	55.1%	n/a
Commute by vehicle*	77.5%	75.2%	75.1%	91.5%	92.3%	91.3%	94.7%	94.0%	92.7%	94.4%	91.9%	93.7%
Time commuting one way*	n/a	n/a	25.1 min	n/a	n/a	25.5 min	n/a	n/a	30.2 min	n/a	n/a	30.3 min

Source: Statistics Canada 2001, 2006 & 2011 Census of Population; *National Household Survey 2011

3. Conclusions

Based on census and NHS data, the community analysis of Rocky View County reveals that there is a mix of traditional rural and urban characteristics among the population. Not surprisingly, there is low population density in the rural jurisdictions used for this analysis. Further, the high percentage of married couples and families with children at home in the rural municipalities is in keeping with common perceptions of rural lifestyles. The rural jurisdictions also have low mobility rates, high homeownership rates and are dominated by single detached homes. While these variables indicate that Rocky View County still has rural characteristics, there are other variables that suggest a major shift towards urban tendencies.

Most notable is the decreasing role of agriculture as an occupation in Rocky View County. In keeping with national and provincial trends, there have been dramatic reductions in the number of farms and farm operators over the past ten years in the county. The increasing

median age of farm operators suggests that new generations are embracing occupations not related to agriculture while existing operators are carrying on the tradition in declining numbers. Although determination of causality and correlation are not goals of this research project, it is a reasonable assumption that a relationship exists between decreasing agricultural operations and the increasing percentage of the population involved in non-primary sector occupations.

There are also distinct indicators of a commuting lifestyle in Rocky View County. With close to two thirds of the population commuting to work outside the municipality for an hour each day, Rocky View County has a strong interdependence with the urban areas that provide its employment hubs. The presence of high socioeconomic status is also indicated, with home values and median household incomes well above the urban thresholds. It is possible that Rocky View County suits the residential preferences of an elite class, a scenario that is radically different than historic community studies indicating exodus from the city was based on affordability and the potential for homeownership.

Finally, the population characteristics of the city of Airdrie add a new dimension to this community analysis. While it was included in the four cases to act as an example of a smaller urban centre, Airdrie demonstrates rural characteristics through multiple variables. For example, its younger population, high number of families with children at home, high homeownership rates and low home values suggest that Airdrie may be the residential choice of families seeking the opportunities historically documented by Clark (1966) and Gans (1967). With a relatively low post-secondary education rate compared to the other three jurisdictions, along with a higher percentage of population employed in primary sector occupations, Airdrie presents itself as more rural than its urban counterpart (Calgary) and its neighbouring rural municipality (Rocky View County). If the political boundaries are removed and Airdrie is included within the community

analysis of Rocky View County as an urban-rural nexus, the population characteristics would likely be very different. Thus, one of the challenges in studying the urban-rural nexus is the decision-making around which jurisdictions to separate and which ones to merge in order to present a more representative image of the subject space. For the purpose of this research, the limitations of politically imposed boundaries are noted and Rocky View County is examined within the space it occupies as a municipal district.

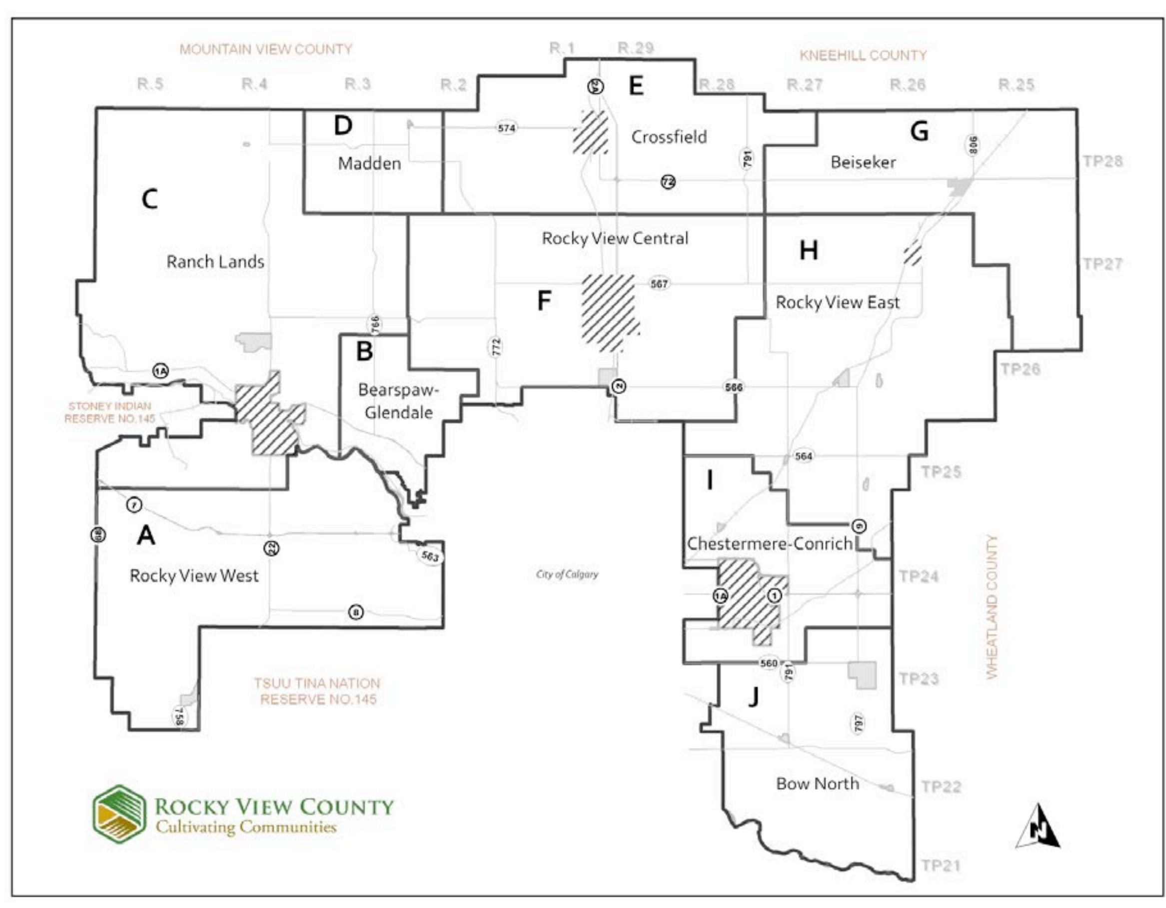
II. Perceptions and Attitudes of Residents in Rocky View County

Analyzing Rocky View County with census data allows for an overview of its population characteristics. Information about the economic, occupational and household makeup of the county is an important step in understanding the people who live there. However, to create a more complete profile of residents, results of the 2010 Rocky View County community needs assessment survey are also analyzed to understand the behaviours and attitudes related to life in the county. These community surveys supplement the census data by focusing on qualitative variables such as why residents chose to live in the county, their sense of belonging within the community, and location of leisure time activities.

The community needs assessment was commissioned by Rocky View County in 2005 and 2010 to determine whether recreation, culture and social support services are adequate in the ten recreational districts of the county (Figure 5.3), or if further services are required. Findings of the original research focus on the level of physical activity of county residents, their usage of library services, sense of community, preference for local or external social programs, residents' awareness of program offerings, and similar outcomes that will drive decision-making for Rocky View County service providers. While the county used the community needs assessment results to guide decisions on further social and recreational infrastructure requirements, this research

project uses the results to understand residents' perspectives of life in the urban-rural hybrid nexus. Three significant points of inquiry within this research project are also themes in the community needs assessment, summarized as follows: 1) why residents choose to live in Rocky View County, 2) how residents feel about living in the county, and 3) amenities and services that residents access. The relevance of these themes is their ability to identify the reasons for residential preference, provide an assessment of sense of community, and determine whether Rocky View County residents are independent of or interdependent with their urban neighbours.

Figure 5.3: Recreational Districts of Rocky View County



Source: Rocky View County, 2010 Community Needs Assessment Study

Data from the community needs assessment surveys contribute to building a baseline understanding of Rocky View County and the perspectives of its residents, but this research project does not endorse the methodology or conclusions reached by the original researchers. This is because the needs assessment was designed for a very different purpose than this research project. With the research questions and methods incompatible between the two projects, the decision to use the community needs assessment was weighed carefully before its data were included. First, it was determined that because this data would be part of a larger project utilizing several data sources, any shortcomings could be managed through rigour of other methods and resulting data. Next, the quantitative nature of the community needs assessment allowed it to reach a broader audience than the limited sample used for the qualitative analysis in this research project. Finally, the questions asked are in keeping with the literature on reasons for living in rural settings (Momsen 1984) and research on the urban-rural happiness gradient (Berry and Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011). For these reasons, it was determined that inclusion of this data would provide valuable insight into the perceptions of Rocky View County residents, with recognition of the limitations in research design and lack of sociological focus.

1. Reasons for Living in Rocky View County

Respondents to the community needs assessment survey were asked why members of their household chose Rocky View County as the place to live. They were given a choice of five responses, plus an additional category for "Other" which offered room for elaboration, and asked to choose all that apply. The five choices were: 1) always lived in the County, 2) rural/small community atmosphere, 3) job or economic opportunity, 4) scenic and natural beauty of the area, and 5) close to Calgary. In the resulting report (HarGroup 2011), other reasons are detailed to provide more information about why people live in Rocky View County. The top three reasons

provided by respondents remained constant between 2005 and 2010 with over 60% of respondents citing each of them: rural/small community atmosphere, close to Calgary, and scenic and natural beauty of the area. Only 18% of respondents in 2010 indicated that they have always lived in the county. It is also significant to note that while 19% of respondents in 2005 moved to Rocky View County for employment, only 8% responded the same way in 2010.

For this research project, results were subsequently analyzed according to the literature and the following categories of responses were created: 1) desire to live near nature, 2) housing affordability, 3) small community atmosphere, 4) good/safe place to raise family, and 5) desire for rural life (farm, ranch, acreage, animals). The findings indicate that there is not much change in reasons between 2005 and 2010, with 63% of respondents in 2010 choosing the county for its small community atmosphere. Another 62% of respondents chose Rocky View County for its natural and peaceful setting. While only 3% of respondents chose the county to lead a more rural life, the biggest surprise is only 2% of respondents indicating either affordability or raising a family as their reasons for choosing Rocky View County.

In addition to the small community atmosphere and natural setting, it is significant to note that 63% of respondents in 2010 chose Rocky View County because it is close to Calgary. This indicates a reliance on proximity to Calgary to fulfill certain needs, without explanation of whether those needs are work, leisure or social. Also noteworthy is the lower number of respondents indicating closeness to Calgary as a reason in 2010, down 5% from the 2005 community assessment. Although the reliance on Calgary persists, it is possible that fulfillment of some needs within the county has resulted in lowered dependence on the urban centre.

While the data from this question reveal some of the reasons for living in the urban-rural nexus, there is potential for redesigning the inquiry in a way that provides context to the

responses. For example, there could have been a prefacing question asking if respondents had lived in the county previously or in a similar area in the past. Early socialization towards a more pastoral lifestyle could have been uncovered through a question about where respondents grew up. Another values-based question could have explored whether respondents are seeking a similar childhood for their children with this locational decision, or if they are empty-nesters returning to their preferred setting. While it can be argued that the community needs assessment research team may not have needed the depth of responses proposed here, these suggestions would assist in understanding residents' interpretations of space. From the perspective of this research project, knowledge of interpretations and meaning-making is valuable in predicting other lifestyle preferences that are important to the original researchers, such as propensity for organized activity or fondness of ad hoc socialization opportunities.

2. Attitudes Toward Life in Rocky View County

The 2010 Rocky View County community needs assessment also measured attitudes toward social capital, a concept that was examined according to Putnam's (1995) definition focusing on social networks, trust and cooperation between people of a given community. Twenty questions about sense of community, social networks and trust were asked to determine the level of social capital in Rocky View County. For the purpose of this research project, the results are analyzed along the following four main themes: 1) trust and helpfulness, 2) acceptance and sense of belonging, 3) socializing and friendship, and 4) community participation. There is also a summary of six questions dealing with amenities and one question about influence in the community.

Levels of trust among residents in Rocky View County are high, with 73% of respondents agreeing that they trust other residents and 74% agreeing that they trust community

organizations. An additional 20% strongly agree about trusting other residents, and an additional 10% strongly agree that they trust community organizations. Overall, more than 80% of respondents agree or strongly agree that people and community organizations can be trusted in the county. However, perception of household influence does not correspond with the levels of trust for community organizations. Only 5% of respondents strongly agree and 37% agree that they are able to influence what goes on in their community. While trust may exist, it appears that respondents either feel unheard or unimportant in the decision-making processes within the community. The question about ability to influence seems to be oddly placed in the social capital section as it does not clearly fit with any particular subset of topics.

About 20% of residents strongly agree that they have reciprocal relationships with other residents when it comes to seeking help, and approximately 65% of respondents agree with that statement. When it comes to acceptance and sense of belonging, 17% of respondents strongly agree and 73% agree that other residents accept them for who they are. Further, about 20% strongly agree and 60% agree that they have a lot in common with other residents and feel like they belong in the community. On average, at least 80% of respondents feel a common bond and sense of belonging in Rocky View County, which is further reflected by the shared trust with other residents.

Friendships and social ties are also strong in Rocky View County. When respondents were asked about socializing, 28% strongly agreed and 56% agreed that they socialize with other residents in the county. Another 22% strongly agreed and 49% agreed that they have strong friendships within the community, while 19% strongly agreed and 47% agreed that they know a lot of people in the community. Given the high numbers for friendship and socialization, it appears that there are strong ties among residents in Rocky View County, a pattern that is

consistent with stereotypical perceptions of kinship ties in rural areas. However, a shortfall of this survey is not asking questions that can draw links between the desire to have friendships or relationships in the county, and actually having those relationships. If social capital needs are being met elsewhere or through a non-locational social network, respondents may have a lower sense of community in the county but it also may not be important to them. Further, for those who did not feel a bond with others, probing questions could have investigated the reasons for their low sense of belonging. In a county that contains a diverse population base, sense of belonging will potentially differ between like-minded people in clustered residential settings and those in remote acreage locations or farms.

Data on perceptions of community participation in Rocky View County reveal that community-based activity rates are lower than personal, familial and friendship ties. Only 15% of respondents strongly agree that they participate in community events, with another 52% agreeing with the statement. When asked about sense of community, 12% strongly agreed and 54% agreed that there is sense of community among residents. Respondents' practices around volunteering further demonstrate lower community activity, with 15% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing that they volunteer for organizations in the community. With 65% of 2010 respondents or family members volunteering in the past twelve months, only 52% of them volunteered in Rocky View County. An equal number volunteered in Calgary, as well as another 26% volunteering in Airdrie or Cochrane. Of those who volunteered, the majority were involved in sports, community services or school programs. Only 14% volunteered for service clubs or other clubs, which has been a traditional measure of social capital (Putnam 1995).

Amenities and facilities also garnered a very different reaction from respondents. Approximately 80% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they were comfortable

with, aware of and had access to community facilities, programs and services. However, only 57% agreed or strongly agreed that these facilities and services meet their needs, and half of all respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they use the facilities and services on a regular basis. Therefore, knowledge of facilities and services does not translate to usage for a large proportion of Rocky View County residents.

3. Amenities and Services in Rocky View County

As mentioned above, residents of Rocky View County are aware of amenities and services within the county but are not making full use of them. In this section, the examples of childcare and recreational pursuits highlight amenity and service usage within Rocky View County. Beginning with childcare, 45% of 2010 respondents who use childcare services have a service provider within Rocky View County, while 23% have childcare in Calgary and 18% have childcare in Airdrie and Cochrane. When asked why they are not using services within the county, 52% of respondents indicated lack of services near their home, but 57% replied that trust for their chosen childcare provider and quality of service were also primary reasons. Although not mentioned in the report, it also stands to reason that parents who require childcare may opt for a service provider closer to the workplace in case of an emergency. Given that more than 60% of Rocky View County's labour force works within the CSD, it stands to reason that Calgary, Airdrie or Cochrane may be chosen for childcare facilities that place children closer to working parents.

Recreational pursuits reveal an interdependence between jurisdictions in the Calgary Region. According to the HarGroup (2011) summary report of the community needs assessment, most recreational activities take place either in the county or in Calgary, and 31 of the 48 listed activities occur in Rocky View County (p.14). More importantly, 12 of the 16 activities that

occur in Calgary are also among the top 25 activities of respondents (HarGroup 2011:14). Examining the top 25 recreation activities and programs also shows that there is a difference between those activities that place indoors versus outdoors. For outdoor activities like walking, jogging, cycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and going to a park, the majority of respondents participate in these activities within Rocky View County. At the same time, a preference for Calgary-based indoor venues like concerts, museums, live theatre and personal development conferences was noted. For swimming, 57% of respondents named Calgary as their preferred location for participation, while 24% also chose Calgary for ice hockey or ringette. Swimming pools, trails and ice rinks topped the list of desired amenities for the county, yet 40% of respondents felt that no new facilities are required within Rocky View County.

When asked about funding for new amenities and facilities, an interesting picture emerged. While 61% of respondents wished to invest in local facilities as opposed to those in neighbouring communities, only 45% felt the same about increasing property taxes to pay for the infrastructure. In fact, 64% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with building amenities through property taxes if people outside Rocky View County could access the new amenities. With Rocky View County residents' reliance on Calgary, Airdrie and Cochrane as urban centres that offer usage of facilities and amenities, it is particularly odd to learn that respondents disagree with building amenities within their own county that might similarly be used by people outside the jurisdiction.

There appears to be an expectation among respondents that urban centres should provide amenities for the county, but county-based amenities should not be open to outsiders. Perhaps the large percentage of the population that chose Rocky View County as their residence because of its proximity to Calgary did so with the expectation of segregated land use that would preserve

the country residential nature of the county. This is only speculation due to the nature of the data generated by the community needs assessment, but commuting data indicates a willingness by respondents to travel for access to amenities. When asked if they are able to travel and commute easily from place to place, 18% of 2010 respondents strongly agreed and 70% agreed that travel was easily facilitated. Further, respondents are willing to travel between 20 to 25 minutes to access a number of the amenities and facilities listed in the survey. Given respondents' level of comfort with commuting and the ability for most residents to reach an urban centre within 20 to 25 minutes, it is possible that they are comfortable separating rural residential life from urban employment and leisure activities.

4. Conclusions

Respondents to the Rocky View County community needs assessment provide a snapshot of their reasons for living in the county, sense of community, and relationships with adjacent urban centres. The data allows for an understanding that most residents choose to live in Rocky View County because of its natural beauty and small community atmosphere, as well as proximity to Calgary. There are reciprocal trust relationships and strong friendships among residents. While residents are aware of services, facilities and amenities available within the county, many of them prefer to use services outside Rocky View County. Reasons for choosing external service providers or amenities vary, but there is a strong indication that residents have comfort and willingness to commute to other areas for what they need.

In addition to the data indicating that residents do not mind commuting for services they need, there is also data suggesting that reliance on Calgary for services and amenities has decreased over time. Using the example of childcare services, there was a 7% increase in respondents who used childcare within Rocky View County from 2005 to 2010. During the same

period, there was a 10% decrease in respondents who chose childcare in Calgary, but a 9% increase in childcare located in Cochrane, Airdrie and Chestermere. Similarly, residents participating in ice hockey or ringette increased usage of facilities in Rocky View County by 10% between 2005 and 2010, while usage of Calgary facilities fell from 40% to 24%. There was a 6% increase in usage of facilities in the same period in smaller centres like Cochrane, Airdrie, Chestermere and other towns. It is possible that as Rocky View County and independent satellite urban centres continue to grow, they will establish the types of facilities, amenities and services that were previously the domain of Calgary only. If comfort levels with commuting remain stable, infrastructure requirements for roadways may change from a Calgary-based hub and spokes model to something more intricate towards urban satellites. On the other hand, if commuters grow weary of driving, there may be population shifts towards urban satellites and small towns as a compromise between urban and rural settings.

From a sociological perspective, the most interesting aspect of the community needs assessment is the ability to better understand how people interact with each other and their physical environment. While the goal of the original research was to uncover needs for servicing and amenities, there is great opportunity to analyze the data in a different manner to focus on the social change happening within Rocky View County. Within this research project, the sociological analysis of specific variables assists in understanding reasons for residence in the urban-rural nexus, as well as the interdependence between urban and rural areas. Possible future approaches may involve social network analysis or assessment of social capital, based on the research focus of the investigator. Thus, it is important to recognize the value of existing data that was not gathered for sociological purposes and examine whether sociological inquiry can offer fresh insight. Ultimately, decisions about infrastructure, municipal expenditures and

regional planning can be well served by understanding how people interact with and use their surroundings. In addition to understanding the demographic changes taking place in urban and rural settings, sociological inquiry allows researchers and policy-makers to uncover the elusive "why" behind the changes. Sociological inquiry, therefore, is significant in its capacity to conceptualize the urban-rural nexus, as well as its ability to offer decision-makers an understanding of the reasons why residents hold certain perceptions of the hybrid space.

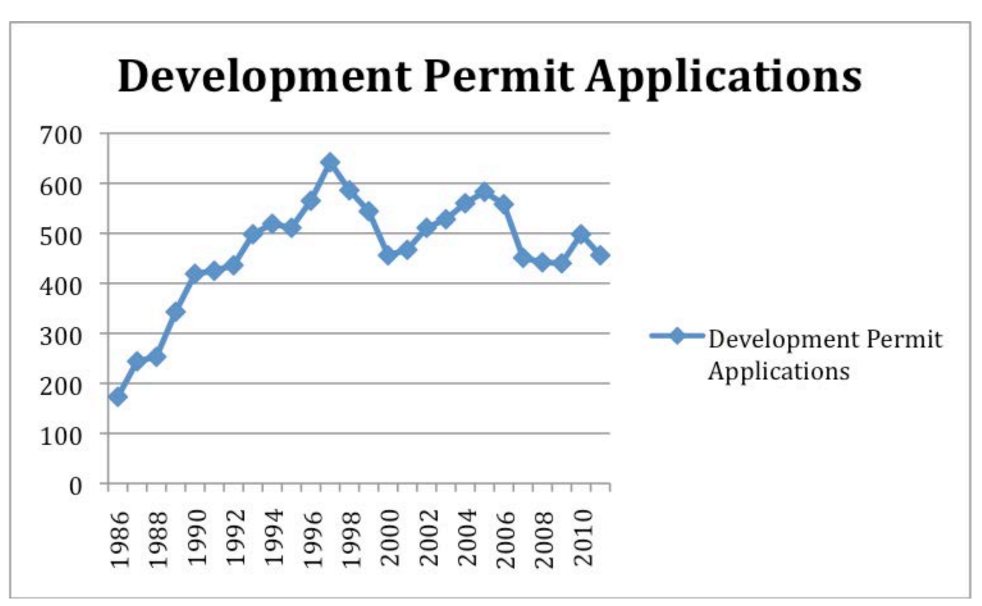
III. Historic Rate of Development and Construction in Rocky View County

While demographics and resident perceptions provide an understanding of the people who live in Rocky View County and how they perceive their lives, it is equally important to appreciate how land use and built form have changed in the urban-rural nexus over time. Changes to the physical environment can either represent a particular social imagining or stand in contrast to it, which is often the source of conflict in the hybrid zone. As part of this research project, changes to land use over time are analyzed through county statistics for development permit applications, redesignation applications, dwelling unit building permits, non-dwelling unit building permits and building permit values over a 25-year period from 1986 to 2011. This analysis demonstrates the pace at which development occurred in Rocky View County, as well as the type of construction that took place as a result. It should be noted that while these statistics do not reflect the size of development or building, they do suggest trends in changing land use and built form.

Focusing first on development permits, these are obtained according to the allowable land use in a given area and offer land developers the ability to build infrastructure and accompanying structures required for a given project. Such projects may be residential, commercial or industrial but they must comply with the land use that is permitted in a specified area. Development permit

applications have increased over time in Rocky View County, but the steady increasing trend between 1986 to 1997 has been replaced by peaks and valleys that average about 500 applications per year through to 2011 (Figure 5.4). Thus, although development permit applications have increased over time, the rate of increase has been sporadic in the past fifteen years. For the last five reporting years, development permit applications have been on par with the early 1990s.

Figure 5.4: Development Permit Applications (1986-2010)



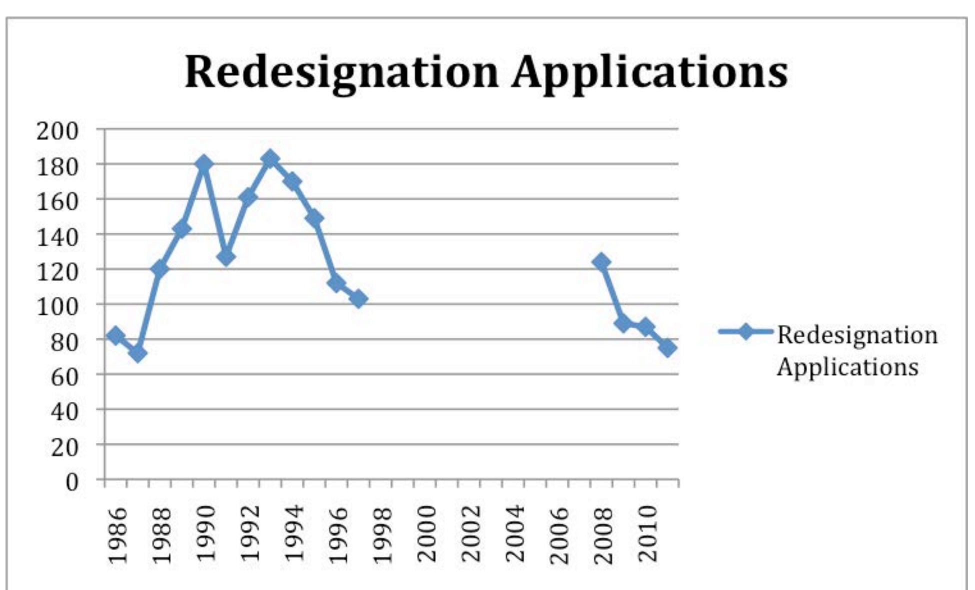
Source: Rocky View County 2013

It should also be noted that prior to the development permit application stage, there may be an application for land use change which is a request to allow development that is not already permitted in a specified area. In formerly rural areas like Rocky View County, land use has transformed from strictly agricultural to allowing residential acreages over time, as well as more commercial and industrial uses in more recent years. These transformations in land use are generally triggered by an interested party wishing to do something different than the allowable

land use, which brings on a redesignation application. It is during this redesignation application stage that the public and elected officials can comment on suitability of the proposed land use change. CrossIron Mills and Harmony, the two developments used as examples of land use conflict in this research project, were both redesignation applications before they went to development permit and building permit stages.

County data on redesignation applications has historically been tracked in different ways, making it difficult to conduct a consistent analysis over time. Data between 1986 and 1997 in Figure 5.5 indicate that redesignation applications increased over time until a peak in 1990. After another high point in 1993, redesignation applications appear to be decreasing. However, ten years of data are missing between 1998 and 2007. From the limited information available, it appears that recent redesignation activity is similar to the late 1980s. However, there are indications from building permit data that the type of developments currently proposed may be dramatically different than those seen in the past.

Figure 5.5: Redesignation Applications (1986-2010)



Source: Rocky View County 2013

In Rocky View County records, building permits are categorized according to either dwelling or non-dwelling units. While the number of building permits issued over time has increased in both categories, the ratio has also changed significantly over the last four reporting years. An important consideration when analyzing and interpreting non-dwelling is the definition of the category. Rocky View County officials indicate that the non-dwelling unit classification includes commercial or industrial structures, but it can also apply to auxilliary structures on residential properties. For example, an industrial warehouse falls into the same category as a detached garage. This broad definition makes it difficult to identify how much commercial and industrial construction has grown over time in comparison to non-dwelling residential, but it provides the ability to see how development and construction has changed in Rocky View County since 1986.

From 1986 to 1988, dwelling unit building permits comprised at least half of all building permits in Rocky View County (Figure 5.6). That trend changed in subsequent years, with dwelling unit permits accounting for a high of 70% of all building permits in 2002, and averaging about 60% of all building permits between 1989 and 2003. From 2004 onward, however, the balance has moved from dwelling to non-dwelling unit building permits, with an average of over 72% of all building permits being non-dwelling units since 2006.

Figure 5.6: Building Permits (1986-2010)

Source: Rocky View County 2013

The switch from dwelling to non-dwelling units dominating building permit applications can be interpreted in different ways based on the lack of specificity in the data. It could be argued that commercial and industrial projects have been on the rise, but the counter argument is that the increase in non-dwelling units is simply from existing residents adding workshops, garages and other accessory buildings to their acreages. However, one thing remains consistent: there has been an overall decrease in residential construction projects in Rocky View County over time. Another interesting point is the increase in value of building permits over time. While the number of total building permits has increased just over threefold between 1986 and 2011, building permit value has increased eightfold in the same time (Figure 5.7). Such a dramatic increase in value of building permits lends credibility to the claim that commercial and industrial construction is replacing residential construction in Rocky View County. This is based on the

assumption that commercial and industrial projects have greater monetary value attached to them than residential accessory buildings.

Figure 5.7: Building Permit Value (1986-2010)

Source: Rocky View County 2013

The dramatic change in value of building permits over time combined with the move toward more non-dwelling units indicates a shift in direction from residential construction to more commercial and industrial projects in the formerly agricultural Rocky View County. This increased scope and scale of land use change has resulted in increased prominence of non-traditional built form in the county. From this, social imaginings of space have come to life through construction of buildings and their accompanying spaces. For residents and decision-makers in Rocky View County, changes to their physical environment and way of life have come rapidly in the recent past and led to conflicts over what constitutes appropriate land uses.

One problem with the data on development and construction in Rocky View County is the lack of correlation to any economic or social events that could potentially explain the peaks

and valleys in activity. The manner in which this data has been gathered and presented in this research project is special in the sense that this type of analysis has not been conducted in the past by county administration. While monthly statistics are collected, there has been no analysis to determine trends or identify years of high or low activity. As a result, there is no ability for Rocky View County officials to offer rationale for differing rates of growth and decline within and between categories. Among the possible reasons are changes to county council, resulting in a majority of councillors either voting in favour or against proposed land use change projects. It could be a matter of market conditions or global financial situations impacting valuation and resale of real estate. The differences could also be the result of population shifts and demands on the housing market, as well as supporting services. While this explanation is beyond the scope of this research project, it is an exercise that would benefit decision-makers in planning for future events of a similar nature.

IV. Geopolitical Environment of Rocky View County and the Calgary Region

Understanding the political situation of Rocky View County aids in positioning the urban-rural nexus within the context of the larger metropolitan region. It is important to recognize the role the county plays in relation to its urban and rural counterparts, as well as how that role may have changed in the face of urbanization pressures. From the early history of regional organization based on the Rural Municipality Act to annexation of county lands by the city of Calgary, Rocky View County has undergone tremendous change in the past century. The physical landscape changed dramatically with advances in agricultural technology, transportation infrastructure and perpetuation of a leisure-consumption lifestyle. Increased demands for servicing, diversification of the economy and incorporation of towns within the county also created a changing political landscape that has required fostering intermunicipal relations with

multiple partners.

1. Regional Planning: A Cross-Canada Comparison

In 1955, the provincial government in Alberta aligned municipal districts with school districts and established the Municipal District of Calgary No. 44, which quickly changed its name to the Municipal District of Rocky View No. 44 by the following year. At the same time, regional planning continued to evolve as the discovery of oil sparked land interest feuds between municipalities in the mid-1900s. As a result, Regional Planning Commissions were legislated in Alberta to generate greater collaboration over natural resource revenues (Ghitter and Smart 2009). In 1995, Regional Planning Commissions were disbanded in favour of greater municipal control over planning, a move which resulted in rural municipalities competing directly with large urban centres for commercial development, residential development and resulting taxation revenue.

Since 1995, the Calgary Region has moved away from a regional approach to planning and operated as a series of independent municipalities with common borders. However, this fractured approach to regional growth led to strained relations between neighbouring municipalities, and the Calgary Regional Partnership was formed in 1999 in an effort to bring back the collaborative focus to planning. The Calgary Regional Partnership still exists and is the only voluntary regional partnership in Canada. While there is collaboration between some municipalities, there is no formal obligation for jurisdictions within the Calgary Region to work jointly on growth management strategies.

Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and Edmonton also operate as regional partnerships but their organizations are all formalized entities. The oldest of these regional bodies is that of the Greater Vancouver Regional District which was formed in 1967, changed its name to Metro

Vancouver in 2007, and provides regional services, policy and political leadership to its 24 local authorities (Metro Vancouver 2011). For Toronto, 1998 saw the amalgamation of seven municipalities to create a single city of 2.4 million people in an effort to reduce the number of elected officials, reduce costs, streamline processes and improve accountability (Toronto City Council 2000). In Montreal, the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) was created in 2001 to act as a planning, coordinating and funding body to serve 3.7 million people in its 82 member municipalities (Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal 2013). The Capital Region in Edmonton was established by the Province of Alberta in 2008 and consists of a diverse group of 24 municipalities with the common goal of working together for ongoing economic prosperity and quality of life (Capital Region Board 2013).

All four of these regional partnerships operate in a manner whereby the participating municipalities work jointly to achieve economies of scale and minimize redundancy, especially for costly infrastructure projects. To balance the cost sharing strategies, regional partnerships are premised on different formulas of revenue sharing (either commercial or residential taxation) to create equitable solutions for growth management. Also important is the interdependency that has developed between the city and the urban-rural nexus as a result of urbanization of traditional rural lands (Reimer 2010; Fullerton and Brander 2010). Farmland comprises a significant portion of these regional partnerships, exemplified by 58% of the CMM's 4,360 kilometers of land area being agricultural (Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal 2013). According to Bunce and Maurer (2005), "farmland preservation is no longer regarded as separable from broader regional environmental and growth management planning (p.3)." Regional relationships are thus unstable and often antagonistic, with seemingly minimal changes in a city's operations having grave impacts on rural areas (Vidich and Bensman 1958). It is a

forced interdependency at best, leading to many contests between the urban-rural nexus and the city over land use, taxation, servicing and location of lucrative development projects.

Rocky View County is similar to other urban-rural hybrid areas, yet special in the Canadian context. While it borders the major urban centre of Calgary and also envelopes several smaller urban satellites like Airdrie, Chestermere and Cochrane, there is no formalized regional collaboration in the Calgary metropolitan region. For this reason, there are several independent jurisdictions in the Calgary CMA that compete with each other for residential tax base, commercial activity and funding from other levels of government. This makes for an interesting case study as the layers of conflict are made more complex by the political environment of a hybrid county competing with urban centres for infrastructure and revenue sources. In this way, Rocky View County is in a similar position to American counties that neighbour urban centres and compete for dollars based on the concept of home rule.

2. Similarities to the Home Rule Governance Model

Home rule is a state of self-government in the United States that was brought to life in the early twentieth century by city politicians wanting freedom from rural-dominated state legislatures (Johnson and Schmidt 2009). As cities began to grow, their elected officials felt that state politicians were often more sympathetic towards the needs of rural areas and less aware of urban challenges. Under American home rule, powers include "the right to frame and enforce a municipal charter, impose new taxes, and establish and enforce specific uses of land," (Johnson and Schmidt 2009:530). The ideal home rule municipality, left untouched by state or federal governments, enables self-government to perpetuate growth by allowing decision-makers to increase tax rates, change land uses and implement special fees as required to generate revenue for projects. For cities, this self-governance allowed decision-makers to manage the provision of

services as populations increased and created higher demands on infrastructure. With the growth of cities, however, expansion of urban land development past city limits and into the urban-rural fringe began to concern counties that neighboured metropolitan centres.

The example of Weld County, Colorado on the northeast fringe of the Denver metropolitan area provides an illustration of the benefits and dangers of home rule. When it became apparent that uncoordinated suburban development or urban sprawl was leading to "land butchering" (Johnson and Schmidt 2009:530) in areas adjacent to Denver, Weld County officials invoked home rule to create an orderly and planned subdivision process based on rezoning of agricultural lands adjacent to urban areas. While to goal was to minimize urbanization pressures in fringe areas and control growth, the rezoning process resulted in a proliferation of planned residential communities that were now under the jurisdiction of Weld County rather than Denver. As a result, Weld County benefitted from an expanded tax base and revenue source to fund further growth. In this way, home rule as a governance model ended up being ironic as a city-led reaction to pressures from rural representation in legislatures when it evolved to become the tool leveraged by rural areas to facilitate their own competing urbanization process.

However, municipalities like Weld County are not exempt from the decisions of higher legislative bodies. When Colorado implemented state legislation that essentially placed a tax cap on residential assessments as commercial growth occurred, Weld County was forced to increase annexation and "up-zoning" of agricultural lands to retain the tax revenue streams that would otherwise be lost (Johnson and Schmidt 2009:535-536). As declining revenues from residential property taxation continued to create a sense of economic urgency to find alternate revenue streams, the late 1990s saw Weld County introduce more land for mixed-use development. Ultimately, it was this land use change that paved the way to disaster for the county as mixed-

uses created pressures on infrastructure that could not be managed financially. Roadways and basic servicing needs simply could not be funded by the county, and the lack of a regional partnership meant that Denver and surrounding jurisdictions would not share the burden. By 2006, years of unsustainable growth practices caught up to Weld County, a situation that was further compounded in the following months by the mortgage and housing crisis that crippled the American economy.

Although home rule does not apply in the Canadian context, the potential for similar issues exists where neighbouring jurisdictions are competing for limited resources. Without a regional plan in place, this is the case for Rocky View County as it seeks opportunities to increase revenue streams through more diversified land development than the traditional country residential acreages. One such example is the county's successful bid to bring a slaughterhouse into their jurisdiction after outcry from Calgary residents drove the owners to seek a less volatile location for their operation (Ghitter and Smart 2009). Building on the infrastructure created in the county in 2006 for this slaughterhouse which closed its doors 14 months after opening, CrossIron Mills shopping centre located in Rocky View County instead of Calgary. Although both large projects appear on the surface as victories for Rocky View County against Calgary in securing new non-residential revenue streams, issues of water servicing and transportation infrastructure have generated debate and conflict between residents and elected officials in the Calgary Region.

3. Future of the Calgary Regional Partnership

There is pressure on the Calgary metropolitan region to act in a more collaborative manner. With limited water supplies and increasing concern over preservation of agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands, stakeholders like the Province of Alberta are encouraging the

Calgary Region to create a collaborative process of managing growth. However, Rocky View County and the three other rural municipalities pulled out of the Calgary Regional Partnership in 2009. In early 2013, the town of High River followed the rural municipalities, resulting in only 13 municipalities remaining in the Calgary Regional Partnership by mid-2013. It was felt by the departing municipalities that the structure of the regional partnership provided unfair veto power to Calgary as the larger urban partner. As a result, the City of Calgary and its surrounding counties are drafting independent growth management strategies, although it is the projected population growth in the city that heavily influences population growth of the Rocky View County as a spillover effect (Municipal District of Rocky View 2009).

Recently, the Calgary Regional Partnership has undergone mediation to bring the rural municipalities like Rocky View County and the Municipal District of Foothills back to the table to discuss regional planning and governance. Water and density are the two main issues, with rural municipalities wanting to tap into Calgary's water supply and Calgary requesting increased future densities in exchange.[12] Rural municipalities have vehemently defended their right to maintain the low density, country residential acreage lifestyle that is representative of their agricultural roots. Calgary has repeatedly stated that such settlements are unsustainable into the future, and must reflect higher densities if there is to be shared water service in the urban-rural nexus.

In 2010, public hearings on growth management in Rocky View County demonstrated that county residents felt rejoining the Calgary Regional Partnership would not be in the best interest of the county (Reeve's Task Force 2011). Despite differences of opinion among county

[12] This summary of the current state of the Calgary Regional Partnership is based on personal conversations with Bob Miller, Strategic Planner with the Calgary Regional Partnership, and City of Calgary Councillor Jim Stevenson, Rocky View County Inter-Municipal Committee. Both were engaged in the mediation process.

residents on how to best manage future growth, there was consensus that the county needs to operate independently of city plans. Urbanization effects have been deeply felt in rural areas across North America and globally as urban place entrepreneurs (Logan and Molotch 2007) capitalized on the opportunity for greenfield development on the city's borders. Land was cheaper and there were no constraints from existing structures. While rural residents watched and tolerated the development of early residential exurban areas, increasing development is touching too close to home for many (Figures 5.8 and 5.9). In Rocky View County, proposed higher density residential and commercial nodes for growth management have been rejected and residents are seeking solutions that better reflect the density to which they have traditionally been accustomed (Reeve's Task Force 2011).

Figure 5.8: North View at 12 Mile Coulee Road & Highway 1A – Calgary side of border with Rocky View County

Photo Credit: Prabhjote Gondek 2010

Figure 5.9: North View at 12 Mile Coulee Road & Highway 1A – Rocky View County side of border with Calgary

Photo Credit: Prabhjote Gondek 2010

With rural residents' attitudes remaining steady over time and provincially elected officials adding to the voices opposing higher densities (Edey 2013), it appears that the mediation process will not be successful in its goal to rally all municipalities for a united approach to the Calgary Regional Partnership. It remains to be seen if the provincial government will mandate the regional plan, much like it did for the Edmonton Capital Region, even without consensus from all municipalities in the Calgary Region. There is a possibility that the Calgary Regional Partnership may become unnecessary as the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan becomes the guiding framework for land use and environmental stewardship (Government of Alberta 2013). In either case, Rocky View County will be faced with restricted decision-making powers as their plans for growth will have to be considered in relation to their neighbouring municipalities and the region as a whole. Much like the case of Weld County, Rocky View

County is limited in its ability to determine its own fate when provincial powers ultimately trump local decision-making.

V. Conclusion

In the course of this community analysis, different methodologies have demonstrated that Rocky View County as the exemplar of an urban-rural nexus is neither urban nor rural but a complex hybrid zone. Census data indicate that the role of agriculture has decreased over time in the county and high socioeconomic status exists among residents, while satellite urban centres enveloped by the county are displaying the characteristics more commonly associated with rural areas. Although the majority of people living in Rocky View County chose their residence for its natural beauty and small community atmosphere, an equal number chose it for its proximity to Calgary. Distance from Calgary is again highlighted by county residents' comfort and willingness to commute for employment and amenities. A more recent trend is the decreased reliance on Calgary and increasing usage of amenities and services located in urban satellites like Airdrie and Cochrane.

Although it is outside the scope of this research project to examine whether amenity options have increased over time in the urban satellites, it stands to reason that increased availability of needed services and amenities has taken county residents on a path away from Calgary and into smaller urban centres that are equally close. Additionally, Rocky View County has begun to provide traditionally urban amenities within its own jurisdiction, as evidenced by the multitude of services available at CrossIron Mills mall. CrossIron Mills is an example of a major shift in land use within the county, as is the approved residential development of Harmony on the west side of the county. The unprecedented size and scope of both developments is reflected in the increasing value of building permits and non-dwelling building units in Rocky

View County.

The types of changes that are occurring in Rocky View County as a result of growing regional urban centres create tension and pressure in the urban-rural nexus. As satellites like Airdrie and Chestermere mature into full-service urban nodes, they place a squeeze on rural spaces by seeking more land and developing urban-type amenities on their borders with Rocky View County. Increasing populations concentrated into these urban nodes dramatically change the densities of these areas, and are often accompanied by changes to built form. Single family dwellings will give way to multifamily buildings to manage the growth and diversity of the population. These changes to density and physical structures stand in sharp contrast to the existing 10 to 20 acre parcel communities that have dominated the residential landscape of Rocky View County in the past decades. Thus, urban-type changes to the jurisdictions enveloped by Rocky View County are not well-received by stakeholders who wish to preserve their landscapes, views, property values and sense of distance from the city.

Dramatic changes to the land use and resulting built form in Rocky View County are fodder for debates around what is appropriate and desirable in the urban-rural nexus. Particularly in an area without a regional planning body, competition between urban and rural jurisdictions creates friction and duplication of effort as municipalities vie for projects that can increase or diversify the tax base and accompanying revenue stream. With larger mega-projects, formerly rural municipalities are forced to evaluate existing infrastructure for its ability to meet servicing requirements that accompany drastic changes. Questions arise about whether creating new infrastructure is the solution, or if tapping into neighbouring systems is more efficient. Ultimately, the debate boils down to the suitability of urban land uses and projects in perceived rural areas. Depending upon an individual's perception of what is urban or rural, hybrid zones

like Rocky View County can be classified either way and arguments can be made for or against land use change. The next chapter provides an analysis of the perspectives and claims that exist among stakeholders in Rocky View County when it comes to determining how the region should grow in the future.

Chapter 6: Discursive Analysis of Conflict in Rocky View County

In launching the second stage of this research project, the focus switches to the social constructions and claims-making processes of stakeholders within Rocky View County. This chapter analyzes the data from participant observation at the Reeve's Task Force public hearings in 2010 to identify the constituent groups in the urban-rural nexus who lay claim to their own social imaginings of the land and challenge the constructs presented by others. It is an opportunity to examine the ways in which language and specific discourses are used to convey value-laden messaging about perspectives on land uses in the hybrid zone. The conflicts among constituent groups emerge through the rhetoric employed in claims-making, and interesting cleavages emerge between groups of seemingly united constituents. As participants express inner turmoil over preserving agricultural uses or developing land, the complexity of conflict among and within groups is compounded by conflict within individuals. Discourse analysis of the Reeve's Task Force public hearings further takes apart the simple dichotomy of urban or rural and shows that hybrid areas consist of many different levels of conflict and cross-pressures from different groups. As an original contribution of this research project, the dimensions of conflict approach to understanding the urban-rural nexus is rooted in this analysis.

The public hearing process encouraged the voicing of a variety of perspectives from numerous stakeholder groups, including longtime residents, recently migrated residents, developers and business owners. During the hearings, residents raised their concerns about environmental impacts of development, rising costs of infrastructure maintenance and incompatibility of higher density living in rural areas. Documenting these claims is critical as "the definition of rural becomes a struggle between interested parties wishing to champion their vision for particular outcomes and a focus for examination of the political and social processes

supporting these visions," (Reimer 2010:63). Through discourse and narrative analysis methods, the claims and stories of Rocky View County residents are positioned as conflicting interpretations of life in the urban-rural nexus as represented through land use and built form. It is also possible to examine the effectiveness of the claims-making and storytelling processes in influencing decision-makers.

I. Discourse Analysis of the Reeve's Task Force Public Hearings

In summer 2010, Rocky View County Council struck a Reeve's Task Force on Growth Management to gain an understanding of stakeholder perspectives on growth in the region. This commissioned group was comprised of a variety of experts with roots and vested interests in Rocky View County. The Reeve's Task Force facilitated six public hearings throughout the county in September 2010 to seek out feedback from residents and other stakeholders, and consolidate it into a master document that could guide council in building a growth management strategy for the next fifty years. For the discourse analysis component of this research project, land use change in the urban-rural nexus is represented by the discussion of growth management during the Reeve's Task Force public hearings.

Recognizing that land use change is a source of conflict, it becomes the social problem that creates division among stakeholders in the county. The social problem of land use change is a reflection of the blurred lines between definitions of what it means to be urban or rural in this hybrid setting. This focus on stakeholder interpretations and representations of urban and rural is in keeping with the social constructionist approach advocated in this research project. Remaining true to the social constructionist tradition, the social problem of land use is not viewed within the normative paradigm that is common to social deviance analyses and requires judgements of right or wrong. Instead, land use as a social problem is examined in the interpretive paradigm

according to the “assemblages of the member’s perspective” (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:26), or the ways in which people use interpretation to construct social realities. The role of the analyst is to study the way in which language is used by the member or individual to make the claim of right or wrong, and not to make a judgement of right or wrong as part of the analysis (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:27). In this way, the normative component is not disregarded but is placed in the domain of the actor rather than the analyst.

For the purpose of this research project, the interpretive paradigm of social problems allows us to understand how stakeholders perceive the problem of land use through their claims. Further, individuals employ different definitions of urban and rural to develop their arguments and advance their positions in the claims-making process related to land use change. Examining the language used during claims-making aids the dual task of understanding how urban and rural are understood by stakeholders, and supports the social constructionist position that such definitions are subjective interpretations rather that objective facts. This attention to language is endorsed not only within the social constructionist approach as the key to interaction and negotiation with others (Berger and Luckmann 1966), discourse analysis is predicated on the assertion that “the world is unavailable to us except through language,” (Miller and Penz 1991:148).

“(L)anguage is the central medium for transmitting typifications and thereby meaning,” (Holstein and Gubrium 1994:263). Essentially, the typologies and classifications that we draw upon in our interpretations of interactions are subsequently communicated through language. However, before this assumption can be accepted and used as the foundation of discourse analysis, we must ask where these typologies and classifications take root. Holstein and Gubrium (1994) direct us to the stocks of knowledge that are comprised of “commonsense constructs and

categories that are social in origin," (p.263). These stocks of knowledge allow us to interpret experiences, understand the intentions of others and develop relevant reactions. Familiarity of situations and experiences creates a shared understanding of the world, allowing for typifications that make things recognizable. At the same time, these typifications are adaptable and evolving to assist in making meaning as situations change.

Typifications and classifications allow for the existence of words, phrases and representations that individuals construct into discourses which are applied to commonly understood situations. Interpretive practice is an individual's ability to draw upon certain discourses to make sense of a given situation. "Contextually grounded discourses, vocabularies, and categories form local interpretive resources or cultures for defining and classifying aspects of everyday life," (Holstein and Gubrium 1994:268). Much like the previously discussed social representations and pre-existing cultural discourses that create an intellectual or symbolic shorthand (Falk and Pinhey 1978; Shields 1991), discourse analysis demonstrates that "discourses 'hook' into normative ideas and common-sense notions…This produces shortcut paths into ideas which convey messages about, for example, 'good' and 'bad'," (Carabine 2001:269). It is the process of constructing a particular discourse by using certain words or phrases, choosing a style of delivery and adding relatable figures of speech that results in a version of reality that the claims-maker presents as factual over all others (Potter, Edwards and Wetherell 1993:386).

Individuals construct their reality in three ways: 1) by utilizing pre-existing interpretive resources or bounded language units, 2) by actively selecting which parts to use or discard based on the situation, and 3) by the action orientation of the talk (Wetherell and Potter 1988;171-172). Building on Miller's (1993) argument for discourse analysts to view all talk as a claim (p.157), it

is important to note the differences between claims-making processes in different settings as audiences and functions of talk change to accommodate specific end goals. Individuals will employ words and styles that are best suited to a given situation in order to construct and convey the most effective discourse for the purpose at hand, whether it is a casual conversation or a public presentation (Wetherell and Potter 1988:171). Additionally, certain ways of talking convey a measure of authority (Miller 1993:155) that can be combined with "category entitlement" to position the speaker as an expert or reliable source of information (Potter, Edwards and Wetherell 1993:393). For example, invoking the categories of community leader or engaged citizen lend credibility to discourse without the need to prove credentials. However, at times, individuals float between categories and identities as they face conflicting circumstances and experiences. At these times, their discursive strategies "appear complex, contradictory and multiple and, in terms of ideological practice, messy," (Edley and Wetherell 1997:215).

In the urban-rural nexus, the hybrid nature of the land and its accompanying lifestyles creates many situations where individuals are constructing complex, contradictory and messy realities. Participants at the Reeve's Task Force public hearings often introduced themselves as small acreage owners or farmers, only to switch gears part way through the presentation to take a second perspective as rancher or developer. Others maintained one sense of identity and perspective throughout their presentations. Within the presentations, some participants chose to focus on a single issue while others strung together related concerns in the form of a narrative. As a result, the data from the public hearings is robust, diverse and well-suited for a discourse analysis that uncovers the many stakeholders, issues, commonalities and perspectives that exist over land use in Rocky View County.

According to Ibarra and Kitsuse (1993), claims-making activities are considered

communicative and reflect the “constitutive (“world-making”) and strategic dimensions of claimants’ discursive practices in demarcating moral objects of relevance to a ‘public’,” (p.32). Analyzing the public presentations at the Reeve’s Task Force hearings allows for an opportunity to see how different stakeholders utilize different rhetorical idioms, counterrhetorics and claims-making styles to construct and communicate their claims. “Rhetorical idioms are definitional complexes, utilizing language that situates condition-categories in moral universes,” (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:34). These rhetorical idioms evoke terminology that passes value judgements and lends itself to categorical symbols, with both positive and negative terms comprising the moral vocabulary (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:37). If, for example, the rhetoric of endangerment is employed to convey the need for action on a given issue, positive terminology in the claims-making process may include safety, preservation or protection. On the flip side, the spoken or implied negative images will include danger, destruction and harm. In this section, the predominant claims of participants in the Reeve’s Task Force public hearings and their associated rhetorical idioms are examined, leading to further analysis of claims-making styles and counterrhetorics.

During the course of the Reeve’s Task Force hearings, several participants took part in sharing their vision of Rocky View County with decision-makers and fellow stakeholders. While some read their prepared statements, others spoke eloquently with no written guides. Some made quick comments designed to provoke, while others simply stated an opinion that seemed commonly accepted. Regardless of the length of presentation, oratory skill or subject matter, the commonality between all presentations was that they made a claim. The topic, delivery and intent was unique to each presenter but the commonality was the desire to communicate a point. Across the four public hearings that were attended for the purpose of this research project, 137

presentations were made addressing the following general discussion topics: 1) the future of residential development, 2) the role of agriculture in Rocky View County, 3) managing future development, 4) servicing future development, 5) financing development, servicing and debt reduction in the future, 6) the importance of open spaces, and 7) communication needs.

Two prominent themes straddled the broad topic areas and dominated the claims-making process: 1) the need to preserve and protect agriculture and the environment, and 2) the rights and reality of the farmer. Both themes were conveyed directly and indirectly by participants using different examples and experiences. Generally, claims-making for the preservation and protection of the environment was conveyed with the rhetoric of loss (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:37) while those advocating on behalf of the rights and reality of the farmer utilized the rhetoric of entitlement (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:38). The rhetoric of loss utilized by the protectionist claimants cautions against losing the value of nature and prioritizes acting as the guardian of a precious entity that cannot defend itself. On the other hand, in the rhetoric of entitlement invoked by farmers' rights advocates, the emphasis is fairness, tolerance and equality. This allows for the delivery of the message that farmers' rights and lifestyles must be protected. These two broad and opposing themes demonstrate the fault lines between stakeholder groups in Rocky View County.

1. Claims of Preservation and Protection

Because the rhetoric of loss is not rooted in mourning actual loss but warning against the dangers of loss (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:37), preservation and protection claims-makers looked to the future as a strategy for enlisting support. "To those residents who say that agriculture's time has passed, you must realize that agriculture will become important in fifty years and we must protect the land," (agricultural preservationist at Bragg Creek hearing). The concept of

protecting the environment positions the claimant in the role of saviour or hero, taking on a defensive role for the sake of the future. Protection, however, also implies that there are parties from whom the environment must be protected. In the case of land in Rocky View County, it must be protected from "the farmers who only want to make money" (small acreage owner at Bearspaw hearing) and "developers who are treated like first class citizens over farmers and residents," (anti-development advocate at Bearspaw hearing). Having established their collective role as guardian of the environment, preservation and protection claims-makers do the work of laying out problems and potential solutions related to land development in the county.

Most utilized as an example of the need for preservation and protection is the precarious situation of water supply and management in Rocky View County. The broad question posed to decision-makers was how water needs for the county will be met over time, particularly in future growth areas, because "we only have so much water," (recycling advocate at Bragg Creek hearing). With this question came calls for a "well-researched, conservation-based water plan that does not treat water as a secondary issue," (participant at Indus hearing). This claims-making style is rooted in logic and organization, with demands for responsible action from all relevant stakeholders. Specifically, the expectation is that elected decision-makers and developers alike will prioritize water management and provide plans in proposed projects.

Along the same lines, the next challenge raised with regard to water related to infrastructure. By focusing on the seventy different water providers and the process of trucking water to residents and businesses, claimants called for "a more environmentally efficient option," (participant at Indus hearing). Additionally, the location of wastewater facilities were called into question because of their proximity to clean water sources. Although water was the starting point of the claims-making process, participants managed to demonstrate intertwined issues around

delivery, waste and safety that strengthened their claim that the environment in Rocky View County requires protection from land development. In this way, the larger social problem of land use change was broken down into more tangible terms of water management.

By raising the problems related to water supply and management in Rocky View County, the preservation and protection advocates also set about proposing solutions. Once again, this reflects a scientific style of claims-making, one where a logical and organized approach is followed, complete with issue identification and resolution strategy.[13] For water issues, the recommended solutions tie back to research and existing reports. "We need to look to background studies on the Bow River Basin and the Alberta Land Use Policy for key information and recommendations to prevent depletion," (best practices advocate at Bragg Creek hearing). Tying solutions back to existing reports accomplishes two discursive tasks: 1) providing information to the audience, and 2) demonstrating knowledge or expertise in the area of water management. This method of earning categorical entitlement is more subtle than expressing credentials and fits well with the scientific claims-making style that should appear almost "styleless" and "sober" (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:49-50). Further claims referenced a water study that showed a "357% increase in unlicensed, unregulated domestic household water usage" (farmer at Bragg Creek hearing), as well as a citizens' commission report on water and wastewater that was completed years ago. Finally, a longtime resident at the Bragg Creek hearing asked decision-makers to join a study sponsored by the University of Saskatchewan dealing with water security issues. For preservation and protection claims-makers, the solution to water issues is found in scientific approaches.

At the same time that science is a utilized as claims-making style, the preservation and

[13] It is noted that the claims did not necessarily appear in logical order during the hearings, but the presence of problems and related solutions is evident in reviewing the proceedings.

protection claims-makers do not shy away from strategic use of moral vocabulary. Two provocative statements at the Bragg Creek hearing bordered on usage of the rhetoric of calamity (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:41) and its related terminology of complete disaster. “Without a full study on surface and groundwater, we will put babies and others at risk,” (former rancher at Bragg Creek hearing). “If we don’t deal with wastewater properly, we will have a second Walkerton with effluent in the water,” (wastewater management advocate at Bragg Creek hearing). Usage of the terms “risk” and “Walkerton” is strategic in that there is a strong, negative reaction to both. Given the magnitude of devastation in Walkerton, Ontario after contamination of the town’s water supply in 2000, preservationist and protection advocates struck a chord with concerned residents of Rocky View County over safety of their own water supply. The innocence of babies and the tragedy of Walkerton are only two examples of the morality-laden vernacular that comprised the vocabulary of preservationists at the Reeve’s Task Force hearings. Negative terminology used by participants throughout the hearings includes: “destroying agriculture”, “destroying rural character”, “risky development”, “addiction to development”, “paving nature”, “levelling nature”, “ripping up land”, “selling out”. In using these terms, claims-makers make a moral judgement against any party that is interested in changing the “natural contours of the land” (final participant at Springbank hearing). A case in point is the claim put forth by a small acreage owner at the Bragg Creek hearing, “I don’t trust developers because they believe in CATNAP: Cheapest Available Technology Narrowly Avoiding Prosecution.” Strategic discourse conveying lack of trust and questionable business practices cast developers into a negative light, setting the stage for a counterclaim.

Usage of negative terminology, however, is balanced by the positive words and phrases that are used by claims-makers to describe the county: strong agricultural roots, rural character,

rich heritage, open space, western principles, rural vistas, beauty, honouring the ecosystem. Terms like these are not only used to describe the land and people's links to the land, they are also invoked to demonstrate why protection is so critical. They are strategically positioned in the discourse to show vulnerability of the environment and heroism of the claimants. Preservation of lifestyle is also a key message. "We like having our space so we don't have to live cheek to jowl," (longtime small acreage owner at Bearspaw hearing). One claimant at the Bearspaw hearing expressed joy with his semi-rural life and concluded that "in fifty years most houses will be off the grid," implying that small acreage lifestyles would be fully sustainable in the future. Subsequently, the same participant expressed that "smaller acreage development should not take place in my back yard." NIMBY, or not in my back yard, is both a perception and term that has become popular in public discourse to describe seemingly selfish anti-growth lobbyists. While this perception was somewhat expected from claimants, it was surprising to hear this chastised view put into such plain language. Similarly, another claimant boasted, "these scenic areas are like the Mount Royal[14] of Rocky View County, attracting those who can afford to live here, not those who aspire to it," (longtime small acreage owner at Bragg Creek hearing). As a departure from the altruistic image of preservationists as defenders of the land, these two claims reflected selfish and elitist perspectives that worked against the rhetoric of loss.

Overall, the discursive strategies of the preservation and protection advocates did the work of identifying the problems with land development in Rocky View County, as well as providing solutions for a sustainable future. A Calgary business owner with two acreage properties in the county summed up the protectionist stance at the Springbank hearing by stating, "When it comes to urban-style development, just because you *can* do it doesn't mean you *should*

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[14] Mount Royal is a prestigious established neighbourhood in Calgary.

do it." This claim neatly packaged the talk of environmental sustainability, maintenance of ecosystems, atmospheric sensitivity, health and safety, and brought it back to one key point: the socially responsible decision will focus on the environment before profit. Going one step further, the protectionist advocates offered methods of preserving agricultural lands, including land credits and establishing funds to compensate farmers. Using a technical or scientific approach, references were made to "established mechanisms in the regional partnership for preserving agricultural lands and providing compensation to farmers so they will not have to sell out to developers," (utility corporation expert at Bragg Creek hearing). The hardworking discourse in this claim manages to identify the issue ("selling out to developers"), recognize the hardship of the farmer, and provide a suitable solution that preserves the land while compensating the landowner. Discursive strategies are interwoven to once again position the preservation and protection claimants as altruistic defenders of the environment.

2. Claims of Farmers' Rights Advocates

While claims-making for preservation and protection of the land was rooted in the rhetoric of loss, the advocates for farmers' rights utilized the rhetoric of entitlement in both direct and indirect ways. The direct approach generally employed the moral vocabulary of rights and fairness. At one hearing, a participant declared, "Farm families count their land as their greatest asset and deserve the right to develop land as they choose," (fifth generation farmer at Springbank hearing). The sentiment was echoed at the next hearing through the claim, "Agriculture is a livelihood and agricultural owners want the right to develop," (former dairy farmer at Bearspaw hearing). Sense of fairness was also invoked through claims that "it is not fair to designate a farmer's land as solely agricultural to their detriment" (small acreage owner at Indus hearing) and "it is not fair or just to force agricultural producers to remain in agriculture"

(third generation farmer at Bragg Creek hearing). The fairness claims were further combined with hardship vernacular addressing the climate challenges inherent to the region, as well as the perspective, “This is no longer prime agricultural land,” (former dairy farmer at Bearspaw hearing). Essentially, this discursive strategy positions the farmer as property owner with an earned right to make decisions about his or her land in the face of changing work conditions.

Accompanying the claims about rights of farmers were those of choice, balance and reason. Although not as forceful as the motif of rights, these vernacular selections conveyed the sense that provision of options could please all sides. “Every farmer should have the choice to do what they want with their land,” (third generation Albertan at Bearspaw hearing). In this claim, there is no explicit statement that farmers should be allowed to develop or sell their land, but that the choice should be theirs. Another participant suggested, “Reasonable amounts of environmentally sustainable subdivisions could help farmers,” (farmer with hundred year history at Bearspaw hearing). Balance was key to the claim of another participant who recommended equal weight to “the rights of farmers with the rights of Johnny Come-Latelies” (self-professed “proud subdivisioner” at Springbank hearing). Thus, while the messaging was less aggressive than the language of rights, these recommendations for balance and reasonable choice supported farmers’ right to make decisions about land sale and development.

Claims-making advocating for the rights and reality of the farmer also communicated the desire of agricultural operators to keep their tradition alive in the face of adversity. “Most farmers want to keep farming but it’s difficult,” (farmer with hundred year history at Bearspaw hearing). Usage of the term “most farmers” combined with expressed length of residence in the county allowed this participant to advance a claim on behalf of an unstructured group with no defined leadership. To add credibility to their claims, participants focused on the business of

agriculture. “What we do on a ranch or farm involves chemical, physical and biological hazards that are mitigated with traceability of animals, food safety measures and environmental monitoring. It takes a lot to turn grass into cash,” (longtime cattle rancher at Bragg Creek hearing). This discursive strategy allowed the participant to position agriculture as a complex operation that involves scientific understanding of risk mitigation, a far cry from the image of the simple farmer. Moreover, “grass into cash” reinforces the image of agriculture as a business, and one that does not easily move from bare land to profit.

The business focus was tempered, however, to avoid perception of greed. “We’re not in it for the money. We just want to keep farming,” (famer at Bearspaw hearing). Once viable, the agricultural operation becomes not just a revenue source but a savings strategy. “Many people look at their land as a retirement package,” (participant at Indus hearing) and many farmers “need to subdivide land because our life savings are in it and we need to settle debt before we can retire,” (farmer at Springbank hearing). Another claimant compared farmers’ retirement strategy with small acreage owners by asserting, “Most people who have purchased in this area bought with the proceeds of businesses they sold. That’s no different than selling a farm,” (longtime family farm operator at Bragg Creek hearing). Within the claims-making process, participants not only used the rhetoric of entitlement but also provided a defense for their position.

Adding to the complex nature of farming as a business are external pressures that have led to the current situation of farmers considering alternatives to agriculture. While farming was positioned as a complex undertaking with built-in hazards, another danger is related to increased urbanization. “It is becoming harder to find farmers willing to take a risk on agriculture with risky roads surrounding them,” (pro-development resident at Springbank hearing). With

increased capacity of roadways in and out of major cities, the urban-rural nexus is often cross-cut with highways that did not exist in the earlier days of agriculture. As a result, farming has become more dangerous. Claims-making was personalized with this anecdote from a farmer at the Indus hearing,

> I have a fifty acre parcel that is in a busy location with Highway 22X[15] now running through it. I applied for redesignation of my land because it is unsafe for farming. Council rejected my application so they could preserve agricultural status of the land.

By labeling Council as an opponent, this discursive strategy brings about the notion of blame in the claims-making process, a sub-theme that is further evident in the talk of agricultural financial viability.

Claims-making about the financial viability of agriculture is built around three distinct arguments: 1) cost of operations is exceeding revenue, 2) it is not easy to find a farm for purchase in Alberta, and 3) real estate prices have pushed land prices too high for farmers to purchase more land. The first two claims were anecdotal, with participants citing their own examples of an unprofitable ranch and the inability to find an affordable farm operation. It was the third claim, however, that did the work of demonstrating the hardship of the farmer in Rocky View County. "There are four quarters of what is mostly pasture land for sale with an asking price of $1.5 million. Only a developer can pay that price, not any rancher," (West Bragg Creek resident at Bragg Creek hearing). Partnered with that claim is the accusation, "It is not fair that small acreage owners can dictate the market value of our land," (large landholder at Bragg Creek hearing). From these claims, we surmise that the exchange value of land has increased as more residential development has occurred in Rocky View County. The increased cost of land not only

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[15] Highway 22X is a provincial highway situated in the south of Calgary. It has a history as a dangerous road due to the high traffic volumes it has endured, often as a two-lane road.

explains why farmers wanting more land simply cannot afford to purchase it for agricultural operations[16], this discursive strategy also lays blame on small acreage owners for artificially increasing land costs. There is moral indignation in the farmers' claims that small acreage owners negatively impacted agricultural lives and livelihoods.

In addition to the prohibitive cost of land, claimants also argued, "We're getting surrounded by small acreages and it's harder for agriculture to sustain itself closer to Calgary," (longtime farmer at Bragg Creek hearing). The sustainability of agriculture was also called into question with regard to open space policies. "The design of open spaces is not the right question at this hearing when you should be looking at open spaces being left for agricultural areas that need them," (longtime farm family representative at Bragg Creek hearing). In terms of vernacular, the language of "closing in" and "open spaces" provides the imagery needed for claimants to convince the audience that farmers are being pushed into smaller, less agriculturally viable spaces. "My dad was forced to retire because the community closed in on us," (fourth generation resident at Springbank hearing). There are elements of loss, pressure and attack conveyed through the interpretive repertoires chosen by claimants advancing this perspective. An "us versus them" undercurrent is at work in this claims-making process, pitting farmers against small acreage owners.

Parallel to the blame-based claims-making strategies, there were also those claims designed to garner sympathy for the plight of the farmer. "When we started out, we didn't get much support from anyone. Now that people have come here and got what they want, it's unfair

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[16] Although not apparent at the time of participant observation during the Reeve's Task Force hearings, further interviews with farmers clarified that land is sometimes sought for purchase to make an agricultural operation more viable. However, residential subdivision of parcels adjacent to agricultural operations limits the amount of land available for purchase and increases land costs as buyers are willing to pay more for smaller residential lots.

that they are in a position to dictate what the rest of us should do," (longtime family farm operator at Bragg Creek hearing). One farmer described the growth management strategy as "penalizing" his operation and another participant stated, "Agriculture has been legislated and regulated to death," (rancher at Springbank hearing). "The only reason we still farm is because you won't let us sell it," (farm matriarch at Springbank hearing). Utilizing terminology to reflect permission, penalty and power does the work of presenting the farmer as the victim in the debate over land use and development in Rocky View County. As defined by Holstein and Miller (1990), the victim label "encourages others to see how the labeled person has been harmed by forces beyond his or her control, simultaneously establishing the 'fact' of injury and locating responsibility for the damage outside the 'victim'," (p.2). The interpretive repertoires used by participants not only cast farmers in a sympathetic light, they also portray others as victimizers. In the sympathetic and blame-based claims-making processes, farmers are positioned to be suffering at the hands of decision-makers (Council), developers and small acreage owners.

Yet the victim label is not maintained as the premier claims-making strategy of those advocating for the rights and reality of the farmer. Instead, the farmer is upheld as the altruist of the urban-rural nexus, the one who welcomed change into the county years ago. "Farmers have more credibility than anyone else in this process because they are accepting of others and they are the reason we are all here," (new Rocky View County resident at Bearspaw hearing). "Subdivisions would not be here today without farmers providing their land," (rancher at Bearspaw hearing). The rhetoric of entitlement is further invoked through the demonstration of the farmer as a provider of access to the land. After all, how can one deny the right to sell or develop to a constituent group that made residence possible for so many residents?

Intertwined with the image of altruist, claimants portrayed the farmer as a dying breed.

"My family has had a farm for one hundred years, yet there is no provision for the younger generation to preserve the farm," (agricultural preservationist at Indus hearing). "We are losing our best people and must create policies for parents wanting kids to remain in agriculture," (former rancher at Bearspaw hearing). Not only has it been difficult to maintain the farm for children to carry on tradition, "most next generations of farmers don't want an agricultural life," (small acreage owner at Bearspaw hearing). Thus, in the claims-making process farmers become historic figures whose legacy is not only in danger from the people they invited on to their land, but also from their own offspring who are unable or unwilling to carry forth with tradition. Farmers' rights advocates use the claims-making process to portray the farmer as a long-serving steward of the land faced with a difficult decision to either preserve agriculture at a personal financial cost, or abandon family legacy to pursue sale of land. We are left with a sympathetic figure in either case as the farmer's decisions appear forced by circumstances outside his or her control.

3. Other Discursive Strategies and Themes

3.1 Counterclaims

During the course of the Reeve's Task Force hearings, there were many examples of participants engaging in claims-making processes designed to convey a perspective and enlist supporters. While the previous section elaborated on the two dominant themes over the course of the hearings, one of the limitations of this discourse analysis is based on the presentation format of the hearings. This format did not allow for dialogue between individuals, making it difficult for counterclaims to be made or examined. There were, however, three exchanges that show how language is assembled to respond to claims. The first example is the most direct and is a counterclaim against the small acreage owner at the Bearspaw hearing who stated, "Farmers only

want to make money". After four presentations from other residents, the claim was challenged by a participant who explained that her parents moved to Rocky View County in 1951 to run a dairy farm. "They cared about land and community, and did not argue against acreage sales. I am offended by the first speaker's comments. Please treat us with respect and support." In her response, the counterclaimant took the profit motive off the table and turned the focus to length of residence, agricultural occupation and tolerance. In this way, she renegotiated the identity of the farmer as a longtime resident with compassion and ties to community, as opposed to the profit-motivated figure raised by the original claimant.

The next two examples of counterclaims came during the Springbank hearing following presentations by both preservationists and farmers. First, a longtime farmer made a statement that was not directed at any single claimant. "Maybe we should tax all the two acre acreage owners with million dollar homes to help subsidize farmers for maintaining agricultural lands." This counterclaim accepted the original claimants' proposition of saving agricultural land, but turned the burden of responsibility back on to the preservationists for financing the process. Next, as a counter to this counterclaim, the final example is an exercise in returning to the original point but revising its true meaning. "No one ever objected to the subdivision of farms. We're complaining about new cities on our land," (anti-development advocate at Springbank hearing). To reposition the original claim that agricultural land must be preserved, this claimant attempted to placate farmers by differentiating between types of land development, stating that subdivision of farms is acceptable but not large scale change ("new cities on our land"). However, the outrage of farmers against preservationist calls for protection of agricultural land did not wane and the same claimant took to the microphone a second time. At the Bearspaw hearing, he went one step further in his claim that there is "no objection to farmers". In his new

version of essentially the same claim, he points the finger at Rocky View County council for being "developer-friendly" and not telling the truth. "Developers are first class citizens while farmers and residents are second class." By creating a category that unites farmers and small acreage residents, this claim introduces common enemies (council and developers) in an effort to enlist support from an adversary.

Interestingly, counterclaims from land developers were not prominent in the hearings. Having been challenged for unsustainable practices, profit-driven motives and taking a "CATNAP"[17], there was an expectation that counterclaims would follow. There were participants who explained the process of development from an infrastructure expenditure point of view, yet no strong claims to defend the tarnished image portrayed by the preservation and protection advocates. In a casual conversation with three development industry representatives after the Bearspaw hearing, it was explained that silence was a strategic decision. With the battle lines so clearly drawn between issues of farmers' rights and environmental preservation, many developers realized the danger of inserting another perspective into an already charged debate. Thus, not engaging in discursive jousting did the work of elevating issues between other groups and allowed developers to assess whether a better strategy would be to advocate for farmers' rights. Following up on their chosen path is an interesting future direction, but remains outside the parameters of this research project.

3.2 Establishing legitimacy through length of residence

At one point, the hearings began to take a turn toward establishing length of residence or lineage after a longtime resident made a claim that resonated with the audience (see II. Narrative

[17] CATNAP stands for Cheapest Available Technology Narrowly Avoiding Prosecution, a term used by a participant in the Bragg Creek hearing.

Analysis of the Farmer's Story). Following this, the claims-making process for most participants began with a statement that included their name, length of residence and occupation. This introductory step in the claims-making process enabled participants to establish categorical entitlement through some combination of recognizable name or "pedigree", generation in the county and status as an agricultural operator. Through successful claims-making, the status of the farmer moved from the margins into a position of power and authority. By leveraging their underdog status and offering entitlement-based claims as an alternative to the preservationist position, farmers were able to use their non-technical language and civic style of claims-making to express moral indignation (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:50). As noted by Miller (1993), "typical ways of knowing and talking about the world (that) have been discredited, or marginalized" (p.153) can become strategies of influence if the intended audience takes up the claim.

This victory of farmers in advancing an effective claims-making style did not proceed unchallenged. When the routine of establishing length of residence continued from one hearing to the next, one participant stated, "I've lived here 25 years but it's irrelevant… you can't give preference to those who have been here longer," (anti-development advocate at Bearspaw hearing). However, the next participants continued to express their length of residence at the beginning of their presentations. The second last participant acknowledged the counterclaim that length of residence was irrelevant and continued on with the farmers' position by stating, "My family has been here one hundred years and while we are not more entitled, we did make it possible for others to move here," (agricultural descendent at Bearspaw hearing). While participants at the next hearing did not always state their length of residence at the beginning of their presentations, advocacy for the rights of the farmer continued. By clarifying that length of residence was an indication that farm families opened the door to small acreage development,

one participant's claim served the purpose of eliminating the need for repetition from each future presenter.

3.3 Servicing, county size and representativeness as themes

In addition to the two major themes of protecting the environment and protecting farmers' rights, three subthemes emerged in the analysis: 1) servicing requirements changing with growth, 2) size of Rocky View County, and 3) representativeness of participants.

3.3.1 Servicing

Beginning with servicing requirements, the term "tipping point" was used to invoke the image of an impending situation.

> The county does not have supports for our community. We will need to partner with neighbours like Cochrane to offer soft supports. There is no volunteer base because people are too busy commuting. Community programs will be needed as we reach a tipping point (small acreage owner at Bearspaw hearing).

This claim utilizes the language of collaboration and support to demonstrate that groups must work together to accomplish what will be needed as the county grows. "Soft" supports refer to the social programs that are generally funded by municipalities, programs that the claimant argues the county does not have. Unfunded support systems are eliminated as an option through the portrayal of busy commuters ("no volunteer base"). Those taking up this claim understand that such servicing can only come with a larger tax base (more residents) or increased taxes. Another participant in Bragg Creek used the word "stagnation" to describe the lack of growth in her section of the county, which has resulted in a lack of services (daycare, recreation centre, sports opportunities) for young families. A Springbank participant used the terminology of "losing out on schools" to describe what will happen without enough residents to sustain public education funding. By placing the emphasis on people and their need for services, this claim

focuses on the end result of land development rather than the process itself. It is a discursive strategy that seeks conflict avoidance through casting the problem in a different light.

3.3.2 Size of Rocky View County

The size of Rocky View County and the ability to manage such a large jurisdiction effectively was another important theme in claims-making. "There are so many different characteristics in different sections that you cannot have a standard policy for the whole," (participant at Springbank hearing). This claim clarified earlier comments that the county is "too big" by explaining that it is more than the size of the county that is problematic; the diverse nature of different parts of the county is the real issue. For this reason, "a one size fits all approach won't work," (longtime farmer at Bragg Creek hearing). Within this approach, the social problem of land use may be different throughout the county. Claimants who see the county as the sum of its different parts advocated for area structure plans (ASPs)[18] "to protect residents" (acreage owner and business operator at Indus hearing). Moreover, for areas within the county that have existing ASPs, there was a call to "respect the hundreds of residents and thousands of hours that have been spent on creating ASPs," (best practices advocate at Bragg Creek hearing). The language of protection and respect draws attention back to formal processes and documents that outline plans for the county, once again tapping into the scientific style of claims-making favoured by preservationists.

Accompanying the call for a return to ASPs is the claim that Rocky View County must rejoin the Calgary Regional Partnership (CRP). Claimants first established the legitimacy of the CRP with talk of "extensive expertise and public consultation" (developer representative at Indus

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[18] Area structure plans are consultative documents that guide appropriate land uses for given regions within a larger jurisdiction.

hearing). Then a call to action was invoked through the "need" to rejoin the CRP so "we have a voice" (participant at Indus hearing) and it "doesn't move forward without us" (utility corporation expert at Bragg Creek hearing). The sense of urgency was further elevated when the same developer representative from the Indus hearing asserted at the Springbank hearing, "The province is watching us. Don't let Edmonton decide what is best for this county." Discourse focused on having a voice, not being left behind and not having choices made for you is strategically used to invoke a sense of urgency around protecting autonomy. If decision-makers in the county do not rejoin the larger group (CRP) as it moves forward, their ability to determine the fate of their county may be lost and left to higher levels of government ("Edmonton").

3.3.3 Representativeness of participants

Discourse analysis is built on the premise that all talk should be read as a claim, and that claims are power negotiations between interested parties wishing their perspectives to be taken up over all others. While there is an assumption that the analyst is aware of the power dynamics involved in discourse, there is a tendency to believe that participants are not always aware of the power games that are in play. In the case of the Reeve's Task Force hearings, there is evidence that claimants were well aware of the power available through talk. "I fear that there are many more small acreage owners now than the original large landowners. So where do the majority of voices come from?" (longtime farmer at Bragg Creek hearing). Use of the word "fear" signals an acknowledgement that volume matters, in both senses of the word. Volume in terms of numbers, implying that farmers fear being outnumbered by the small acreage owner population when it comes to voicing their perspectives. Also, volume in terms of how loudly interest groups present their claims. "There are many voices in this community that do not express the same sentiment as the loud voices," (fifth generation farmer at Springbank hearing). These claims indicate that

participants are aware that discourse matters, and that it has the ability to sway decision-makers. To believe that presentations at the hearings are off-the-cuff remarks minimizes the awareness and strategy employed by claims-makers.

II. Narrative Analysis of the Farmer's Story

Analysis of the discourse employed in the Reeve's Task Force hearings indicates that many participants consciously selected rhetorical idioms and moral vocabularies to convey specific constructions of reality in the urban-rural nexus. Through use of emotional motifs and imagery connected to distinct phrases, claimants were able to paint a picture of their version of reality and enlist the support of others. Similarly, participants in public hearings or other negotiated situations may employ narratives or storytelling to convey their perspectives. For example, Caine's (2013) ethnographic research of the Deline community on Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories analyzes the language and narratives involved in negotiating cultural landscapes between Aboriginal groups and representatives of both the federal and territorial governments.

The embedded power relations between Aboriginals and governments were enacted as the language used in planning the Great Bear Lake watershed tipped the scales in favour of the structured bureaucratic narratives used by resource development officials. Unable to effectively participate in the negotiations according to the rules of engagement asserted by government, Aboriginal leaders invoked storytelling as a method of explaining their people's connection to the land through the story of The Water Heart. "The decision to use the story in the plan was a perceptible shift in planning thought and process" (Caine 2013:178), creating a cultural landscape in narrative form. Once Aboriginal leaders were able to convey their interpretations of the land, social transformation was possible through shared understanding. Thus language and

narratives are critical components in conveying and structuring shared meanings of space between people who come from different places, not to mention the importance of mutual ability to influence negotiations of future landscapes.

In the course of the Reeve's Task Force hearings, there was a moment similar to The Water Heart story of the Deline. The positioning of Alice Wickston's[19] story in the proceedings of the public hearing process is arguably organic, yet it seemed strategically timed. After initial introductions at the Springbank hearing, followed by thirty minutes of presentations defiling the development industry and municipal council as co-conspirators in the demise of Rocky View County, Alice Wickston went to the microphone for a turn to tell her own story. In the space of three minutes, Alice managed to explain that: 1) she is a longtime resident, 2) she is the last of a dying breed (farmers), 3) she feels betrayed by the small acreage owners who now turn their backs on farmers, 4) she is nearing retirement and longs for sustained social support (her children, her community), and 5) she is going to stand tall in the face of adversity targeting the farmer. The emergence of Alice as the character of strong farmer created an unexpected momentum that saw other farmers continue to tell their stories and form a loose group opposing the previous participants who argued for conservation and land preservation. In Francesca Polletta's (2006) words, Alice's story was the "BOOM – It Happened" moment (p.45) when the collective action began for farmers. It is beyond the scope of this analysis to determine whether Alice's story was strategically planned or completely spontaneous, but it can be analyzed for the work it does *for* and *on* its listeners.

1. The Stages of Alice's Story as the Farmer's Story

With the telling of Alice's story came the turning point for stakeholders supporting the

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[19] Alice Wickston is a pseudonym.

right of farmers to sell their land to any party and in any manner they deemed appropriate. They now had the story they could rally behind for mutual benefit, and an opportunity for collaboration with willing residents to present an alternative view for growth management in Rocky View County, opposing the organized and technically proficient preservation and protection claimants. Alice's story made the sympathetic farmer its central character, yet from a discursive perspective her claims-making exercise had been random at best and confused at worst. What made her tell her story the way she did, when she did and for what purpose? The impact of Alice's story on the analyst was not a unique case, as the majority of participants at the hearing were leaning forward and listening intently during her three minutes at the microphone. In the course of all six hearings, there had been no other presenter who garnered a standing ovation. There is no question that Alice exercised power in rallying farmers behind a common vision, making it important to examine what made her story so much more effective than that of the multiple other residents who had voiced similar concerns in preceding and successive hearings. Narrative analysis is used to examine not only this story, but the story of the farmer in Rocky View County, using Alice's story as the central narrative.

Before unpacking the story of the farmer, we must establish whether Alice's discourse or account meets the requirements of being a story by drawing on William Labov's six components of narrative structure (Frank, 2010:26). Stories may meet some or most requirements of Labov's schema in the sense that things happen in consequence of each other, making his components "stages" of the story. Most stories do not contain all of Labov's stages, and the stages are typically out of order when they do exist. Labov's stages are: 1) the abstract, which warns that a story is coming, 2) orientation, 3) a complicating event, 4) resolution, 5) evaluation and 6) coda, where the turn to talk is returned to others (Frank, 2010: 26). Alice's story stands up to Labov's

test in some ways but not others.

The event at which Alice tells her story assists with its qualification as a story. At the public hearings, participants had to go to a microphone and state their names. In terms of Labov's stages, the audience had warning that a story may be told and we quickly became oriented to the character and events:

> My name is Alice Wickston. It's a little difficult for me to get up here. There has not been one farmer that has even spoken this evening. I've lived here for 54 years. My husband has lived here for 78 years.

Seconds into the story, we are informed of the characters (Alice and her husband), their role in the county (farmer), and the length of their residence in the region. She goes on to set up the supporting cast and events that led to this storytelling occasion:

> Well, when I moved out here, there were 35 dairy farms, there were about 14 or 15 of us ranchers. There's none now. We're it. The few of us who are here this evening are it.

The audience is given an indication of how farming has changed over time, and we anticipate that this information is significant to the rest of the story. Alice's next move is to bring in the antagonist and the start of her complicating event:

> Yes, we've seen all of you come. We've welcomed you. But I guess we're a little tired of being your view and your zoo. The land is here and I challenge any of you to come and farm. Every time we combine, you complain. Every time our cows are in the pasture, you're afraid your children are going to get hurt. Every time we do anything, you complain. I don't know what we're supposed to do.

Although Alice explains that she is tired of the complaints against farmers, she does not state a precise enemy or complicating event. The listener must rely on context of the setting and prior knowledge of the region to interpret her inferred complication. Having listened to earlier participants and knowing the residential makeup of the county, Alice's audience understands that by "you" she is referring to non-farming small acreage owners who moved into Rocky View

County after the farmers, wanting a country lifestyle. Her life has been complicated by the vision of country lifestyle that these small acreage owners brought with them, as it is in stark contrast to the business of farming. The indexical statements of being "your view and your zoo" and the unstated "you" are left to interpretation by the audience, who Alice gambles will understand her intent.

At this point, Alice offers more complications by explaining that she must retire as her husband can no longer farm alone. Assistance from her children is not possible as housing prices in her part of the county made it impossible for them live nearby. The final complicating event is introduced near the end of her story when we learn she is being prevented from selling her land:

> We would like more than any of you to have this as still farming, but it isn't a farming area and the only reason it is, is because some of you wanted to leave that there and won't let us sell it.

In the middle of her story, Alice offers this evaluation of the situation:

> I'm afraid that it's been too late for this plan for us, but I would like to see you be a little bit wider in your views.

Any resolution to the complicating event will not benefit Alice, as it is "too late" for her, but she requests that small acreage owners remove their blinders to see alternate possibilities. Alice makes the audience and decision-makers aware that choices have to be made, and she encourages that judgements be made according to her point of view.

Alice's evaluation of the situation is two-fold. It begins with her unhappiness and frustration over how farmers have been treated by newcomers, and it ends with her final remark invoking the stoic hero figure of the farmer, who is "still here and we're going to stand tall and I'm very proud of who we are, and we're stewards of the land." We are left with Alice continuing to hold her own as she returns to her seat.

Evaluated according to Labov's stages, Alice's account qualifies as a story because it has the key components. However, it is a disjointed narrative and there are several statements that cannot stand on their own. Even more disturbing are Alice's contradictory statements, such as when she romanticizes "a creek to be a creek and not a manufactured one," yet tries to "get a little bit of bigger density that some of us could maybe move into side by side condos." Farmers are "stewards of the land" but she is demanding the right to sell her land to developers. Thus, through estrangement from the story, a critical analysis demonstrates the inability of the parts of Alice's story to create a cohesive whole. To make such a simple assessment, however, would overlook the considerably more powerful capacities Alice's story holds and the narrative equipment it possesses (Frank, 2010:27).

2. The Capacities of Alice's Story as the Farmer's Story

There are many capacities within Alice's story that help it to do its work. For example, there is the trouble element, both in terms of the trouble caused by the complaining small acreage owners and the trouble Alice creates by challenging the status quo at the public hearings. We get caught up in Alice's point of view because she makes it compelling through her stake in the outcome: the suspense lies in what will become of Alice. The language Alice uses (cattle, pasture, creek) conveys tangible images of the rural landscape, providing a symbiotic dimension to her story. However, of all the capacities possessed by Alice's story, there are two that are most hard at work: 1) development of character, and 2) resonance with a larger group. Both capacities prop each other up, one strengthening the other through their interconnectedness. Together, they create the larger narrative of the farmer, a story that others relate to, sympathize with and are encouraged to take up as their vision for the future. Alice's story attracts the listener, providing enough general direction that we can fill in the blanks where necessary to make it work for our

own reality. She engages our imagination of what could be, and what ought to be, by urging us to believe that her story is the true "fate of our times" (Frank 2011).

2.1 Character

The character of Alice, and the character of her character, are revealed throughout the story in no particular order. We learn the vital statistics early on when she states her name to establish lineage (the Wickston name is well-known in the county) and the number of years she and her husband have lived in Rocky View County. More creative is the impact of her statement that "there has not been one farmer that has spoken this evening", implying that she is a farmer and she is speaking for farmers. Alice is faced with multiple challenges, including backlash from the small acreage owners she welcomed into the county and the uncertainty of her impending retirement. These challenges have merged to create a test for her character: how can she hold her own and remain a resident of the county she has called home for 54 years when newcomers have taken away her ability to fulfill her life goals? "I don't know what we're supposed to do," despairs Alice.

Further despair arises from the conflicts she must navigate. The people she welcomed into the county have now made her unhappy. Alice longs for an easier life for herself and her husband (who "couldn't do it alone" at this age), and hopes "that some of us could maybe move into side by side condos." Yet, she likes "the open spaces and wilderness." She has seen the decline in farming families over time, and reasons that "we would like more than any of you to have this as still farming, but it isn't a farming area and the only reason it is, is because some of you wanted to leave that there and won't let us sell it." The complexities of modern life in a rural setting translate into the complexity of emotions and desires within the character of Alice. While some readings of the story indicate a woman who wants to have it all ways, deeper reflection

illuminates the irresolvable conflicts of a troubled character.

Does this conflicted character choose despair and leave the story as a chaos narrative? Or is there something further she is compelled to tell us about the ending of her story? At this point, the character of Alice's character emerges and we see that she will continue to hold her own. "The land is here and I challenge any of you to come and farm," invites Alice, establishing the difficult nature of the lifestyle she has chosen. Rather than running from the complaints of the small acreage owners, "we are still here and we're going to stand tall and I'm very proud of who we are, and we're stewards of the land." In the end, Alice throws down the gauntlet and stands firm against her perceived challengers.

Not only does Alice hold her own *in* the story, she does so by *telling* the story. "It's a little difficult for me to get up here" and "I'm afraid that it is a very hard thing for us to come to these and listen to you complain about us" are both statements that suggest considerable effort was involved in the telling of this story. In particular, the indexical nature of the first statement leaves the audience curious about the type of hardship that could make this storytelling so difficult. By omitting the context of the statement, Alice points to something but we are left to wonder what that something could be. Not knowing the reason leaves the listener to reach an imagined conclusion, likely one that will cast the character in a sympathetic light. Alternately, the not-knowing creates an opportunity for more dialogue and storytelling to find the back story, necessarily perpetuating Alice's story.

2.2 Resonance - Alice's story becomes the farmer's story

Another capacity of Alice's story that enables it to be retold is the ability to transform itself into a broader narrative. Alice's story becomes the story of the farmer because she paints the picture of us (farmers) versus them (acreage owners) in her telling of her personal account.

She interchanges her usage of “I” and “we” throughout, creating a group while at the same time developing a sympathetic character. The “artfulness” (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:36) in Alice’s storytelling is that she convinces us of the existence of the farmer as an ideal type; this ideal type is her creation, used to navigate her reality, yet it translates into a universal type through her storytelling. With her authority asserted in her opening statements, when we learn of her lineage and length of residence, Alice positions herself as unassailable and asks us to believe that her ideal type of the farmer holds equal authority. This hardworking story manages to develop a character (Alice), demonstrate character of the character (stoic), and finally transform the personal character into the representation of a universal character (the farmer).

In her artful telling of her tale, Alice uses appeals or tropes that have immediate resonance with the audience. Tropes are powerful and free-standing, holding the ability to enlist support from the listener. Both the story and Alice “do” power, but there is interdependency between them. The tropes need Alice to speak them, and Alice needs the tropes in order to be heard. Alice becomes the everyday hero who has many obstacles to overcome (Linde, 2009:83). She invokes her unassailability by telling us farmers are “stewards of the land”, using the illustrative power of the term to assert her ethical point of view. It is precisely this ethical relevance of stories that makes them dangerous, particularly when we get caught up by the story and accept one point of view at the expense of all other possibilities. Alice’s trope may not be factual, “but it is a vital fabrication mechanism. The trope expresses what the group needed for its development,” (Frank, 2010:132).

Farmers as “stewards of the land” has a metonymic (Polletta, 2006:59) or metaphoric relation to other images we hold: strong work ethic, hard life, pioneer, salt of the earth. Alternately, the images conjured up by Alice’s small acreage owner references are less

favourable: rich, elite, self-serving. Alice dares her opponent group to try her lifestyle by saying, "The land is here and I challenge any of you to come and farm." The us versus them position is used to demarcate clear lines between those who have worked hard for what they have and welcomed others into their community, and those who capitalized on opportunity and now wish to deny the same access to others. While this difference may not be clear to anyone but the farmers that Alice is enlisting, it is repeated through metonymic means to render it true, regardless of empirical accuracy (Polletta, 2006:61).

During the public hearing process, Alice's story was the first to employ tropes and metonymy effectively. The bulk of prior participants had relied on technical accounts, and those who attempted to tell stories did not gain traction. Literature on storytelling can reveal some insights into the impact of Alice's choice to use non-technical language and abandon evidence-based testimony. "Stories of personal struggles can make real the consequences of governmental actions that are too often conceived abstractly," (Polletta, 2006:86). Additionally, stories rely on familiar plot lines that engage the audience, as well as doing the work of registering differences and discovering "areas of unanticipated agreement," (Polletta, 2006:89). In Philip Smith's assessment of binary opposition (Frank, 2010:139), Alice's story provided the audience with the "good" story they sought out among the suspicious presentations of the day.

While other participants discussed issues of land use policies, tax base growth and annexation, Alice told the audience that she was tired of people complaining about her cows in the pasture. She further gave the sensory-deprived audience more imagination fodder by inferring that small acreage owners do not appreciate the value of their land with the statement, "We don't have to mow our 5,000 acres a day like you like to do. We like to pasture that land and we like to have it used." Alice took advantage of an opportunity to position herself within an

existing field by reversing the traditional power structure (Linde, 2009:116). By refusing to conform to the expected technical speech which privileged the elite (Polletta, 2006:83), Alice told a story that resonated with the audience. Further, Alice managed to elevate the voice of the farming community "whose typical ways of knowing and talking about the world have been discredited, or marginalized" (Miller 1993:153) from Alice's perspective.

Alice's story trumped technical accounts that preceded hers for good reason: the technical accounts did not have a character (Frank, 2010:169) and they could not demonstrate the stake of the storyteller. Without a character with whom to relate, or an understanding of the character's investment, a story cannot effectively engage an audience and it certainly cannot evoke sympathy. Apart from the technical accounts, Alice's story also trumped the other stories that were told before hers. A case in point is the speaker that presented immediately before Alice. The presenter's account seemed to promise all the elements of a story: we learned that he is a family man with children, his wife is a forty-year resident of the area and he chose to live in a rural setting. "We chose to live in an acreage lifestyle and live amongst the communities, the farms, the cattle, the deer." With all the orientation facts in place, and the potential to engage similarly situated residents, this story did not get taken up because this presenter did not build a sympathetic character. In fact, he lost any potential supporters early on when he stated he owns two properties, one of which "I'm trying to sell for a million dollars and have had two offers declined to continue with the process because they heard about future development." His story did not gain traction because his insinuated wealth prevented him from becoming either a sympathetic or heroic figure.

Finally, in the presentations that followed Alice's, farmers and ranchers took up the story according to Alice's template ("My name is ______ and I've lived here for __ generations.") and

added to it in the spirit of the farming collective. During subsequent meetings, any attacks against farmers ("they are only interested in making money") were refuted ("I don't think self-interest is something to apologize for in a democratic society with free enterprise roots") and rebuked ("small acreage owners wouldn't be here if a farmer hadn't paved a little bit of paradise for them", "I am offended by your comments that we are here to make money", "I hope that you will support and respect the people who have been here all these years").

3. Dangers and Possibilities of the Captivating Story

Our human need to filter out what William James called the "blooming, buzzing confusion" (Frank, 2010:46) takes us through a selective evaluation process to develop our own versions of reality, which when fully formed lead us to search in vain for others to sympathize with us. Because life is complicated, our maturation involves an acquisition of blindness in order to get on with life and get things done. That which makes it possible for us to get through the day is ultimately what holds us back from engaging in a truly dialogical existence. We must be ever wary of the "effect of people being caught up in their own stories while living with people caught up in other stories," (Frank, 2010:78). Such is the present state of the people within Rocky View County who cannot or will not hear their neighbours' stories.

Alice certainly offers an out by asking residents to be wider in their views, but she is also asking them to trust her point of view. As Alice's story and the story of the farmer have no end, it remains to be seen if it becomes the story that gets taken up. Equally pressing, if the story of the farmer is the one that rallies residents to voice their perspectives, is it the right story? In time, we will learn if the story of the farmer is good, bad or just dangerous in the sense that it managed to accomplish its goals, but for the wrong ends. In the story of the farmer, "they are doing what they have to do, where and when they find themselves," (Frank, 2010:160). If residents choose to

take the story as a call to prescriptive action, then it is their interpretation that has made the story good or bad depending on the eventual ending.

The many presentations at the Reeve's Task Force hearings and stories like Alice's refute the portrayal of Rocky View County as a homogenous rural entity, resulting in a need for future policy makers to consider the divergent needs of the county's component parts to be successful in their governance. Thus, the public hearing process further raises the issue of alienation of those stories that do not fit the two dominant narratives. The sides in the argument are drawn between farmers and small acreage owners. Power relations have privileged two stories: the "hard-done-by" farmer and the "protector-of-the-land" small acreage owner. Yet, Rocky View County continues to become more socioeconomically diverse, creating further versions of reality. With such diversity in the county, how will those who fit neither category decide which story is best along ethical lines, or will their anomie create more chaos?

The narrative analysis of Alice's story reveals that the contradictions in the story provide it with something more valuable than a strong claim that will carry the day. The story's inherent contradictions bring to light the possibilities that exist for different endings to the story of the county's future through different interpretations of its meaning. It may not have been Alice's intended purpose, but there are threads of Alice's story that could be pulled by unexpected groups to tell their own stories and enable us to be "a little bit wider in our views". If we allow others to be heard, perhaps the multitude of voices can provide a greater number of options to resolve the issues. Following Linde's (2009) discussion on coherence of stories (p.4-5), we must accept that stories have a life of their own which includes the ways in which the audience chooses to take them up and make them their own.

III. Conclusion

During the course of the Reeve's Task Force public hearings, a common thread emerged as participants gave their positions on growth management in Rocky View County. The collective group agreed that current approaches to development in their rural region were unsustainable, regardless of their individual views on how future growth should be managed. If we understand social problems as "constituted by claims-making activities" (Ibarra and Kitsuse 1993:26), unsustainable rural growth emerged as the social problem that stakeholders readily accepted in the county. Having agreed upon the social problem, however, the perspectives of stakeholders differed dramatically in terms of how future growth should unfold in the county.

Without being a formal or identifiable group, those residents who identified themselves as farm operators in their presentations managed to convey a united position that: 1) farmers view their land as an investment and retirement plan, 2) farmers should have the right to sell their land at their discretion, and 3) zoning land solely for agricultural use is unconscionable in present conditions of decreasing viability of farming operations. While these statements from various residents were not quite a story, they had an effect that technical accounts of environmentalism and arguments of economics did not. In the language of narrative analysis, the farmers were able to combine enough elements of storytelling to build a sympathetic character and engage an audience.

Yet, even with such impassioned presentations from the farming residents attending the hearings, the facts about water shortages were impossible to ignore and the preservationists made convincing technical presentations about watersheds, wastewater disposal and servicing. One participant raised concerns about "putting babies and others at risk" without full studies on surface and ground water. Another participant cited experience with local watershed partnerships

that demonstrated a three hundred percent increase in unlicensed, unregulated domestic household usage of limited quantities of water in recent years. The fact that both participants also had agricultural ties to the community gave more credibility to their claims, and demonstrated that the fracture points were not black and white between farmers and small acreage owners. Bigger issues of depleting natural resources seemed to transcend interest groups and may provide the core around which mutually beneficial solutions are constructed in the future. Historically, the scarcity of groundwater reserves and methods of sewage treatment seem to be the rallying points for community cohesion (Momsen 1984; Cryderman 2010; Ferguson 2010; Cryderman 2011). It remains to be seen if this issue or others like it resonate with enough residents to bring the opposing sides together.

Overall, resident groups pointed the finger at developers, political leaders and each other to enhance their respective claims. Agricultural residents claimed that newcomers were selfishly keeping their piece of the pie while wanting to close the door on others pursuing the same small acreage lifestyle. Small acreage owners attacked the greed of farmers who valued profit over preservation of farmland. The spectre of Calgary as the greedy development-driving force was also periodically invoked by participants to remind residents that ultimately the battle was between urban and rural interests, creating a sense that a common ground was required within Rocky View County to maintain its best interests against urban threats.

Because the goal of the hearings was to inform the county's growth management strategy, it is important to review which claims carried the day and influenced the Reeve's Task Force in its recommendations for future growth in Rocky View County. The recommendations reflect strength of both the preservationist and agriculturalist claims, demonstrating that the scientific facts of the technical accounts provided by conservationists did not trump the

emotional appeal of the farmers' claims. Development of a water management strategy and public engagement in water servicing for future developments were two major water-related recommendations (Reeve's Task Force 2011:24-25). Additionally, the six recommendations regarding agriculture in the county reflect the need to respect agricultural operators' rights of ownership, as well as removing the expectation that the burden for open spaces be borne by farmers and ranchers (Reeve's Task Force 2011:27). It is also significant to note that a "Code of the West" has been developed and posted on the Rocky View County web site to familiarize newcomers to the agricultural way of life, another recommendation generated by the Reeve's Task Force. These recommendations show that this county is attempting to preserve its rural roots while recognizing that it must also steward protection of its resources.

At the Reeve's Task Force hearings, participants made a number of claims that represented their views on how Rocky View County should plan for future growth. These claims were analyzed as a response to the social problem of land use change in an urban-rural nexus, using the interpretive paradigm of discourse analysis to examine the ways people use meaning-making or interpretations to construct their social realities. Because the goal of discourse analysis is not to quantify the perspectives from the hearings, it is not intended to state that the majority of respondents feel one way or another. Rather, the purpose is to understand the experiences and perspectives that lead to the social realities people construct within the urban-rural nexus.

While farmers and ranchers with longtime agricultural operations assert the claim that they hold the right to sell their lands for financial viability, preservation and protection is the main claim issued by the environment and land advocates. However, it is simplistic to believe that these two sides represent all interested parties in the urban-rural nexus. There are layers of complexity that begin to emerge in the claims-making process. For example, cleavages within

and between groups surface with discussion of the need for improved social services and the struggle to govern a jurisdiction the size of Rocky View County. Size of the county is a significant perceived issue as exemplified by claimants who argue that the increasing volume of acreage owners, both in terms of population and vocal presence, is unfairly tipping the scales in favour of the preservationist perspective. Yet within the acreage owners group, there is no uniformity in perspective as arguments both for and against land development were presented by members of this broad group. Analysis of claims-making processes enables the identification of fault lines between and within groups and individuals, indicating that there is a multidimensional quality and complexity to the conflicts in this hybrid space. This analysis of Reeve's Task Force public hearing data provides the grounding for the dimensions of conflict approach to understanding the urban-rural nexus that is further developed in Chapter 8.

Given the prepared and brief nature of the hearing presentations, further research is required to allow stakeholders in the county to explain their perspectives and assist in clarifying points from the Reeve's Task Force hearings. Having analyzed the demographics, attitudes, development statistics and discourse related to life in the urban-rural nexus of Rocky View County, the final analysis of the second stage of this research project examines the perspectives of county administrators, elected officials, developers and residents. Through interviews with a variety of stakeholders, the research goal is to identify the meaning-making processes that lead to the perspectives formed by various constituent groups and individuals within those groups. By allowing stakeholders the opportunity to expand on their perspectives, the interview data will supplement many of the claims made during the formal presentations at the Reeve's Task Force hearings. Further, interviews provide a contextual understanding of perspective and enable an analysis that looks beyond the claim and into the rationale for claims-making. In this way, social

constructions or imaginings of urban and rural can be identified, as well as the conflicts that arise as a result of difference in these imaginings.

Chapter 7: Analytical Interpretations of Meaning-Making: Identity, Pressure and Conflict

In order to more clearly understand the social constructions and meaning-making processes of the residents of Rocky View County, interviews were a critical component of the research methodology adopted because they provided an opportunity for respondents to explain their own perspectives in a more personal manner. While some respondents maintain the claims-making styles and vocabularies observed in the hearings, others delve into their experiences using more casual conversational styles. As a result, these findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to have lived in Rocky View County over time, as well as residents' understandings of the social transformation that has turned this previously rural area into an urban-rural nexus with multidimensional conflicts over space.

From a methodological point of view, meaning-making processes emerge as respondents take time to consider their immediate reactions and responses to questions. By encouraging respondents to tell the story of life in the urban-rural nexus, "reflexive progression" (Hiller and DiLuzio 2004) allows respondents to move past automatic initial responses, realizing "that the superficial but socially acceptable answer" (p.19) may not be the best one. Further, interviews enable event validation through "the mere existence of the study in itself serv(ing) as a validating fact to the respondent that their experience was significant and worthy of attention," (Hiller and DiLuzio 2004:12). Recognizing the importance of their accounts, and not restricting their choice of responses, assists in having respondents provide more insight into their perceptions of life in Rocky View County and the impacts of land use change within this hybrid area.

Interview methodology also provides a link to the theoretical foundations of this research project. While previous chapters and methods have painted a picture of what Rocky View County looks like and the various claims that accompany the social problem of land use change,

the interview analysis findings demonstrate that differences in social imaginings of space create the basis for conflict. In addition, the conflict among and within groups is explained through an understanding of the expectations of life and interactions in the urban-rural nexus. Interviews with representatives of constituent groups in Rocky View County offer an empirical exploration of the complex social relations in the hybrid zone that position urban and rural as socially constructed concepts rather than dichotomous definitions.

I. Managing the Data

To effectively present the depth of data from the interview phase of this research project, this chapter and the ones that follow are divided into sections to highlight the different groups, interpretations, meanings and expectations attached to space in the urban-rural nexus. First, there is follow up on the discourse analysis finding that constituent groups within Rocky View County are not cohesive units with a single, shared perspective of the hybrid region. Managing the interview data requires a balance between categorizing respondents into the groups that guided the sampling process, and remaining true to the role hybridity that emerged during data collection and analysis. That is to say, there is a place for more traditional analysis of conflicts among groups as well as an innovative approach that identifies conflict as a more complex concept. Analysis of the multiple dimensions of conflict results in identification of constituent groups that are not as straightforward as the locational or occupational categories used during sampling. As stated in previous chapters, this research project has exposed the fact that traditional dichotomies do not assist in fully understanding either the physical form or the social constructions that exist in the urban-rural nexus. Rather, we must shift our focus to situational understandings of terms like urban and rural, and the way in which these two polarities have morphed into the complex urban-rural nexus exemplified by Rocky View County.

Following the analysis of group characteristics and conflicts, respondents' perspectives of the major issues facing Rocky View County are examined in Chapter 7 to identify common themes. Identity of the county is analyzed to understand interpretations of how this hybrid jurisdiction should evolve into the future. Residents' expectations of life in the county are also analyzed to better explain intergroup relations. Through this multifaceted examination of social interpretations and interpretive repertoires, Chapter 7 concludes with a discussion of the power relations that determine whose social construction or vision ultimately defines the urban-rural nexus. Chapter 8 then deals with the two cases of land use change (CrossIron Mills and Harmony) and identifies case-based perspectives regarding acceptable land uses in the county. Discussion of the timing, scope and scale of land use change based on the two cases offer further insights into social imaginings of space.

1. Respondent Groups and Characteristics

Although a more formal discussion of groups within Rocky View County will emerge in subsequent sections, a description of respondents chosen for interviews is important at this stage. As part of the sampling process for this research project, the following constituent groups were identified for interviews: 1) longtime agricultural operators (farmers and ranchers) in the Springbank and Balzac areas, 2) longtime small acreage owners in the Springbank and Balzac areas (both commuters and non-commuters), and 3) new residents in country estate subdivisions in the Springbank and Balzac areas (both commuters and non-commuters). During the recruitment process, longtime residents were categorized as those who have lived in the county for ten or more years, while new residents were considered those who have resided in the county for less than ten years. Commuters travel into an urban centre for employment. Springbank and Balzac area residents were selected as they border the two cases of development that form the

focal point of this research project: the commercial development of CrossIron Mills and the proposed community of Harmony.

For background into the development projects, interviews were also conducted with representatives from the developers, designers, investors and decision-makers who created and approved the concepts for development in each case to understand the reasons why land use changes were proposed and what type of research supported the decisions. The processes that led to land use changes are explored to assess whether existing policies were sufficient for decision-making with such dramatic land use change proposals, or if new approaches were required. These interviews are important in understanding to what extent dramatic land use change within the county was based on a shared vision and common rationale from the perceived pro-growth advocates and decision-makers.

2. Length and Type of Residence

Both length and type of residence (farm or small acreage) were deemed to be variables worth exploring during the research design phase of this project. The findings indicate that there is an important link between length of residence, type of residence and perception of space, but these variables are not significant in every component of the analysis. That is to say, longtime residents, newcomers, farmers or acreage owners are not unified groups across the board in their perspectives toward land use change. This finding, however, is significant in demonstrating that conflict is not solely rooted in length or type of residence, and further investigation is required to uncover the sources of conflict.

Additionally, the arbitrary decision to make ten years of residence the break between new and old residents is not supported by the data. “This is our thirteenth summer here and we’re still

the newcomers," (Lori[20], east side farmer). Other respondents who have lived in the county for less than twenty years made similar comments in casual conversation at the start of their interviews, with one referring to herself as the "new kid on the block" after eleven years (Marla, west side acreage owner). Self-identification as newcomers by residents who have been in the county for over ten years requires revisiting the original sampling categories for length of residence. Further demonstrating the need to adjust length of residence categorization is the location of the two cases that serve as examples for land use change in this project. The areas immediately adjacent to Harmony and CrossIron Mills are established areas with longtime residents, and these areas were the primary draw for respondents who are impacted by land use change in Rocky View County. This also has a bearing on the research results as new residents in these targeted areas have often lived in the area for between ten to twenty years.

There was also an assumption during recruitment that all new residents would be acreage owners. It should be noted that one respondent who has lived in the county for just over a decade identified herself as an agricultural operator during the interview process, although her spouse who was also interviewed characterizes himself as a commuter rather than a farmer. Another respondent has been an acreage owner for the past two decades but was a farmer prior to that time. During his interview, he provided perspectives from both farming and acreage standpoints. Thus, the sampling assumptions of residence type were put aside to some degree during analysis to ensure that the integrity of respondents' self-identification was respected.

To summarize, the categorization of residents has been adjusted to reflect that longtime residents are those who have lived in Rocky View County for 20 or more years either as agricultural operators or acreage owners. Excluding the ten background interviews with non-

[20] Lori is a pseudonym. All respondent names have been changed to pseudonyms for confidentiality.

residents, the remaining total interviews involved 17 longtime residents and 16 relatively new residents in Rocky View County. Of the 17 longtime residents, 9 are farmers, 7 are acreage owners and one has long history in both roles. For the new residents, 12 are acreage owners, 2 are farmers and one is in a hybrid situation acting as part-time ranch manager with a regular job in Calgary. In the subsequent analysis, length and type of residence are used as variables related to perspectives on land use change in the county, but not as initially intended in the sampling process to draw comparisons between longtime residents (farmers) and newcomers (acreage owners) as unified and opposing groups. Instead, length and type of residence are but two variables that are analyzed as they relate to acceptance for change in the urban-rural nexus.

3. Defining "Impacted" Parties

Within the resident subsample of the data, it became apparent early into the sampling process that researcher bias had crept into the project design. The assumption was made that those residents in close proximity to CrossIron Mills and the proposed Harmony site would be the ones impacted by these two cases of development. During one of the early interviews, however, a respondent who initially identified as a county councillor broke from the role being played at the outset of the interview, weighed in as a west side resident and challenged the scope of sampling by self-identifying as an impacted party outside the established geographic areas outlined in the research design. Her argument was that members of small acreage communities in west Rocky View County are unduly affected by projects like CrossIron Mills through the taxes they pay, an amount that was perceived by the respondent to be a higher share than other parts of the county.[21] These taxes are then used to fund the infrastructure required for large-scale

[21] While there is no difference in the mil rate between residential areas of the county, homes with higher property values (generally the west side of the county) pay a greater amount of property tax than those assessed at a lower value.

development that does not benefit the west side of the county.

Recognizing the validity of this respondent's assertion, a decision was made to allow similar self-identifying impacted residents to take part in the research project based on their perspectives. As a result of widening the scope of sampling, different dimensions of conflict emerged that would potentially not have surfaced without responsive recruitment redesign. Thus, the data became more robust with the acceptance that perceived impact by any resident in the county could be as meaningful as geographic location when examining impacts of land use change in Rocky View County. By listening to one respondent's comments, a research design flaw with geographic constraints in sampling was remedied, ultimately adding to the quality of data collected.

Similarly, the background interviews with decision-makers are also enhanced by two respondents who self-identified as being impacted by CrossIron Mills or Harmony. A small land developer provided a different perspective of how residents and decision-makers influence future land development in Rocky View County following the approvals of CrossIron Mills and Harmony. In addition, an intermunicipal affairs specialist from Calgary described the issues faced by the major urban centre in the CMA as a result of no regional plan. Both interviews enhanced the data with perspectives of stakeholders who have been affected by land use change in Rocky View County but do not fit the initial sampling parameters of the research project.

4. Roles

To build upon the data emerging from the Reeve's Task Force hearings, the intent of this interview analysis chapter is to further draw out perspectives on land use change. There is attention to respondents' utilization of various roles and experiences during the interview process, highlighting how role-based interpretations shape the social constructions of life in

Rocky View County. In people's talk, they are often speaking from one or more of the roles they perform in the course of their lives in the urban-rural nexus. Also, there is ongoing social transformation (Parkins and Read 2013) as residents reconstruct and reconceptualize their expectations of space over time. For example, a respondent may provide perspectives of father, son and farmer through the course of the interview process. Utilization of these multiple roles during the interview makes it difficult to categorize respondents based on a single role. Also, during the course of the interview process, the researcher is often not privy to knowing which role is being invoked or when roles are changing. In the case of most interviews for this research project, it was not possible to choose a single descriptor category that could capture the role of a respondent and still maintain the integrity of responses.

Many respondents transitioned between roles, speaking from experiences linked to particular situations. Thus, this analysis is not intended to categorize interviews and simply state that members of a constituent group share a common perspective or have differences between them. Instead, it is intended to show that while categorization of respondents into particular constituent groups serves the purpose of forming a sample during the initial design stage of the research project, pre-interview categorization has limitations for analyzing the role-based meaning-making processes of individuals. Respondents in this research project play many different roles in their lives in Rocky View County, and they draw upon the experiences from these roles to form holistic perspectives of life in the urban-rural nexus. In this way, the hybridity found in the physical form is also reflected in the perspectives held by stakeholders in the county.

The identification of roles as a key component of the meaning-making process is not intended to detract from the more significant focus of interview analysis, which is to examine

conflict in relation to the hybridity of the region. However, roles are a critical component in understanding how respondents form their social constructs. Thus, the existence of multiple roles in a single respondent's interview is duly noted but not further analyzed in any formal manner. That is to say, there is no point of departure towards introduction of role theory in the sociological sense within this research project. In keeping with the research objectives of identifying conflicts over land use and drawing attention to the trouble with dichotomizing urban and rural, this research project moves forward with the common understanding that people have a variety of roles they perform in the course of their everyday lives that sometimes come into conflict with each other. Having addressed the possibility, for example, that a small acreage owner may also draw upon her experiences as a rancher, elected official and concerned citizen during the course of an interview, this research project embraces the complexity of the meaning-making process as it relates to the many roles of an individual.

In the analysis that follows, identification of respondents is through pseudonyms and categorizations that correlate with how they presented themselves during the sampling phase of the research project. For example, a quote may be credited to Nathan as a west side rancher because that is how he identified himself when responding to the request for participants. During the interviews with respondents, however, many more roles emerged as they discussed their history in the county or drew upon various examples from outside the sampling role to make a point. Attempting to cross reference all possible roles to all respondents proved to be an impossible task and required the further assumption that the researcher was able to identify all the roles that had been invoked in the interviews. Thus, the categorization of respondents when using their quotes is meant to differentiate one from another according to the initial sample. It is not intended to match invoked role with respondent for specific quotes.

II. Perspectives on Groups, Opinions and Influence in Rocky View County

To establish an understanding of the groups that exist in Rocky View County, respondents were asked about: 1) different opinions, 2) the groups that hold those opinions, and 3) the influence that these groups have on the future of the county. The resulting responses and analysis provide insight into the magnitude of difference between constituent groups and the power dynamics at play between these groups. In keeping with the findings of the participant observation and discourse analysis of the Reeve's Task Force public hearings, preliminary examination of the groups mentioned by interview respondents depicts similar categories. There are farmers or agricultural operators, acreage owners, developers, and the county as an entity that is comprised of council and administration. However, because this research project is interested in the perspectives of individuals and constituent groups in the urban-rural nexus, the questions posed in the interview process have been designed to elicit responses that go beyond simple categorizations like farmers and acreage owners. By focusing on the opinions and influence of groups in Rocky View County, the resulting data augments the high level categorizations of groups that emerged as a result of the Reeve's Task Force public hearings.

1. Classification of Constituent Groups in Rocky View County

There are basic distinctions made by respondents to demonstrate that differences exist among and within constituent groups. For example, when farmers are mentioned as a group, there is a differentiation between those who believe in the landowner's right to decide what is appropriate land use and those who feel that any use other than agricultural is detrimental to the county, although these may not always be mutually exclusive perspectives. Discussion of acreage owners similarly differentiates between those who welcome new development and those interested in preservation of the county's natural resources. Such distinctions are made evenly by

those outside and within each group, so there is consistent recognition that each constituent group is not unified in its perspective on what type of land use is appropriate within Rocky View County. Thus, occupational or residential categorizations are demonstrated to be ineffective in capturing the meaning-making processes and social constructions of space at work among members of different constituent groups. The analysis requires greater depth in understanding conflict as a clash in perspectives that can exist among and within groups, as well as within individuals.

To provide a general idea of the types of distinctions that exist, Table 7.1 offers a classification scheme for the groups and subgroups that comprise Rocky View County. While this list is not intended to be exhaustive, it does offer a general overview of groups that are at times at odds with each other and within their own groups over land use change issues. It also demonstrates that traditional groupings, like farmers and acreage owners, are not sufficient to examine the nature and scope of conflict that exists in the county.

Table 7.1: Groups, Subgroups and Opposing Perspectives

Group	Perspectives toward land use
Farmers	Preserve agricultural way of life
	Allow land sale based on land rights
Acreage owners	Preserve landscapes and ecology
	Allow land sale based on land rights
Longtime residents	Must act as stewards to protect ecology
	Allow newcomers same opportunity to live in county
New residents	Must act as stewards to protect ecology
	Allow newcomers same opportunity to live in county
Developers	Development enables revenue generation
	Development creates complete communities
County administration	Mixed development creates revenue streams for county
	Development enables political autonomy

It is worth noting that developers and administration are generally viewed to be distinct constituent groups within which members have a shared perspective. Developers are felt to have an interest in land use change so their speculative investments can yield a return. While there is consistent mention of developer desire for land use change and revenue generation, there is also a perspective that highlights the benefits of development projects for county residents. Some respondents describe the positive addition of the amenities offered through development projects, either because of proximity to services or diversity of Rocky View County's tax base. Others see an opportunity for development to enable land sale by farmers who are losing viability of agricultural operations because of the pressures of urbanization. County administration is a final group that is not mentioned often and the general sense is that they are simply performing tasks as set out in the guidelines created by decision-makers. Because administration is rarely mentioned by respondents, but administration representatives were interviewed for the background interviews, the data is mostly focused on this group's own perspectives of land use change.

A further finding that adds depth to the analysis is the emergence of themes that codify interested parties in ways that go beyond sampling subsets or the groups discussed at the Reeve's Task Force public hearings. Respondents' discussion of opinions, groups, and influence runs parallel to the categorizations uncovered in the discourse analysis, yet they also identify two more divides between residents. Significant difference is noted between those who live on the west side of the county and those who reside in the east, as well those who are organized and vocal in their perspectives versus those who remain silent. This discussion of organized interest groups also feeds into the theme of influence over composition of county council. For these reasons, the analysis of groups and their opinions begins with categories that mirror sampling

subsets and Reeve's Task Force public hearing data, but goes on to include examination of conflict among groups according to themes emerging from the interview process. At the end of this section, the groupings and perspectives reflected in Table 7.1 will be taken a step further through analysis of interview data to demonstrate the dimensions of conflict that exist in Rocky View County.

2. Farmers' Rights Advocates

When Alice Wickston told the story of the farmer at the Reeve's Task Force public hearing in Springbank, she weaved a tale of conflict that positioned the farmer as a steward of the land placed in the compromising position of selling family land for future survival. Alice's story touched on the effects of age, next generations not farming the land, pressures from non-farmers to maintain agricultural land, and the uncertainty of leaving a known way of life. Many of these themes emerged further during the course of interviews with respondents.

To begin, many respondents voiced the same opinion about land rights that was heard during the Reeve's Task Force public hearings. "Ag people have the land base that allows more people to move here. They should have a bigger say in development over the larger numbers of small acreage owners," (Clancy, west side farmer). This argument follows the logic that landowners reserve the right to determine its use. Further, landownership is also equated with power because "the person with the majority of the land should have more say and political influence," (Peggy, ranch manager). It is through this line of thinking that the political element of power begins to emerge in the data as an analytical theme. One respondent positioned landownership as the basis for democratic representation. "You should have a vote per acre and not per person," (Anne, county councillor). The land rights argument uses sense of fairness or entitlement to build the position that landownership offers the right to determine land use.

Land rights or entitlement on their own, however, do not serve to paint a sympathetic picture of farm operators. Thus, advocates of farmers' rights go on to explain the hardships that justify conversion of agricultural lands for other uses. First, there are the obstacles that hinder agricultural operators as a result of urbanization intruding into rural spaces. "As acreages developed, moving cattle from one field to another became more difficult because of the roads. You're always bumping into some kind of traffic or driveway. And with wider machinery, it became almost impossible to cross the overpasses on Highway 2," (Vance, Balzac farmer). In this perspective, urban and rural uses are portrayed as incompatible in shared spaces. "A lot of land here is farmed by air. Overhead spraying and combines make for dusty operations. Urbanites and their pools at such a close proximity make it difficult to carry on agriculture at a large scale," (Warren, east side farmer). The arrival of urban uses in a rural county has created hardship for the farmer.

Next, farmers' rights advocates explain how increasing costs have made it difficult to maintain viable agricultural operations. "Input costs keep rising and can go up ten-fold while product receipts may only double. With narrow margins, you can only compensate by producing more. Fifty years ago, I made a living with a hundred cows but now you need five or six hundred," (Richard, west side farmer). Another respondent spoke of the "potential for contamination of streams, creeks and groundwater from cow poop" as a further hazard of cattle ranching, and also indicated "there's no money in hay as a crop when the investment to grow it is a quarter of a million dollars but the profit is only $6,000," (Sam, west side hobby farmer). With such obstacles facing agricultural operators, farmers' rights advocates focus on the production value of land. "A fella with a lot of land does not necessarily have a lot of money if the operating cost of the land is higher than production," (Nathan, west side rancher).

While production value of land is a significant concern for farmers, there is also equal attention to the exchange value of the same land. "Farmers believe in landowner rights because their farm is a life investment. Without development, monetary value of land drops, you can't get loans at the bank, and there is no money for cattle or equipment," (Anne, county councillor). By applying a limited land use to agricultural land, the argument is made that "farmers are sentenced to death by farming" if there is no opportunity for financial gain through sale for non-agricultural purposes (Vance, Balzac farmer). For some farmers, selling off portions of their land allows them to maintain agricultural operations through the proceeds of sale being reinvested into farming. "If you're a farmer, your land is worth nothing if designated agricultural because you have no ability to get loans. We are devaluing land with an agricultural classification," (Peggy, ranch manager). It is the potential for urbanization that drives up monetary or exchange value of land in the urban-rural nexus, but only if the land is free from the restriction of agriculture-only land use.

"Because the land values escalate near a major city like Calgary, farmers cannot expand to become more viable economic units. You have sons and daughters with no opportunity to stay because expansion is impossible," (Nathan, west side rancher). A final hardship faced by agricultural operators is the struggle to maintain a farm that can be passed down to the next generation. The double-ended issue is inability to grow an operation to a viable size, as well as lack of interest from children to enter into agriculture. For some, the decision to sell is difficult but ultimately based on financial realities of operating a farm in the midst of urbanization. While expressing remorse in leaving a third generation farm and giving up her children's childhood home, one respondent indicated that "selling was a good move in hindsight, where we gained financially and avoided debt," (Brenda, Balzac farmer). In other cases, the writing is on the wall

with children steering clear of the farm lifestyle.

> Farms are a narrow margin business and a farmer's son growing up will seek out a different role. Today, you have the opportunity to work in the city for a four-week vacation and paycheque. The vision of success for this generation is getting a four-year degree, a good paying job with benefits, and living happily ever after. (Richard, west side farmer)

Examples like these highlight the inner conflict of the farmer that is as prevalent as the conflict among constituent groups in the urban-rural nexus.

To summarize, there are multiple factors that add layers of conflict (Table 7.2) in contributing to the position of farmer or landowner rights advocates. Each factor can stand alone as a rationale for land sale, but the typical scenario is a convergence of different factors that contribute to this position regarding land use change in Rocky View County.

Table 7.2: Supporting Factors for the Perspective of Farmers' Rights Advocates

Factors Affecting Farmers	Description of Issue
Land/property ownership	Landowners reserve the right to make decisions about land use. The amount of land one owns should dictate the amount of influence over decisions on land use change.
Urban pressure	Intrusion of urban uses and ways of life limits the ability for farmers to move machinery, raise livestock and perform agriculture-related tasks without upsetting non-farm neighbours.
Cost of farming	Rising land costs in the urban-rural nexus limit the ability of farmers to remain viable through larger farm size. Operational costs are also outpacing profitability.
Retirement strategy	Farmers view their land a means of production, to be sold when they no longer wish to engage in its operation. Thus, it is a means of livelihood and also a retirement plan.
Generational shift	The children of farmers are facing increased costs to maintain family operations, and also limited by the amount of space available to expand operations. Many are also choosing non-agricultural careers.

3. Preservationists and Conservationists

Just as farmers' rights advocates provide their perspectives on the legitimacy of landowner decisions to sell their property for non-agricultural uses, the preservationist or conservationist group similarly provides arguments to support their position. In the preservationist case, legitimacy is tied to the idea of altruism and doing the right thing for both the environment and society. Much of the preservationist position is built around water management as the rationale for maintaining only agricultural uses in the region. In addition to managing the precious resource of water, preservationists also position natural beauty and food production as reasons for restrictive land uses.

Beginning with water, "Calgary's water supply comes from everything west of Calgary, so water provision is a big role that the county plays in the region," (Richard, west side farmer). Preservationists contend "the closed river basin and depletion of water licenses have made water supply and management the biggest issue in Rocky View County since 1996," (Donna, west side acreage owner). This refers to the Alberta government's *Water for Life Strategy* (Government of Alberta 2013) that reviews and controls the allocation of water for residential, industrial, commercial and agricultural uses in the province. Water licenses are issued for parties wishing to access ground or surface water supplies, but there has been a moratorium on these licenses since 2006. Particularly in southern Alberta, the moratorium was triggered by an increasing draw on limited water resources through growth of industrial and commercial uses, as well as burgeoning populations in urban areas. For preservationists, the provincial water allocation and management strategy indicates "the fragility of our groundwater supply should dictate the scale and type of development we allow," (Rita, west side farmer).

In relation to natural beauty, the views offered by the topography of the region are deemed as worthy of preservation. “West of Calgary, there is a view line that is unparalleled. You come up over a hill and there is a beautiful vista, one that I would like to see preserved,” (Jackie, county councillor). Another respondent cautioned against developers wanting to “rape the land” and called for residents to “embrace the foothills and aesthetics of our county,” (Brooke, west side acreage owner). For conservationists like these, the value of county land is connected to the view it offers, unlike the production value valorized by farmers. The idea of conserving landscapes and views is also tied into the more noble intention of “preserving the whole Alberta heritage,” (Brooke, west side acreage owner). As a direct shot at farmers wishing to sell their lands, acreage owners are positioned as those who “would love to have a large farm, but none are available,” (Jackie, county councillor). Not only is the need for preservation of the agricultural lifestyle lauded, it is also deemed to be something that acreage owners would actively pursue if the opportunity was available.

The significance of farming is further advocated by preservationists on a more global scale. They have revived the relationship between agriculture and food production to make the point that land use change will be to the detriment of global food supply. “There is a disconnect between land, food and human activity. After all, is there another activity more prevalent than bending your elbow and opening your mouth?” (Richard, west side farmer). A rallying cry of preservationists is to leave rural municipalities as rural. “We have a huge role to play in educating others about agriculture and its importance in biodiversity. The highest and best use of land here does not refer to density. Highest and best use is natural in Rocky View County,” (Donna, west side acreage owner). A return to our collective agricultural roots is in the works, according to another respondent. “The focus is switching back, and we’ll have to get brown

before we can get green. Just look at television and Dirt Jobs on the History Channel. It's time to get your hands dirty when steel toed boots are back in vogue," (Richard, west side farmer).

Finally, the cautionary point of resource depletion is raised again by preservationists but this time in a less specific and more apocalyptic manner. Whereas the earlier section dealing with issues in Rocky View County documented fact-based claims of limited water supplies and logistics of wastewater management, resource depletion as a broader claim by preservationists paints a bleak picture of a future where agriculture is not protected. "People need to start realizing that there is a growing awareness of more food need, but not enough land or water supply. Our natural capital is not limitless. We have maxed out Mother Nature's credit card," (Richard, west side farmer). Instead of appealing to the facts of resource depletion, positioning agricultural preservation for the good of humanity provides conservationists a sense of legitimacy that cannot be easily challenged. The battle between conservationists and farmers' rights advocates is elevated to a level where one form of power is pitted against another based on dueling arguments of legitimacy, with the perspectives of preservationists listed in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Supporting Factors for the Perspective of Preservationists

Factors Affecting All Stakeholders	Description of Issue
Water supply	A limited amount of surface and ground water indicates a need to match growth to water supply. The moratorium on licenses should be a signal to stop growth.
Natural landscape	The beauty of the county, particularly in the west, is being sacrificed to development.
Importance of agriculture	Alberta's heritage is based on farming and ranching. Our food supplies depend upon agricultural pursuits.
Limited natural resources	Once our agricultural lands are stripped for development, we cannot get them back. Water is similarly a non-renewable resource.

4. Perspectives on the Sale of Agricultural Lands

A third step in the analysis pertains to the perceptions of land sale by different groups. On the farmers' rights side of the argument and as further proof of Rocky View County's lack of suitable agricultural areas due to urbanization pressures, respondents described farm families who sold their land to maintain an agricultural operation in more amenable areas. "Farmers in this area are losing their clout because of the monetary value of land. With their land being taken away from them and pushed toward other industries, farmers are moving farther afield near Red Deer and High River," (Dan former Balzac farmer). Another respondent states, "Only the outer parts of Rocky View County have economically viable farms, near Crossfield and Beiseker. Other people who really wanted to farm have sold out and moved out farther into Alberta or into Saskatchewan," (Nathan, west side rancher). A further example positions the farm not as a means of production, but as the product itself:

> My neighbour sold a section of land to a consortium of landholders who bought it at a rate he couldn't refuse. With that large amount of cash, he bought a lot of land in Saskatchewan and moved his son's family out there to farm it. Because of the recent land bust, he has commenced purchasing back his old land here for less money than they paid him, knowing full well he'll be able to resell it, given its position 5 miles out of the city. He farms land. That's his biggest crop, not what he could grow on it. (Warren, east side farmer)

It is the perspective of these respondents that agricultural land sale in Rocky View County is unavoidable. Whether the result of such sale is the maintenance of farming operations elsewhere or profit, the bigger point is that land sale is inevitable.

Others, however, feel that selling agricultural land can only be classified as negative. There is no room for both land rights and land protection in some perspectives. Unlike the positions stated above, where land sale allows for repurchase of agricultural land in another area, one respondent focused on how "a number of the original farmers group would like to continue

farming, but there are quite a few who have had rewards in selling out and developing," (Rita, west side farmer). It is the very charged addition of the three-letter word "out" that positions land sale as a greedy decision (selling out) as opposed to a financial inevitability (selling). "People on the north and east side of the county who have farmed for a hundred years on the best agricultural land in the world only want to cash it out and buy a retirement place in Phoenix. We get our redneck label from their sense of entitlement," (Rachel, county councillor). Sale of land for development purposes draws out emotional responses from respondents who advocate for greater preservation of agricultural land uses over sale for land development. Whether preservation comes in the form of continued agricultural uses or greenbelts of protected spaces, conservationists position halting land development as a positive step for the environment.

Somewhere in the middle of the two extremes lie the perspectives of those respondents who stress the conflicted nature of decision-making for farmers who must reconcile abandoning way of life for financial gain. "Farmers are trying to manage the squeeze of trying to have a viable operation, to just farm and not worry about all this other stuff. But you need to expand to stay viable and land prices are high near a city like Calgary," (Richard, west side farmer). Once urbanization pressures encroach on agricultural lands, some feel that sale is the only choice when the cost to purchase land for farm expansion is too high. "We knew that selling our land was inevitable. Once the place across from us was sold, we knew ours was next. It drove the value of our land up, and also made it clear that it would not be rural. But we were third generation on that land. Our kids didn't want to see their home disappear," (Brenda and Vance, Balzac farmers). The feeling of loss and regret in making the decision between maintaining farming heritage and financial reality was summed up by one respondent as follows:

> As a young boy, I came here as a nine year-old farmer's son who did manual labour and learned how to work, looking forward to the fact that the land would be worth money. My dad was an active man, but he knew when his end was coming and we were forced to sell the land when dad's time was done. Our family is now able to afford a posh lifestyle, but it came sooner than expected and my dad can't be here to enjoy it. When I went to a city management meeting about land development, and they explained that there are plans to annex lands three miles to the west and two miles to the north for growth in the next 35 to 50 years, that took away my feeling of guilt for selling when I did. (Dan, former Balzac farmer)

When respondents elaborate on the decisions they have made, and the conflict that results from the choices, it facilitates a contextual understanding of their perspectives on land use in Rocky View County. The meaning-making and rationalization processes are as significant as the final decisions made by agricultural operators who have sold their land for development. Qualitative methodology offers the reflexive opportunities required for generation of data that is multidimensional and robust.

In the midst of the polarizing opinions about the appropriate course of action for agricultural operators, some respondents offer a solution they position as mutually beneficial for the county and farmers. "The ecological goods and services that are being contributed by vacant farmland have been provided to the public at large for free," (Richard, west side farmer). It is implied that there are benefits of agriculture that the general public does not recognize, and those benefits should be acknowledged and rewarded. "Action for Agriculture is doing a study that will put financial value to good and services that have been produced for free," (Donna, small acreage owner). By offering recognition that translates into financial compensation, it is hoped that agricultural operators will have greater incentive to retain farmland. "There are all sorts of means for compensation and ecological preservation," (Rita, west side farmer).

While this idea of fair compensation is floated by those interested in preservation or conservation of agricultural land, the complex relationship between legislation and

implementation makes it difficult to comprehend, so there is little detail offered by most respondents who use the example. One respondent summed it up as follows:

> Property rights imply that one can do what he wants, which I believe in, but we must be careful. I'm not the only guy at the watering hole. American-style farm trusts and the land stewardship act are political footballs because they are purposely vague and misunderstood. But these conservation and market-based tools allow for transfer of development credits so that the 50 people at the watering hole can get what they wish, and others get reimbursed for what they gave up. (Richard, west side farmer)

The fair compensation position recognizes the financial reality of the farmer as well as the potential for resource depletion if all stakeholder needs are not balanced. However, the complexity involved in assigning fair value and executing the idea of a collective land trust make this solution unpopular for anyone who has not studied its intricacies. Hence, it was raised by a few respondents but explained only by one. When mentioned by a farmers' rights advocate, the compensation angle was not mentioned at all and the description of Action for Agriculture as the formal group promoting this type of solution was simply, "they are against major development in an area that's considered good farmland," (Vance, Balzac farmer).

Although it is outside the scope of this research project to outline the parameters of the compensation-based approach to farmland conservation, it is important to recognize the current inability of such a complex solution to gain traction with either farmers' rights advocates or preservationists. For their position to be acceptable and ultimately a potential win for both sides, preservationists must find a way to communicate the fair compensation solution in a way that appeals to those who are not subject matter experts. Until such time, the more emotional appeals of the hard-done-by farmer and the warnings of the environmental protectionists will continue to prevail and be at odds. Table 7.4 summarizes these three different positions on land sale in Rocky View County.

Table 7.4: Perspectives on Agricultural Land Sale

Reasons to Allow Land Sale	Reasons to Stop Land Sale
• Urban pressures are making agricultural operations impossible. Land sale is not a desirable decision, it is simply inevitable for farmers in Rocky View County. • Only viable farms are on outskirts of county or in Saskatchewan; allow farmers in county to sell and pursue agriculture elsewhere.	• Farmers are only interested in cashing out for their own gain. • We are losing valuable agricultural land.
Compromise Position	
• Compensate farmers for the value of the non-tangible goods and services they provide (open spaces, watershed preservation).	

III. Other Dimensions of Conflict that Fracture the County

As mentioned earlier, identifying groups according to occupation or residential category proved useful for the purpose of sampling and preliminary analysis, but it is ultimately limiting in fully understanding the complexities of conflict in the urban-rural nexus. Rather, the data point to three additional layers or dimensions of conflict: 1) residential location on the east or west side of the county, 2) ability to organize and vocalize a perspective, and 3) representativeness of county council. Each of these dimensions of conflict is comprised of opposing groups with clashing perspectives on land use change that intertwine with other themes that emerge in the debates between land rights advocates and preservationists.

1. East Side versus West Side

To begin, there is the conceptualization of Rocky View County as two distinct parts, separated as east side and west side.

> Resident groups are not consistently geographically represented across the county. The west side likes their views and landscapes, but not growth. Langdon, Balzac and Conrich are prepared to accommodate growth. They have a deep respect for the land, but also don’t want to tie farmers’ hands against development. The tone of conversations is completely different on both sides, where one is more about preservation than planning for the future while the other is concerned about development but open to a conversation. (Frank, county administrator)

This description of the two sides of the county addresses the social imaginings of space among groups, but only scratches the surface in discussing how people and perspectives differ from east side to west side. Other respondents describe the importance of physical and aesthetic differences in the county.

> The gentrification of Rocky View County has been on a very selective basis. If you look at Springbank and Bearspaw, it is largely wealthy individuals from Calgary who chose the west side for its proximity to the mountains, no commercial development and easy connections to the city. It's different from Langdon where you have to drive through an industrial area to get downtown. (Brad, small land developer)

From these physical descriptions, respondents begin to discuss the lifestyles and activities that define social imaginings of space differently between the east and west. "People have different ideas about the county, such as thinking they are the custodians of natural places, and that it's their playground where urbanites can take their quads, like Bragg Creek. We don't have that so much on this side of town. We don't bring in the crowds of Kananaskis," (Warren, east side farmer). There is also a sense of loss of community and traditional rural way of life. "Acreage people have changed the west. Kids play soccer on the weekends instead of helping at the farm. It's all urbanized with no rural community. And the farmers east of Calgary have given up because they are outnumbered by people with urban interests," (Richard, west side farmer).

Respondents' reactions to life on the west side of the county versus the east side can be analyzed from a political economy perspective. The west side of the county reflects a desire for a high status lifestyle that ties into the symbolic economy generally seen in more urban settings. There is attention to size of home, recreational pursuits and other material symbols of wealth. Further, the views of the mountains and accessibility to recreational areas like golf resorts and ski hills adds value through beauty and proximity. On the other hand, Goddard's (2009)

description of land as a factory tends to prevail on the east side as residents are perceived to be farmers with little interest in the material goods traded in the symbolic economy. While the preservationist group chastises farmers for selling out, there is no tie between profit and overt displays of wealth. Even acreage owners and hamlet residents in the east are viewed as those who seek affordability rather than status by moving to east Rocky View County. In this way, the high exchange value of land in the west offers status while low exchange value in the east offers opportunity for homeownership. Further, use value of land in the east offers agricultural livelihood.

To determine whether socioeconomic data can support the claims of respondents, 2006 Statistics Canada census tract data was analyzed between west and east sides of Rocky View County. Average value of owned dwelling, median household income and educational attainment level reflect that there is validity to the perspectives of difference between west and east sides. Table 7.5 shows the socioeconomic differences between the two sides of the county based on data from four census tracts, two that are immediately to the west and two that are immediately east of the city.

Table 7.5: East versus West – Differences in Social Class

Census Tract Location – West	**Springbank/Elbow Valley**	**Far West Side**
Average Value of Owned Dwelling	$1,004,741	$763,301
Median Household Income	$174,363	$108,567
Population with Post-Secondary Degree, Diploma or Certificate	41.5%	36.4%
Census Tract Location – East	**NE Edge of Calgary**	**Langdon & Area**
Average Value of Owned Dwelling	$656,010	$432,782
Median Household Income	$84,876	$86,833
Population with Post-Secondary Degree, Diploma or Certificate	11.4%	11.5%

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census of Population

Based on 2006 census data, the high end of average home value on the west side of the county was $348,731 higher than that on the east side. Median household income was similarly $87,530 (more than double) greater on the high end of the west side as compared to the east side. Finally, three to four times as many residents on the west side of the county hold a post-secondary degree, diploma or certificate when compared to the east side.

Another social indicator of difference between east side and west side is the difference in visible minority population. While Chapter 5 lays out the demographics of the county as a whole, specifics of the east versus west fault line in Rocky View County can be observed by using the example of the Khalsa School in the hamlet of Conrich on the east side of the county. To determine whether there is a link between this social institution and the residential population in the area, visible minority statistics from the 2006 and 2011 census periods were examined. A search by census tract in 2011 was not possible as data from the National Household Survey (NHS) were suppressed for the Conrich area, but 2006 data indicate that 20% of the population in this census tract is visible minority and 11% of that total is South Asian (Table 7.6). This is a relevant finding as the Khalsa School is an alternative for the Punjabi-speaking Sikh community, a group that would be categorized as South Asian in census data. Comparatively, only 8.3% of the population in the west census tract containing Springbank and Elbow Valley is visible minority, and only 1.6% of that total is South Asian.

Although visible minority statistics are not available for 2011, language-based data from the NHS indicate that 10.6% of residents in the Conrich area list Punjabi as their mother tongue and 8.4% state that it is the language most spoken at home. Conversely on the west side in the Springbank and Elbow Valley census tract, only 1% of the population considers Punjabi their mother tongue and 0.1% list Punjabi as the language most often spoken at home. These

preliminary findings demonstrate that there is a concentration of Punjabi population on the east side of Rocky View County, although this research project is not designed to confirm whether the school was a draw for the Punjabi population or if it preceded the school. It can be speculated, however, that the location of the Khalsa School is a combination of exchange value (cheaper land in Rocky View County than Calgary) and use value (proximity to ethnic enclave in northeast Calgary) factors.

Table 7.6: East versus West – Differences in Visible Minority Status and Mother Tongue

	Location in County	
	East (Conrich)	**West (Springbank/Elbow Valley)**
Visible Minority	20.0%	8.3%
South Asian	11.0%	1.6%
Punjabi as Mother Tongue*	10.6%	1.0%
Punjabi Language Most Often Spoken at Home*	8.4%	0.1%

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census of Population; *National Household Survey 2011

In examining the east side and west side of the county, it becomes apparent that people have different values that coexist in a single jurisdiction. The social construction of what it means to live in the urban-rural nexus is noted to be dramatically different between residents of eastern and western Rocky View County. It is through enactment of the daily routine that values are brought to life and an intangible conceptualization of space becomes visible. Ironically, it is often the newer people leading more urban ways of life that wish to prohibit further change to the county as opposed to the established agricultural residents who are willing to negotiate change. Some respondents feel that the western opposition to change is the result of a sense of privilege. "On the west side of Rocky View, we attract a number of people interested in residential development. They provide a high tax base for the county and use Calgary's

infrastructure. It's a parasitic relationship," (Kevin, county administrator). Another respondent used more pointed language to describe the west side, stating, "People see my community as a spoiled brat: overpaid, sense of entitlement, richy rich and not hard working," (Rachel, county councillor). Residents of western Rocky View County are painted as wealthy and selfish, wishing to retain their status and property as symbols of exclusivity.

Desire for exclusivity of residence on the west side of Rocky View County was further illuminated by a move to formally separate, or secede, from the county in 2010. Petitioners argued that secession was the only recourse to preserve a western way of life in the face of urbanization pressures (Francis 2010).

> In the west, we pay two thirds of the tax base, if not 80%. People moved out here for the beauty of the landscape and care deeply about the environment and land. To preserve that, 90% of the west side of Rocky View was willing to separate from the rest of the county. We had 2,000 signatures of support in a month. (Rita, west side farmer)

However, not everyone feels that secession was a move to retain western values. Some respondents feel it was a means to maintain status quo, avoiding any potential influx of socioeconomically different residents because of increased densities and perceived lower property values as a result. When the attempt to secede failed because the minimum number of signatures was not obtained, some residents were not sympathetic. "Springbank is just different from the rest of the county. When they tried to separate and then join Bighorn County, they were laughed at," (Brad, small land developer). The feeling is that living on the west side does not grant residents exclusivity. Rather, it should be understood that others would want to share in the same benefits of location. "When you live in a desirable area, it's not sensible to think that no one else would want to live there," (Stephen, county councilor).

2. Organized Vocal Groups versus Quietly Passive Residents

Organizing a petition for secession is a dramatic example of the second dimension of conflict emerging from the data, which is the difference between vocal, organized groups and silent residents. The ability to form a group is recognized as a positive step, because "a collection of thoughts, even if a minority position, can be organized well and presented strongly," (Paul, land developer). By formalizing a position and expressing it either verbally or in writing, some groups in Rocky View County have met with success in communicating their perspectives on land use change. "Groups that are organized for petitions and public hearings have the ear of the county. If the mood of the day of the county thinks they're right, they get their way. The silent majority does not have enough time or inclination to get what they need, so they get steamrolled," (Vance, Balzac farmer). Organization of groups ties back to the image of west side residents as wealthy and privileged, with enough disposable time to create and deliver their message.

Not all respondents agree with the categorization of the west as having too much time on their hands. "I worked with my neighbours to teach them how to rebut proposals and challenge annexation. I'm very familiar with these things because I have always been active. It also means I have no time off to enjoy the county," (Donna, west side acreage owner). Statements by west side residents tend to associate organization and vocalization of their position as a responsibility or civic duty. "Community groups on the west side are using the internet to organize themselves, but those in the north and the east are silent and sending the message that they are not concerned about municipal affairs," (Rachel, county councillor). Some respondents consider residents outside the western part of Rocky View County as apathetic and unaware of the implications of land use change, with their silence acting as its own message of disregard. However, remaining

quiet cannot be equated with disinterest and can be rooted in traditional values of maintaining social cohesion.

> Everyone knows everyone here and you don't want to speak out and alienate a friend. But I wish the silent majority would speak out more. This naysayer group is small but well-organized. They have split themselves into four different groups, but the membership in all the groups is the same. I made a list of the names, and they're all the same. (Sam, west side hobby farmer)

The "silent majority" that is referenced by respondents is aware of the tactics being employed by vocal groups, and the reaction is an effort to discredit their opponents' position as well as their methods. "There are some fringe groups, and the task force showed that they can make a lot of noise. Not a lot of small acreage owners and farmers agree with environmental groups who are anti-development. We don't give them too much time," (Nathan, west side rancher). In addition to encouraging others not to listen to vocal interest groups, there are challenges to their legitimacy. "This vocal group is elitist in protecting personal stakes under the message of environmental destruction. They are demonizing the developers and creating obstacles without proof of any corruption," (Christy, west side acreage owner). Rather than taking up the message of conservation as an altruistic enterprise, some respondents view the protectionists' claims as self-serving and without merit. "There is a group of people that has one opinion and it is NO. Yet they have presented not one single alternative proposition," (Victor, west side acreage owner).

3. Representativeness of County Council

Even in the face of challenges, the fact remains that the organized and vocal groups have had influence in Rocky View County. This influence is reflected in the third dimension of conflict as representativeness of county council. For the vocal protectionist group, a critical means of ensuring preservation of values and social imaginings of space is mobilizing voters to

elect leaders with the same views. “We had a corrupt council. I wished for a council with a backbone that didn’t succumb to pressure,” (Greg, west side acreage owner). Issues with decision-making can only be resolved by replacing the decision-makers who do not reflect the same social construction of the urban-rural nexus. Following the 2010 municipal election, respondents who viewed the changes to council as positive offer a simple rationale: “Country residential people have the population base, so therefore they have the votes that count,” (Clancy, west side farmer). However, while some respondents feel that the equilibrium of power on county council is now more reflective of the population, there are those who perceive the change as a negative situation.

“There are a bunch of people out here that don’t have the spirit of community in the countryside. They want to welcome you to the kingdom of Springbank. They’re the loud ones that get out and vote, so now we have a west voting bloc on council that does not represent the true voice,” (Todd, west side acreage owner). As the values of the vocal west side residents come to dominate decision-making positions in the county, there is increasing concern among some respondents that “people moving out here now want expensive homes with grass, not a life with horses and chickens. They will likely vote for things we would not vote for,” (Beth, west side acreage owner). Concern over lack of representation for longtime residents who value landowners’ rights triggered different ways of establishing legitimacy of position, specifically the “votes per acre” method of representation described earlier (Anne, county councillor). “The more we grow our acreage communities and hamlets, the more power those areas have on county council. Because divisions are represented by population, that balance will be a problem if we restrict landowner rights,” (Anne, county councillor). Without a major paradigm shift in democratic process and accompanying policy changes, however, representation per acre rather

than per person is nothing more than a dream for some.

Recognizing that democratic process favours those with a critical mass to influence change, the vocal groups in Rocky View County turned words into action. Being organized and loud meant that "the volume went up 5000% when council did not meet expectations. We changed out five people in the last election," (Donna, west side acreage owner). By uniting residents with a common vision for their hybrid space, the preservationist coalition affected change by turning influence (altruistic claims) into real power (authority through decision-making). "The political process worked well in 2010 where western councillors were elected and redirected the development process that was not sensitive to the lifestyle of the far west. To dismissively see the vocal groups only as shrill harpies who are off their meds is a mistake," (Rachel, county councillor). For some, the change to council is a reflection of Vidich and Bensman's (1958) time of dynamic change when the actors must be more representative of their audience. Preservationists have thus lifted the symbolism of land stewardship from the character of the farmer and made it their own, leaving behind the image of the farmer as a rube with single-minded focus on profit from land sale.

> There has always been a huge split between councillors from the north and east, and the councillors from the west who are attempting to protect the interests and wishes of their constituents. Things have changed for the better with the last council, where extremely well-qualified people were elected instead of the good old boys. (Rita, west side farmer).

From these responses, it is clear that stakeholders in Rocky View County are aware of residents' ability to influence decision-making through the electoral process. Some of this enthusiasm, however, needs to be placed in context. A significant portion of data collection for this research project took place immediately following the late October 2010 municipal election. Interviews were conducted within 2 to 6 months of changes to county council. In January 2011,

further change occurred with the tragic death of a sitting council member. The resulting by-election brought about further transformation on council. Responses and reactions to interview questions must be considered in light of the timing of the election, as it is likely that respondents were holding on to the anticipation of changing perspectives and resulting decisions around land use.

As a follow up to this research project, it would be useful to see if promises were fulfilled and if the social constructions of acreage owners on council brought about desired changes for vocal groups in Rocky View County. Alternately, did new council members face challenges as decision-makers who now had to consider the "political realities of three million people moving into the metropolitan area" (Frank, county administrator), as opposed to listening only to a group of acreage owners wanting to maintain a specific lifestyle? Once in a position to evaluate all sides of a given position, it is possible that councillors may have become wider in their views on acceptable land use change. If so, respondents reactions to the new council of 2010 may have changed by the time the 2013 election came around.

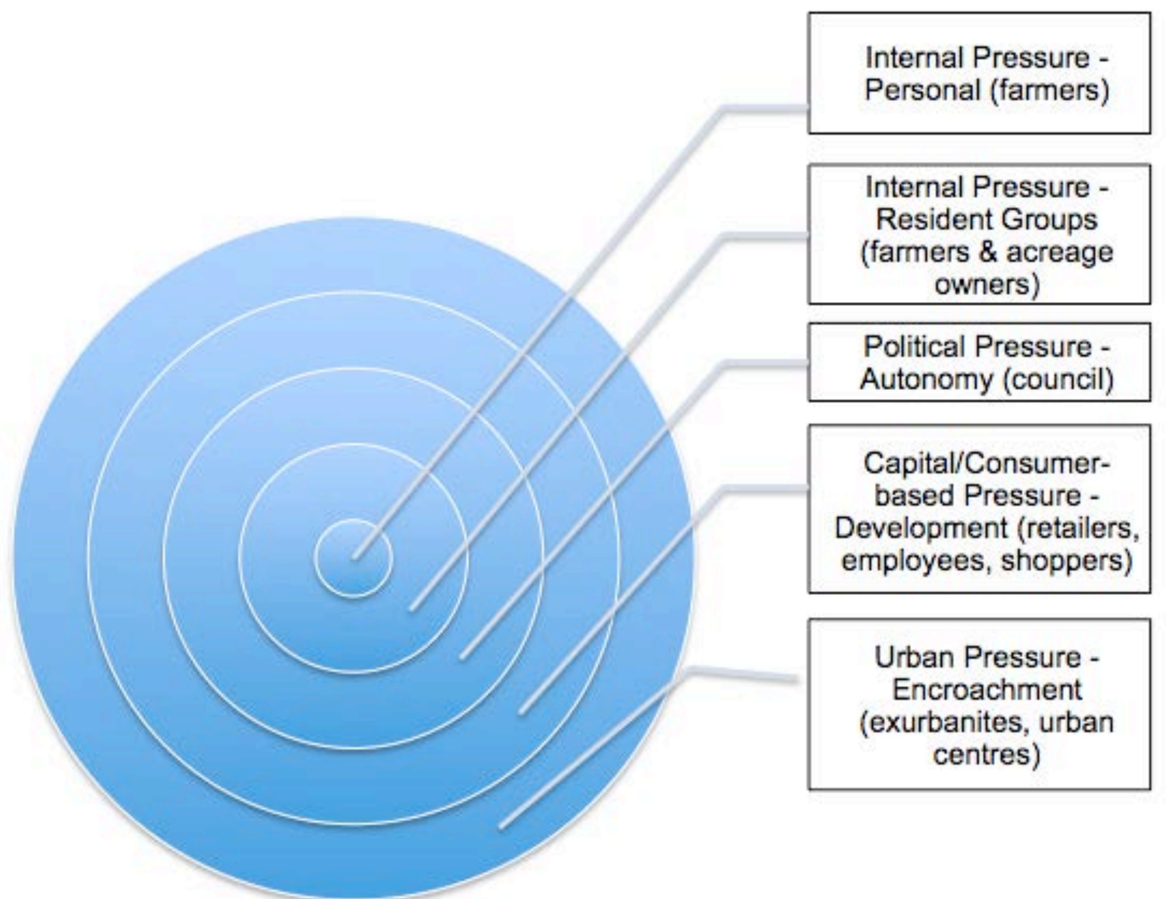
IV. Conclusion

An understanding of the groups, perspectives and three additional emergent themes from the interview data analysis offer an interesting perspective of the internal and external pressures that exist in Rocky View County (Figure 7.1). As the literature indicates, and as supported by the claims-making during the Reeve's Task Force public hearings, there is conflict among groups in the urban-rural nexus. Interviews with non-residents and residents confirm this, but also reveal that there is complexity to the conflict. There are multiple perceptions of what the county is and should be, as well as different perceptions of land use change based on personal situations and imaginings of the hybrid space. These opposing perspectives are not limited to opposing groups;

the same conflicts may exist within groups and at times within individuals. Through analysis of the multiple groups and perspectives that exist in Rocky View County, this research project identifies five external and internal forms of pressure that create layered dimensions of conflict.

First, there is the most external pressure point of urbanization, where *encroachers* possess a different vision of the urban-rural nexus than residents. These encroachers include the exurbanites who seek residence in the county according to their own social construction of rural life, as well as the satellite urban centres that attempt to consume county land for their own purposes. Second, there are *capital/consumer-based pressures* from developers, retailers, shoppers and recreational visitors who envision Rocky View County as both a place to consume and a place within which consumption takes place. Following these non-resident pressure points, third is the internal pressure of policy decisions that are made by county council or *councillors as decision-makers*. Opposing opinions on council stem from councillors' residence in the county and their personal social constructions of space. When councillors make decisions on the future of the county, the opposing perspectives enter a formally negotiated process where majority opinion determines land use. Fourth, at a personalized level among groups, great internal pressure comes from *values conflict of rural space users* as represented by the values of small acreage owners and farmers who have different perspectives of life in Rocky View County. Finally, the most internalized pressure point is the one that tells the story of the *conflicted farmer*, who wants to continue with the agricultural tradition but must sell in the face of change.

Figure 7.1: External and Internal Pressure Points in the Urban-Rural Nexus



In the next chapter, the pressure points discussed above will be combined with the issues, identities and expectations of stakeholders within Rocky View County. The resulting dimensions of conflict approach will demonstrate how the cleavages within and between groups cut across different issues and result in a complex understanding of the urban-rural nexus that defies traditional dichotomies and analyses. Instead, differing social constructions of space should be used as the basis of analysis of conflict in this hybrid area.

Chapter 8: Dimensions of Conflict Approach

While it was noted at the beginning of Chapter 7 that role identification for each respondent is not possible on an individual basis, an analysis of the combined data from the interviews generates findings that demonstrate the complexity of roles and issues in the urban-rural nexus. These findings assist in presenting an innovative approach to examining the dimensions of conflict in hybrid areas like Rocky View County. Rather than the dichotomous classifications of urban or rural, or the inevitability of progression toward urbanization according to an urban-rural continuum, the dimensions of conflict approach allows for identification of cross-cutting cleavages. The multiplicity of positions on different issues, along with the different pressure points within the urban-rural nexus, create conflict between stakeholders with varying interests in the county.

In this chapter, the different issues, expectations and identities associated with Rocky View County will be analyzed to demonstrate that multidimensional conflicts make it difficult to develop a single identity of the urban-rural nexus or unify the constituent groups within it. Further, multiplicity also makes it difficult for decision-makers to satisfy the needs of groups that may be in opposition or collusion depending upon the issue at hand. Sections I and II provide a macro analysis of issues within the county, as well as the identity of Rocky View County in the larger metropolitan region. This provides the context for Section III which delves into the micro analysis of residents' expectations of life in the urban-rural nexus. Section IV then analyzes the layered complexities of issues in Rocky View County using the dimensions of conflict approach.

I. Perceived Issues in Rocky View County

Following the introductory questions in the interview process to establish length of residence and/or occupation in the county, respondents were asked what they perceived to be the

major issues facing Rocky View County. There was no guidance to frame responses in a particular manner because there is significance in identifying whether land use change is considered an issue. Responses did not vary greatly between residents and background interview groups, leading to the identification of three prominent issues: 1) pressure to evolve physically and financially as a result of urbanization, 2) the need for a plan to manage change, and 3) clashing ways of life impacting infrastructure and servicing needs. Although the overarching theme is pressure from the growth of Calgary and urban satellites, each of these issues are intertwined and best understood in relation to one another. Further, these all issues are directly related to land use change in the county.

1. Pressure to Evolve Physically and Financially

"Some of the challenges facing Rocky View County are the pressures of urban forms of development moving into a primarily rural-based situation surrounding the city of Calgary," (Brian, county administrator). For some, the move towards different built form and uses in the county are described as "a move in the right direction to correct the skew towards a residential tax base," (David, land developer). This notion of a move towards a change in the tax base is significant from an economic point of view. The general impression is that financial gain from development is beneficial for the landowner who may be a speculator, farmer or small landholder. Following the sale of land, there is benefit to a builder or building operator who in turn sells or rents the built form to an end user that may be a resident or business. However, change in land use for subsequent land development also results in changed taxation categories for the governing municipality.

Traditionally, commercial taxes are higher than residential taxes, allowing municipalities to have concurrent revenue streams that fund service delivery in a given area. For Rocky View

County, land use change allows for the ability to collect greater taxes on existing lands by changing the allowable activity on the land from agricultural or residential to commercial. Also, increasing density or number of residential units in the county serves the purpose of increasing tax revenue collected through more homeowners paying taxes to live on the same land base. Changing the land use within the county, either through increased density or allowing different uses, prevents the "encroaching annexation that is taking away our tax base through big chunks of Rocky View County being eaten away by Calgary," (Celeste, west side acreage owner). "Some people feel it is horrendous to change land use, but they don't think about the tax base," (Todd, west side acreage owner).

2. The Need for a Growth Management Plan

An evolving taxation system serves as rationale for changing land use, but not without warning. "Rocky View County doesn't know what it wants, and they don't know how to get there," (Brad, small land developer). The county is dealing with "spillover development pressures from being on the doorstep of a million people and coping with an identity that is neither rural nor urban but rurban," (Ned, former county administrator). Transforming the county into a region with mixed uses brings issues related to managing different uses in close proximity to one another. "They need to consider how they will allow development so it meshes with the agricultural and residential developments that are already here. They can't just wait for development proposals and say they don't have a plan," (Jim, west side acreage owner). One resident positioned the need for a plan in sociological terms by stating, "People fear claustrophobia. They fear the unknown and they fear other people," (Victor, west side acreage owner). Managing multiple uses in the county is about both the physical aspects of the land, as well as the lifestyles and expectations of the people who live and work on the land.

> The county is trying to accurately reflect the type of growth people would like to see here for the next 30 to 40 years, and consider what is important to the people who live here, both newcomers and longtime residents. Sometimes people value the same things and sometimes communities value different things. We need a plan that people are happy with and is not being rammed down their throats. (Anne, county councillor)

Pressure to evolve from a rural county into something different is based on "a need to get to the point where it becomes an urban-rural hybrid that achieves a unique opportunity for those seeking something different by moving to the county," (Kevin, county administrator). In addition to those seeking commercial enterprise as their targeted opportunity, there is also a desire for change from agricultural operations that tie residence to occupation. With more people seeking homes in Rocky View County for residential purposes only, either because of willingness to commute or operate home-based businesses, the county will have to "adjust to changes that require new servicing strategies and methods to organize other forms of development in a historically agricultural and rural settlement pattern," (Brian, county administrator).

3. Clashing Ways of Life Impacting Infrastructure and Servicing Needs

"The biggest cause for concern in Rocky View County is the conflict between two societies: agriculturally-oriented people and urban people," (Dan, former Balzac farmer). Respondents describe the issues that emerge when space must be shared for very different ways of life, and used examples similar to the ones heard in the Reeve's Task Force public hearings. Roadways that did not exist prior to the proliferation of small acreages, or were typically used to move agricultural machinery, are now overtaken by commuter vehicles. The calm pace of light traffic has been replaced with more vehicles driving faster to reach their destinations. "Years ago, one of the things we talked about a lot was the fact that folks who moved to the country for lifestyle competed with people who were there for livelihood. That became even more different

as pressures and acreages developed," (Vance, Balzac farmer).

The discussion around ways of life is rooted in an understanding of how basic servicing requirements differ between urban and rural areas. Competition with urban centres requires that hybrid municipalities like Rocky View County provide the same type and caliber of servicing that urban residents and businesses are used to receiving. In particular, water and sewer servicing are the two biggest sources of difference between urban and rural residential life. Urbanites have access to water through their taps and it is the responsibility of the municipal government to provide the underground pipe network that delivers water, as well as the water itself. At the same time, wastewater is funneled away using a similar sewer pipe infrastructure. Costs are recovered through utility payments, property taxes and public/private partnerships. Because there is density or clustering of residences and businesses in urban areas, these services can be delivered in a manner that achieves economies of scale.

In a rural or hybrid setting like Rocky View County, sheer size of the municipality and dispersed nature of built form creates a logistical issue for efficient delivery of urban-type servicing. Running a network of pipes to service isolated homes and businesses across a piece of land as big as Prince Edward Island is a costly endeavour. Add in the costs of weaving around multiple independent satellite jurisdictions and it becomes an unmanageable task. For these reasons, water servicing in rural areas typically involves either a well on one's property or water licensing operations. Water licensing agreements allow operators to draw water from an approved source and truck it to users as a fee-for-service arrangement. Wastewater is traditionally managed through on-site septic fields or septic tanks that disperse or contain the by-products of water use. Unlike urban areas where most users do not consider where water comes from or where it goes, rural users are aware of water supply limitations because they must

monitor well levels and/or have water shipped in at a cost. Similarly, wastewater management in rural areas involves monitoring of septic fields and pumping of septic tanks. Thus, urbanites moving to rural areas are faced with realities of water and wastewater management that are not their direct responsibility in cities.

"Large urban centres are satelliting around Calgary and impacting roads, waste systems and water. There is increased household and industrial water usage, which impacts groundwater reserves and water transportation systems," (Warren, east side farmer). Commodification of water is a further issue in Rocky View County. "With a closed river basin and no licenses being issued, new developments must purchase water capacity from others," (Donna, west side acreage owner). Particularly troubling to one resident is the potential for precedent-setting through commercial sale of water to meet demand. "I was fascinated by the politics of water. The story of water is a dirty little story that goes back to the meat packing plant. We are very clever people and we have resources that we can channel, like the first commercial sale of water in Canada," (Warren, east side farmer). The reference to the meat packing plant is significant in this respondent's perspective as it speaks to the historic case of the measures taken by the county to bring a non-traditional industrial operation into its jurisdiction.

When Calgary lost the opportunity to benefit from a slaughterhouse operation in 2004 due to community opposition within the city, Rocky View County influenced Rancher's Beef to relocate just over city limits, inside the county, with the assurance that servicing needs could be met (Ghitter and Smart 2009). Although the county lacked the infrastructure to provide adequate water service, it refused to collaborate with Calgary on service provision in an effort to prevent city leaders from controlling rural interests. Instead, the county opted to utilize provincial funding available to revive a struggling beef industry in the wake of the Canadian BSE crisis to

create a new water line on county lands. Even after Rancher's Beef closed its operations shortly after opening, this new water line was the key to Rocky View County courting land developers interested in building a mega-mall in the Calgary metropolitan region. CrossIron Mills found a home just outside Calgary because Rocky View County was once again able to secure water without tapping into the city's water supply.

Along with the issues that surround water provision in a changing urban-rural nexus, Rocky View County must also deal with wastewater and storm water management. "When you have an area that is built out, even one more house or garage can start flooding in a previously problem-free area. Now I am extremely cautious that redesignation first looks at groundwater, wastewater and storm water," (Jackie, county councillor). Again, there is concern about the county's desire to provide solutions that do not involve Calgary. "When Calgary has sewage capacities that are world-class, why wouldn't council negotiate a deal with the city? You can drink the water that leaves Calgary's treatment facility, yet we are sending our sewage to Langdon," (Greg, west side acreage owner). While the county continues to make decisions designed to preserve autonomy and revenue streams, residents are questioning the wisdom of rejecting existing infrastructure solutions through collaborative urban-rural ventures.

Beyond the water-related issues, there is also concern that development triggers other challenges. "We have road challenges, policing challenges and infrastructure issues while we are trying to build an administration building and fire hall," (Peter, east side acreage owner). With growth comes the need for protective and by-law services, resulting in increased costs and responsibility for a county that has taken on development without a collaborative regional plan. Another resident laments the impacts to the county's landscape. "Expansion of the city brings encroachment and its impact on the beauty of the rural setting. It would be a shame to have an

open view of the Rockies destroyed by poor land development decisions," (George, west side acreage owner). In addition to the larger issues of water, waste and transportation infrastructure, the provision of emergency and social services, as well as aesthetics, are equally impacted by changing land uses in the urban-rural nexus.

At the tipping point when a critical mass of urbanites populates a formerly rural area, expectations must be managed and decisions must be made about ways of life that are either appropriate or manageable in this new, uncharted territory. While there is a tendency to believe that conflict exists between urban and rural expectations in hybrid areas, the literature indicates that there is not a great divide between the servicing expectations of longtime residents and newcomers (Johnson et al. 2003). Yet, this belief persists and decision-makers continue to expand service offerings in the hybrid area to make it more attractive to urbanites in an effort to increase residential tax base (Davis, Nelson and Dueker 1994). As the data analysis indicates, the difference in servicing expectations is not between urban and rural residents, but between administrators who seek to attract new development and residents who are cautious of the accompanying natural and financial costs.

Through the question of what issues exist in Rocky View County, respondents provide a preliminary perspective on concerns related to managing urbanization pressures as they impact the county's physical form, financial situation, resident relations and natural resources. Table 8.1 provides a summary of the key issues identified by residents, as well as the positive and negative impacts of taking action related to land use change.

Table 8.1: Residents' Perceptions of Issues in Rocky View County

Issue	Impacts of Allowing Land Use Related Change
Pressure to evolve physically and financially	**Positive:** more commercial development diversifies tax base; lesser tax burden for infrastructure maintenance on residents; greater political autonomy for county
	Negative: county decision-makers lack the experience to manage urban-style growth; more development changes the rural landscape; more development places natural resources in jeopardy
Need for plan to manage change	**Positive:** county has a vision for diversification to reduce dependence on Calgary
	Negative: no logic in pattern of approvals for development
Clashing ways of life impacting infrastructure and servicing needs	**Positive:** greater opportunity for urban-type servicing with nodal/clustered development; urban-type servicing as a draw for exurbanites and businesses to locate in the county
	Negative: cost of urban-type infrastructure and servicing is high; increased servicing drains natural resources like water

II. Identity of Rocky View County

Asking respondents about the issues in Rocky View County reveals differing perspectives of how the county should manage urbanization pressures. In order to understand how respondents perceive the county as a jurisdiction or municipality, they were also asked to discuss the role of the county in the Calgary metropolitan region. This focus on establishing the role or identity of the county is considered critical in understanding the meanings attached to space, as well as the expectations of the county as a decision-making body. First looking at the interviews with residents, most respondents feel that the county acts as a "landbank" for Calgary (Greg, west side acreage owner). A developer in the area notes the "lack of respect for the county as little more than a rural municipality that acts as a long-term land supplier to Calgary," (David,

land developer). Because the city is growing, land on the urban edges is viewed as a potential growth site. At the same time, respondents feel that the county offers a “buffer between the city and everything outside it,” (Beth, west side acreage owner). Although not explained in detail, Rocky View County was referenced as a transitional area next to the city of Calgary. Some respondents also discussed the role of the county as the regional provider of food, water, views and recreational pursuits.

A few respondents, however, took the question in a different direction and provided their perspectives on what the county is not. One respondent described Calgary and Rocky View County as oil and vinegar, stressing that the county “should be mindful of sleeping next to an elephant. You can scream all you want to about protecting your two-acre parcel but if the city wants to annex you and put in multifamily, they will,” (Todd, west side acreage owner). A farmer described the role of the county as “subservient to the richer, educated politicians of Calgary compared to our nice country bumpkins,” (Warren, east side farmer). The general sense is that Rocky View County is like “the poor cousin waving a hand and asking for attention, but the role the county plays is not as big as they would like it to be,” (Christy, west side acreage owner). “It’s like David and Goliath, but David doesn’t even speak the same language,” (Warren, east side farmer). Residents see the desire of Rocky View County to be active in the land use planning decisions that will shape the future of the area, but are wary of the power and experience held by urban decision-makers.

When examining the results of interviews with county administrators, councillors and developers, the perspective is considerably different than that of residents. “Rocky View County does not just play a role in the region. They *are* the Calgary metropolitan region,” (Ned, former county administrator). Another county representative makes the claim that “the Calgary

metropolitan plan is more about Rocky View County than Calgary," (Frank, county administrator). For administrative leaders, the county is an equal partner at the table, "recognized by the province as a player in the market now… willing to put money where our mouth is," (Gus, county administrator). In the face of such bravado, however, others still exercise caution that echoes the sentiment of residents. "Rocky View County is like any municipality wanting to control its own fate, but must be aware of its position next to the sleeping elephant in the same way Canada is aware of the U.S.," (Brad, small developer). Although the county should play a significant role because "they control land on three sides of Calgary, politics comes into play when lack of water resources puts them in a gunfight with a knife," (Paul, land developer). It appears that while county representatives are interested in being taken more seriously in their governmental capacity, not all stakeholders are certain that Rocky View County has the image or resources required to compete with urban municipalities.

Respondents' discussion of Rocky View County's ability to compete with urban areas centers on two broad components of municipal governance: 1) the ability to offer services desired by residents and businesses, and 2) the ability to engage as equals in discussions with neighbouring urban municipalities, particularly Calgary. Although many respondents are not pleased with the county's decisions to offer urban-type servicing for new developments, there is no argument that such servicing is possible because it has been provided in the past. Disagreement revolves around whether or not the county should continue to grow in a manner that requires greater infrastructure for water, waste and roads. Therefore, the bigger question is whether the county can engage meaningfully with urban municipalities. There is difference of opinion between those who feel the county should compete with urban municipalities and those who feel that urban uses have no place in a rural or hybrid area. In addition, while there is

cautious optimism among some respondents that Rocky View County has the status it requires to be taken seriously by urban neighbours in times of negotiation, most respondents feel that the county's image is one of inexperience and arrogance.

> In the framework of no regional planning since 1995, Rocky View County took a position that it could do what it wanted in a municipal context. Essentially, Rocky View County plays the role of spoiler. You have a million person elephant in the room wanting to control destiny on its borders, and a municipality that won newfound freedom to do what it wants. It is like a parent with a child who does not want to be controlled or disciplined – you may be 18 but you're still my kid. (Heath, intermunicipal affairs specialist)

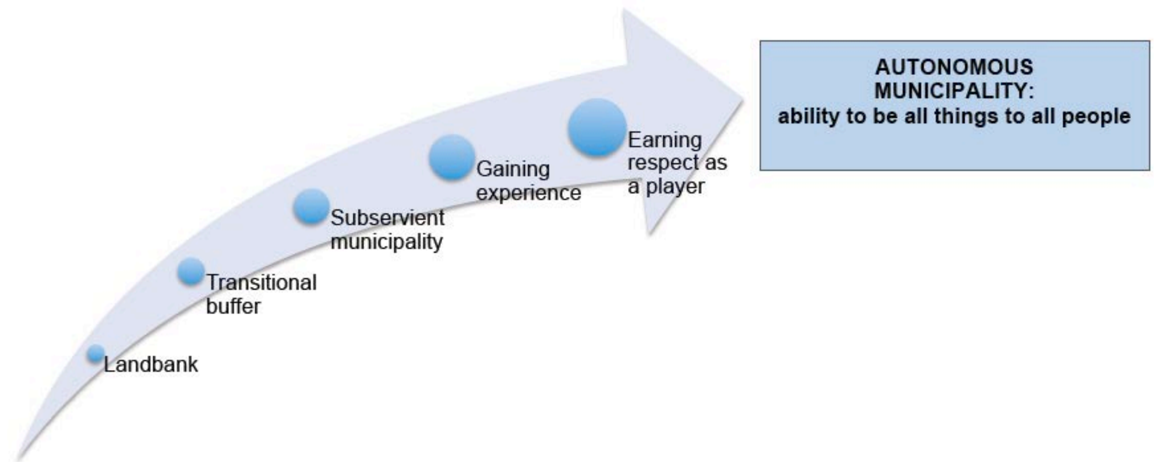
The parent and child analogy speaks to the growing pains of a county with relatively new decision-making powers in the context of a larger metropolitan region. When Vidich and Bensman (1958) discuss pivotal points in the history of small towns, they note that times of dynamic change will come when new audiences can no longer be managed by the existing players. As the cast changes, there is turmoil as the new guard attempts to replace the old. For Rocky View County, this type of dynamic change occurred in the mid 1990s when regional partnerships were struck down. Land use planning decisions became the domain of the county without the need to consult with neighbouring municipalities, including Calgary. Now, Rocky View County may be at a second stage of dynamic change but only time will tell which version of change will ultimately be victorious. Will this be the type of change that sees county administration and council competing head to head with urban municipalities for residential and commercial development? Or will it be the reverse, where a change in the players on council results in a "no growth" coalition in the decision-making seat? Either scenario is possible as there are very different expectations of what should constitute the urban-rural nexus.

Without understanding the rationale or motivation for land use change, the assumption operates at a very macro level that there are pro- and anti-development interests at work. Deeper

investigation, however, reveals the conflicted nature of meaning-making and decision-making in the urban-rural nexus. Reasons for provision of servicing and land use change are rooted in formerly rural municipalities trying to control the ways in which they transform in the face of urbanization pressures. Change may be inevitable when living next to the “sleeping elephant”, but the pace and design of change is believed by some to be controllable. Thus, Rocky View County has a conflicted identity in the Calgary metropolitan region based on the expectations of different groups.

Within the scope of this research project, the conflicted identity of Rocky View County is best analyzed according to the power it is believed to hold in the Calgary metropolitan region. Perspectives of residents differed from those of county representatives, and they can all be viewed along a continuum of Rocky View County being powerless, an emerging force or powerful in determining its own fate (Figure 8.1). Depending upon where a respondent feels the county lies along the continuum, there is a different image of the county as a decision-making entity that holds the ability to transform itself in the face of internal and external pressures.

Figure 8.1: Continuum of Municipal Identity by Power



III. Expectations of Life in the Urban-Rural Nexus

Just as the identity of the county is explored through understanding the expectations of different constituent groups, the interview process with residents asked respondents to reflect on their expectations of life in the hybrid region. Expectations are an important component of social imaginings because it is the expectation or vision of a particular lifestyle that leads urbanites to leave the city for the country. Similarly, longtime residents of rural areas have expectations of how their later years will be spent based on their history in the area. Among the residents interviewed for this research project, different perspectives were expressed in response to the question of whether life in Rocky View has changed, and if expectations have been met. The responses range from those who had no expectations to those who feel fulfilled and those who are not fulfilled, as well as explanations for the various states in between.

"When we moved to Rocky View County, we didn't know what to expect because we were young and naïve, but my attitude is that people with land have a right to do what they want on it," (Peggy, ranch manager). Other respondents focused on lack of change rather than expectations, stating, "My life hasn't changed because there's no development around me," (Sam, west side hobby farmer). Citing a desire for residential privacy while promoting community involvement, another respondent stated, "Nothing much has changed for us because we have a buffer of trees. We still drive to town to get our milk and we have lived here long enough to know all the people around us," (Celeste, west side acreage owner). Responses like these indicate that some residents take a live-and-let-live approach to land use change in the county, happy with their choice and unconcerned about activity in the larger county.

Others also expressed that expectations have been met, but elaborated on their responses with explanations of work that had to be done to accomplish this. "We are fortunate enough to

have a large enough property that we don't have constraints on what we do with our land. We aren't trying to subdivide or urbanize. But any time development has occurred at our edges, we have felt compelled to deal with it," (Warren, east side farmer). "Dealing with it" involves staying abreast of proposed changes by adjacent neighbours and working things out either informally or through council hearings to ensure that expectations continue to be met. Utilizing formal processes allowed other residents to set out their expectations in planning documents, like area structure plans, to ensure that future growth is in keeping with the public's perspective. "It's a challenge to keep track of what's going on and who's trying to change the rules, but I have stayed involved and am happy with how well it's worked out," (Peter, east side acreage owner).

Quite different from those who either had no expectations or feel expectations have been met, some respondents reluctantly acknowledge satisfaction with life in the county up to a point. For this group, expectations have been met but change is having a negative impact on their lives. "I still feel like I live in a very small community, but the development I see is bringing unmanageable traffic and a ridiculous amount of garbage. It's detracting from the beauty of the county," (Brooke, west side acreage owner). Others describe their expectations and how they cannot continue to be fulfilled. "My expectations have been fulfilled because we have had horses in 20 years, kids have been in 4-H, and we went riding and picnicking. But we have lost our access to the river and lost the security of sending kids out alone. Development has become intrusive," (Beth, west side acreage owner). After describing issues like light pollution and traffic congestion on formerly rural roads, one respondent said, "Living out here, on a farm, was my dream so it has been met. But I don't know how much longer I can afford to live here when the owner sells and any other place in the county is too expensive," (Lori, east side farmer). Expectations vary among residents, ranging from affordability to peaceful surroundings to

beautiful landscapes. This variety of expectations further reinforces the complexity involved in interpreting and defining what is urban, rural or hybrid. When each term holds a personalized meaning for individuals, establishing a common understanding and delivering a personalized expected experience is an impossible task.

Even if the tangible expectations could be fulfilled, like elimination of light pollution and unlimited access to natural amenities, could the urban-rural nexus continue to meet the social expectations of residents? For longtime residents, there is a sense of loss reflected in their responses.

> When we first moved here, we wanted to be part of the community and integrate with farm families, never feeling that we wanted to be isolated or exclusive. Now, we have residents complaining about farmers fishing on private land, and we have put up a gate to add value and protection for our community. It's become an idea of entitlement, that this is ours and no one else can have it. It's tragic." (George, west side acreage owner)

While examples like the gate and increased density of homes act as the physical reminders of change, it is the lost emotional connection to others and social cohesion that stands out most for some residents. "I grew up as a kid in the 1950s with a whole group of farm families, playing sports together, going to community events and being social. Then in the 1970s Calgary boomed, city people came out here, and friction started because urban people don't fit in," (Nathan, west side rancher). Further examples of social behaviour were provided by respondents to demonstrate the differences between urbanites and rural residents, including attendance at church services, corporal punishment in schools and openness about homosexuality. Examples like these highlight different social expectations and interpretations of community.

Compounding the social disparity between urban and rural ways of life, agricultural residents further face the issue of rising land prices and limited mobility of farm operations. This theme will be explored in greater detail in the next section, but it has relevance to the notion of

expectations. A basic expectation of any agricultural operator is financial stability. “Because land values are escalating near major cities, farmers cannot afford to expand to be viable economic units. So the conflict of the 1970s, the friction with urban people, is gone. Farmers realize it’s over. The city is coming. You need to sell and move,” (Nathan, west side rancher). Rather than stay and fight change, there is a group that sees the inevitability of increasing urbanization in the hybrid zone. “When we saw the place across from us go to a major developer, we knew we would have to sell. It drove up the value of our land, but it was also clear we could not be rural. In a way, we were forced to move,” (Brenda, Balzac farmer). For some agricultural operators, selling the farm or ranch was not part of their expectations, a point that becomes more significant in the subsequent discussion of conflict among groups in Rocky View County.

Questions about expectations in the interview process require reflection on the part of the respondent, resulting in a thoughtful response that is often backed by examples of experiences to illustrate the perspective. By asking people to reveal their expectations for life in the urban-rural nexus, we stand to gain a more robust understanding for what this hybrid region used to be, as well as what it has become, through the eyes of those with lived experience in the space. Discussion of expectations range from livelihood to aesthetics to sense of community (Table 8.2).

Table 8.2: Fulfillment of Expectations

Stage of Fulfillment	Impact of Land Use Change
Expectations Met or No Expectations	No perceived impact from land use changes
Expectations Met by Staying Engaged	Provided feedback on land use change
Expectations No Longer Met	Natural amenities are gone
	Sense of community is gone
	Way of life no longer possible
	Financial viability in peril

There is great complexity to the meaning people attach to their lives and the land upon which they live. Through an exploration of expectations, there is greater appreciation for the concepts of sense of belonging and social capital as described by residents.

IV. Conclusion

From the data analysis of groups, issues, identity and expectations in Rocky View County, there emerges a picture of a multidimensional hybrid space with conflicting pressures creating fracture points between stakeholder groups. In Table 8.3, the dimensions of conflict in Rocky View County are presented by schematizing the polarities related to occupation, location, length of residence, level of organization and other characteristics that foster difference between stakeholders. By removing the assumptions of solidarity among members of constituent groups, the cleavages between and within groups are better exposed. Without the constraints of treating groups like farmers or acreage owners as unified entities with matching characteristics, there is an opportunity to analyze the perceptions and interpretations that result in conflict. In this way, the dimensions of conflict are based on multiple factors rather than just group membership.

The nature of conflict in each scenario is rooted in the significance given to different values: 1) landowner rights to profit from land sale ($), 2) aesthetics/beauty of nexus (AEST), 3) ecology/environment (ECOL), 4) sense of community (COMM), 5) political autonomy (POLI), 6) agriculture as livelihood (LIVE), 7) residential property value (PROP), 8) social status (STAT) and 9) rural heritage (HERI). As summarized in the table[22], there are one or more values at odds in any given scenario of conflict, and the amount of importance given to a value will vary between the opposing sides. Thus, the dimensions of conflict approach offers an original

[22] While the table is representative of the data in this research project, it is not intended to display the full range of possibilities of conflict.

contribution to the literature on urban-rural hybridity by recognizing and codifying the variety of stakeholder groups, perspectives of space and the layers of discord between them.

Table 8.3: Dimensions of Conflict in Rocky View County

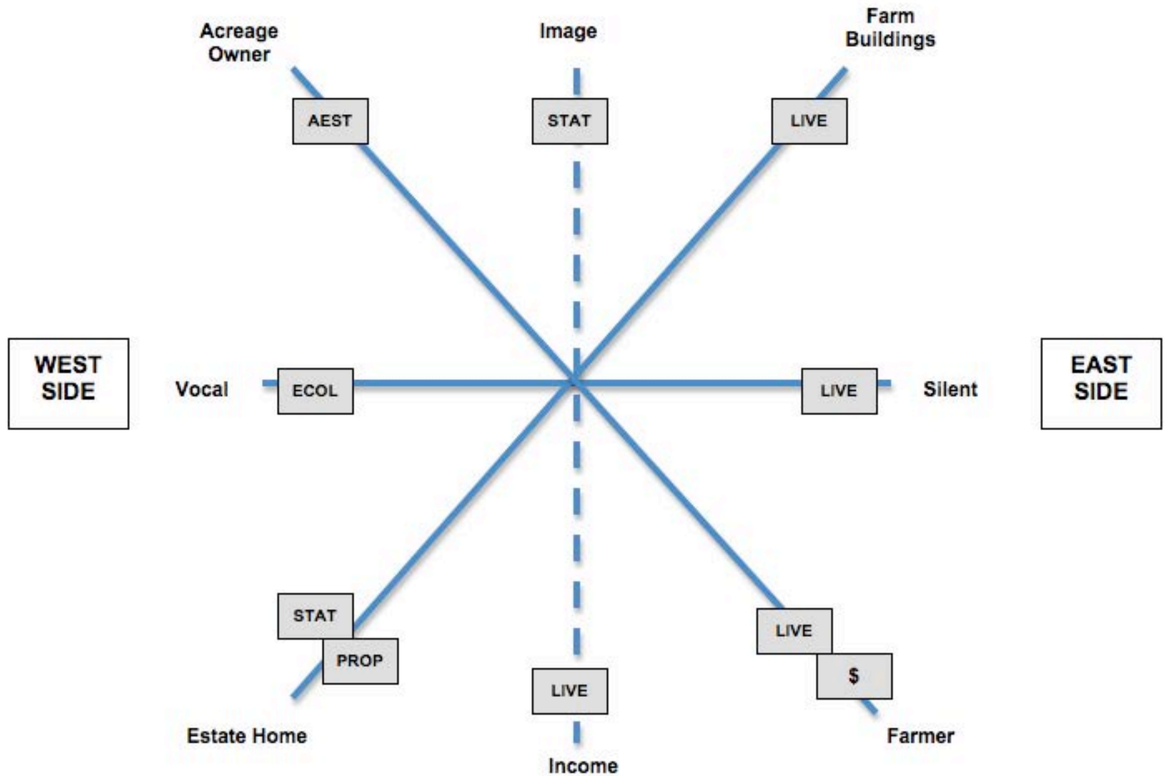
Opposing Sides		Nature of Conflict
Acreage owners	Farmers	AEST, LIVE
Developers	Residents	$, HERI
Rocky View County	Calgary/urban satellites	HERI, POLI
Exurbanites	Rural residents	STAT, LIVE
New residents	Longtime residents	PROP, COMM
West side	East side	STAT, LIVE
Vocal	Silent	ECOL, LIVE
Organized	Independent	ECOL, AEST, LIVE
Allow land sale	Preserve agriculture	$, LIVE, ECOL
No development	Some development	$, HERI, POLI
Nature as aesthetic	Nature as means of production	AEST, LIVE
Commuters	Work in county	AEST, LIVE, COMM
Drawn to open spaces and animals	Raised with fields and livestock	AEST, LIVE
Estate homes	Farm buildings	STAT, PROP, LIVE
New social institutions	Old social institutions	STAT, COMM
Cost of land as attraction	Cost of land as limitation	PROP, LIVE
Council/administration	Residents	POLI, HERI

A further model can be constructed to reflect the multidimensional nature of conflict in Rocky View County. If we view conflict from the multiple roles and characteristics that comprise different perspectives in the urban-rural nexus, the spokes of opposition form a matrix that can then be populated with the values that play a key role in determining significance of one position over another. However, the complexity of conflict in this hybrid area makes it impossible to generate a single matrix that can neatly summarize all positions and perspectives. As mentioned earlier, conflict in the urban-rural nexus must be viewed contextually for different

situations, which makes the dimensions of conflict approach messier than neat dichotomies but much more representative of the multiplicity of issues.

Figure 8.2 depicts one example of charting conflict by opposing perspectives. In this example, the spokes in the model show the polarities associated with the east side and west side of Rocky View County. At the ends of the spokes are the primary opposing values that drive dissent between perspectives, which again accentuates the layered complexities that lead to conflict in the urban-rural nexus.

Figure 8.2: Dimensions of Conflict between East Side and West Side



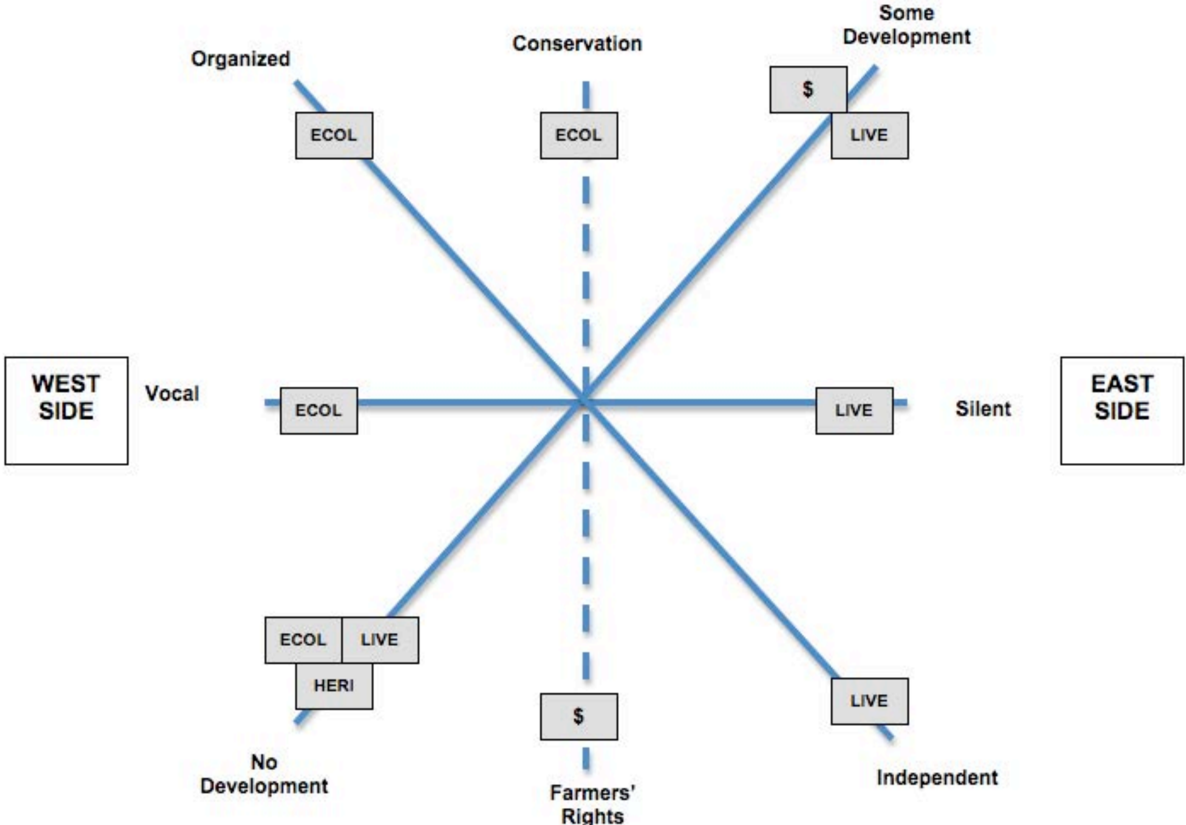
In the matrix dealing with east side against west side, Figure 7.2 utilizes four dimensions to show the multiplicity of positions that can converge to create a single perspective. For those on the west side (left side of the diagram), descriptive characteristics include being an acreage

owner, ownership of an estate home, placing importance on image and taking a vocal stand against land use change. On the east side (right side of the diagram), opposing descriptors include being a farmer, owning farm buildings, placing importance on income and remaining silent in the face of land use change. With this particular categorization of each side, the east side appears to place greatest significance on the value of agriculture as livelihood (LIVE) and landowner rights to profit from land sale ($). This includes the physical representation of agriculture through farm buildings, as well as the perspective of land as a means of production. On the other hand, the west side places great significance on the values of social status (STAT) through location in the county, aesthetics or beauty of the nexus (AEST), ecology or environment (ECOL), and residential property value (PROP). While the east side perspective appears tied strongly to the identity of the farmer and the resulting position of landowner rights, the west side perspective is multidimensional and draws upon four separate values to build the conservationist position.

However, this depiction is not applicable in all cases of conflict between the east side and west side. By changing the characteristics of a given side in the conflict, or changing the significance placed on a value, the nature of conflict is dramatically altered. For example, Figure 8.3 illustrates the dimensions of conflict between east side and west side assuming that farming is a common occupation between opposing sides. This changes the values assigned to the locational dimension of east versus west, with the two sides now representing the values of landowner rights to profit from land sale ($) against ecological preservation (ECOL). The position of the east side (right side of the diagram) has not undergone values-based change, with agriculture as livelihood (LIVE) and landowner rights to profit from land sale ($) still being the most significant values. On the west side (left side of the diagram), the change is significant. The

conservationist position is now built around placing greatest significance on ecology or the environment (ECOL) while also respecting agriculture as livelihood (LIVE) and rural heritage (HERI).

Figure 8.3: Dimensions of Conflict between Farmers on East Side and West Side



These two models illustrate the different dimensions of conflict that can exist even when the opposing sides are essentially the same. In this case, the larger conflict is still between landowner rights advocates and conservationists, but they are portrayed with very different characteristics and value sets in the two examples. Viewing conflict as a one dimensional concept misses the layers of complexity that exist under the surface of any given position. By

examining the characteristics of groups and understanding the significance of values, there is more depth to the analysis of conflict in the urban-rural nexus.

Chapter 9: CrossIron Mills & Harmony: Mega-Project Examples of Conflict and Change

Based on the dimensions of conflict approach discussed in the preceding chapter, social transformation of the urban-rural nexus can be understood in terms of the multiple pressure points and types of conflict that exist in this contested space. In moving from an agricultural municipality to its current hybrid state, Rocky View County has transitioned from farmland with homesteads to a shared space between farmers, acreage owners, commercial developments and recreational areas. This chapter uses two selected cases of land use change, CrossIron Mills and Harmony, because their impact as mega-projects is the most dramatic and most public in terms of project scope and size. Both cases provide strong evidence of the tensions under which Rocky View County exists. They are also representative of the concepts of edge cities (Garreau 1991) or "in-between cities" (Keil and Young 2011) that reflect the age of post-suburbanization. Post-suburbia is a reconceptualization of the urban-rural hybrid area that illuminates the multi-faceted and multi-scalar nature of social transformation (Phelps and Wu 2011).

First, CrossIron Mills is a fully enclosed shopping mall in the northeast/north central part of the county with over 200 retailers, many of which are premium outlet brands. It extends over one million square feet and is the first stage of multiple nodes of development planned for the area. Costco and Lowe's opened as big box retailers near the mall about a year after it opened in 2009. Future plans include a business park and an industrial park with logistics and warehousing facilities, as well as residential development (M.D. of Rocky View 2000). Second, Harmony is a 1,750-acre community planned for the west side of the county bordering the community of Springbank. According to the conceptual scheme, Harmony will incorporate diversity of housing type in its residential nodes, as well as a PGA-ranked golf course, schools, a recreation centre and a business campus in its commercial nodes. The vision is to create a complete community

five miles west of Calgary, just off the TransCanada Highway, where people can live, work and play (M.D. of Rocky View 2007).

I. Context of Change: Positioning CrossIron Mills and Harmony in Time and Space

As indicated by the data in Chapter 4, there has been a 21.8% decline in number of farms in Rocky View County between 2001 and 2011, as well as a 19.4% decrease in number of farm operators between 2006 and 2011. According to 2012 county census statistics, 47% of the population lives in areas designated as country residential, while 38% resides in agricultural areas (Rocky View County 2012). The space vacated by farmers has been taken up by acreage owners over time, resulting in increased density through residential land uses on formerly agricultural land. As of 2012, the Rocky View County Land Use Bylaw allows for three designations of residential land use (R1, R2, R3) that can accommodate either two, four or ten acre residential parcels with a single dwelling. For example, a 600-acre farm selling 100 acres for redesignation as country residential could effectively attract between ten to fifty new households depending upon the approved acreage size. Thus, not only has land use changed in the county, there has been a corresponding change in density as a result.

At the same time that densities have changed in Rocky View County, land uses other than residential or agricultural have slowly begun to materialize. The gradual emergence of small acreages and small commercial operations has given way to bigger ventures in the county in recent years, like CrossIron Mills and Harmony. These two large-scale development projects stand in stark contrast to changes in the county which have historically been more gradual and are representative of planned commercial and residential development. Both mega-projects are vivid examples of urban form intruding into a rural community, and both contain sophisticated and utopian elements of complete communities where planners envision the ability for residents

to live, work and play in the same space. Accompanying the development plans are higher densities, more complex servicing and increased transportation infrastructure that continue to change the physical form and social relations within the county.

Regional maps provide situational context for CrossIron Mills (Figure 9.1) and Harmony (Figure 9.2), and the images that follow provide an example of the change that has either happened or has been proposed by the two cases. With CrossIron Mills, Figure 9.3 shows an aerial photo of the Balzac area in 1998. Residential acreages exist in the northern section of the area, while the southern part consists of agricultural operations. In sharp contrast, Figure 9.4 depicts the same part of Rocky View County after the construction of CrossIron Mills. It is clear that while the northern residential acreages have not changed much since 1998, the southern section of the area is now either overtaken by commercial development like CrossIron Mills or stripped for future development. Figure 9.5 is an aerial photo of the north Springbank area, west of Calgary along Highway 1 and southeast of Cochrane. The green massing in the map indicates the future location of Harmony amidst existing acreage subdivisions, immediately adjacent to and northwest of the Springbank airport. Finally, Figure 9.6 is the conceptual drawing outlining the first phase of Harmony, with location of the golf course, lake, residential and commercial nodes in the proposed development.

Figure 9.1: CrossIron Mills in Regional Context (Point A below)

Source: Google Maps 2013

Figure 9.2: Harmony in Regional Context

Source: www.liveinharmony.ca 2013

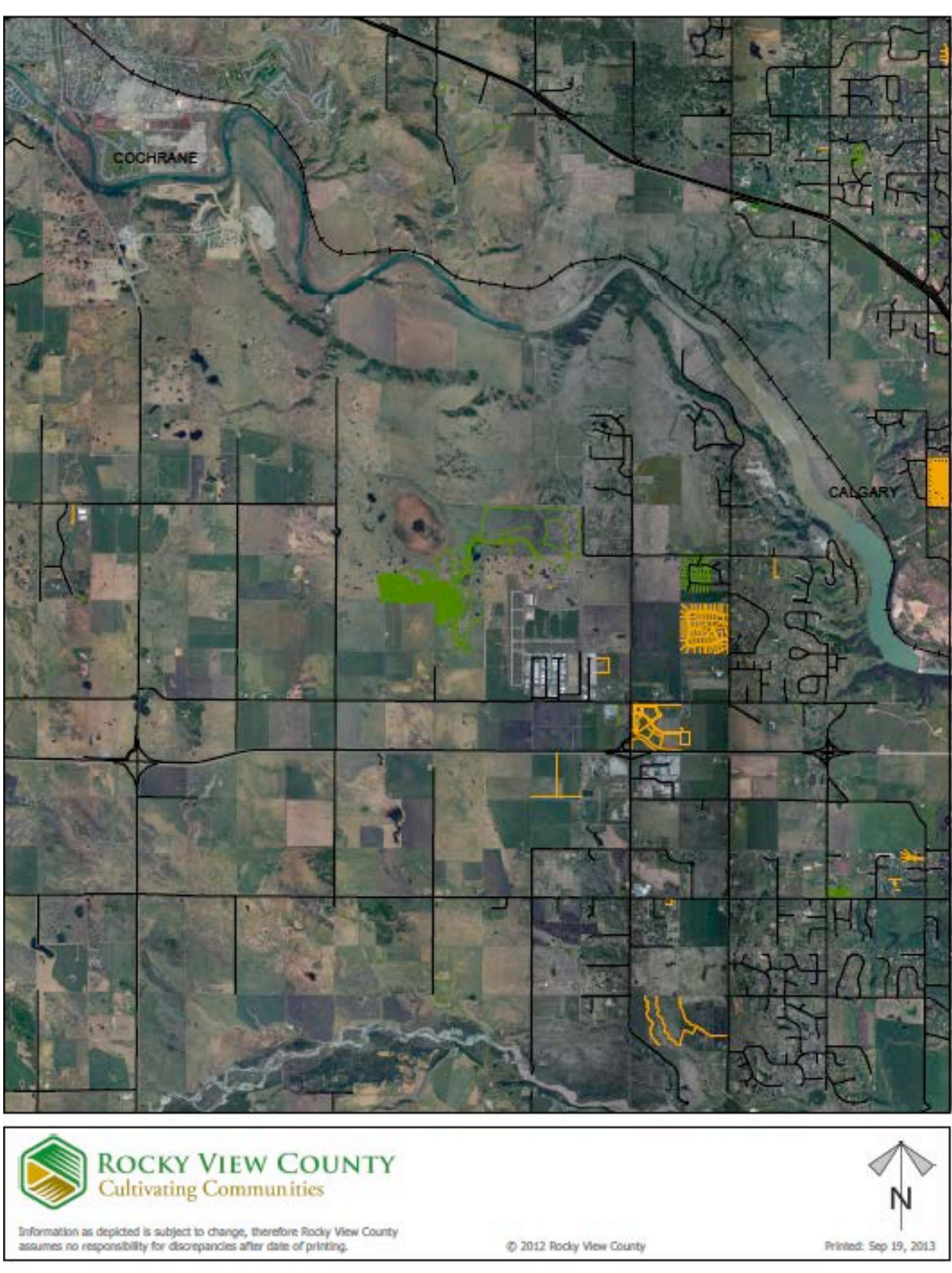
Figure 9.3: East Balzac Aerial Photo 1998

Source: Rocky View County 2013

Figure 9.4: East Balzac Aerial Photo 2012

Source: Rocky View County 2013

Figure 9.5: Harmony Aerial Photo 2012



Source: Rocky View County 2013

Figure 9.6: Harmony Conceptual Scheme

Source: Municipal District of Rocky View 2007

The type of urban intrusion proposed by CrossIron Mills and Harmony, combined with the speed and scale of these developments, is a marked departure from the more gradual changes that created clustered acreage communities in the past. For these reasons and others, there continue to be strong reactions – both positive and negative - towards these projects from stakeholders in Rocky View County. Providing an image of land use change, whether as physically constructed built form (CrossIron Mills) or graphically constructed conceptual schemes (Harmony), acts as a means to establish the social construction of space held by an "other" in the urban-rural nexus and measure respondents' reactions to it.

II. How Decision-Makers and Administrators Perceive the Mega-Projects

Inclusion of questions related to CrossIron Mills and Harmony allows the interview process to move from general philosophies around appropriate land use to specific perspectives on tangible changes within the county and the conflicts that accompany them. During the background interviews with groups that included county administration, county council and land developers, respondents were asked whether the two cases were routine applications in land use change. The goal was to gain insight from those immersed in the decision-making and implementation processes about the validity of the assumption that speed and scale are differentiating factors. This assumption is the combined result of discourse analysis from the Reeve's Task Force public hearings, historic analysis of the permit applications and anecdotal data from conversations with stakeholders during the development of the research project proposal. A follow-up question asked if Rocky View County's approach to land use change evolved as a result of these two projects. Although a few respondents felt that the county's approach to land use change was not altered by either application, there was overwhelming consensus in all background interviews that neither CrossIron Mills nor Harmony were routine applications.

To guide the narrative around perceptions of CrossIron Mills and Harmony, Table 9.1 highlights the ways in which these two development projects are a departure from traditional land use change applications. The interview data that follows the table elaborates upon each position from the perspectives of decision-makers and administrators.

Table 9.1: CrossIron Mills and Harmony as Mega-Project Applications

Differentiating Factor from Prior Applications	Impact to Rocky View County
Sophistication of process	High level of intensity required dedicated administration team
	Learned urban-type development processes
	Focus on implementation of plans rather than just process of application
Economic effects	Dramatically increased land values
	Diversification of county tax base
	High cost of infrastructure to county
Contextually appropriate mixed-use development	Partnership with farm family to ensure integrity of final product
	Single application that incorporates all desirable social institutions
Political autonomy	Opportunity to show leadership
	Necessary projects for county to determine its fate without Calgary's interference

"CrossIron Mills and Harmony are the biggest social experiments in the history of Rocky View County," (Tom, county councillor). By calling these developments "social experiments", there is an implication that an effort has been made to change the interactions or social relations within the county. This transformation is summarized by another respondent as "turning a totally rural area that was dependent upon land into a sophisticated urban form of development," (Brian, county administrator). From some respondents, the description of this transformation is much more vivid and negative.

> CrossIron Mills is the county thumbing its nose at Calgary and declaring war. Anyone who wants cheap land and a low tax rate should come to Rocky View County. This was a unique application in its magnitude and how much debt we inherited. We are no longer that cute county that did everything off the cuff. CrossIron Mills blew that world apart. (Rachel, county councillor)

The dramatic nature of the change was also captured in reference to the residential community of Harmony. "Harmony was not routine at all. It's like taking a town of 10,000 people and putting it into the middle of nowhere," (Jackie, county councillor). Both cases elicit strong reactions that

demonstrate the scope of change as one with massive impact upon the county.

It is also pointed out that development of this magnitude would not have been possible in earlier times. “This new approach to urban development wouldn’t have occurred pre-1995 when a regional planning commission would have killed the idea because it stood outside the guidelines of the plan and the Municipal Government Act,” (Heath, intermunicipal affairs specialist). Because Rocky View County is now able to manage its municipal land use decisions independently of its urban neighbours, anything is possible when it comes to development applications and the decisions of council. However, the county was also under pressure to manage the atypical logistics of these applications in ways that were different from existing processes. To manage the demands of servicing and decision-making, “we established a separate office to manage all issues moving forward,” (Kevin, county administrator). For the development of CrossIron Mills, Rocky View County created a dedicated unit that would directly oversee the process on-site with the developer and consultants.

As a result of the approval of CrossIron Mills, landowners and speculators began to see the willingness of the county to work with developers to create new built form and associated uses in the formerly rural area. “The level of intensity of recent development in the county is exceptional. CrossIron Mills is a groundbreaking application and implementation plan. It has set off a land rush in terms of dramatically increased land values,” (Heath, intermunicipal affairs specialist). Those who stand by the decision to alter land use in such a dramatic manner explain their position as one that looks after the county’s financial interest in the face of other changes. “East Balzac (CrossIron Mills) was designed to diversity the county’s tax base. With the gas plant coming down, that tax base would otherwise be lost,” (Frank, county administrator). In the larger scheme of Rocky View County operations and revenue interests, proponents of CrossIron

Mills point to the need for stabilizing a tax base that was too reliant upon property taxes from homeowners as a primary revenue stream. "Rocky View County had a very heavy skew towards residential tax base and they now have significant commercial. It's the right direction for a balanced approach. But it was not routine in any way, in all of Canada, because of its size and scale," (David, land developer).

Balance is a theme that carries over to Harmony as well, with proponents using terminology of "complete communities" to portray its holistic approach to development. "Harmony was the desire to create a complete community, more than a place to drive to at the end of the day for Calgary workers," (Ned, former county administrator). With this description of the project, the intent to activate sense of community in place of a traditional commuter lifestyle begins to emerge.

> Most developments in Rocky View County start with low hanging fruit, like putting in residential, then schools, then commercial. Harmony was different. It was a complete community with a completely different scale. The challenge was to ensure it continued to go past the low hanging fruit. (Frank, county administrator)

Critics of the complete communities model challenge the notion of people living, working and playing in one place. With a city the size of Calgary next door, as well as urban satellites like Cochrane and Airdrie in close proximity, it is unrealistic to assume that people can be contained and content within one geographic space for all their basic and social needs. However, as an ideological construct, complete communities present a persuasive image of sustainability that is used by developers and planners to sway public opinion. The complete communities argument is therefore met with both hope and skepticism, with some applauding its vision and others challenging the ability to implement such a model. When the success of complete communities in suburban locations within city limits is underwhelming, there is validity to the question of

whether this model can work in the urban-rural nexus.

Even advocates for change recognize that approval of the new land uses and related development does not translate directly into a successful end product. Attention to implementation is a key component to realizing the vision. In the case of Harmony, respondents indicate confidence that integrity of design will be maintained because of the relationship between the original farm family and the land developer. Stewardship of the land and sense of responsibility are insinuated through descriptions of a family "who pioneered this area in the late 1800s and are now partners in this project," (Paul, land developer). A representative of the farm family indicates that "we stayed involved because we have seen ranchers sell a parcel and get a bit of money, but we want to stay to make sure it's not something we feel is unsuitable for this county," (Adam, farm family representative). While the profit motive is evident for sale of the lands, it is tempered by the word of the farmer to do the right thing. The family's link to the land offers legitimacy to the project.

When asked if the county's approach to land use change evolved as a result of CrossIron Mills and/or Harmony, respondents offer different perspectives. The most negative is the view that "no one feels Harmony is great, but it is coming one way or another. It was just part of the many applications that came at a time when Rocky View County never turned anything down," (Jackie, county councilor). Although in agreement that this was not a change in approach, others offer the counter perspective that the county has been implementing a thoughtful and proactive evolution of the land use change process over time. "Their approach was changing before these applications, and it continues in spite of them. Rocky View County has always been a staunch supporter of complete planning and community development," (Ned, former county administrator). It is also important to recognize that Harmony is seen as distinct in terms of its

location, and its success “cannot be replicated everywhere because of geography, climate and proximity,” (Ned, former county administrator). Thus, there is considerable difference in perceptions of how Harmony came into existence and will be implemented, but agreement that it was not a game-changer in terms of process.

For others, the evolution of process is less important than execution of project. “CrossIron Mills is less significant in terms of approval process but much more in terms of its implementation,” (Heath, intermunicipal affairs specialist). There is difference from the norm not only in terms of the scale of the project, but also the speed at which county administrators had to ramp up their learning process. “This project didn’t really give Rocky View County a chance to crawl first. They had to jump right into the deep end,” (David, land developer). Speaking to the benefit of a steep learning curve, one respondent noted, “CrossIron Mills helped Rocky View County drive the sophistication of their land use change processes,” (Jared, former county administrator). A sense of pride is also apparent in the responses from those who position the two cases as necessary innovation for the county. “Leadership is about making bold moves and moving forward. We are a lot smarter and more politically savvy than we used to be,” (Anne, county councilor). While critics claim that decisions were made without consideration of the people and the environment, proponents of CrossIron Mills and Harmony believe that the right choices were made for the future of the county to generate predictable revenue streams, accommodate population growth and preserve political autonomy. In effect, by offering the land uses and resulting built forms that would otherwise be constructed on land annexed from Rocky View County by urban neighbours, there is control over urbanization pressure and an opportunity to finance inevitable future change. The conflict is between perceptions of the county as an entity under pressure of losing control over its future and the county as a physical and social space that

must retain its rural heritage. These different interpretations of the appropriate future for Rocky View County create conflict among groups.

With the background interviews, it is clear that while developers and administrators feel that CrossIron Mills and Harmony represent success in the transformation of Rocky View County as a hybrid region, there are conflicting opinions about these changes at the council level. Because councillors are also residents of the county, representing different geographic divisions with socioeconomic diversity, this research project is able to examine whether the conflicts among constituent groups are similarly taking place among members of council. The findings speak to the representativeness of council, and also indicate how the power struggles among groups with influence are directly transferred to positions of decision-making authority through the electoral process. Battles between sides holding informal power eventually filter up to those who have the authority to make decisions about land use. As a result, empowered parties try to enact their social constructions of the urban-rural nexus.

III. Resident Perceptions of the Mega-Projects

Although the questions for residents were different than the ones posed in the background interviews, similar reactions to the cases can be observed between those who agree with land use change as represented by CrossIron Mills and Harmony, and those who feel the developments are not appropriate in the urban-rural nexus. Respondents were asked for their perspectives on why CrossIron Mills and/or Harmony were proposed, as well as their reactions to the approval of both cases as significant changes to land use in the county. Not unlike the data resulting from earlier questions about land use change, the analysis of perspectives on case-specific changes reveals a county divided. There are both proponents and critics of change, as well as multiple perspectives on what the change has done to the county.

In Table 9.2, a cost/benefit analysis is presented to preface the analysis of residents' responses to the changes brought upon Rocky View County by CrossIron Mills and Harmony.

Table 9.2: Costs and Benefits of CrossIron Mills and Harmony

Perceived Costs	Perceived Benefits
• Profit for developers and farmers at expense of all other stakeholders • Urban thinking does not fit in rural location • Water servicing inappropriate and too costly • Increased residential development adds to financial burden for county	• Ability for farmers to sell unprofitable agricultural operations • Land costs more affordable for developers • Fits within area structure plans • Diversification of county tax base • Ideal physical location on major highway • Live/work/play model with access to amenities and community hub • Ability for seniors to age in place

Beginning with the reasons for proposing the cases in point, one perspective is that these changes to land use and the resulting projects were solely for the purpose of generating revenue and profit for landowners. "Harmony was proposed because the developer wanted to make money," (Donna, west side acreage owner). Also speaking about Harmony, others make the distinction that it was a chance "to make a lot of money for the ranchers involved" (Rita, west side farmer), as well as "money and greed driving profit for landowners and developers," (Greg, west side acreage owner). It is significant to note that there is a clear demarcation between landowner and developer, but consistency in chastising both for profit motives.

Somewhat different but indicative of financial benefits nonetheless, respondents feel that CrossIron Mills "needed a lot of land and it was more economical to locate in Balzac than inside the city," (Vance, Balzac farmer). Land values in the monetary sense are generally higher in urban areas, which is why greenfield development in periphery areas of cities and bordering

rings of green space in neighbouring counties is less expensive for land development. “Cost of the same amount of land would be exorbitant if it was in the city,” (Warren, east side farmer). While Harmony was perceived as a chance to make money, CrossIron Mills was viewed as a means of saving money. In the end, the opposition to both is rooted in the lowering of the use value of the county’s land as a benefit to all, just to drive increased exchange value as a benefit to the few.

There is also talk of the county acting as an “entrepreneur” who has the “vision of the tax base required to be independent and avoid annexation,” (Warren, east side farmer). By using county land to secure urban-type shopping mall development that will be a regional draw, Rocky View County is securing a commercial revenue stream that supplements its previous residential tax base. In addition, one respondent speculated that the county “knows the land around CrossIron Mills will make it a nucleus for further development,” (Vance, Balzac farmer). CrossIron Mills is perceived to be the draw not only for shoppers to the region but also other businesses that will act as ancillary service providers for the commercial centre.

Location is perhaps the key to the mall’s success, “being perfectly situated at the intersection of Deerfoot Trail and Stoney Trail,” (Peter, east side acreage owner). Using the comparison to the United States and other cities in Canada, one respondent stated, “Discount malls seem to be on the outskirts, probably because of land prices and tax rates,” (Vance, Balzac farmer). While aware of the financial advantages to the developer, this respondent and others like him do not oppose development on these grounds because “that’s all fair and it’s how business works,” (Jim, west side acreage owner). With this perspective, it becomes clear that the issue is not a lack of appreciation by some groups that a profit motive exists in land sale and development. Rather, the conflict lies in the perception of whether profit is an acceptable motive,

particularly when it is seen to trump preservation of natural resources.

Keeping with the concept of the profit motive, there are also respondents who feel that land sale and development in the cases of Harmony and CrossIron Mills were approved because the financial reward goes to resident landowners. “There’s no money in farming. A farmer cannot make a living just farming any more. Farmers sell to developers because they have to live,” (Sam, west side hobby farmer). Once again, the landowner rights position is presented as an acceptable rationale for land sale and land use change. More importantly, it is the ability of the farmer to benefit that positions the sale as positive. “You should try for a win-win solution and shoot for a respectful development, but the bottom line is always who owns the land,” (Peggy, ranch manager). When the landowner in question is from a longtime family, there is further support for right to sell. “Harmony’s success has to do with the family name. If they feel it’s suitable for development, then it’s a logical proposal,” (George, west side acreage owner). Invoking the symbolism of the farmer as the original landowner, struggling to maintain an agricultural lifestyle in the face of urbanization pressure, positions land use change and land sale as a reasonable and acceptable practice. In this way, farmers’ rights advocates use emotional appeal in advancing their perspective.

Lastly, the theme of complete communities emerges from the data and positions land use change in the cases of CrossIron Mills and Harmony as a means to add value to life in Rocky View County. “When Harmony had their first open house, the idea captured the imagination and made you consider how European communities exist with a live, work and play mentality,” (Todd, west side acreage owner). As opposed to the traditional Rocky View County model of residential acreage communities, Harmony proposes the inclusion of employment centres, commercial districts and recreational facilities. For some respondents, this is considered the best

use for land that experts and longtime farm family representatives have deemed unsuitable for farming. In the same way, CrossIron Mills is viewed as "nothing but good for our society as a whole. Stores and services are welcomed because we can get at them from where we live and not have to drive through the city," (Dan, former Balzac farmer). Better access to amenities is considered a positive change, and bringing in essential shops and services is recognized for its associated convenience rather than a negative trend toward urbanization. Both CrossIron Mills and Harmony are viewed by some respondents as the type of "core or hub" that is presently lacking in Springbank and the county in general (Marla, west side acreage owner; Victor, west side acreage owner), rationalizing that they will provide a needed sense of place or community.

With residents having provided their perspectives on why CrossIron Mills and Harmony were proposed in Rocky View County, as well as the resulting positive and negative impacts, the final stage of analysis involves reactions toward the two projects after they were approved by council. Not surprisingly, some respondents view the projects as valuable to the county while others feel they are inappropriate. Focusing first on those opposed to CrossIron Mills, there is the visceral response that ran as an undercurrent in other interviews but was fully expressed in only one: "It pissed me off," (Warren, east side farmer). There are concerns about Harmony based on "urban thinking in a rural location. I am completely against it because it is on a historic lake bed, and they did not prove they have access to water," (Donna, west side acreage owner). The "politics of water" are equally a cause for concern regarding CrossIron Mills, with the "first commercial sale of water in Canada setting a precedent for sale of water through NAFTA," (Warren, east side farmer). Accompanying the concerns about natural resource depletion are issues with financial burden caused by the projects. In speaking about Harmony, one respondent explained that her reaction "was about financial burden and concern with financial management

by the county. Residences cost the taxpayer $1.65 for every tax dollar they pay. Present taxpayers will pick up these costs and that's unacceptable for everyone," (Rita, west side farmer). The arguments presented by respondents like these rely on positioning conservation and preservation as serving the greater good of the environment, the community and its residents.

Taking up the issues related to water and financial burden, another group of respondents support the land use changes but not the process to achieve the changes. "I am supportive of CrossIron Mills, but critical of Rocky View County not getting City of Calgary water and sewer servicing. They let the deal get away because they wanted too much," (Nathan, west side rancher). Essentially, the project is viewed in a positive light but management of the servicing and associated costs was poorly negotiated by council, leaving a situation of higher costs because economies of scale were not leveraged. This lack of support for council is further described by another respondent. "I like the farm family and the developer who created Harmony. I think they're great people who will do what they say. But I don't like the way it got approved by a corrupt council that did not press for them to prove water sources," (Greg, west side acreage owner). Mistrust and doubt about council's motives are raised by comparing current councillors against their predecessors.

> Previous council had its own agenda. CrossIron Mills is excessive, a waste of water and a waste of land. Now Harmony and its engagement process leaves you feeling manipulated and it leaves a bitter taste. You just cannot envision what it will be. Harmony is someone else's dream and our nightmare. (Beth, west side acreage owner).

While mistrust of council does not overshadow the benefits of the two projects for some respondents, the ones who do not share the vision of the future of Rocky View County are left feeling displaced by land use change and development.

Shared social imaginings and visions of space, or lack thereof, create the bonds or

divisions between constituent groups in the urban-rural nexus. For those who share the vision with the county and the developer, the changes to land use are viewed as acceptable. “I thought CrossIron Mills was great because the East Balzac area structure plan had us anticipating it,” (Peter, east side acreage owner). There is a common vision of the space and its suitability for a given land use. For some, there is also a shared understanding of need. “The natural process is that people move in and lifestyles change, but that’s happening globally. Why object to something that makes business sense and is good for the area?” (Victor, west side acreage owner). Acceptance for social transformation of the county over time makes some respondents more amenable to land use change than others.

Some residents of Rocky View County spoke about social transformation from the perspective of changes that have come in many ways over time. Previous sections deal with the sense of loss of community, as well as the observations that urban lifestyles have replaced rural ones. For many, there are also concerns of aging in place for seniors. “We need to find a way to keep seniors in the community. It is not alright to be losing people every year who either die or have to move to the city for more appropriate housing,” (Greg, west side acreage owner). A longtime resident who was asked about his reaction to CrossIron Mills stated, “My gut reaction was: God bless them. We must have a plan for the people who made this country the best in the world - our seniors. There need to be services, hospitals and clinics in this area so they are not sent to facilities with no friends or family around,” (Dan, former Balzac farmer). Other longtime residents advocate for land use change to benefit landowners with history in the region. “Once you know something like CrossIron Mills can go ahead, your thought process changes. It is hard to see native prairie land disrupted but it is also a good opportunity for the people who owned the land,” (Brenda, Balzac farmer).

IV. Conclusion

As times change and people with conflicting social constructions of space come to occupy the urban-rural nexus, the process of social transformation will vary among constituent groups and create conflict related to appropriate future land uses. One person's view of the land as a space to be preserved is as strong as another's perspective of the land as a means of production or source of revenue. Within Rocky View County, utilizing CrossIron Mills and Harmony as tangible cases of land use change assisted the data gathering and analysis process by drawing out perceptions of what the urban-rural nexus can and should be in the present and the future. Both cases were also predominant examples during the Reeve's Task Force hearings, indicating that they resonate with county residents regardless of perspective on land use change.

Equally significant is the fact that both CrossIron Mills and Harmony are approved projects representing unprecedented land use change in Rocky View County. Their application processes, community engagement strategies and implementation hurdles have been closely watched by others aspiring to develop in the county. For example, November 2013 saw the announcement of two more commercial projects in the county: the planned New Horizon Mall near Balzac and the proposed RioCan/Tangers Outlets at Calaway Park. Both locations have been recognized for years by land speculators, retailers and developers as development-friendly areas (Toneguzzi 2013), yet no plans have moved forward. Reasons of commercial market instability, lack of adequate servicing and inappropriateness of built form have been cited as rationale for the lack of development in these two areas. However, it is equally possible that Rocky View County's desire to approve massive land use change with CrossIron Mills and Harmony was the key to enabling more approvals that were previously denied. While determining causality is outside the scope of this research project, it is possible that future

projects will either benefit from the processes used by the two cases or move forward as supplementary developments for either project.

From a sociological perspective, it stands to reason that the approvals of CrossIron Mills and Harmony created the sense of inevitability that many respondents articulated in their positions on land use change. Specifically, if projects of this scope and size are approved on lands adjacent to farms and acreages, then logic dictates smaller developments or ancillary uses may also be approved in the vicinity. Further, if these developments are approved in one part of the county, they may also be replicated in others. In this way, approval of a physical transformation of land by decision-makers begins the process of social transformation for residents. The preceding analysis of the cases of CrossIron Mills and Harmony indicates that residents and decision-makers within Rocky View County have either embraced or come to terms with land use change. While there are still groups that feel empowered and have organized their members to speak out against change, others have defaulted to powerlessness and accepted its inevitability. Most interestingly, there are those who have committed themselves to creating an autonomous county that will regulate its inevitable social transformation on its own terms. Thus, utilization of CrossIron Mills and Harmony as cases of land use change in the urban-rural nexus generates data that adds the critical element of power to the dimensions of conflict.

The interview data for this research project is robust, multi-faceted and insightful. While complexities of perspectives come to light with contextually complete responses, commonalities also emerged between the themes resulting from the interview data analysis and other methodologies used in this research project. Reasons for supporting or criticizing land use change, like the cases of CrossIron Mills and Harmony, center around the themes that have been prevalent in other stages of analysis: ecological concerns, land rights, urbanization, county

autonomy. To summarize the findings of the interview data analysis, there are four interwoven themes.

First, there is support for the preservation and conservation position that natural resources in Rocky View County are in high demand yet short supply. Among the endangered resources are agricultural operations, natural prairie lands, and water supply. Opponents to land use change argue that increased land development will devastate our global food supplies and damage the delicate ecosystem that maintains water supplies and natural landscapes. Second, there is the counter position that agricultural operators have the best understanding of farming and farmland. If it is their perspective that some areas are no longer fertile and others are too constrained by neighbouring urban uses, then we must not tie these agricultural operators to a land use that will prohibit sale of lands for other purposes. If farmland is perceived as a financial asset akin to a retirement strategy, there must be recognition of landowner rights for the financial viability of longtime agricultural residents.

The third theme asks the question of how much "urban" should be contained within the urban-rural nexus. While developers and administrators see the need for increased servicing capacity to maintain and attract more urban-type projects, there is no assurance of how water and sewage can be managed. Thus, the existing water and sewage management options for places like CrossIron Mills are called into question for their sustainability. There is an option to tie in to Calgary's infrastructure for servicing requirements, yet the desire to enter such a relationship remains absent. This leads to the fourth theme of county autonomy. For administrators, developers and some members of council, the transformation of Rocky View County has started and should continue until full autonomy is a reality. To achieve this type of self-sufficiency, advocates believe that land use change can help the county achieve a balance between residential

and commercial uses, as well as a balance between urban and rural settlements. In this social imagining, Rocky View County relies less on its regional partners to share space and corresponding activities. Instead, the county moves forward as a municipality that can be all things to all people. However, not all decision-makers on council share this perspective and it is also not endorsed by a large enough majority of the voting public. Therefore, Rocky View County as a municipal entity continues to struggle in defining itself and presenting a consistent identity.

Through the interview data analysis, it becomes clear that conflicts among and within constituent groups in the county are more complex than much of the literature has documented. The provision of a contextual understanding of conflict is a major contribution of this research project to the literature on social transformation in the urban-rural nexus. By examining the conflicting roles, identities and social constructions at play in the hybrid zone, there is an opportunity to define the urban-rural nexus as experienced by its constituent groups. Removing the shackles of binding dichotomies like urban and rural allows for definitions of hybrid spaces that appreciate socialization processes, meaning-making and transformation over time. Not all stakeholders in Rocky View County agree on what their space means to them, but this type of research allows those perceptions to be vocalized and potentially exchanged with others to seek common ground.

Most significant in this interview data analysis has been the focus on conflicting perspectives and how groups position their own social constructions of space over others. Conservationists and land rights advocates equally try to influence decision-makers to limit or encourage land use change in the way that best represents their interests. However, the decision-makers are selected from the very groups that try to sway their opinions. It then stands to reason

that the constituent group most able to drive electors to the polls to vote in "friendly" councillors will be the most successful at shaping the future of land use in Rocky View County. This interrelation between groups with influence and groups with power is a major finding of this research project that will be discussed in more detail in the following concluding chapter.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

In studying the urban-rural nexus, this research project demonstrates the multidimensional nature of social relations and conflict in this hybrid zone between the city and the country. The analysis reveals a collection of different subgroups that comprise the county, each with its own values and social imaginings of space that come together and conflict in myriad patterns depending upon the issues and groups involved. As an urban-rural nexus, Rocky View County provides an interesting and timely case study of a hybrid area undergoing dramatic change as differing perspectives on land use and way of life come into contact with each other. Given the steady population growth of the city of Calgary and the urban satellites enveloped by the county, urbanization pressures will continue to bring change and conflict to Rocky View County. At the same time, declining interest in and viability of agricultural operations is transforming the nature of the farm community in this urban-rural nexus as families contemplate sale of long-held lands and transition into a different life. Conflicting and converging pressures, combined with ongoing social transformation of people and spaces, create a situation where no continuum can predict the future of this nexus that defies classification as rural, urban or some point in between. Predictable outcomes are moot in a contested space rife with incompatible social constructs of place.

The urban-rural nexus is a land in a perpetual state of flux. Its conflicts are multidimensional and the pressures it faces come from varied sources. Externally, urban and commercial pressures squeeze these hybrid places to change and create mixed use spaces. Internally, struggles to maintain identities and ways of life explode into battles between residents. Further adding to the tension in this charged space are the contests between governing bodies who invoke different sources of legitimacy to claim authority over decision-making, all in

the interest of establishing their own social constructs of the urban-rural nexus. In this zone of transition filled with mixed identities and inconsistent social imaginings of space, the layers of complexity in every issue create dimensions of conflict that can neither be understood nor resolved in a simple manner. This research project has demonstrated through a multi-method analysis of people, places and meanings attached to space that the urban-rural nexus is a space unlike any other. It must be conceptualized on its own terms, using the perspectives of the people who lay claim to its spaces.

I. Contributions to the Literature

In fulfilling the research goals of identifying the meanings attached to space in the urban-rural nexus, as well as the dimensions of conflict over land use, this study addresses gaps in the existing literature and provides an original contribution to our understanding of hybrid regions.

1. Theoretical Contribution

Accepting the challenge to return to the field and focus again on the actor's point of view (Falk and Pinhey 1978), this research project utilizes social constructionism as a way to understand the meaning-making process of individuals in the urban-rural nexus. Unlike other research that begins with definitions of urban and rural and tries to fit the nexus into an established scheme (Redfield 1947; Key 1961; Cloke and Edwards 1986; Beggs, Haines and Hurlbert 1996; Champion and Hugo 2004), the goal of this study was to move beyond reification of urban and rural as separate concepts. Rather, the goal was to uncover the ways in which individuals within the nexus make sense of their everyday encounters with others, and the typification schemes employed in defining urban and rural (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Harris 2010). It is from the perspective of actors in the urban-rural nexus that identities of self, other and constituent groups can be contextually understood. Classification of groups allows for an

analysis of how different sets of values have had an impact on identities in the nexus over time. In keeping with the social transformation thesis of hybrid spaces (Parkins and Read 2013; Reimer 2013; Bryant 2013), this research project demonstrates that urban and rural have had transforming effects upon one another as opposed to the belief that only urbanization pressures affect change in the nexus. The transformed and sometimes split identities that emerge in the nexus include acreage owners as interested in both land preservation and personal property values, along with agricultural operators with a desire to hold on to the family farm while also considering the resale value of their land.

Social transformation also allows for an understanding of the unpredictable nature of constituent group alliances in the urban-rural nexus. In shared spaces, values held by constituent groups can change over time based on interactions with other groups and pressures from multiple sources. As a result, the primary value orientations of seemingly unlike groups, such as farmers and developers, may lead to partnerships that deliver a mutually beneficial, yet unpredicted, end result (Form 1954). In this way, social construction models show us how people create meanings in the spaces they inhabit, while social transformation advances the notion that identities change over time through exposure to others. Within this research project, these theoretical underpinnings facilitate the goal of contextual understandings of urban and rural.

The choice of social constructionism as a theoretical foundation for this study highlights the role of power in the urban-rural nexus. Landscapes are constructed by individuals who have a specific vision of space, thus executing that vision is an exercise of power (Hanson 2013). This power is particularly significant in the urban-rural nexus where dramatically different interpretations of the space are competing with each other to shape the landscape according to a particular vision. Discourse analysis also plays a key role in this study as both a theory and

methodology that is driven by the understanding of all talk as claims-making for a desired result (Miller 1993). From the Reeve's Task Force public hearing data and interviews with stakeholders, it is apparent that individuals within the urban-rural nexus employ multiple claims-making techniques to influence decision-makers in creating their endorsed visions of space.

2. Methodological Contribution

It has been raised in the literature that demographic and geographic attributes alone cannot address the social characteristics that are critical to explaining urban and rural differences (Kurtz and Eicher 1958). While scales have been developed in an effort to operationalize the characteristics of ideal urban and rural types, these approaches have been called into question (Miner 1952), along with contradictory results that suggest urban and rural may not be polarities based on social ties data (Key 1961). Further, there is the issue of ongoing transformation of rural (and urban) areas that renders indexes incompatible from one research period to the next (Cloke and Edwards 1986). Quantitative approaches to examining urban, rural and in-between spaces also miss the important element of studying what is in the minds of the individuals who inhabit these spaces (Bell 1992). However, demographic data is useful in setting the stage for more in-depth research into perspectives on life in the urban-rural nexus. Thus, this research project combines elements of both quantitative and qualitative methods to paint a true picture of the hybrid region.

To start, the community analysis conducted in this study provides the baseline needed to understand the socioeconomic characteristics of people who live in Rocky View County as an example of the urban-rural nexus. The indicators of class and ethnicity uncovered in the demographic profile play a strong role in subsequent analyses of different constituent groups and their conflicts. Further, historical information on the county's growth and governance models

provides the context needed to understand stakeholder perspectives in the public hearing and interview data.

Next, from a qualitative perspective this research project is rooted in the community studies tradition to obtain firsthand perspectives of life in the urban-rural nexus. Analysis of the meaning-making process is considered more valuable than generating standardized definitions of urban and rural. Thus, insider perspectives from respondents within the nexus allow for a deeper understanding of social constructs than outsider musings of what the hybrid space means to people, a methodological decision that is in keeping with traditional community studies of contested spaces (Whyte 1943; Vidich and Bensman 1958; Gans 1962). By examining the lived experiences of residents and other stakeholders, there is appreciation of the conflicting values among residents who arrived in the nexus at different times (Macgregor 2010), as well as an appreciation for those who have grown and transformed in this "interstitial space," (do Carmo 2010). Finally, this research project takes a cue from Sampson's (2011) re-examination of neighbourhood effects in Chicago. Employing a diverse number of methods and data, his work is recognized as significant for the future of social science research as a comprehensive empirical study (Wilson 2011; Denton 2013). While this project is not at the scale of Sampson's (2011) research, it is an effort to exercise similar methodological rigour.

3. Analytical Contribution

Also in keeping with Sampson's (2011) empirically grounded study, this research project prioritizes the case study approach over a broader conceptual approach to analyzing the urban-rural nexus. First, the urban-rural nexus is identified as a distinct settlement type (Sorokin, Zimmerman and Galpin 1965; Pryor 1968; Sharp and Clark 2008) that deserves attention as a space unlike suburbs, exurbs, edge cities or other concepts that may be included within its

bounds. Then, this empirical investigation of the urban-rural nexus positions Rocky View County as a timely case study of a zone in transition between urban and rural land uses. While this research is special in its investigation of a rural Canadian municipality in a metropolitan setting without a formal regional partnership, the constituent groups and conflicts that comprise this county are reflective of the urban-rural nexus in many other locations (Johnson and Schmidt 2009; Hanna and Noble 2010; Bunce 2010; Caldwell 2010; Gayler 2010; Taylor 2010; Bryant and Marois 2010).

The decision to examine land use change as source of conflict is also particular to this study, as is the usage of two examples of mega-projects that epitomize urban-type land uses in a rural county. Investigating perceptions of land use change as evidenced by two tangible examples allows for analysis of physical representations of social constructs in the contested space of the nexus. Competing images of space (Lynch 1960) were brought to light through the perspectives on appropriateness of CrossIron Mills and Harmony as examples of land use change in Rocky View County.

Finally, this research project offers a new way to analyze conflict in the urban-rural nexus through both discourse analysis and the dimensions of conflict approach. Discourse analysis of the public hearing and interview data reveals that multiple, conflicting claims are made by different stakeholder groups in describing the urban-rural nexus and appropriate land uses within it. This identification of conflict through claims-making is a new way of understanding the nexus, and one that indicates that there are multiple pressure points acting on residents and other stakeholders within the hybrid zone. This supports the position that urbanization pressures alone do not explain conflict in the nexus; rather, the conflict is layered and complex between exurban, commercial, political and internal pressure points. Further, conflict is multidimensional in nature

with cross-cutting cleavages between issues and groups. Prioritization of different values by different groups brings them into conflict with each other at different times, exemplified by the counter positions of preservationists and farmers' rights advocates over sale of land for development. The most unseen yet complicated conflict takes place at an individual level, where diversity of identities and values within a single actor create inner turmoil. Identification of the three levels of conflict (among groups, within groups and within individuals) is an original contribution of this research project.

Table 10.1 provides a summary of the theoretical, methodological and analytical contributions of this research project.

Table 10.1: Contributions to the Literature on the Urban-Rural Nexus

Realm of Contribution	Main Points
Theoretical	• Social constructionist approach to privilege meaning-making processes over researcher-defined concepts of urban and rural • Social transformation approach to understanding evolving identities of actors in the nexus • Social constructs and discourse understood as claims that position one vision of space over all others
Methodological	• Community analysis for baseline understanding of demographic characteristics and geopolitical history • Participant observation and interviews to analyze meaning-making processes and conflicts • Community studies approach to contested space to appreciate lived experiences
Analytical	• Empirical investigation rather than conceptualization of urban-rural nexus • Case study model • Land use as source of conflict • Discourse analysis of claims-making • Dimensions of conflict approach • Three levels of conflict – among groups, within groups and within individuals

II. Summary of Findings

This research project proposes reconceptualization of the urban-rural nexus in an innovative manner. To begin, an analysis of the meanings attached to space allows for a better understanding of what urban and rural mean to people who use the terminology as descriptors of their lives within the hybrid zone. Understanding the terminology allows for a greater appreciation of the individual and group identities that exist in the nexus. Then, analysis of conflicts illuminates the multidimensional and often intertwined issues that exist in the urban-rural nexus. These conflicts can exist among groups, within groups and within individuals. Lastly, the meaning-making and claims-making processes that generate identities and conflicts must be viewed for the larger purpose they serve. Ultimately, these processes are efforts to privilege one social construct over all others to define the nexus in a particular manner. Thus, more than any standardized definition that can be created for the urban-rural nexus, it is the analysis of social constructs and the power of constituent groups to enforce those constructs that best defines this hybrid space.

1. Meaning-Making Beyond Urban and Rural

Default usage of dichotomous terminology like urban and rural is based on a need to easily categorize or compartmentalize people and experiences because there is not enough time to analyze and think through every interaction. However, when time is available and issues are significant, people engage in claims-making processes to develop and express their perspectives with the hope that someone will be persuaded to see things in the same way. Given the opportunity, people call upon their interpretations of situations and place them into the broader context of their lived experiences to reflect the meaning-making processes at work in defining urban, rural and the spaces in between. By removing the focus from dichotomous and

standardized definitions of urban and rural, this research project pushes us to consider the terms from the perspective of the laypeople who use them. In this way, we are exposed to the images and interpretations that accompany the use of urban and rural as they are perceived by residents in these spaces. Most important to this study is the application of urban and rural as they pertain to the urban-rural nexus.

Those seeking to define urban and rural have generally done so in a manner that presents the terms in a dichotomous manner. Building upon the dichotomy, further conceptualizations of an urban-rural continuum have been developed to explain the points between the extremes or ideal types. The main issue with these approaches is the desire to create a uniform category to contain people and places that have become increasingly complex over time. In early agrarian times or economies with a simple division of labour, demarcating roles or identities was a more straightforward process that allowed for clear categorization of people and the land they occupied. However, contemporary societies and economies are much more complex with multiplicity of roles and diversity of social ties between people. As a result, the spaces people occupy are riddled with multiple uses, identities and relationships.

Within the scope of this research project, defining urban and rural serves the purpose of understanding how the terms create social imaginings of space in the urban-rural nexus. For this reason, enabling respondents to present their own interpretations of the terminology using personal examples uncovers the values that are linked to definitions. In varying contexts, "urban" is presented by respondents in a positive manner as an indication of sophistication and appreciation for the sustainability that accompanies urban-type densities and development processes. From a political perspective, "urban" is viewed by some respondents as a superior position and one that holds an upper hand in negotiating land uses and development. On the

other hand, "rural" is representative of limited understanding and backwards processes that prevent municipalities like Rocky View County from engaging equally with Calgary in determining future growth and land use change in the metropolitan region. However, "rural" is also invoked to convey a sense of community and belonging that is lacking in urban settings. The differing connotations in which urban and rural are used by participants confirm the position of this research project that geographic and demographic definitions cannot fully convey the meanings attached to the terms. Rather, urban and rural serve as the shorthand version of complex interpretations of the people and interactions that represent specific places.

Another poignant example is that of the farmer as a metaphor for rurality. The practice of using the farmer as the symbol of the rural municipality, and the entrenchment of the agricultural value system, is at a crossroads in Rocky View County. In the past, the farmer was the general symbol of community, with the municipality's prosperity tied to the farmer's prosperity (Vidich and Bensman 1958). Presently, some characteristics of the farmer are still used to invoke a sense of land stewardship and loyalty to a rural way of life. For preservationists, conserving agricultural land uses serves the dual purpose of promoting farming and limiting urban-style growth. However, the social transformation of farm life and new realities of agricultural operators cause problems for preservationist goals. When faced with the reality of exchange value of land overshadowing its use value in the urban-rural nexus, the contemporary farmer ceases to be the primary advocate for an agricultural way of life and becomes the antithesis of the symbol lauded by preservationists. This results in preservationists positioning the farmer as both self-interested and as a rube, a person who has turned his or her back on the land and lacks the sophistication to serve the needs of a more refined and educated population that values preservation of agriculture. While this characterization is not supported by the data on

educational attainment, profession and general socioeconomic status, it works well for rhetorical purposes of creating an ideological foe. Because the farmer is such a strong symbol in the urban-rural nexus, no group is able to fully detach themselves from agricultural tradition and identity. What changes from group to group is how the symbolism of the farmer is used for different ends.

2. How Perceptions of Space Impact Group and Individual Identities

At the start of this research project, it resembled other studies that attempt to understand the nature of conflict in the urban-rural nexus by first identifying different constituent groups and then investigating their perspectives on land use. Early into the participant observation and later supplemented by the interview process, it became apparent that categorizing people into groups was not an easy task. As discussed earlier, the multiple roles that individuals play in their lives and in the nexus make it impossible to compartmentalize them into neat boxes. However, this realization also served the purpose of highlighting the need to privilege the ways in which people relate to the spaces they occupy. By exploring people's interpretations of land uses and placing their perspectives into the context of their lived experiences, a more complete understanding of their social constructs emerges. People view the same piece of land in very different ways, often due to the interactions they have had with that space over the course of their lives. It can be viewed as a means of production, commodity, nature, playground, retreat or any combination of these visions. Rather than focusing solely on identifying distinct constituent groups with specific meanings attached to space, this research project chose to investigate how people form their personal identities and the identities of their spaces according to social constructs or interpretations. In this way, identity becomes much more complex than simply thinking of a person or place as urban or rural.

Once identities are formed, they can be used strategically at different times for different

purposes. In Alice Wickston's story of the farmer, she speaks of land stewardship, agriculture and retirement in the same breath. She invokes the identity of farmer as settler, homesteader and pioneer for the specific purpose of building legitimacy to switch to her next point: let me sell my land so that I may enter the next stage of my life and retire my body from the hardships of the farm life. While the meaning she attaches to the land has changed over time, Alice uses the identities the land has afforded her over time to make her claim in the hope that her social construct of the urban-rural nexus will take precedence over others. Investigating meaning-making in this hybrid zone comes with the caution that meanings change over time, creating new identities for those who hold them. It is important to understand the full range of identities over time to fully appreciate the process of social transformation of people and places.

In the same way that people change over time, the urban-rural nexus as an entity itself has changed. More than just the transition from an agricultural region to mixed use municipality, Rocky View County demonstrates how geopolitical transformation changes the identity of spaces. With the Calgary metropolitan region as the only large urban area in Canada with a voluntary regional partnership, the case of Rocky View County continues to be a relevant example of how a hybrid area manages change with no mandated regional identity imposed by higher levels of government. In the past, the county was the designated as the agricultural space, buffer and annexation area within the Calgary metropolitan region as governed by the provincial regional planning commission. This role was clearly defined for the county as Calgary was designated the location for all urban-type activity and development. With the abolition of the planning commission, however, Rocky View County is presently in a position to autonomously determine its own fate as an urban-rural nexus. The question now becomes which social constructions of space will provide the vision for future place-making.

When asked about the role of Rocky View County in the Calgary metropolitan region, respondents provide very different responses based on their lived experiences. While many residents feel that the county is an inexperienced junior partner in the process of shaping the region's future, members of administration and the land development industry feel that Rocky View County has become the leader in setting a vision for the lands that surround Calgary. These are dramatically different identities to be shared by a single entity. Preservationists assert the identity of inexperience when they question the county's decisions favouring land use change, while farmers' rights advocates see the county as a visionary that understands times have changed for agriculture. Staunch agriculturalists feel the county should only be in the business of farming, while seniors feel that aging in place can only be facilitated by Rocky View County creating more diversity in housing stock and providing more local heath care services. With the door blown wide open for what this formerly agricultural space can become, Rocky View County must now decide which social construct of space will become its identity.

Individual (or group) identity and the identity of the county are both in a state of transformation, and what each perceives itself to be is not necessarily the perception of others. Given the multiplicity of roles and hybrid nature of identities in the contemporary urban-rural nexus, it is possible to invoke different elements of identity as situations change. For this reason, classification of individuals, groups or the county as something singular is impossible. Just as the single identity of the farmer is no longer a reality, there is also no single identity of the rural municipality.

3. Multidimensional Nature of Conflict

Without understanding the complexity and interconnectivity of social imaginings of space, our impressions of the conflicts among people in shared spaces is lacking in depth. By

analyzing the claims-making processes of participants at the Rocky View County Reeve's Task Force public hearings, this research project took the first step towards identifying the different groups and social constructions of space that exist in the urban-rural nexus. To further explore the emergent themes from the hearings, interviews with residents and other stakeholders in the county revealed subgroups that go beyond the general characteristics of farmer, acreage owner and land developer.

Group identities are tied to more than occupation or location in many cases. The prioritization of different values results in subgroupings that draw membership from multiple larger groups. This is why farmers can be split between groups that desire some development and those that wish to restrict all land use to agricultural only. Different issues will result in inconsistency in group composition depending upon the side of the argument chosen by an actor. The diversity of people in the urban-rural nexus, the number of roles they play in their lives, the variety of issues they face, and the number of relationships they must negotiate all contribute to the multiplicity of positions regarding land use. Complexity is reflected in the dimensions of conflict and the ability for issues to cut across different groups.

Within this research project, the farmer offers a strong example to represent the complexities of conflict. To start, the traditional perception of the farmer is linked to the identity of one who uses land as a means of production. This identity positions the farmer as a champion for preservation of the agricultural land uses typically seen in rural municipalities. As an advocate for the agricultural way of life, farmers as a group should be positioned at the opposite end of a hypothetical continuum that places land developers on the other pole. However, the data reveal that this traditional identity of the farmer does not represent all farmers. While equally committed to the land as a means of production, there are those who also value the land for its

resale potential. Reasons for selling land include aging and inability to work the land, as well as dwindling economic viability of agricultural pursuits due to urbanization and economic pressures. For reasons like this, perception of land shifts from its use value through the commodity it produces to the exchange value of the land as a commodity itself. Now there is conflict not only among groups who wish to preserve agriculture and those who desire development, but there is also a fault line within the agricultural group among those who want no development and those who want some development.

Social imaginings of space do not remain constant over time as different variables bring about changes to group and individual perspectives. As demonstrated by the example of farmers not being a united group, there are situational and life stage differences that alter the values people prioritize during decision-making. Particularly in a place like Rocky View County where farm operators are declining in numbers and their median age is increasing, financial security for retirement creeps up the priority list of values and competes with the desire to preserve an agricultural lifestyle. It is here that the third level of conflict can be seen in the urban-rural nexus, when the individual must make choices between values that are impacted by the pressures of hybridity. What is distinct about the urban-rural nexus, however, is its situational conflict. For agricultural operators, this conflict is more than an occupational struggle where the only decision to be made is between farming and not farming. In the context of the nexus, where proximity to urban areas inflates the monetary or exchange value of agricultural land, the rationale for land sale may not have anything to do with aging, ability or economic viability. The decision to sell agricultural land in the urban-rural nexus is different from rural areas in the sense that its future use potential gives it value to non-farmers. On the other hand, farmland in rural areas would only hold use value for those pursuing agricultural interests. In this way, the third level of conflict in

the nexus becomes a battle within the conscience of the farmer who must choose between staying true to agricultural roots or generating revenue from land sale. It is a conflict of personal values.

4. The Role of Power

A place like the urban-rural nexus defies a singular definition or identity due to the complexity of identities and conflicts that are contained within it. However, it can be understood as the confluence of people with differing values that have had influence over each other as they have come to share a common space that contains their homes, farms, workplaces, schools, places of worship and social networks. Sharing this hybrid space has resulted in conflicts over the activities and accompanying land uses that are most appropriate in the nexus, which is often conflict between the use value and exchange value of the land. This contested space is also a segregated space, where land use change has been successful in some areas but not others. For example, commercial, retail and industrial development prevail in east Rocky View County while the west side has largely become an agglomeration of estate homes in acreage subdivisions. The way in which an urban-rural nexus like Rocky View County segregates land use is a physical representation of social constructions, an indication that meaning-making is as much about interpreting space as it is an exercise in power to have that space reflect a particular vision.

Power is an important consideration in analyzing the meanings attached to space in the urban-rural nexus. No group is perceived to be completely powerless, but there is a difference in the legitimacy and authority carried by each. The claims-making processes utilized at the Reeve’s Task Force public hearings demonstrate that different sources of legitimacy are tapped by different groups. While the preservationist position is built upon doing the right thing for the

environment and ensuring that food supplies for future generations are not jeopardized by land development decisions, the counter argument from farmers' rights advocates is that agricultural operations are in a state of collapse from urbanization pressures and allowing land sale is the only means to compensate farmers as they transition out of their occupation. Both positions appeal to higher moral ground, with one being altruistic and the other based on entitlement and compassion. It is difficult to argue against either one because both have enacted strong discursive strategies.

The question, however, is not which argument holds more weight. Rather, the question is which argument will appeal to the decision-makers entrusted to represent the best interests of the citizenry in the urban-rural nexus. At the level of local governance, there is opportunity for groups to appeal to councillors who live in their districts and hold the same views on land use change. For this reason, the occupational shift away from agricultural pursuits combined with an increased population of exurbanites means that the majority of the population in the county may not understand the farmer's way of life. If this large segment of the population is also able to influence voting behaviour through organized and vocalized messaging, there is a strong possibility that county council will be comprised of like-minded people who align with the preservationist position over the farmers' rights position. Based on the data from interviews with county residents, many people believe that the 2010 municipal election accomplished the task of electing a pro-preservation council and perceived irresponsible development decisions will be a thing of the past.

While there may be confidence that local decision-makers can either be influenced and/or switched out in election years, there is less empirical evidence that the same opinion holds for other decision-making bodies. Respondents have little to say about their influence over the

Calgary Regional Partnership or the provincial government. When mentioned, the perspective is that urban regional partnership members do not understand the needs of rural municipalities, a belief that has resulted several rural jurisdictions like Rocky View County withdrawing from the partnership. Provincially, some respondents make reference to watershed programs and larger resource management initiatives with the interpretation that Government of Alberta decision-makers will agree with preservationist claims and limit future land development. Both governance bodies hold some measure of authority in determining the fate of Rocky View County. Membership in the regional partnership is voluntary, but it is still an officially recognized organization that has influence on provincial decision-making. Further, the provincial government can trump any local decision-making through legislation. Presently, the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan is being circulated to stakeholders following a lengthy consultation process. If approved by cabinet, this plan will become the law that governs land use for the region. As such, any decisions made at the local Rocky View County level will have to abide by the provisions of the provincial land use framework. Therefore, residents' ability to influence local councillors will become less effective if a regional framework supersedes county decisions on land use change.

As decision-making models related to land use evolve in the Calgary metropolitan region, the ability of groups within Rocky View County to influence decision-makers will also change. Presently, the approach is to appeal to local councillors with the understanding that like-minded thinkers will make decisions on land use that align with constituents' perspectives. Both the vocal, organized preservationist groups and the quieter, organic groupings of farmers feel that councillors can relate to their images of space in the urban-rural nexus. However, there is complete mistrust for members of the Calgary Regional Partnership because their collective

social construct is believed to be detrimental for the county is its urban-type vision of higher densities and shared servicing. The provincial land use framework provides discomfort to farmers' rights advocates who believe that land rights will not be upheld in the newly proposed model. It is anticipated that measures to protect water supplies and agricultural ways of life will restrict land development and neuter local decision-making authority. Further, there is a sense of unease that while some members of regional or provincial decision-making bodies may share local visions of appropriate land use in the urban-rural nexus, the ability to influence these people is much more difficult than influencing local council.

5. Future Considerations for Rocky View County

The urban-rural nexus has been presented as a distinct and complex space based on the findings of this research project. Building upon the empirical examination of Rocky View County as an urban-rural nexus, a conceptualization scheme has been proposed that recognizes the significance of meaning-making, conflict analysis and influence strategies as critical components in understanding this hybrid space. This conceptual scheme is a departure from traditional practices of dichotomizing urban and rural as opposite ends of a continuum that can fit hybrid spaces along its axis. Most original to this conceptualization is the position that cross-cutting cleavages between groups and issues create dimensions of conflict over land use. The multiplicity of positions in the nexus are so conflictual that creating unity between constituent groups and individuals is an impossible exercise. There is no commonality to hold this place together, resulting in a heterogeneous collective of people and groups that is more typical of urban spaces. "Rocky View is a county of extremes. We try to be gentle and say it's a community of communities, but it's really a community of extremes," (Rachel, county councillor).

Over time, Rocky View County has changed from a cohesive rural community of like-minded individuals with shared interests to a disconnected series of communities where people have little in common. Backgrounds, lifestyles and interests of constituents in the urban-rural nexus are too varied for social cohesion. People may live in a shared space, but their identity may not be connected to the land. For some, changing land use and migration of exurbanites into formerly rural spaces has resulted in creation of a place that no longer reflects their old ways of life. For others, their lives are spent in the urban-rural nexus but their identity is located elsewhere. They are aware that they came from somewhere else and can identify that they do not belong here. In these ways, sense of identity in the nexus can be a confusing mix of roles that may or may not translate into a sense of connectivity with others.

As Rocky View County continues its transformation as an urban-rural hybrid space, the cleavages between groups and perspectives will become more pronounced. The continued expansion of commercial retail projects into the county will have an impact on its identity. If the proposed outlet mall near Calaway Park on the west side of the county proceeds to construction, it will create a retail hub that draws in non-residents for consumption of goods and experiences centered around the concept of "shoppertainment," (Hannigan 1998). Similarly in the Balzac area, the New Horizon Asian mall will be built to serve a niche market of consumers that do not reside in the county. However, with the draw of culturally-specific social institutions like the New Horizon Mall near Balzac or the Khalsa School in Conrich just east of Calgary, it is likely that the residential population of Rocky View County will change in time. In marketing a $2.4 million land development opportunity east of Calgary, Equinox One Real Estate Services Ltd. (2013) describes the parcel as "directly across the street from the Khalsa School (and) perfect for the developer who wants to plan and start to develop the surrounding land, as it is sure to become

a key part of the new Conrich." Using the Khalsa School as a geographic landmark in marketing material indicates that it has become an established social institution in this part of Rocky View County. Combined with the ethnic population findings noted in Chapter 7, this part of Rocky View County may face new dimensions of conflict as people with different cultural backgrounds take up residence in an area that was relatively homogenous in the past.

Akin to the Khalsa School, the Edge School for Athletes in Springbank is another social institution that is changing the constituency of the county. While it is outside the scope of this research project to determine the makeup of Edge School's student population from a demographic perspective, several respondents in Springbank expressed frustration at the changes brought into the county by this school. Increased traffic, increased wastewater removal and the general disconnect of students from the larger community are some of the issues that bring the school's population into conflict with residents. With the popularity of the school growing as an alternative for athletics-based scholarship, requirements for residence of students may change and place pressure on the west side of the county to meet housing needs of families with students wishing to enroll at Edge School. Even without residence requirements for admission, the desire for residential proximity to the school could bring increased housing demand to the area. It remains to be seen if this potential residential demand and the associated households blend in with the existing population or trigger further dimensions of conflicts.

As a final example of land use bringing the potential for increased conflict in the urban-rural nexus, the Rancher's Beef site near CrossIron Mills that was vacated in 2007 will be reactivated by Harmony Beef in 2014. Sale of the facility was approved in late 2013, and met with little official resistance as the land is already zoned for this type of activity. However, there is a possibility that occupants of new residential and commercial developments in the area since

the closure of the previous plant will take issue with this industrial use in their proximity. Because land use change in the county has been dynamic over time, it remains to be seen if a returning use is easily received in the face of massive transformation of the area since 2007. The dimensions of conflict over this meat processing facility could include residents, employees and shoppers taking aim at smells from the beef plant. Additionally, agricultural advocates may be at odds with acreage owners and businesses over the appropriateness of this land use in a now established area.

6. Broader Implications for Metropolitan Regions

These examples are intended to highlight the potential for continued transformation of the urban-rural nexus as a space that houses many different people and institutions that do not fit any schemes of compatibility in terms of land use or lifestyle. If we continue to conceptualize hybrid spaces along an urban-rural continuum, the opportunity to understand conflict and social transformation from the perspective of constituent groups will be lost. By examining the meanings attached to land and the identities generated by those meanings, there is a way to understand the conflicts that arise through the values they represent. At a time when the urban-rural nexus is undergoing massive change, it is imperative for sociologists to refocus their analytical efforts on the people within these contested spaces.

With the scope and scale of changes occurring in hybrid spaces, urban and rural sociologists must also be aware of the implications to cities and their metropolitan regions. There are issues raised through this research project that apply to all cities as they continue to grow and burst out of their boundaries into adjacent spaces. For example, if the current crisis of consumption (Hannigan 2010) in our cities is an indication of the financial and infrastructure strains on urban municipalities, how will growth into outlying areas be managed? If people

choose to live in either more affordable or higher social status communities outside the core city's jurisdiction, there is no opportunity for urban municipalities to tax these exurbanites for the services they use inside the city without expanded governance powers. In Canada, there are varying degrees of power given through city charters but the general model is to enforce regional partnerships as a means of achieving economies of scale, as well as reliance on higher levels of government for funding. Regional models have enjoyed varied success, but the bigger issue is the sustainability of providing regional servicing like public transit and road infrastructure over a sprawling space. Once the city overextends itself into outlying areas, will it trigger some type of post-suburban "specialized locales within wider multi-nodal metropolitan systems" (Phelps and Wu 2011:5) that change the way we view metropolitan regions?

Now let us suppose that the opposite scenario becomes a reality, where land is preserved for agricultural uses and green spaces at the edges of cities. Presently in Canada, provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan are seeing interest in large agricultural land purchases by development speculators and those interested in preserving arable lands (O'Brien and Kirbyson 2012). There is also foreign interest in Canadian farmland, a proposition that is not surprising in the global economy but unsettling to farmers who see a move from family-owned farms to rented farmland as a negative impact on their way of life. If this trend in commercialization and globalization of farming continues, will it drive more people to seek other (urban) forms of employment? There is also the possibility that rented farmland will make agricultural operations a destination workplace rather than a home-based business, meaning that people in those occupations will need to seek residence elsewhere. Will this changing face of farming also change the metropolitan landscape as it adapts to differing residential and occupational needs?

Our understandings of urban and rural spaces have undergone dramatic change as land

uses have become less constrained by traditional definitions and zoning policies. The outpouring of urban-type land uses and developments into rural areas has created hybrid spaces that have implications for life in the metropolitan region. To view the urban-rural nexus as separate from the metropolitan region is a mistake; it is in fact a mirror of the contested and segregated spaces that exist in our cities. Moving forward in our sociological research programs, it will be necessary to abandon the tendencies to separate urban studies from rural studies in metropolitan areas and instead appreciate the effect of each on the other. The new, more comprehensive direction we require to fully understand the changing nature of the urban-rural nexus and its surrounding areas is based on the study of metropolitan regions.

Along with identifying the need for a shift in our scholarly focus, this research project also raises questions about the urban-rural nexus that will interest policy-makers and practitioners. Specifically, is there a better way to organize and govern these hybrid spaces to address the conflicting meanings and demands attached to space? For Rocky View County, is there a better regional structure that can manage the conflicting values and ways of life that coexist in this single jurisdiction? As much as we need to reorganize our understanding of the urban-rural nexus, decision-makers must also consider how governance can be reorganized to better serve the multiple stakeholders that hold an interest in this contested space. This case study poses a challenge to both scholars and practitioners in that it questions the relevance of traditional models of hybrid urban-rural spaces, both from a theoretical and practical point of view. Through identification of the interconnected stakeholders, meanings and conflicts that exist in the urban-rural nexus, this research project encourages a new understanding based on the perspectives of the people within this distinct setting.

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Appendix A: Interview Guides

I. Guide for Background Interviews (developers, designers, investors and decision-makers)

1. Tell me about your position or role as it relates to Rocky View County or (project name).
2. What do you think are the major issues facing Rocky View County today?
3. In your opinion, what role does Rocky View County play in the Calgary metropolitan region?
4. Tell me about the different opinions that you feel exist about Rocky View County, and the different groups that hold these opinions.
    a. What influence do these groups have on the future of Rocky View County?
5. Was (project name) a routine application in land use change?
    a. How was it similar to others?
    b. What made it different?
    c. Did you and/or the county have to modify your processes with this application?
6. Did you engage with local stakeholders on this project?
    a. How do you think the public has responded to the development?
7. Do you feel Rocky View County's approach to land use change has evolved as a result of this application for (project name)?

II. Guide for Resident Interviews

1. Tell me where you live in the county.
2. How long have you lived in Rocky View County?
    a. Always at the same address?
    b. (If applicable) Where did you live before?
3. What do you do for a living?

   a. Are you employed within the county, or outside?
   b. Have you always worked inside/outside the county?
4. What do you think are the major issues facing Rocky View County today?
5. In your opinion, what role does Rocky View County play in the Calgary metropolitan region?
6. Tell me about the different opinions that you feel exist about Rocky View County, and the different groups that hold these opinions.
   a. What influence do these groups have on the future of Rocky View County?
7. How has life changed for you in Rocky View County since your early years here?
   a. What were your expectations for life in Rocky View County when you moved here?
   b. Have your expectations been met?
   c. Have land use changes impacted your expectations?
8. How familiar are you with land uses in Rocky View County, anywhere from very familiar to not at all?
   a. Which land use changes do you view as positive?
   b. Which land use changes do you disagree with?
9. Why do you think (project name) was proposed?
10. Tell me about how you responded to (project name) when it was first proposed.
    a. How do you feel about (project name) now that it is an approved part of Rocky View County?
    b. Tell me about any conflicts that have surfaced as a result of this development.
    c. What role, if any, have you played in the debates surrounding (project name)?