

Amenity migration: diverse conceptualizations of drivers, socioeconomic dimensions, and emerging challenges

Hannah Gosnell · Jesse Abrams

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Abstract Rural communities throughout the post-industrial world are in the midst of a significant transition, sometimes referred to as rural restructuring, as traditional land uses, economic activities, and social arrangements transition to those associated with “post-productivist” or “multifunctional” landscapes. Amenity migration, the movement of people based on the draw of natural and/or cultural amenities, can be thought of as both driver and implication of this transition, resulting in significant changes in the ownership, use, and governance of rural lands, as well as in the composition and socioeconomic dynamics of rural communities. In concert with other social, economic and political processes, amenity migration is contributing to the fundamental transformation of rural communities throughout the world. This paper presents a review of the social science literature related to the concept of amenity migration, focusing on the ways in which it has been conceptualized, theorized, and documented by different communities of scholars. We then profile and summarize diverse perspectives on drivers and socioeconomic impacts, highlighting emerging challenges and opportunities related to this type of migration occurring at multiple scales and in multiple sites. The paper also identifies and discusses particular areas where further research is needed.

Keywords Amenity migration · Counterurbanization · Rural restructuring · Post-productivist transition

Introduction

Rural communities throughout the postindustrial world are in the midst of a significant transition, sometimes referred to as “rural restructuring” (Nelson 2001, Woods 2003), as traditional land uses, economic activities, and social arrangements transition to those associated with “post-productivist” or “multifunctional” landscapes (Holmes 2002, 2006; McCarthy 2005; Wilson 2001, 2006). Amenity migration, the movement of people based on the draw of natural and/or cultural amenities, can be thought of as both driver and outcome of this transition, resulting in significant changes in the ownership, use, and governance of rural lands, as well as in the composition and socioeconomic dynamics of rural communities. Amenity migration is a phenomenon of increasing interest to rural geographers and other social scientists due to the ways in which, in concert with other social, economic and political processes, it is contributing to the fundamental transformation of rural communities in more developed regions throughout the world.

This paper presents a review of the social science literature related to the concept of amenity migration and complements Taylor’s review of a range of

H. Gosnell (✉) · J. Abrams
Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR, USA
e-mail: gosnellh@geo.oregonstate.edu

approaches to studying exurbia in this issue (Taylor 2010). With a focus on the role of *natural* rather than cultural or other types of amenities, we first consider ways in which this migration phenomenon has been conceptualized, theorized, and documented by different communities of scholars, and the diverse terminology employed by researchers in different places and in different disciplines. We then profile and summarize diverse perspectives on drivers of amenity migration occurring at multiple scales, including globalization and rural structural change, gentrification, and the motivations of amenity migrants. Next we review literature dealing with the economic and social impacts of amenity migration on rural communities. Finally, the paper identifies and discusses particular areas where further research is needed. We consider the ecological dimensions of amenity migration to some extent, but review literature dealing more specifically with implications for ecosystems and environmental governance elsewhere (Abrams and Gosnell, in review). Throughout the paper we highlight emerging challenges and opportunities related to natural amenity-driven migration occurring at multiple scales and in multiple sites.

Conceptualizing and describing amenity migration

Natural amenities have long played an important role in changing the geographic distribution of social and economic activity. As Power (1996) notes, British observers noted economic growth in “fashionable watering holes” like Bath and Brighton as early as 1811. This long history in the U.K. could explain the relative sophistication and theoretical richness of rural studies literature emanating from that region dealing with urban-to-rural migration. American scholars did not start writing about the phenomenon in a concerted and analytical way until the 1970s, though Moss (2006) traces documentation of the phenomenon in the US back to Edward Ullman (1954) who noted a “migration reversal” in the 1950s. David Bell (1973) was another early observer of the ways in which quality of life—a function in large part of the presence of natural amenities—determined economic well-being in postindustrial societies moreso than quantity of goods. Sofranko and Williams (1980) identified “amenity movers” as

a significant portion of rural in-migrants to the North Central US in the 1970s, and Williams (1979) made an early attempt to understand the motivations of these migrants. Research efforts examining amenity migration, and closely related phenomena such as exurbanization and rural gentrification, have grown in number and scope since the 1970s.

One of the challenges related to a review of scholarship on amenity migration has to do with the diffuse nature of the literature. Articles with insights into the phenomenon appear in publications ranging from *Society and Natural Resources* and *Journal of Rural Studies* to *Coastal Resource Management*, *Research on Aging*, *Mountain Research and Development*, *Journal of Travel Research*, and *Rangeland Ecology and Management*, among others. Further, many important findings are in the gray literature, e.g. reports from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (McGranahan 1999; McCool and Kruger 2003; Garber-Yonts 2004; Stein et al. 2005). Several comprehensive literature reviews have already been conducted (e.g., Marcoullier et al. 2002; Stewart 2002; Garber-Yonts 2004; McCarthy 2008; Kruger et al. 2009); and several books deal with the issue explicitly or in large part (Boyle and Halfacree 1998; Jobes 2000; Jackson and Kuhlken 2005; Moss 2006; Travis 2007; Jacob 1997). None of these, however, have attempted to synthesize the global literature on this complex and multifaceted phenomenon.

Terminology

Limiting a review of this phenomenon to studies explicitly referring to “amenity migration” would be incomplete, as the term is not universally used. In Australia, amenity migrants are often referred to as “lifestylers” (Curry et al. 2001), many of whom are responsible for a “sea change” in that country, the term used to describe migration to high amenity coastal areas (Curry et al. 2001; Gurran and Blakely 2007). Other studies refer to “back-to-the-landers” (Halfacree 2006, 2007), and Smith (2007) even notes a “back-to-the water” phenomenon among houseboaters in southeast England. Amenity migration, or “aspirational migration” (Woods 2003), is often linked with processes of “counterurbanization” (Boyle and Halfacree 1998; Dahms and McComb 1999; Otterstrom and Shumway 2003; Mitchell 2004; Löffler and Steinecke 2006, 2007; Halfacree 1994),

a “rural rebound” (Johnson et al. 2005; Johnson and Cromartie 2006), and/or a “population turnaround” (Lewis 2000). Other related nomenclature includes “the new countryside” (Beesley et al. 2003), “the global countryside” (Woods 2007), and the “urbanization of the rural” (Cloeke 2006). Studies related to amenity migration in the range management literature include considerations of “trophy ranchers” (Gentner and Tanaka 2002) and “amenity buyers” (Gosnell and Travis 2005) and the ways in which urbanization, exurbanization, subdivision, and “changing faces” are impacting ranch landscapes and communities and approaches to resource management (Huntsinger et al. 1997; Liffmann et al. 2000; Sayre 2002; Wulfhorst et al. 2006).

In reviewing and synthesizing the international literature on “amenity migration,” it is important to acknowledge that the term refers to a variety of migration processes taking place in diverse spatial, political, social, and economic contexts. In addition to discrepancies in terminology related to different cultural contexts, as discussed above, there is also no academic consensus on precisely what phenomena this term includes, and therefore, a review of the concept raises questions of how to delineate its boundaries. As stated above, a general working definition of the phenomena is “the movement of people based on the draw of natural and/or cultural amenities;” but does that include the “back-to-the-land” movement of the 1960s and 1970s as documented by scholars such as Jacob (1997)? Similarly, does the term include similar urban to rural migration patterns documented in the US, the UK, and Australia as well as those in countries such as Estonia and Nepal? Does it include issues of second-home ownership and absenteeism as investigated by Stedman et al. (2006), Schnaiberg et al. (2002), Godbey and Bevins (1987), Stewart and Stynes (1993), and Green et al. (1996)? How is amenity migration related to exurbanization? Taylor, in her exurbia literature review in this issue, includes amenity migration as an approach to studying exurbia which looks at the complexity of causes and impacts of exurban growth along with urban fringe studies, counterurbanization, and research on residential preference. Rather than attempting to dogmatically provide concrete answers to these questions, we have chosen to be inclusive, for the purposes of this paper, drawing on research on various urban to rural

migration patterns in diverse cultural contexts; however, we do exclude rural suburbanization patterns that are the focus of Taylor’s review of exurbanization in this issue.

A regional literature?

Demographers, geographers, and sociologists focusing on the American West arguably account for the bulk of the literature on the topic from the 1970s to the present, and the American West is perhaps the most often-cited example of a region experiencing high rates of population growth related to amenity migration (see, e.g. Rudzitis and Johansen 1989; Rudzitis 1993, 1999; Shumway and Davis 1996; Nelson 1997; Cromartie and Wardwell 1999; Judson et al. 1999; Beyers and Nelson 2000; Shumway and Otterstrom 2001; Smutny 2002; Otterstrom and Shumway 2003; Vias and Carruthers 2005). Since much of the amenity migration and related exurban and suburban development around the world is arguably “American-style” (Leichenko and Solecki 2005, see also McCarthy 2008 for a lengthy consideration of this phenomenon, resulting in what he refers to as the “global rural”), lessons from the US may be relevant in other geographic contexts. As Robbins et al. (2009) argue, it is critical to recognize the global nature of the changes taking place in the American West and elsewhere, and not limit analyses of rural demographic and economic change to fixed boundaries, such as the legendary “hundredth meridian” often used to bound the American West (Stegner 1954; Wilkinson 1992). This is why we argue that a cross-regional review of literature related to amenity migration can catalyze new insights regarding linkages and continuities, as well as regional specificities.

The western US, like many other places rich in natural amenities, is in the midst of a major transformation. Traditionally envisioned as America’s “outback,” a rural, remote frontier characterized by open spaces, low population densities, and the dominance of primary sector activities such as ranching, logging, and mining, the American West today stands as the fastest growing region in the nation, as well as the most heavily urbanized (Otterstrom and Shumway 2003; Travis 2007). Extractive and manufacturing activities that have traditionally anchored western economies are now dwarfed in importance by service-sector and high-

tech industries (Power and Barrett 2001; Vias and Carruthers 2005), and the region's scenic landscapes are increasingly valued more for the aesthetic and recreational amenities they provide than for their stocks of precious metals, timber, or forage. While the population boom in the West has been concentrated in urban and suburban zones, rural areas have also seen significant change. Economists focused on the so-called New West, e.g. Thomas Power and Ray Rasker, have published many articles documenting the ways in which amenity migration is contributing to the transition and revitalization of western rural economies formerly dependent on extractive industries like timber, mining, and grazing (Power 1996; Rasker and Hackman 1996; Rasker and Hansen 2000; Power and Barrett 2001; Winkler et al. 2007).

The United Kingdom has likewise been the source of a well-developed literature on rural change, treating counterurbanization as one component of a larger social and economic restructuring of rural places and people as they transition away from "productivist" agricultural activities (Ilbery and Bowler 1998; Wilson 2001; Halfacree and Boyle 1998). The emerging post-productivist or multifunctional countryside is defined in part by non-agricultural representations of rurality, the rise of the consumption of rural landscapes, and the movement of urban ideals and expectations to rural places (Wilson 2001). The macro-scale structural changes associated with the decline of state-supported agricultural regimes are seen to create sociopolitical vacuums at the local level that are filled, at least partially, through the redefinition of rural lands from productive to consumptive goods (Lowe et al. 1993). Indeed, Halfacree and Boyle (1998, p. 9) posit that "migration of people to the more rural areas of the developed world... forms perhaps *the* central dynamic in the creation of any post-productivist countryside."

More recently, case studies from elsewhere in North America and around the world documenting the phenomenon have been published, including ones from Spain (Paniagua 2002; Elizburu 2007), France (Buller and Hoggart 1994), Scotland (Short and Stockdale 1999; Stockdale et al. 2000), Ireland (Mahon 2007; Ní Laoire 2007), The Netherlands (van Dam et al 2002), Estonia (Tammaru et al. 2004), Canada (Dahms and McComb 1999), Australia (Curry et al. 2001, Gurran and Blakely 2007), New Zealand (Woods 2010), and Latin America more

generally (Ferras 2007). Nepal (2007) even employs the counterurbanization literature to explain emerging rural settlement patterns related to tourism in the Annapurna region of Nepal.

Theorizing rural change: from global influences to local dynamics

A sizeable body of literature has begun to address questions of the proximal and distal causes of amenity-led rural change. A variety of factors operating at multiple scales contribute to making the movement of affluent urban populations to scenic rural areas possible, desirable, and socially acceptable. These include global flows of capital and goods that help explain the susceptibility of rural spaces to post-productivist migration patterns, national and regional cultural and demographic trends that drive the development of these patterns within specific contexts, and the unique attributes of local rural places which influence the outcomes of migration phenomena. Examining the motivations of amenity migrants through, for example, explorations of the rural idyll, analysis of "pull factors," or by way of ethnographic research, provides insight into the movement of ideas and expectations that accompanies amenity migration (Bjelland et al. 2006; Kearney 2006; Knox 1992), but it often fails to shed light on the movement of capital within particular rural contexts. Importantly, Scott et al. (2010), Young (2010), and Hurley and Halfacree (2010) (all this issue) offer new insight into the ways that the desires of amenity migrants about the rural landscape and its development intersect with local needs and expectations. This section summarizes literature that examines amenity migration in terms of global and regional drivers contributing to processes of rural gentrification, as well as the role of individual preferences, decisions, and behavior.

Globalization and rural structural change

Understanding the global phenomenon of amenity migration requires attention to global patterns of capital investment and disinvestment and the uneven contributions of various nations (and the rural places within them) to patterns of production and consumption. While the relation between national or

international restructuring and local-level rural change has received a great deal of attention in the European literature, a more limited amount of North American scholarship has attempted to explicitly analyze amenity migration to rural areas in terms of “how the global intersects with the local in the experiences of individual agents” (Fitzgerald 2006, p. 1). Woods (2003) and McCarthy (2008, p. 129) in particular explore some of the ways in which “rural areas are being produced through increasingly globalized forms and relationships.” A major driver of this change is global trade liberalization, which has allowed developed countries to outsource the production of food and fiber to less developed countries rather than relying on domestic production. As Stauber (2001) points out, such changes have led urban America to break its long-standing “contract” with rural America. The commodification of domestic rural landscapes as lifestyle amenities is one result of this contractual vacuum.

Nelson (2002, p. 905) looks at recent changes in the American West through the lens of rural restructuring, observing that “neoliberal trade policies, capital-labor substitution, industrial restructuring, and diminishing resource quality have resulted in declining employment and income levels in the region’s traditionally basic sectors,” contributing to outmigration of longtime residents and the cultivation of new economies by in-migrants. Stauber (2001) also links rural amenity migration to the decline of the rural middle class due to limited family-wage economic opportunities in rural areas and the emergence of suburban America as the location of domestic political power. He posits that the increasing sophistication of global trade arrangements and a national policy promoting “lowest-cost services to the urban majority” has undermined rural American prosperity and led to current economic and social transformations (Stauber 2001, p. 14). Buttel (2003) likewise points to the role of an increasingly globalized marketplace in putting marginal American lands at a disadvantage in terms of the production of mass commodities (see also Carlin and Saupé 1993). Similarly, declining labor needs in other extractive sectors due to mechanization and downsizing, for example in timber and mining, have contributed to rural change (Power 1996).

Jackson-Smith (2003) links rural community change to the declining role of commercial farm

and forest operations nationwide, but also emphasizes the importance of demographic factors and changing employment patterns. He identifies retirement and housing trends, as well as “the decreased real cost of transportation, the growth of the digital and service economies, and the rise of telecommuting” (p. 308) as key contributing factors. The advancement of telecommunications networks nationally and globally, combined with a decreased importance of physical presence in white-collar work has played a role; as has the ease of physical transportation with the aid of well-maintained highways and interstates as well as rural runways (Ory and Mokhtarian 2006; Jackson and Kuhlken 2005; Travis 2007).

Hoey (2005, 2006) examines the influence of social and structural transitions during the past three decades on middle-class working families in the United States, specifically the postindustrial economic restructuring and corporate downsizing that defines the contemporary workplace. He describes how some workers and their families, by leaving the city for rural areas, are challenging assumptions of the American Dream that promise future reward for loyalty to an employer, hard work, and self-sacrifice. The author interprets this life-style migration as a negotiation of tension “between experience of material demands in pursuit of a livelihood within the flexible New Economy and prevailing cultural conventions for the good life that shape the moral narratives that define individual character” (Hoey 2005, p. 586). Others note the transformation of consumerism in modern capitalist societies from a focus on the consumption of objects of utility to the consumption of lifestyles, identities, culture and leisure (Marsden et al. 1993; Smith and Phillips 2001).

While economic conditions are clearly variable both within and between the numerous countries experiencing amenity migration, the existing literature suggests some common patterns of rural restructuring. These changes, related largely to the devalorization of domestic productivist activities in the face of global trade liberalization, are not by themselves sufficient to explain amenity migration, but are rather posited as a necessary first step leading to the subsequent revalorization of rural space for consumptive activities, and related processes of rural gentrification.

Rural gentrification

Both British and American scholars have used a “rural gentrification” framework, drawing on gentrification theory from the urban studies literature, to interpret the dynamics of counterurbanization in specific places (Phillips 1993, 2002, 2004; Phillips et al. 2008; Smith (2002a, b); Darling 2005). According to this perspective, community change results from the displacement of local households through increases in the cost of living and home prices. Darling (2005), like Phillips (1993) before her, makes use of the “rent gap” theory, investigating the importance of the revalorization of devalued rural properties within the sweep of changes from productivist to post-productivist rural landscapes. Revalorized rural spaces are seen to take on the characteristics of “positional goods,” signifiers of wealth and status available only to the elite few (Cloe and Thrift 1990; Phillips 1993).

Travis (2007) describes the gentrification of ranching landscapes throughout the American West, driven largely by the transformation of rangelands from low-value productive lands to high-value positional goods, as well as the draw of the cowboy myth. In a study of ranching activities in southern Arizona, Sayre (2002) points to the interplay of suburban development, commodification of an idealized ranching lifestyle, and specific tax policies in the transformation of rural landscapes. Smith’s (1998) treatment of rural gentrification introduced the concept of “greentrification,” highlighting the importance of ideals of nature to rural in-migrants and drawing attention to the way that natural or semi-natural rural spaces become valorized as high-end consumptive commodities. The terrain of rural gentrification includes a variety of actors—including, for example, “marginal gentrifiers” (Phillips 1993), those whose contributions to the valorization of rural residential areas comes primarily through sweat equity rather than financial capital, and rural “gatekeepers” (Smith 2002a, b), real estate agents and other intermediaries that actively regulate the movement of various social strata into and out of gentrifying rural places—transforming diverse rural spaces in response to multiple push and pull factors. The rural gentrification framework contributes to an understanding of amenity migration by integrating socially constructed nature and rural idylls with national and international

patterns of investment and disinvestment in rural places.

Understanding migration patterns also requires a closer look at the agents of change themselves and the ways they actively construct and reconstruct rural places through the movement of bodies, capital, and ideas.

The motivations of amenity migrants

Much of the amenity migration literature references the “pull factors” of rural areas (Marcoullier et al. 2002; Hansen et al. 2002). In these studies, specific expectations regarding the natural and cultural environment of rural areas act as major drivers of the migration phenomenon (Deller et al 2001; McGranahan 1999; Rudzitis 1993, 1999; Riebsame et al. 1996; Theobald et al. 1996). In a study of small-acreage forest owners in Virginia, for example, Kendra and Hull (2005) found that economic motivations were highly important for only a small minority of landowners, and that values associated with quality of life, proximity to nature, recreation, and escapism were more common. This characterization of family forest owners placing economic returns from their land as secondary or tertiary priorities is consistent with much of the literature on non-industrial private forest owners (Finley et al. 2005). Likewise, in a study of new ranch owners in the Greater Yellowstone Ecoregion, Gosnell et al. (2007) found the “River Runs Through It” phenomenon to play a significant role in newcomers’ decisions to purchase agricultural land in this high amenity area, much of it featuring miles of private stream frontage for exclusive and uninterrupted fly fishing.

These examples highlight the importance of social constructions of rurality and urbanity, and their effects on individual decisions to relocate. Amenity migration can be interpreted as a reaction to the ills of urban space, or, like urban gentrification processes, as a reaction to the perceived stifling effects of suburbia (Phillips 2004). As McCarthy (2008, p. 131) observes, “understanding amenity migration demands investigation of the widely circulating imaginaries, meanings, and performances coded as ‘rural’ that generate demand for, and somewhat orchestrate the production and use of, particular commodifications of rural landscapes.”

Perhaps the most important social dynamic related to amenity migration in rural areas is the construction and importation of rural ideals (or “idylls,” see Bell 2007) by the primarily urban in-migrants (Halfacree 1994; Cadieux 2010). Smith and Phillips (2001, p. 458) argue that “the consumption of reinvented images of rurality can provide a source of identity, shared living experiences, membership of social space and group, and can be perceived as a medium for obtaining a ‘sense of place’ in the world. Studies of new middle-class consumption practices have highlighted the power of affluent in-migrants to inscribe their idealized vision of rural living upon the landscape.” Significantly, these ideals of rurality often conflict with understandings of land and community among long-standing rural residents (Yung et al. 2003; Wulfhorst et al. 2006).

The desire among urban populations to possess an idealized rural lifestyle is seen by many scholars as a powerful transformative factor, particularly in light of technological and workplace changes that allow many white-collar workers to work remotely from almost anywhere. Rasker (2006) and Power (1996) use a “quality of life” model of economic development to explain recent shifts in rural economies in places such as the American West. According to their model, new development is driven by a high quality physical and social environment that attracts foot-loose, self-employed or telecommuting individuals, many of whom bring with them other forms of capital, e.g. home equity and investment income.

Several scholars have examined the role that the land tenure system in the American West, which includes public or limited-public access to scenic federally-owned landscapes, has played in attracting migrants (Frentz et al. 2004). Wilderness areas, in particular, have proven to be major magnets for amenity migrants (Rudzitis and Johansen 1989; Duffy-Deno 1998; Rudzitis and Johnson 2000; Rasker 2005). Environmental quality has also been shown to be important to older, affluent Americans, many of whom are nearing or have reached retirement age. As the nation’s baby boomers continue to retire, migration to high amenity areas by this demographic is expected to continue (Haas and Serow 2002; Nelson et al. 2004).

A lesser-known but promising subset of the literature on the American context features ethnographic research by anthropologists on the motivations of “lifestyle migrants.” Hoey (2005, 2006)

examines “relocation stories” of people who leave corporate culture behind in search of the rural idyll, and, indeed, of themselves. “Decisions to start over take place within the context of moral questions about what makes a life worth living and what does not through a process in which geography has a bearing. For these migrants, a choice about where to live is also one about how to live” (Hoey 2006, p. 347). Similarly, Jacob (1997) and Hines (2007) characterize the experiences of a certain type of migrant as personal experiments in self-reliance, sustainability, and rural living. Hines (2007) draws on ethnographic research to document the ways that self-actualization often motivates migration to places like Montana’s Paradise Valley. Notions of “geographic salvation” or “aspirational ruralism” can be major drivers of urban flight and pursuit of the “rural idyll” (Woods, this issue). Along similar lines, Halfacree (2006, p. 309) traces the more-than-40-year history of “counter-cultural back-to-the-land experimentation” in England, critically interrogating “the extent of consubstantial relationships between land and everyday life.”

The nature of the progression from tourism and recreation to ownership (Godbey and Bevins 1987; Stewart and Stynes 1993), and the influx of retirees and other aging “baby boomers” to high amenity rural areas have been topics of study for a number of scholars (Benett 1996; Judson et al. 1999; Haas and Serow 2002; Serow 2003; Nelson et al. 2004; Stockdale 2006). Stewart (2002) emphasizes that amenity migrants’ change in location often develops over time, beginning with tourism to that area, leading to cottage rental or seasonal homeownership, and eventually permanent relocation (see also Godbey and Bevins 1987).

Given this diverse set of drivers occurring at a variety of scales, how does amenity migration play out “on-the-ground”? The following sections review literature dealing with the social and economic effects of the processes related to amenity migration described so far, followed by a consideration of emerging research challenges and needs.

Social implications

Landscapes and communities undergoing processes related to amenity migration are subject to a diversity

of in- and out-migrants, community contexts and consequent social dynamics. For example, whereas back-to-the-landers generally strive toward independence from the comforts and material provisions of urban areas (Jacob 1997), other amenity migrants, sometimes referred to as “modern cowboys” or “lone eagles,” seek to remain connected to urban centers through seasonal residential patterns, commuting (physically or telecommuting) to work in urban areas, or by encouraging the extension of urban comforts to rural places (Riebsame 1997; Ghose 2004; Hines 2007).

Despite evidence that rural areas are shaped by complex patterns of in- and out-migration (e.g. Cloke and Thrift 1990; Hoggart 2007; Nelson 1997; Ní Laoire 2007; Robbins et al. 2009) leading to a landscape of diverse rural spaces (Marsden et al. 1993; Murdoch et al. 2003; Woods 2003; Kendra and Hull 2005; Halfacree 2007), studies of the social implications of amenity migration tend to frame research questions around the differences between two broad categories of people: local residents with long-term, often generational, roots in the community on the one hand, and newcomers who generally lack social or familial ties to the community on the other. Salamon’s (2003a, b) research on rural communities, for example, reveals that “oldtimers” tend to be more invested in the community, while “newcomers” are more likely to have a transitory orientation, are less integrated into the community, and have a weaker sense of community. This “old vs. new” characterization does not reflect the full complexity of modern rural places (Robbins et al. 2009), but it does allow for the analysis of a particular social group of interest—the amenity migrants themselves—as they influence the dynamic rural communities into which they move. In particular, amenity migrants’ patterns of social interaction, civic and political engagement, spending, investment, and land ownership and use have the potential to affect social dynamics in unique ways that can be negative, positive, or some combination.

The sudden arrival of outsiders who import their own expectations and values, as well as their own constructions of rurality, can significantly alter the social context in receiving communities. This is especially the case where newcomers control large parcels of land and view the purpose of that land differently from “traditional” local expectations

(Gosnell et al. 2006; Haggerty and Travis 2006; Yung and Belsky 2007), when in-migration is associated with rapid development and population growth (Nelson 2002; Salamon 2003a; Ghose 2004), or when in-migrants change the local balance of political power (Walker and Fortmann 2003; Walker and Hurley 2004). Amenity migrants are often portrayed as lacking in understanding of local traditions and culture, local institutions and local sources of information (Moss 2006). Yet these same newcomers often play pivotal roles in regulating local space, for example through participation on local land-use boards or preservation organizations (Cloke et al. 1998; Walker and Hurley 2004).

Private property access is perhaps the most commonly cited flashpoint dividing newcomers and longtime owners (Brown 1995; Yung and Belsky 2007; Jagnow et al. 2006; Hurley et al. 2008). Increasing rural heterogeneity can complicate long-established traditions and implicit understandings having to do with management across private property boundaries. But in contrast to stereotypes linking the Old West with conservative ideologies regarding property rights, Yung and Belsky (2007) found that newcomers on ranchlands along the Rocky Mountain Front in Montana demonstrated stricter interpretations of property rights than longtime owners, often posting their land (with No Trespassing signs) and eschewing overtures from neighbors regarding cross-boundary management and public access. They note that “[e]fforts at cross-boundary conservation need to recognize the challenges of changing landownership and the ways that existing customs might provide important foundations of cooperation. At the same time, an increasingly diverse set of private landowners must negotiate mutually beneficial boundary practices that meet both existing and emerging community and conservation needs” (Yung and Belsky 2007, p. 689).

In light of the divergent constructions of place and community found in rural areas, a number of scholars have investigated the existence of a “culture clash” as new values and expectations are imported into rural communities (Smith and Krannich 2000). There is evidence that in-migrants are often offended by some of the less idyllic aspects of rural living, such as the smells, sounds, and noises associated with agriculture (Jackson-Smith 2003; Jackson and Kuhlken 2005) and forestry (Egan and Luloff 2005), and

may work to reconstruct local rural space to better match an urban middle-class ideal (Halfacree and Boyle 1998; Nesbitt and Weiner 2001). Some research also points to the existence of a “last settler syndrome” or “gang-plank” phenomenon, where recent in-migrants act to protect their newfound rural ideal by restricting further immigration, a stance that can conflict with community development and growth initiatives on the part of locals (Ploch (1978), but see Smith and Krannich (2000) for evidence against the gang-plank hypothesis). Amenity migration based on the draw of natural features may lead to a pro-environmental shift in rural values (Jones et al. 2003), or may elicit latent environmental tendencies in longtime owners (Fortmann and Kusel 1990; Smith and Krannich 2000).

Community political alliances and policy preferences are often re-negotiated during the amenity migration-driven transformation of rural places. Brunson et al. (1997) found that policy preferences related to natural resource management are a function of both occupational affiliation and geographic location, suggesting political shifts in response to changing rural demographics and economies. Walker and Fortmann (2003) describe a case in California’s Sierra Nevada where politically conservative newcomers had sufficiently different rural constructions from the politically conservative locals that they allied (at least temporarily) with a pro-environment segment of the population that had traditionally been shut out of local politics. While this alliance eventually fell apart, the study highlights the complex political landscapes that can emerge as rural communities undergo amenity-driven change. Drawing on the same case study, Hurley and Walker (2004) demonstrate the ways in which seemingly “scientific” land use planning based on widely-accepted conservation biology principles can be perceived as conspiratorial, shining light on the ideological differences between longtime residents and newcomers.

A number of studies (e.g. Theobald et al. 1996; Ghose 2004; Salamon 2003a, b; Sheridan 2007; Yung et al. 2003; Brogden and Greenberg 2003) describe how the social identities of rural places become susceptible to redefinition as new social groups begin to occupy space once occupied by others. Changes in patterns of land development, use, and habitation—for example, from agricultural land to exurban developments, or from working ranches to hobby

farms—serve to alter the socially constructed meanings of those spaces, rewriting the rules of what kinds of people, activities, and social relationships “belong.” This is reflected in Marsden et al.’s (1993) and Murdoch et al.’s (2003) characterization of “contested countrysides” and analogous concepts applied to other gentrifying rural places (e.g. Sayre 2002; Sheridan 2007; Walker and Fortmann 2003). In his investigation of changes underway in the American West, Sheridan (2007, pp. 122–123) drives the point home by saying that “urban America is attempting to produce Western rural spaces—recreational, aesthetic, environmental, iconic—that marginalize or destroy the extractive West.” Hurley et al. (2008) explore similar issues regarding sweetgrass basket-making in South Carolina. Their social-ecological examination demonstrates the ways in which place-based suburban landscape management strategies, together with new property regimes, may interact in new and unexpected ways, simultaneously rendering new opportunities for livelihood practices possible and closing off long-standing practices (see also Hurley and Halfacree, this issue). Still, this research provides strong evidence that amenity migrants are in the driver’s seat when it comes to terms of access to resource spaces.

Looking beyond issues of urban or rural classifications, it is clear that socioeconomic class differences play a major role in the restructuring of rural places that accompanies amenity migration. In the American West, for example, Nelson (2001) found that rural restructuring can increase awareness of class differences, particularly when in-migrants are (or are perceived to be) wealthier than local residents. Whether or not defined in terms of “gentrification,” amenity-driven rural change is typically framed as the displacement of lower-income groups by those with the financial freedom to afford rural living without relying on productivist activities (Cloke and Thrift 1990; Fielding 1998; Phillips 1993; Travis 2007), and the American West in particular is full of stories of rural areas “ruined” by an influx of wealthy outsiders (e.g. Rothman 1998). Phillips (1993, p. 124) cautions, however, that “[r]ather than seeing rural social change in terms of a middle class replacing a working class...in many instances it is probably more valid to talk in terms of one middle-class fraction replacing another.” Hoggart (2007) likewise found that popular conceptions of a stable rural working

class being pushed out by geographically mobile middle-class urban migrants was inaccurate in England and Wales. Rather, “working class” households were found to be dynamic, in terms of class composition, strategies to adapt to rural change, and patterns of migration.

In contrast to negative characterizations of the social implications of amenity migration, a number of studies show that receiving communities can benefit from changes associated with the arrival of newcomers (Krannich and Petrzela 2003; Clendenning et al. 2005). For example, Krannich et al. (2006) survey of four rural communities in the American West found that overall, community satisfaction was *higher* among residents of the areas most affected by amenity migration. They found no evidence of differing levels of social integration and civic engagement in the four communities.

To the extent that in-migrants represent a highly educated and politically active class of people (see, e.g., Hines 2007; Jacob 1997; Jones et al. 2003), they have the potential to improve their adopted locales through the mobilization of unique skills and abilities and new forms of capital. In many places amenity migration is responsible for reversing decades-long population declines (Johnson and Beale 1994, 1999; Johnson et al. 2005), creating renewed—if transformed—possibilities for the continuation of rural communities. Finally, local governance capacity, based on the active engagement of diverse local stakeholders, can also benefit from the increased human capital and diversity of values associated with amenity migration.

Economic implications

Economic effects of amenity migration in rural areas arise due to amenity migrants’ generally greater wealth than that of those they displace, their economic independence from traditional rural activities (such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, or manufacturing), and their generally more “urban” consumer habits, which create demands for new goods and services (or modifications in existing goods and services). A number of scholars have interpreted amenity migration as a phenomenon that is driven primarily by the accumulation of capital, through the commodification of agricultural

landscapes (which were admittedly already integrated into the service of capital accumulation but were not previously viewed as commodities outside of their productive value) (Sayre 2002); specifically by commodifying a rural ideal which can then be bought and sold as a lifestyle amenity (Smith and Phillips 2001; McCarthy 2008), or through the exploitation of the “rent gap” by middle-class outsiders, in a phenomenon similar to urban gentrification (Phillips 1993; Darling 2005). As McCarthy notes in a 2008 review of the ways in which the rural has been globalized, “the particular countryside on offer here is clearly a postproductivist one, with consumption-orientated uses for elites being the major commodities it produces” (McCarthy 2008, p. 129).

Assessing the net economic costs and benefits of amenity migration for rural places is a complex endeavor and a central preoccupation of rural resource planners, but outcomes are likely to vary depending on the characteristics of individual communities. On a basic level, the importation of wealth into rural areas can be seen as a welcome opportunity to struggling economies, particularly when amenity migrants invest in local improvements such as the building or renovation of structures. These same migrants can also increase local economic activity through demand for services such as land management, food service, and other more “urban” demands. A significant number of scholarly articles have focused on the ways in which natural amenities, especially public lands and other protected areas, stimulate economic growth by attracting individuals, small businesses, and retirees with nonearnings income, contributing to a variety of multiplier effects (Johnson and Rasker 1995; Power 1996; Nelson 1999, 2005; Vias 1999; Booth 1999; Shumway and Otterstrom 2001; Lorah and Southwick 2003; Serow 2003; Hunter et al. 2005; McKean et al. 2005; Rasker 2006).

But this does not hold true everywhere. In the American West there is a growing recognition of the significant “cost of community services” (e.g. fires, roads, police, school) that come with new residential development—especially in places far flung from town centers—and the fact that those costs often overshadow any new income from property taxes, for example (Travis 2007). In rural Scotland, Stockdale (2006) notes that in-migrants, while often possessing the necessary human capital to bring about an economic regeneration, are associated with relatively

little in the way of new job creation, since they are often self-employed. Saint Onge et al. (2007) used longitudinal data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics to investigate nationwide trends in socioeconomic well-being in rural areas and found that, while residents of high-growth amenity recreation (HGAR) counties have experienced higher income growth over time and greater occupational prestige than their non-HGAR counterparts, these gains were offset by higher costs of living, and that overall benefits accrued primarily to those in the lowest socioeconomic strata. They attribute this rise in socioeconomic status among the poor to the creation of low-skill service jobs. Ohman (1999) points out that amenity migration can attract migrants from a variety of economic backgrounds, potentially leading to greater income disparities, particularly as higher-wage primary and secondary sector jobs are replaced by lower-wage service jobs.

This aspect of the so-called postproductivist transition is especially apparent on agricultural landscapes, a frequent target of amenity migrants (Huntsinger et al. 1997; Hansen et al. 2002; Sayre 2002; Gentner and Tanaka 2002; Gosnell and Travis 2005). Existing case studies on amenity migration to agricultural landscapes in the American West suggest that a large proportion of new landowners are contributing to local economic shifts because of their lack of interest in the details of commodity production of any kind, instead opting to leave decisions regarding production in the hands of a ranch manager or replacing production altogether with other land uses (such as recreation or aesthetics). New owners will often de-emphasize conventional productive practices in favor of land uses that respond more to recreational, aesthetic, or conservation motivations, e.g. building trout ponds and reallocating water formerly used for irrigation to instream flow (Gosnell et al. 2007; Yung and Belsky 2007). As increasing numbers of landowners in a given area shift from productive to non-productive uses, secondary support industries and services associated with productive uses may decline and eventually disappear due to lack of financial support (Jackson-Smith 2003; Sampson and DeCoster 2000). Also, rural communities may struggle to maintain a diversity of economic activities as traditional and amenity uses come into conflict, for example when the costs of business rise for local ranchers due to the changed access

arrangements on neighbors' lands (Yung and Belsky 2007). These are a few examples of how the replacement of traditional landowners with amenity owners can create feedback loops that encourage continued transition.

At the same time that traditional land uses and associated employment fade under the influence of amenity migration, new opportunities arise in response to the changing economic landscape. Examples include services related to the management of newly acquired properties, outfitting and guide services, employment in construction and real estate, and retail, food industry, and other service jobs that accompany the more "urban" demands of amenity buyers (Ghose 2004). Like the primary- and secondary-sector jobs they replace, these new jobs are likely to be highly seasonal, particularly in the case of rural areas with high levels of absentee ownership. Meeting the challenges of high seasonal unemployment, combined with the increased cost of living may prove difficult for rural communities with few resources. Furthermore, these jobs generally provide lower wages and few (if any) benefits (Ohman 1999).

Most case studies of rural communities experiencing amenity migration note a significant rise in the price of housing and land as a consequence (e.g. Ghose 2004; Hammer and Winkler 2006; Loffler and Steinecke 2007; Torrell et al. 2005). This change is significant, as it can lead to a positive feedback cycle in which real estate prices continue to escalate as amenity migrants continue to arrive, making the persistence of traditional productive practices less feasible, leading to the continued selling-off of land for inflated prices, at which point the only possible buyers are more (and increasingly wealthy) amenity migrants. In their study of ranch values in New Mexico, Torrell et al. (2005, p. 537) found that "a relatively small percentage of ranch value was explained by income earnings. Ranch location, scenic view, and the desirable lifestyle influenced ranch value more than ranch income." As the ranching community disappears, so too do the businesses traditionally associated with productive agriculture, e.g., local farm machinery dealers. One change noted by the authors in the Upper Klamath Basin was that, while the local farm equipment dealership was still thriving, their inventory had changed from large tractors to smaller tractors aimed at hobby farmers, and a drive-thru espresso place had been added. With

inflated land prices may come a rise in other “cost of living” expenses as local businesses increasingly cater to a more affluent customer base (Ghose 2004).

As discussed above, amenity migration sets in motion a number of economic changes in receiving communities. The net benefits and harms will vary from place to place, and much will depend on the prior economic condition of the communities in question. It seems clear that, even in the absence of amenity migration, the economic benefits accruing from—and the level of activity in—extractive land uses such as logging, grazing, and mining would nevertheless be in decline, due to decreasing labor demands (e.g. through greater mechanization) and changing operational contexts, particularly global competition (see, e.g., Power 1996; Power and Barrett 2001; Buttel 2003; Vias and Carruthers 2005). In light of this, questions of community economic health should not be framed as a comparison of employment and entrepreneurial prospects in “contemporary” (i.e. amenity-based) versus “traditional” (i.e. extractive) economies, but rather as a comparison of alternative “contemporary” economies in which the high-employment, high-wage, and high-benefit jobs associated with activities such as industrial logging and milling can no longer be assumed to be core components.

Summary and future research needs

As the diversity of this literature attests, amenity migration as a concept includes a wide variety of activities that take place on a differentiated social landscape that is itself the result of multiple migration phenomena, globalization, and uneven development. The heightened interest in recent years in this particular migration pattern is due to its increasingly large footprint on rural landscapes worldwide. Factors such as the growing disparities between rich and poor and the increasingly interconnected nature of global markets and specific demographic patterns (e.g. “baby boomer” retirement in the US, the emergence of a flexible New Economy) work in concert to set the stage for lifestyle consumption of rural landscapes. While not an entirely novel phenomenon, amenity migration’s rise as a transformative process implies significant changes in the

dynamics of rural places worldwide. Thus, efforts to theorize these particular trends can be seen as part of “a larger conversation about the effects of globalization on rural areas” (Cloke et al. 2006; McCarthy 2008).

Indeed, as just one dimension of the broader transition to post-productivism in the global north, amenity migration can be thought of as a function of the interplay between macro-scale forces associated with global trade liberalization and the actions of individual human agents in search of idyllic rural spaces within which to live and recreate (Lowe et al. 1993; Halfacree 2006). Much of the literature emanating from the US tends to focus on the latter over the former. Referring to this gap, Nelson (2001, p. 395) rightly calls for “a more synthesized field of rural studies spanning disciplinary and national divides,” one that better blends economic and cultural perspectives to describe rural change. Hurley and Halfacre (2010) begin to address this deficit with their consideration of how amenity migration is affecting the traditional gathering practices of sweet-grass basket-makers in South Carolina’s Lowcountry (see also Hurley et al. 2008).

Another issue needing attention is the tendency of academics to cite “their own,” which has resulted in several discrete literatures that often fail to interact with one another. Geographers, rural sociologists, and scholars studying tourism and recreation would benefit from more iterative interactions. Robbins et al. (2009)—four geographers—deliberately chose to publish in *Rural Sociology* with the goal of provoking more critical dialogue between the two disciplines. Similarly, a review of the literature reveals a significant regional divide evidenced by the almost complete lack of cross-fertilization between rural scholars in the UK and the American West (but see Nelson 2001 and 2002 for exceptions), in spite of the fact that both regions are seeing demographic change in rural communities with similar outcomes, albeit in very different geographic contexts. Robbins et al. (2009) review literature on the so-called “New West” and identify several ways in which research taking place in this region could be more theoretically nuanced by considering global, universal trends. Similarly, many scholars in Australia are writing about amenity migration, but rarely cite scholars from the US, opting instead to theoretically position themselves in relation to the UK

literature. This latter example is especially lamentable given the similar geographies and ecological challenges confronting the US and Australia, and the potential for comparative research. Scholars from both hemispheres and both sides of “the pond” stand to gain insights by reaching beyond their traditional cohorts. Further, the growing number of studies of individual gentrifying rural places worldwide opens the possibility for cross-cultural synthetic work on the drivers and outcomes of amenity migration processes.

One area needing more research in this vein has to do with the ways in which demographic change related to amenity migration is interacting with global processes of devolution in environmental governance. Given the proliferation of collaborative conservation efforts around the world (and notably in the American West), how does the influx of newcomers influence the evolution of these initiatives? How do absentee owners and/or retirees from urban areas contribute to local governance? What kinds of agri-environmental alliances are emerging and with what social and ecological results? How is social capital and civic engagement affected by displacement of longtime owners (often “pillars of the community” in ranching communities with significant “local knowledge”)? This subject has been dealt with in regard to land use planning (Chipeniuk 2004; Travis 2007; Gurran and Blakely 2007), but what about governance related to ecological restoration, e.g. implementation of the Endangered Species Act in the American West, an increasingly vexing challenge for rural communities there?

Much of the existing literature has tended to frame amenity-driven rural change in terms of a transition from resource “exploitation” to “preservation” (e.g. Power 1996). This framing leaves unanswered questions about the value of working landscapes and what is often referred to as resource “stewardship,” the active and informed management of land for combined social, economic, and ecological benefits (Brown and Mitchell 2000). Indeed, one study found that visitors to Steamboat Springs, Colorado, would reduce both their expenditures and number of days spent if existing ranch lands were converted to urban uses. The average trip would be reduced by approximately 2.3 days and the average reduction in expenditures would be approximately \$100 per person per day, resulting in about \$230 less per person per trip spent there if ranching was not part of the vacation backdrop (Ellingson and Seidl 2009). To

the extent that working landscapes are considered to be important components of local economies as well as national and global conservation strategies (Beresford and Phillips 2000), there is a need to understand the potentially transformative effects of amenity-driven rural change in areas of traditional rural land use. In a 2004 editorial in *Rangeland Ecology and Management*, geographer Nathan Sayre (2004) makes a compelling case for the need for more qualitative research on the social dimensions of urbanization and other “new” rangeland issues, to improve our understanding of emerging management challenges and opportunities in these working landscapes.

In addition to questions about governance, scholars have yet to tap important questions about the ways in which increasing rural heterogeneity and new mixes of financial, social, and intellectual capital might catalyze the cultivation of new forms of economic development on agricultural landscapes around the world, e.g. local branding and the development of regional food systems, as well as schemes for payment for provision of ecosystem services. Not much is yet known about how these potentially promising “post-productivist” economic opportunities intersect with amenity migration and demographic change, how they are playing out on the land, and with what perils and pitfalls (though see Robertson (2004) for a critique of ecosystem service markets, and wetlands banking in particular).

A promising theme running throughout much of the more recent literature is the heterogeneous nature of rural places, complicating simple narratives of a “clash” of generalized urban and rural publics. Scholars such as Cloke et al. (1998), Kendra and Hull (2005), Marsden et al. (1993), Murdoch et al. (2003), Travis (2007), and Robbins et al. (2009) have characterized changes in rural areas as multidimensional, suggesting the need to examine the way different facets of amenity migration (e.g. “back-to-the-land” migration, wilderness gentrification, absentee ownership) influence diverse rural social and environmental settings, rather than attempting to capture the influence of a singular “amenity migration” on a singular “rural.”

Calls to expand conventional notions of rural space beyond material geographies to include space as conceived and as lived (Phillips 2004; Halfacree 2007) and to cross disciplinary boundaries in the study of rural gentrification (Smith 2002a, b; Phillips

et al. 2008) challenge rural scholars to add new dimensions of theoretical inquiry to the study of changing rural places. A growing body of literature has begun to examine unique examples of transformed rural space that provide new insights on the diverse forms amenity migration can take. These include, for example, “radical rural” spaces that eschew global capitalist networks of production and consumption in favor of self-sufficient local networks (Halfacree 2007), anti-urban intentional communities in the Netherlands (Meijering et al. 2007), and the specific patterns of rural gentrification by gay male (Kirkey and Forsyth 2001) and lesbian (Smith and Holt 2005) populations. How might changing rural spaces be more explicitly and originally conceptualized?

In conclusion, we are hopeful that this review, while certainly incomplete, provides some insight into the development of research on amenity migration, its diversity, and some of the central themes scholars have considered. Being a relatively new field of study, there are many unanswered questions and opportunities for new scholarship and, hopefully, more cross-fertilization and comparative work in the future.

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