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Ad hoc rural regionalism

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A B S T R A C T

A new regionalism has been much documented and researched for metropolitan areas; this article documents that there is a new rural regionalism as well. In the United States, these groups appear most likely to emerge in areas that are challenged by outcomes characterizing globalization's effects on the rural condition: namely, exurban or metropolitan sprawl and the resulting landscape fragmentation, often in combination with extreme pressure on the profitability of small farms or other resource uses. This research asks: what impetus is behind rural regional efforts; and what sort of processes of institutionalization do these groups utilize? The paper builds on theory developed by the new regional geographers over the last twenty years, most notably Anne Gilbert and Anssi Paasi, and applies the theoretical framework to three North American case studies in what can be classified as ad hoc rural initiatives in contested landscapes, initiated by local or grassroots actors to foster a specific conceptualization of region. While specific programming varies for different groups, rural regionalism addressed the balance between and interconnections of landscape and land use change, social networks, economic viability, and impacts of global industry. Central to the case studies are actors' efforts to create a regional identity, including forming institutions, defining regional boundaries, and identifying social/symbolic shapes for the region. The research discusses the importance of viewing regionalization through the lens of agency.

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> We must create in every region people who will be accustomed, from school onward, to humanist attitudes, co-operative methods, rational controls. These people will know in detail where they live and how they live; they will be united in a common feeling for their landscape, their literature and language, their local ways, and out of their own self-respect they will have a sympathetic understanding with other regions and different local peculiarities. Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, 1938

1. Introduction

In the U.S. literature, the 'new' regionalism is metropolitan in nature, but as Mumford's entreaty for "every region" suggests, rural regions are also appropriate objects of investigation. More to our point, in the U.S., rural districts have significant current activity in ad hoc, voluntary regionalism, but whether the nature of rural regionalism is the same as that of metropolitan regionalism is open for debate. This research asks two twinned questions for the U.S. context: what impetus is behind ad hoc rural regional efforts; and what sort of processes of institutionalization do these groups utilize? We use the work of Gilbert (1988) and Paasi (1991, 2002a,b, 2003) as the analytic framework to understand the actions of these organizations better.

In particular, we focus on a specific type of rural regionalism, efforts that arise through the ad hoc activities of non-governmental parties. By ad hoc, we mean non-governmental community activity that is issue driven. These efforts are often undertaken through local coalitions in which a non-profit organization or citizens' group spearheads an initiative that leads to a regional consciousness.[1] To begin to make sense of these efforts, the article examines three case studies of ad hoc rural regionalism. The rural regions we investigate span two or more counties and are outside of metropolitan areas in landscapes where jobs are still based in local resources, whether as amenities for tourism or as sites of production.

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[1] While the purpose of this paper is not a census of such groups, it may be helpful to know that a Web search in spring, 2006 quickly identified 25 groups across the U.S. that have mission statements or programming that addressed at least two of equity, environment, economy, and citizen education; that crossed political boundaries; were located in non-metropolitan areas; and that from their web-sites did not appear governmentally driven. They thus appear to fit our criteria for ad hoc rural regionalist groups. Very likely there are many more such groups.

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The argument is presented in the following five sections. First, we examine the impetus behind regionalism. These goals of regional organizations are analyzed compared to strongly economic as well as more broad-based theories, notably those of Anne Gilbert (1988). Next, we investigate the issue of agency, in particular the theoretical framework of institutionalization developed by Anssi Paasi (1991, 2002a,b, 2003), who focuses on regionalization as a process, a becoming, rather than an extant condition. The middle section discusses the rural condition in general and as distinct from a metropolitan system. The subsequent section presents three case studies from Massachusetts, Iowa, and California. Finally, we use the theoretical framework derived from Gilbert and Paasi to analyze the American experience of ad hoc rural regionalism with respect to purposes and forms of institutionalization, and suggest some ways the framework can be adjusted to even better address the agency involved in regionalism.

2. Impetus behind regionalism

In recent years there has been a spate of books and articles on regionalism, suggesting a renewal of both academic interest and practical application of this long-standing ideal. The debate on new regionalism is particularly robust in the European context. With the expansion and further integration of the European Union (EU), the concept of a "Europe of Regions" gives added currency to new regionalism. The regionalism of Europe has generally involved a devolution of political power from national governments to regional bodies, but this process has been uneven both across countries as well as within them (John and Whitehead, 1997). In these cases, new regionalism and the associated regional identity tend to stand in counterpoint to national identity and in some cases strive to establish alternatives modes of governance. Jones and MacLeod (2004, p. 434) make the distinction between "centrally orchestrated *regionalization* and demands for a locally rooted *regionalism* more receptive to questions of political participation, citizenship and culture" (italics in the original). It is to regionalism, as defined by Jones and MacLeod, that this paper is addressed. The focus here on regionalism coheres well with recent calls to bring greater attention to the ways that these new territorial forms "are constructed politically and reproduced through everyday acts and struggles around consumption and social reproduction" (Jonas and Ward, 2007).

Most U.S. authors (Ohmae, 1995; Barnes and Ledebur, 1997; Orfield, 1997; Fishman, 2000; Katz, 2000; Barnett, 2001; Calthorpe and Fulton, 2001) concentrate on metropolitan areas, as these are the most obvious examples and the ones that effect the greatest populations. The focus tends to be on the economic realities of regional locations and/or on managing growth and social equity within the regions. As Swanstrom (2001) notes, typically the calls for a new regionalism are based on the increasing importance of regions in a globally competitive market, with the *raison d'etre* of such regionalism being to improve the competitive position of regions in the global market. Influential authors such as Storper (1997a,b); Scott (1998) and Porter (1990) all see the region as the basis for economic life, and to differing levels, the basis for a new social community life as well. Many, perhaps most, authors focus on the economics of globalization, with the region becoming the new and appropriate site for economic development (e.g. Keating, 1998). As explained by Frisken and Norris (2001): "New regionalism … basically assumes not only that it is in the economic self interest of local governments operating in city regions to overcome their divisions, but also that the economic imperative (i.e. the need to compete globally) will impel them to do so, despite political constraints that have prevented their coming together in the past." The political cost and effectiveness of this is not persuasive to all scholars, however (Loverling, 1999).

Wheeler (2002), in a thoughtful analysis of ten years of U.S. planning literature examining 'The New Regionalism,' finds instead that the impetus of such efforts is concern over suburban sprawl and its related effects – traffic congestion, environmental degradation, characterless development, and inequities between cities and their suburbs – all of which require regional responses for effective policies. To address such concerns, he points to the creation of new regional governance units, the coordination of governmental actions through regional ad hoc working groups that focus on regional land use and infrastructure planning, and state policies that reward and encourage communities that are taking steps toward such regional goals as fair-share affordable housing. Similarly, Kipfer and Wirsig (2004) argue that the new regionalism is a response to the complex, multi-nodal regional form, which developed beginning in the post-1960s period. These explanations are not necessarily contradictions; government or business groups may decide to address land use and other planning issues based on concern that they are impeding the region's ability to compete for new firms.

What unites these various approaches is the sense that in a global economy, the region marks the appropriate level for effective organization. In the U.S. context, this tends to involve the movement of power upward from localities to regional bodies (albeit often without official government powers), while in the European and British contexts, it tends to involve movement downward from the nation or state to the region. This movement of power tends to be an issue of governance, rather than government, and as such the official and unofficial networks of power reach beyond government to include civil society. In the European context it seems apparent that there has been a real movement of power (albeit quite unevenly) between levels of government, while in the U.S. this tends to be more the power of collaborative networks (Booher and Innes, 2002) rather than straight-forward political power.

Regionalism is not limited to industrialized countries, of course. Thompson (2000) also views economics as the main impetus behind regionalism, and finds that South Africa has been undertaking a 'new regionalism' for over a decade. In countries of the global South at least, the new regionalism arises as a reaction to the economic pressures of globalization overwhelming the domain of politics; it is a way to reinsert transparency, legitimacy, and public discourse into what have become highly centralized decision flows. In the South African context, the new regionalism is "a practical means of working collectively to overcome economic marginalisation by transforming structural weaknesses and trying to turn strengths to advantages (55)." This echoes the scalar reminder of Jonas and Ward (2007) that regionalism is both a downscaling from the global level and an upscaling from the local geographies of competition and conflict.

Similarly, it is not clear that the strongly economic arguments for regionalism will hold in rural areas. Almost by definition, effective competition in the globalized market is usually imagined as a metropolitan role. It appears likely that in a non-metro, i.e. rural, context, a broader purpose for regionalization will be necessary for it to have sufficient traction to occur. An example is the sort of regional role anticipated by Gilbert (1988). She identified three conceptualizations of regions: as a local response to capitalist processes, a focus of cultural identification, and/or a medium for social interaction synchronizing people, nature, and social relations in time-space settings. As a local response to capitalist pressures the region is referred to "as the spatial organization of the social processes associated with the mode of production. (209)." As a focus of identification "the region is defined as a specific set of cultural relationships between a group and particular places (210)." Conceiving a region as a medium for social interaction focuses on "the relationships that link together individuals and groups within

society and which concern all aspect of social life, from economics to culture and symbols (212)."

3. Agency and regionalism

While the roles and goals often associated with regionalism are identified above, lacking is the question of agency – who undertakes these actions and why.[2] Regions are often the deliberate product of social actors seeking to achieve their goals using regional identity (Johnston, 1991). These actors work in relational networks that build from both place and space (Amin, 2002), and, like all places, regions are defined in large part by their articulations of social relations as connections both within and beyond that particular place, embedded in deeply layered and differently experienced histories (Massey, 1994). Given the focus of this paper the issue of agency – of how regions develop, how they are signified and socially produced and reproduced – is central to this investigation. The work of Anssi Paasi (1991, 2002a) helps explain this process; see also MacLeod and Jones (2001). Paasi (1991) defines regions as

> A sociospatial unit with a longer historical duration, a representation of 'higher-scale history' into which inhabitants are socialized as part of the reproduction of society. Region is thus a *social and cultural category* with an explicit collective dimension representing institutional practices sedimented in the *history of the region* … It is mediated into daily life and is produced and reproduced in multitudinous social practices through communication and symbols (249, italics in the original).

The process through which a region becomes a social reality is institutionalization, defined as

> A sociospatial process in which a territorial unit emerges as part of the spatial structure of the society concerned, becomes established and identified in various spheres of social action and consciousness, and may eventually vanish or deinstitutionalize in regional transformation. The process is a manifestation of the goals established by local or non-local actors and organizations and the decisions made by them (Paasi, 1991, p. 243).

Paasi conceptualizes the emergence or institutionalization of regions as consisting of stages which are entirely or partly simultaneous and may be ordered in different ways. These stages are:

1. Construction of territorial shape: These are the functional processes through which actors define boundaries for the region and develop expectations of appropriate social practices within the region, such that the region becomes identified as a separate spatial sphere. Implicit and reified in this process are relations of power among the agents acting within and without the region (Paasi, 1991, p. 244).
2. Formation of the symbolic shape: This is the process of naming the region and developing the set of symbols with which it will be established. The use of such symbols is essential, as they connect the region's image with a broader social consciousness of its existence and development of inhabitants' identification with the collective practices of that region (a circular process). This process establishes the region as a socio-cultural unit (Paasi, 1991, 244–5).
3. Emergence of institutions: Activists, elites, and mass media engage in establishment of both formal institutions and local or non-local practices in the spheres of politics, economics, legislation, and administration. Taken as a whole, this is the development of a regional culture with implicit socialization of individuals into the regional community and production and reproduction of social consciousness (Paasi, 1991, p. 246).
4. Establishment of a region: This is the continuation of the institutionalization process after the region has an established status in the spatial structure and social consciousness of the society, whether through formal administrative institutions or local practices. At this point, the region is ready for wider acknowledgement and potentially place-marketing. There may be an ongoing struggle over resources and power (Paasi, 1991, pp. 246–7).

While Paasi is very clear that these can be simultaneous processes, there is something in the human mind that sees a list as a set order. Particularly given that Paasi's early and recent work are essentially about agency, it does seem odd that the 'emergence of institutions' phase is listed after the development of territorial and symbolic shape; in order for these to occur, someone must be undertaking them, whether consciously or not. Given Gilbert's argument that such actions are conscious efforts and our findings below, a focus on agency suggests the following stages of territorial formation.

1. Activists develop regional institution(s) (which may become increasingly formalized with time).
2. Actors and institution(s) construct territorial shape (which may or may not match existing political boundaries).
3. Actors and institution(s) form symbolic shape.
4. Establishment of a region.

These processes work together to form structures of expectation, cognitive frames bound to a specific region that speak to its distinctiveness and collective spatial role "based on [collective] knowledge or beliefs regarding the historical and cultural features of a region" (Paasi, 1991, p. 249). Structures of expectation help to form interpretive communities producing and reproducing sociospatial collective identities and the structures of expectation themselves. Important in this is that the structures of expectation, which actors develop, must be based on some shared experience of the region; any symbol or ideology that does not connect to some socio-historical reality for inhabitants will be meaningless and ineffective in 'creating' the region (Bloom, 1990; as cited in Paasi, 2003). Popper and Popper (2000) refer to this as the importance of metaphor, where selection of a locally meaningful metaphor for the regional effort is seen as central to its relevance to local actors and its long-term success.

In rural areas where so much is tied to the land and the landscape, much of the shared experience of the region relates to the local environmental and agricultural history and practices, that is to say, land and landscape issues. Even rural regions that are economically defined generally rely on a natural resource for identity. These phenomena often lead to rural regions having a basis in physiography. Mountains, hills, river valleys, lake districts, coastal zones, *et cetera* are elements of physical landscapes that are at once easily identified and commonly experienced. Thus, we can expect that for rural regionalist efforts, successful structures of expectation will center on landscape-related phenomena.

Why this is so is perhaps best answered by bioregionalist theory. This argues that residents need to find locally based, unique ways to live within the limitations and opportunities posed by the ecology and culture of their particular region of the world. It is "a proposal to ground human cultures within natural systems, to get to know one's place intimately in order to fit human communities to the Earth, not distort the Earth to our demands." (Andruss et al., 1990) One of the lessons the bioregionalists provide is that to 're-inhabit'

[2] Compare this focus on largely individual agency to that of institutional agency in the various papers in the 31st volume of Geoforum, and especially the introductory essay by Philo and Parr (2000).

a region first requires that one identify with it, learn about it, and take pride in it (Sale, 1985). Using Paasi (1991, p. 244), one can describe this as the transition from land (a basis for material production) to landscape (a source of identity and community as well as inspiration); he finds this transition to be central to the institutionalization of regions. Identifying with a landscape is a version of "re-inhabiting" the place. On a practical level, one could expect to see it through the dispersion of knowledge about the geomorphic boundaries and ecosystem functions of the region, as well as the development or renewal of an aesthetic signification, and focus on local products and processes.

4. Rural conditions

Rural conditions vary from metropolitan ones in more than just the obvious questions of built form, density, and sources of employment; they are not just 'little cities.' In the United States, some of the key differences between typical value sets for rural versus metropolitan residents include strongly valuing landownership with interests both in being good stewards and in protecting their right to use the land as they wish (Strong, 1975; Hamin, 2003). Rural communities in the United States typically have an aversion to governmental intervention, particularly as the governmental unit becomes farther removed from the town itself (Strong, 1975; Lapping et al., 1989). At best, rural government functions are staffed by full- or part-time generalists with no special training. Typically, many of the functions and decisions are executed by volunteers. This is possible because of strong social capital, with more than 50% of rural residents reporting having volunteered in the past year, often on a regular basis. This is both a cause and result of typically stronger community ties and neighborly interactions than in urban or suburban communities (Pew Partnership, 2000). The upshot is that in rural areas, the number of civic organizations, whether religious, social, or the various boards and committees that make up rural government, is much higher per capita than in other areas of the nation (Hobbs, 1995).

A key challenge in many rural communities is that they have little professional staff available to guide land use and community development. The professional staff that is available to rural towns is often through regional planning agencies (RPAs), Councils of Government (COGs), regional planning organizations (RPOs), or resource conservation and development councils (RC&Ds), with whom levels of trust and responsiveness tend to be varied. Public funding for these organizations has not been generous in the last decade as regional planning fell out of favor in the 1980s and did not regain a solid funding base despite a recent renewal of interest in regional issues (Wheeler, 2002). A culture of volunteerism combined with suspicion toward and lack of capacity in local governments makes grassroots, community-based approaches both possible and necessary for rural areas.

Why such grassroots organizations would be needed now in rural America rests on the social and economic realities of the new century. Rural areas are not uniformly generalizable, but instead demonstrate significant diversity. In many locations, there is an increasing dissociation between agricultural production trends and population dynamics; agriculture and rural futures are no longer quite so intimately related (Paquette and Domon, 2003). Adapting the work of Terry Marsdon (1998) suggests a tri-form categorization is appropriate for rural areas in America. Some areas continue as viable, profitable productive agricultural landscapes (e.g., Iowa), termed by Marsdon as a *paternalistic* countryside, where large holders and agri-business prevail in relatively stable landscapes. A second type of rural area has less viable global-scale agriculture and is also distant from metropolitan areas, and thus struggles to keep residents and provide services to an often poor, elderly, or Native American population (e.g., North Dakota). In the U.K, Marsdon terms this the clientelistic countryside, which is dependent on subsidies for survival; a better term for such areas in the U.S. would be *marginal*.

Still other rural areas are undergoing a transition into post-productionist countryside in which large-scale commodified agriculture is largely remnant or gone; instead, amenity-related economics rule the day. Such areas tend to be highly scenic and have significant open space good for recreation, located near a university or other center for technology, and, rather than population decline, struggle instead with too-rapid increase in new residents attracted to the region by its natural beauty (Howe et al., 1997): Colorado's Front Range comes to mind. Some, but not all, of these high-growth areas are located in distant but still drivable relation to a metropolitan center, and thereby are in the early stages of inclusion in the urban region. In Marsdon's terminology, this would be the *contested* countryside.[3] The contestation arises as development and exploitation of a particular natural resource, such as minerals, forest products, or water, challenges amenity-dependent activities such as tourism or real estate values, resulting in intra-community social conflicts. A key point here is that rural regions are complex. In many areas, and particularly in the contested countryside, long-time residents and their social networks coexist, gracefully or not, with newcomers who can be anything from rich retirees to new homesteaders, most of whom bring urban values and expectations, along with urban social and monetary resources.

A further observation is the need for greater regional cooperation in the country's hinterlands. A key role for ad hoc rural initiatives is to stabilize community demographics during times of economic change, so that in hard times people stay because they want to; this can counteract downward pressures. A strong regional identity can assist in developing social capital and encouraging entrepreneurship (Raagmaa, 2002). For contested countryside areas, motivations may be similar to that in metro areas – negative externalities of development in one community deeply affect neighboring communities. For marginal regions, challenges in sustaining services and attracting development will be best met through inter-local cooperation. For stable agricultural areas, the need for regionalism is probably not so pronounced. For all these areas, having an identifiable 'brand' for the region may add significant opportunity for tourism, as tourists look for a place-based experience and generally prefer locations that offer multiple recreational opportunities (Garrod et al., 2006). Similarly, local 'branding' is important for value-added agriculture, as in the higher prices commanded for products from Vermont. Throughout these categories, we see global markets for goods and labor affecting the stability and conditions of rural regions. Further insight into motivations for regional organization will be developed through the analysis of the case studies.

Rural areas thus face polyvalent situations often of significant landscape and cultural change under conditions that limit the role and effectiveness of formal governance. Linked to a cultural expectation of volunteerism and minimal interference in property rights, it is clear that rural regionalism must take shapes different from metropolitan efforts. The authors recognize that there have been many governmental attempts in the United States to create regions in rural areas. These efforts often come with the benefit of large amounts of federal or state money. Examples of this on a large scale are the Tennessee Valley Authority and Appalachian Regional Commission. On a smaller scale are rural planning organizations (RPOs) regarding transportation as well as resource conservation

[3] Marsdon includes a fourth category in his analysis of the British countryside – the preserved countryside, in which strongly entrenched middle-class actors control and limit new development. In the U.S. context, while one can think of towns or cities or even suburban counties that match this description, its relevance for broader rural regions is less clear.

and development councils (RC&Ds) which are subsidized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These administrative rural regions are not the ad hoc rural initiatives that are the object of this research. This research looks particularly at autochthonous activities by private interests in rural districts.

5. Case studies

To begin to empirically understand the roles of ad hoc rural regionalism efforts, this article presents three case studies.[4] Two of the cases are regional efforts with which the authors were either involved (Loess Hills Alliance) or locally familiar (Highlands Communities Initiative), while the third (Sierra Business Council) represents perhaps the most successful example of ad hoc rural regionalism in the U.S. These three were selected because they represent what appears to be the range of organizational types: government-assisted but still ad hoc, existing non-profit driven, and newly constructed coalition; as well as a geographic range within the United States (see map, following page). All three landscapes can be characterized as contested (using the Marsdon terminology presented above). These cases suggest that rural regionalist efforts are most likely in the contested countryside, although a broader study would benefit from analysis of such efforts in the marginal as well as the paternalistic countryside.[5] This research is not intended to present a random sample of information on the typical organization; instead, it investigates some exemplary cases to suggest directions these organizations are undertaking.[6]

Presented in the next section are the three case studies (organized east to west). Information on the Highlands Conservation Initiative (HCI) and the Loess Hills Alliance (LHA) comes primarily from interviews with key personnel at the organizations, along with reference to their organizational websites. LHA data is supplemented by the author's personal participation in the early stages of that organization as well as minutes from the Board of Directors meetings. The Sierra Business Council, as a leading regional organization, has had significant research and public attention, and so information on that case comes from published sources. Any points of contestation among the published data, the interviews, and the author's experience are explained in the notes section of this paper. Afterwards, we will analyze them based on the roles of organizations as derived from Gilbert (1988) and the actions of institutionalization based on Paasi (1991, 2002a). Table 1 shows the framework for this analysis.

Table 1
Framework for analysis

Conceptualization of region (categories based on Gilbert, 1988)
• Local response to capitalist processes
• Focus of cultural identification
• Medium for social interaction
Institutionalization actions (categories based on Paasi, 1991, 2003)
• Activists develop regional institution
• Institution constructs territorial shape
• Institution forms symbolic shape
• Establishment of a region

5.1. Highland Communities Initiative (HCI)[7]

The western portion of Massachusetts contains lands hilly, isolated, and beautiful – rural in an U.S. East Coast sense of the word, meaning that it is never very far to a medium-sized city and residents are split between those fairly isolated in local communities and those deeply tied to regional networks for work and friendship. Several board members of the Wyomissing Foundation, a family foundation based in Pennsylvania, had vacation homes in western Massachusetts, and by 2001 several members had moved to the Hilltowns full time. Stephan Plain (deceased), in particular, was the initial driver behind HCI. He was a Selectman from Worthington, Massachusetts and also a family member for Wyomissing Foundation. In 1999, Plain went to the Foundation and asked for money to support and protect the area.

The Foundation decided to grant about $1 million to the initiative, for a five-year period. The program has since been refunded, and the end date has been removed. At its initiation, Wyomissing asked local non-profits to compete as to who would administer the funds. The Trustees of Reservations (TToR), the oldest land trust in the nation with land holdings and easements across Massachusetts, won. According to Jocelyn Forbush, the HCI director from 2001 through 2005, TToR was selected because they had a history of addressing not just natural but also cultural conservation. The project officially launched in April 2001, with five years of funding in place. When they began, there was arguably no region, and instead just local identity among residents and local policymakers. Plain was the one who first decided the appropriate geography for the initiative. He selected 38 contiguous towns between the Housatonic and Connecticut Rivers, with boundaries based on shared characteristics:

- small populations,
- fragile fiscal health, with municipal budgets based on residential property tax,
- overlooked by Boston, and
- generally 'forgotten' towns and area.

They named their program the Highland Communities Initiative (HCI). The term 'highland' came from the name of the ecoregion (Berkshire Highlands) that the region encompasses.[8] Generally, the idea was to identify areas that were not yet significantly impacted by sprawl, but where sprawl could be foreseen; in this way, the Foundation saw time to get ahead of the curve and manage the coming growth. The initial foundation goals for the project were land conservation and community preservation (land use planning). As Wyomissing, Plain, and TToR got to know the area better, the project goals expanded to include support for working landscapes (forestry and agriculture) and economic development (light industry); this was intended to reduce the taxation burden on private lands by diversifying the municipal revenue base. The HCI initiative was formed with three

[4] The literature also provides examples of rural regionalism. The most relevant publication describing other such case studies, although with a goal of providing activist lessons rather than a more academic understanding, is Bernard and Young (1997). A highly detailed and interesting volume anticipating and to some extent describing the efforts in the Sierra Nevada mountain range is Duane (1999). Richardson (2000) describes a university-lead effort in rural Vermont which accomplished many of the goals we identify. The role and activities of land trusts, along with several examples of land-trust-lead grassroots coalitions are documented in Gustanski and Squires (2000). Finally, for an international parks-and--people partnership perspective, one can begin with McNeely (1995).

[5] An example would be analysis of the Buffalo Commons initiative, but at this time this has only the most preliminary of organizations leading (or perhaps following) the development of regional identity, and thus comes into a different category than the main topic of the paper (see Popper and Popper, 1987, 2000).

[6] See note 1 above. The authors welcome examples of such groups that readers may be familiar with.

[7] Unless otherwise noted, information in this section comes from a telephone interview by E. Hamin with Jocelyn Forbush, first Director of the Highlands Communities Initiative, on 5/24/02.

[8] From personal communication, Wendy Sweetser, Director of the TTOR Highland Communities Initiative, 10/18/05.

representatives from TToR and two family members from the Foundation. They developed an advisory committee that included a loose group of local community leaders and professionals such as local land trust staff, Regional Planning Agency personnel, etc.

In their first year, HCI undertook a regional profile (a data gathering effort) and gathered a variety of new and existing data. They conducted an original training needs assessment survey of local municipal board volunteers and local land trusts about what training they viewed as needed in the region. They hired three RPAs to review the zoning provisions of the 38 towns. This was distributed as a map of the region with coding for each town's various zoning provisions, so that communities can see what their neighbors are doing. They also hired the American Farmland Trust to do a literature review of relevant New England examples of cost of community service studies; in the U.S. context, fiscal outcomes from zoning are central parts of arguments for and against development.

With this information in hand, they sought local buy-in by creating five working groups of local community leaders and professionals. These included groups on:

- ecology,
- culture and scenic,
- recreation,
- working landscapes, and
- conservation-fiscal health interface.

Each group met three to five times, and developed set of findings during 2001. The findings were presented at a Fall 2001 conference, which served as the major public event signifying the birth of the initiative. Based on those proceedings, HCI developed its programming. Key programs are as follows.

- Small grants: A maximum of $5000 per grant is given out each month, to non-profit organizations for land conservation and community planning projects. Examples include supplemental funds to finish open space plans, seed money to pay for appraisals, funding for consultants/regional planning agencies (RPAs) to work on planning, by-law revisions through RPAs, etc.
- Web site: HCI views this as its main communication route, place to show model projects, share info, list research, etc.
- Hiring a full-time circuit rider. This person serves as liaison with local boards, RPAs, individuals and land trusts, and gives technical assistance to boards.[9]
- Sponsoring a bi-annual workshop with training on planning, easements, and similar topics.
- Regional public events such as old-growth forest walks, information sessions for landowners on private forest management and conservation restrictions, trainings for planning board members of various issues, etc.
- Publications: HCI has developed an impressive array of publications to help towns plan better, as can be seen at its website: http://hci.thetrustees.org/index.cfm.

At HCI's founding, the director knew that to do her job well would require that HCI also address economic development. With insufficient funds to buy all the land TToR wanted to see conserved, keeping privately owned land out of development was crucial. One way to do that is through regulation, which was the agenda in the above items, but it is more feasible in the long term to ensure that the economics of working lands continue to be profitable. Thus, at its founding HCI anticipated working on economic development through supporting development of cooperatives for forestry and farmland, and potentially working with towns to bring in industry. Nonetheless, TToR's expertise, and indeed the expertise of the directors they hired, was in land conservation and planning rather than economic development; and this portion of its goals remains relatively background. Direct land acquisition or easement purchases were not part of the HCI plan; the Foundation felt that their money would go too quickly with not enough to show for the investment. TToR itself continues to fund the purchase of conservation easements in the area.

The Foundation intended programming that would outlive HCI, which meant it had to be supported by the towns, so that when the program ends things will be different for towns. Characterizing their initial goals in 2002, Forbush suggested they sought to develop internal social networks and economies of scale through encouraging a regional approach, a regional awareness. Her goal was that these

[9] Full disclosure: the person hired for the circuit rider position (Wendy Sweetser) was a student of the author. Sweetser became executive director in 2005, and information since 2002 is based on conversations with her.

networks become self-sustaining, so that community members have better access to information, and have tools that are ready, so that they can take control of the future of their towns and projects. Ideally, this would lead to increased community in other grassroots activity, so that the culture of land conservation would become stronger.

By 2007, HCI's goals and programming had shifted somewhat. The website identified the goals of the initiative as:

- "create a strong regional awareness among Highland residents about the natural resources and rural heritage of this region;
- develop a network of knowledgeable citizens committed to providing leadership in their communities on land protection and community preservation issues;
- foster the protection of significant landscapes by individuals, land trusts, towns, and state government; and
- encourage and assist the 38 towns in their efforts to preserve their rural heritage in a way that recognizes the need for housing and development" (http://hci.thetrustees.org/pages/1592_about_hci.cfm).

They achieve this by:

- "developing and distributing conservation tools,
- supporting and enhancing the work of communities and organizations through a small grants program,
- sponsoring new research enterprises, and
- providing technical assistance and training on land use planning and land conservation issues" (http://hci.thetrustees.org/pages/1592_about_hci.cfm).

HCI can be characterized as an effort by elites and relative outsiders to address land use and economic change in a rural area through developing a regional network among communities. The success of the regional naming is mixed. To the extent there was a regional identity before HCI, it was as the 'hilltowns', and linguistic closeness of highlands and hilltowns has meant that when people use the HCI initials, they may think that in fact it is the Hilltowns collaborative.[10] While it is not clear that the name "Highlands Communities" has developed clear affiliation among residents, the concept of these towns as a region joined together does seem to be spreading. An example is a new farmers' market entitled the Hilltowns Farmers Market in one of the regional hubs. This case study demonstrates how regionalism in a rural context engages land conservation, social networks, private lands, and working lands together, and demonstrates that traditional economic development is not a primary motivation for at least this effort of rural regionalism.

5.2. Loess Hills Alliance (LHA)

The Loess Hills are on the western edge of Iowa abutting the Missouri river. While the rest of the state is plowed virtually stem to stern, much of the Loess Hills, with their friable soils and steep bluffs, were spared the plow and instead typically were grazed, and as a result this area is the last functional prairie ecosystem in the state (Mutel, 1989). The sweeping vistas from the hills provide great beauty, and the area has come under development pressure as commuters and retirees move from Omaha and Council Bluffs; an additional threat to the area is the use of the hills for fill dirt, where hills are carved up and trucked away for road and other construction in the nearby metropolitan areas.[11]

In the early 1990s, a curator working with Iowa State University organized a traveling art exhibit centering on the Loess Hills, highlighting art by area residents and others inspired by the landscape and people of the region. This exhibit had the important effect of raising state-wide awareness of this previously little-examined region, as well as developing regional identity for local residents (Mutel et al., 1994) – while loess hills were widely known as the key geomorphic factor in the area, it had not been conceived as the Loess Hills prior to the 1970s (Petrzelka, 2004). Now the local Audubon Society is named the Loess Hills chapter, as is the local Red Cross, hospitality association, camps and cabins, a national Scenic Byway, and an annual weekend prairie education program open to the public. Clearly, this naming had local relevance.

In response to these threats and the growing awareness of the importance of the remnant prairie contained within the hills, in the mid-1990s a group of residents and officials at state conservation agencies and state and national land trust chapters began discussing what could be done. This resulted in a formal coalition that sought to combine their individual organization and agency efforts. Based on both their ideological support for being community-based as well as political concerns, they made very conscious efforts to reach out to local property owners and businesspeople to include them in the organization.

While it started out as an ad-hoc grassroots group, the LHA sought and received state recognition and funding in 1997.[12] In the first two years the Alliance received $500,000 per year. It has received around $200,000 per year since then, except for one particularly lean year in which there was no funding. However, the state felt that if they were going to fund the group, legislators would decide how it was organized; the result was the most of the seats on the new, official advisory committee went to appointees of the county boards of supervisors, and seven other local residents selected by the state agency designated to be the LHA's parent, the Loess Hills Development and Conservation Authority. Specific early accomplishments include purchase of conservation easements on over 1600 acres in partnership with national and state land trusts;[13] small grants programs for appropriate economic development and for prairie restoration; research into regional fiscal impacts and patterns of development (Hamin and Benson, 2001); development of new higher-value agriculture in the area (vineyards); and workshops and publications on appropriate prairie land management and landowner tools (Loess Hills Alliance, 2002).

The real work continues to be done by subcommittees, which include some people from the advisory committee but also others who simply volunteer (Loess Hills Alliance, 2002). The three program subcommittees are Stewardship, Protection, and Economic Development. According to Rollie Roberts,[14] Chairman of the Executive Committee, each of the three program committees receive a third of the funds after administrative costs and salary for a part-time secretary are deducted. The Economic Development Committee and Protection Committee run small grants programs for the benefit of any number of the seven counties in the Loess Hills

[10] Even on the HCI website they note that the region is sometimes called the Hilltowns; see http://hci.thetrustees.org/pages/6548_history_of_the_highlands.cfm.

[11] E. Hamin worked with the LHA as a supporter from 1998 to 2001, attending initial organizational meetings and occasional follow-up meetings. She also made presentations on options in types of national parks units to the LHA and other local groups, and prepared an analysis of patterns of development and fiscal impacts of residential development in the unincorporated areas of the region (Hamin and Benson, 2001). Much of the knowledge in this section is from her experience with them, updated and supplemented by information from participants.

[12] Rollie Roberts, personal communication, June 5, 2007.

[13] This number comes from an email with the LHA conservation committee chair during late May, 2002.

[14] Personal communication, June 5, 2007.

region. The Stewardship Committee promotes prescribed burning and private land conservation practices.

The Alliance has changed structure to best achieve its mission with resources available. In the beginning there was sufficient funding to hire an executive director. There was an education and outreach committee in the beginning. In 1998, the group lobbied in Washington, D.C. to get the area recognized as a unit of the National Park system, but this effort was unsuccessful.[15] As state funding declined in the early part of this decade, the group now has returned to a volunteer director (Samuels, 2005).

The Loess Hills Alliance began as a regional grassroots organization in a rural part of a rural state. The state came to its assistance with resources but at the same time co-opted some of its self-direction. Nonetheless, the institution has continued to be effective at promoting conservation and development efforts in this distinctive landscape. The imagery of the Loess Hills has pervaded into many other grassroots organizations with specialized missions. The visibility of the Loess Hills has risen to where former Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt (2005) argues that it is a worthy landscape for federal investment in ecological protection.

5.3. Sierra Business Council (SBC)[16]

The Sierra Nevada mountain range in eastern California is home to one of the most interesting and successful examples of rural regionalism organizations, the Sierra Business Council.[17] Defining their region as the 640-kilometer (400-mile) stretch of California from the Great Basin to the east, the Klamath Province to the north, the Central Valley to the west, and the Mojave Desert to the south, the region spans two states and twenty-one counties (Sierra Business Council, 2007). Thus, the SBC region is much larger than the previous two cases. The Sierra region and the Sierra Business Council have received such significant foundation support that follow-up studies have been commissioned to investigate the efficacy of the programs. The authors rely on this rich literature for this case study (Innes and Sandoval, 2004).

In the mid-1990s, the Sierra Nevada region was experiencing a classic case of shifting economics and demographics. The traditional extractive industries of mining and logging had been in serious decline for twenty years. Meanwhile, the tourism and recreation industry was flourishing. The population during the period had doubled, fueled by urbanites moving out from the coastal cities and low-income workers connected to the hospitality industry. At the time, there was no region-wide organization that was effective, although there were nascent organizations that were polarizing in representing either environmentalist or property-rights constituencies.

Lucy Blake, a person experienced with environmental issues and community organizing, with Tracy Grubbs, a close associate, began organizing the Sierra Business Council in 1994. She identified a gap not only in the need for a region-wide organization, but also for an organization that could make the connection for businesspersons of the economic importance of the Sierra Nevada environment. Her leadership style was from the beginning collaborative and personal. She traveled the far-flung region selling the idea of a business council. The Sierra Business Council is not a grassroots organization: it is an elite organization, but one that is intentionally diverse, although dominated by business interests. The board of directors was created from persons who Blake felt would be able to embrace and promote a pragmatic approach. The first chair of the board was the publisher of a regional magazine. Currently the board is comprised of nine individuals in private business and one regional planning director. Membership on the council comes at a cost of between $100 and $10,000. The membership of approximately 600, is 80% private businesses and 20% government agencies and non-profit organizations. Blake volunteered her time for months and did not apply for external funding until the membership base was around 300.[18] In addition, the organization has been funded with $6.8 million from the Hewlett Foundation to conserve land (The Associated Press, 2002), and another $335,000 from the Irvine Foundation to buy office space for on-going operations (Wasserman, 2001).

An SBC employee described the group this way:

> Well, our official mission is to secure the social, natural and environmental capital of the region for this and future generations. So that's what you tell people when you say what the mission is. But in reality, what that means is, shifting the culture of the region so that every time people make a decision, they are thinking about not just the financial bottom line, but also how it affects your community and how it affects the environment around you. That's the real mission of the organization (Innes and Sandoval, 2004).

One of the first projects of the SBC was the development of Sierra Nevada Wealth Index, which was first published in 1996 and updated twice (Sierra Business Council, 2007). This index was a critically important work of research for the council because of both the process of developing it and the product. The Index, which was staff developed, relied upon significant input and collaboration from individuals in the Sierra Nevada. Specifically, it assessed the natural capital, financial capital, and social capital of the region and showed their interrelationship. While still in draft form, the report was widely circulated for review and feedback. This process served to create a transparent research method that was credible to the business community, vest the community in the process, and build critical regional relationships. When the Index was released, it was used heuristically as a basis for dialogue, not for advocacy.

This method of collaboration was repeated for subsequent efforts. Early on, SBC developed a reference guide entitled *Planning for Prosperity* (Sierra Business Council, 1997) for communities in the area on how to guide land development appropriately; this publication won the American Planning Association's Burnham Award (Polster, 1998). Other activities include a habitat protection program; an educational program regarding easements and stewardship for local ranchers and others; a leadership course to increase empowerment among local residents; and work with towns in the region to improve local planning and coalition building among landholders and non-profits in the region (Weintraub, 2001). All of the activities exploited the regional strengths of natural beauty, an independent-minded population, and expanding tourist sector, while recognizing the weaknesses of intraregional political conflicts, a failure to link environment and economics, and a lack of

[15] They were successful in getting a NPS special resource study completed, which is the first step toward designation of a new park unit. The problem, as became clear during subsequent public hearings on designation options, was twofold. First, as often happens, local landowners were not impressed with the idea, and groups of landowners hostile to any sort of NPS designation came to the meetings to make their feelings clear. Second, and not unrelated, much of the land was in private ownership; given that federal budgets do not go far toward purchase of private lands, this made many of the traditional park designations (e.g. national park, national preserve, etc.) impossible. While the NPS found the area deserving of protection, the administrative feasibility of such a step was deemed problematic (National Park Service, 2001).

[16] Unless otherwise noted, the case study draws on Innes and Sandoval (2004) and Innes and Rongerude (2005).

[17] Although the SBC has recently faced political challenges, largely because it has increased its leadership role in regional planning. See Walker and Hurley (2004) and Innes and Sandoval (2004).

[18] This effort has been so successful that its founder, Lucy Blake, was a winner of one of the coveted MacArthur Foundation "Genius" grants in 2000 (Vogel, 2000).

regional identity. Interestingly, the SBC does not seem to have invested much energy in developing the symbols of regionalism. In part, this may be due to the fact that the Sierra Nevada are well established iconically. A silhouette of the mountains appears in the group's logo.

Organizationally, the Sierra Business Council in the formative years functioned on a flexible, distributed, and diffuse structure that relied on dialogue and the social interaction of stakeholders. It began holding annual two-day conferences in 1995, which changed venues throughout the region. Another important project from the beginning has been conducting a leadership seminar. With the departure of Lucy Blake as president, the organization became more structured. Currently, there are ten staff members (Sierra Business Council, 2007).

6. Match to theory

The case studies illustrate rural regionalism that appears where areas are challenged by outcomes characterizing globalization's effects on the rural condition: rural sprawl and metropolitan spread and resulting landscape fragmentation often in combination with extreme pressure on the profitability of small farms or other resource uses. However, in contrast to strongly economic arguments, the response to these pressures is broadly constructed, and corresponds well with Gilbert's (1988) broader conceptualization of regions as a local response to capitalist processes, a focus of cultural identification, and/or a medium for social interaction synchronizing people, nature, and social relations in time-space settings. This finding does not discount economic concerns, which are more fully described below; instead, we argue that for rural areas the deeply interrelated nature of landscape, work, and social life means that regionalist efforts address these broad issues as well as economics.

In all three cases, some combination of interested organizations and residents developed regional affiliation as a way to manage economic and land use change, as a way to take an active, rather than a passive, stance to the prevailing global capital forces. Particular examples include efforts to build local agriculture and value-added agriculture, and encouraging social norms of land stewardship to ensure sustainable use. They are thus forces of resistance (Castells, 1997) – quiet, sometimes fairly conservative, but, nonetheless, loci of active engagement in designing futures.

Which of the conceptualizations of region as identified by Gilbert did the actors in these case studies realize and which of the processes identified by Paasi did the actors undertake? Table 2 summarizes this; their activities appeared to be quite expansive in terms of creating a region and addressing regional needs.

Table 2
Case studies match to theory

Criteria	Highlands Communities Initiative	Loess Hills Alliance	Sierra Business Council
Roles of organizations (categories based on Gilbert, 1988)			
Local response to capitalist processes	N	Y	Y
Focus of cultural identification	P	Y	? (pre-existing region)
Medium for social interaction	Y	Y	Y
Institutionalization actions (categories based on Paasi, 1991,2003)			
Activists develop regional institution	Y	Y	Y
Institution constructs territorial shape	Y	Y	? (pre-existing region)
Institution forms symbolic shape	Y	Y	Y
Establishment of a region	?	Y	?

Y = yes, N = no, P = partially achieved, and "?" indicates the data did not support a conclusion.

To the extent these organizations undertook cultural identification and served as mediums for social interaction, these activities were methods for achieving the resistance goals. All the organizations sought to manage change in the landscape and related socio-cultural experiences, to buffer their region from the sometimes brutal winds of global capitalism and develop futures more active than passive. This often takes the form of efforts to improve local land use planning and decision-making. This cannot be achieved by individuals in isolation – community meaning is by definition shared meaning, thus requiring social interactions. As a result, successful regional institutionalization requires the regionalizing force develop forums for social engagement.

It is clear that these organizations were engaged in the construction of territorial shape, the formation of the symbolic shape, and the emergence of institutions (particularly through shifting local practices) simultaneously. The final stage of Paasi's institutionalization, the establishment of the region, was not part of the regionalist agendas in two of the case studies as they were emergent institutions, while for the LHA it was a clear goal that, given the Park Service's lack of interest, failed to be fully achieved.

For the SBC, the 'region' preexisted the organization, but determining the territorial shape still required affirming previously blurry boundaries. For the others, the construction of territorial shape was undertaken *de novo*, based on some analysis of underlying physiographic characteristics as well as socio-demographic conditions of neighboring communities. The existence of these shared characteristics guided the boundary-making; in the HCI, for instance, it was rural character, development pressure and lack of access to professional planning staff.[19] The LHA, SBC, and HCI initiatives held similar goals in shaping social practices, including better land use planning in protection of sensitive ecological lands as well as productive acreages, coupled with economic development that transitions from resource-extractive to resource-based. Examples of this latter type include encouraging tourism income to supplement small farming, development of value-added agricultural products, and 'buy local' campaigns. Implicit in these shared social practices are changes in local power relations, better equipping communities to manage the development process (sometime, but not always, to the disadvantage of developers), and increasing the empowerment and knowledge base of local volunteer boards.

A key technique shared by the groups is the development of a regional inventory. This had the benefit of developing working relationships over a relatively non-controversial task. Done best, as exemplified by the Sierra Nevada Wealth Index,[20] the inventory can be a heuristic exercise that encourages a network of social interaction. A regional inventory also involves early discussions about bounding the region.

A subsequent key technique shared by the groups is ecological education for members and the public, both generally about the ecology of the region and also specifically about the different ecological outcomes from stewardship choices on private lands. The LHA, for instance, worked to change local perceptions of cedar trees from appropriate part of the landscape to 'weed,' as fast-growing cedars are a key threat to non-fire-managed prairie. This accords nicely with the bioregionalists' perspectives on what is needed to create genuine regional consciousness.

[19] Further investigation into the types and levels of preexisting shared experiences among residents which should lead to authenticity in the regional boundary (Bloom, 1990) would be interesting, particularly in comparison to the depth and reach of regional identification among residents, but is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article.

[20] The Sierra Business Council publishes the Sierra Wealth Index; versions from 1996, 1999–2000, and 2006 are available at their website: http://www.sbcouncil.org/.

Names and other significations chosen for the *de novo* regions can be revealing. In fact, a measure of the successfulness of creating the identity of a region can be evidenced in the creation of proper place names from physical features. While the Sierra Nevada pre-existed as a proper name, the loess hills and the highlands were merely landscape descriptions prior to work of the ad hoc organizations. All three names are based on the outstanding geomorphological aspect of the respective areas. The Loess Hills example by virtue of its regional subtitle was the most evocative. In the Loess Hills example, the title of the art exhibit and following books, "The Fragile Giants," proved a potent rallying force for increasing public awareness of the special qualities of the landscape and its vulnerability to human actions, which preceded formation of the official Association (Mutel, 1989; Mutel et al., 1994). HCI seemed to stumble a bit regarding its regional and organizational names, with early uncertainty about whether these were 'hill-towns' or 'highlands;' the lack of clarity probably stemmed from the strong outsider involvement of this particular effort, where it was not particularly clear to outsiders which term would carry more local resonance. SBC was able to adopt existing regional terminology, and chose a name for the organization that challenges nothing. In these three cases, the groups seemed to choose metaphors or signifiers that are place-based but nonetheless fairly neutral. This has obvious advantages, but also disadvantages. As Popper and Popper (2000) have written quite eloquently, regional place identity is strengthened through use of particularly evocative metaphors linking people to the region. This may be a particularly charismatic or locally loved animal or plant, a landform (e.g. the hills), or a culture (e.g. the Amish Country). The Poppers coined the term the 'Buffalo Commons' for their vision of the future of much of the Great Plains; and in an interesting way the very controversial nature of their ideas created a rallying point in the community; whether one loved or hated the idea, it forced consideration of the region's future (Popper and Popper, 1987, 2000).

Development of a forum expressing the regional aspirations of the group and bringing in newcomers to it are central activities in all cases. These forums clearly serve both to socialize members into the shared norms and social practices for the region (often defined as land stewardship or production techniques), as well as to adjust direction for the group. While Paasi (1991) finds that the region must be stabilized before it is ready for place-based marketing, this is a clear direction for many of the groups even prior to stabilization.

7. Conclusions

In summary, we find that the new regionalist geographers, highlighted here in the work of Paasi and Gilbert, are helpful in understanding rural regionalism, in large part because they bring a focus on agency – questions of who does what and why. Given the ad-hoc basis of much current rural regionalism, questions of agency are key. Rephrasing Paasi, as we did above, to focus even more directly on agency makes the analysis clearer. The more strictly economic or even quality-of-life arguments appear less useful in understanding rural regionalism than may be the case with metropolitan regionalism, in large part because economics, land, and society are deeply intertwined in rural areas.

Based on the case study evidence, ad hoc rural initiatives can engender full-blown rural regionalism. The organizations emerged in areas that are challenged by outcomes characterizing globalization's effects on the rural condition: rural sprawl and metropolitan spread and resulting landscape fragmentation often in combination with extreme pressure on the profitability of small farms or other resource uses. In metropolitan regionalism, economic growth is observed as primary, particularly in the context of globalized industry (e.g. Keating, 1998). A secondary motivation for metropolitan regionalism is managing the growth (traffic, land use) associated with economic growth. As evidenced in the case studies, with rural regionalism it is clear that much of the regional motivation is economic, but it is not the broad boosterism for economic growth that is primary, but instead a rather subtle, nuance approach that seeks to manage the externalities of the spatiality of globalization and its raised economic connectivity (Held et al., 1999) to achieve a more balanced growth. The landscape itself is an object in rural regionalism. This may, however, be a function of the placement of these cases in the contested countryside. A broader examination of examples would be helpful here. Further, while chicken-and-egg is not clear, the organizations also undertook social activities designed to increase regional identity. To achieve these goals, the organizations undertook activities corresponding to all three of the region-building aspects identified by Paasi.

We do not seek to valorize all rural regionalist organizations. Like all human endeavors, these are neither inherently good nor bad. Agnew (2002) and Harvie (1994) both demonstrate cases where regionalist initiatives sought to defend local prosperity against those 'outside' the region. As noted by DuPuis and Goodman (2005), unreflexive localism that leads to idealization of a particular set of norms and images of place can ignore the potential exclusivity inherent in networks of place, whether local or regional. While our cases sought to cross social boundaries between old-timers/resource extractive culture groups and newcomers/resource-recreational groups, whether this represents reaching out across dominant ethnic and class affiliations is not clear; broader community engagement in development of regional narratives would clearly help in achieving social justice (Young, 2006). That said, it is helpful to remember that these organizations are in actuality quite weak, and clearly are open and relational rather than self-contained (Jones and MacLeod, 2004). If one result of globalization is indeed the proliferation of spatial scales, the nesting of the local in the national, international, and transnational as claimed by Jessop (2002), it may be that in the case of these rural regions, the local is itself too small to effectively 'nest,' and the rural region instead seeks to be of sufficient scale to interact effectively in the dense webs of globalization (Swyngedouw, 1997).

The original ad hoc goals of these organizations did not necessarily include the broader object of creating regional identity. Yet, in actuality, they quickly set about creating an alternative rural character, with sophisticated land use planning and strong social bonds and norms of stewardship. This alternative can manifest complex relationships and motivations with old as well as new constituencies. Far from being merely the hinterlands to metropolitan areas (Cronon, 1991), these places have the potential to engender new, authentic, and lasting rural regional identities. This hints at a different future for rural regions. Rather than being isolated places of resource use, these regional identities describe communities enmeshed in distinctive regional cultures that are connected to local and more sustainable production of knowledge and goods as well as their rural landscapes.

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