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Fulkerson, Gregory M. (2022). **Community in Urban-Rural Systems**, Rowman & Littlefield.

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Community in Urban-Rural Systems is Gregory M. Fulkerson's latest volume in the series *Urban-Rural Dynamics*, for which he serves as editor, and builds on arguments he has previously made in the series. As do previous volumes, this 2022 study frames his analysis of the relationship between urban and rural economies and populations historically and theoretically. In Fulkerson's analysis, this relationship has three dimensions: the environmental demographic, the political-economic, and the sociocultural. Although most of Fulkerson's data and examples refer to the United States, he points out that the principles have global applications. Although not explicitly, this study also suggests the negative political consequences of misunderstanding the urban-rural divide, and an absence of attention to urban-rural systems: cultural, economic, and political marginalization of rural communities may contribute to political alienation and extreme political expression.

A key concept is the "caloric well," that is, energy available from all sources, organic and inorganic, that contribute to the energy requirements of a system, urban or rural, regional, national, or global. Caloric well analysis identifies caloric needs of individuals in proportion to amount of land required to meet those needs. Rural communities clearly are better positioned to meet their own caloric needs, whereas urban communities cannot do so without relying on rural areas. Ironically, many or most rural communities at present do not benefit from their ability to meet their own caloric needs, in part because of "urbanormativity," an attitude which privileges urban culture and communities, and the conversion of agriculture into an industrial process with markets dominated by supply-side economics.

Optimal development of CAS (Complex Adaptive Systems) depends on theoretical clarity (provided in part by Fulkerson's own continuing research project) and more refined policies to address the imbalance of power between urban and rural populations.

The first two chapters of Fulkerson's study examine the historical (and prehistorical) development of relatively small, isolated human groups into larger units, which become connected into urban-rural systems and eventually, into webs of smaller systems. Within the last century these systems "coalesce," as economies become more complex and global. In Chapter 3, Fulkerson's explanation of this demographic shift is bolstered by a historical survey of political economy. Ironically, as human populations become more concentrated in the metropolis and thus more dependent on rural production to meet their energy needs,

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urbanormativity intensifies, affecting rural ecology, demographics, agency, and wellbeing and, ultimately, threatening mass societies--urban and global economies—as well.

Fulkerson's historical analysis is based in part on the work of Marx, Malthus, and foundational twentieth-century sociology. Although he does not say so, Fulkerson's title, and other titles in the series, seem to allude to Raymond Williams' literary critical project in *The Country and the City* (1973), a Marxist study of literary imagery which, like Fulkerson's own work, interrogates cultural assumptions about urban-rural tensions. If Williams focuses on literary imagery of the "Edenic" countryside," as opposed to the dangerous city, Fulkerson instead emphasizes the assumption that urban populations are culturally superior. Both scholars, however, point to grossly oversimplified cultural stereotypes, which present rural places and people as simple.

The full implications of Fulkerson's analysis are worked out in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, where he argues that urban-rural patterns which have evolved since the Paleolithic period are now unsustainable. In other words, the available energy (caloric well) in many systems already fails to meet the requirements. Global energy requirements are now on a path toward unsustainable caloric deficits (not to mention the additional drastic costs of climate change and ecological degradation). Ironically, although rural communities produce the calories, they also tend to bear the consequences of a global caloric deficit. Although Fulkerson glances at the ecological consequences of urban-rural systems which do not adapt to current environmental and social stresses, his focus is on the need for policies which build sustainable human (cultural and economic) networks between communities.

Chapters 7 and 8 and the conclusion, emphasize how communities work and how, through planning and development, pressures on rural and urban areas which are unsustainable could be mitigated. Fulkerson sees small human groupings as, once again, key to building and sustaining culture, which is necessary for both individual/small group agency and the rural productivity essential for sustaining urban life. Community organizers (working with government agencies and NGOs) must be central figures in this process.

Although the author does not address the problems of political will and funding sources for community building, perhaps the next volume in this series will do so. *Community in Urban-Rural Systems* (2022) will be a useful addition, not only to academic libraries, but to any entity developing policy.