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## Review of *Restructuring Rural Saskatchewan: The Challenge of the 1990s* by Jack C. Stabler and M. R. Olfert

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**Restructuring Rural Saskatchewan: The Challenge of the 1990s.** Jack C. Stabler and M. R. Olfert. Regina, Saskatchewan: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1992. xii+87 pp. Maps, graphs, tables, and references. \$C9.00 paper, (ISBN 0-88977-071-9).

Stabler and Olfert have contributed a well-conceived empirical analysis of a truly rural economic region (about 18% of the Saskatchewan population is employed in primary sectors, overwhelmingly agriculture). This

book tends to support most of the same phenomena postulated in Central Place Theory literature, and observable in similar case studies of similar regions. Great Plains development and planning agencies should find in Stabler and Olfert's methods a rich harvest of easily applicable approaches to analyzing their respective economic spaces, provided they have access to a large, diverse database, or can compile it themselves with a minimal expenditure. Unfortunately, the theoretical contributions arising from this work, although not absent, seem to be limited because of publication space constraints.

This book is organized into 9 chapters that pack a lot of information into a small space. The first three serve to introduce the method of presentation, analytical framework, and data sources for secondary data, with collection procedures for primary data. These chapters were sufficiently effective in achieving their purpose. The authors appropriately chose to summarily describe Central Place Theory in a few pages, referencing some of the sources in this vast literature for a more complete coverage. Data was collected from several sources, which, although cross-checked in some instances, may have inhibited comparability.

Chapters 4-7 contribute the primary substance of the book. They begin with a description of the trade center hierarchy which supports previously denoted evidence of distributional concentration and lower level retail disfunction found in earlier case studies. Chapter 5 presents some findings that could have been developed in much more detail for theoretical purposes: the notion that increasing regional agricultural diversity has reduced, and in some cases reversed, tendencies towards regional population and income losses, for instance. The authors present this idea as an explanation of disparities in regional growth patterns, but, unfortunately, fail to fully analyze the postulated relation. This particular strategy could be very useful in a large number of Great Plains regions exhibiting similar characteristics, and could equally contribute to basic knowledge of structural changes in rural economic spaces.

Chapter 6 reinforces earlier findings of further spatial polarization of retailing activities. The analysis examines the nature of rural consumers to maximize their utility through multi-purpose shopping trips for higher-order goods and services, which tend to bypass a level in the hierarchy. Chapter 7 analyzes "bedroom community," manufacturing concentration, and mining influences within the Central Place scheme with no particularly illuminating results, but certainly supportive of previous hypotheses.

The closing chapters focus on the planning dilemma of people v. place prosperity, while noting the tendency for infrastructure investment to follow migrational trends. The authors offer some recommendations, but this section deserved more space than it was allotted as it seems to be the section that addresses the “restructuring challenge” presented in the title. The amount of pertinent data presented is quite large for a book this size, and the level of analysis high, but appropriately simple in calculation and concept. It is well worth reading; especially if the reader is faced with similar regional development concerns. **James Knotwell**, *Department of Geography, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.