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# RURAL EDUCATION: PASTS, PRESENTS AND FUTURES.

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EDUCATION

[canberra.edu.au/education](https://canberra.edu.au/education)

## 2011 – HALF WORLDS POPULATION IS URBAN

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- Modernity can be defined as the move from the rural to the urban.
    - 1948 this happened in Europe, USA etc.
    - 2012 in China.
  - **What does this mean for how we understand and interact with the world?**
    - The knowledges we value in education (curriculum).
    - What we assume as normal or standard (benchmarks/averages).
    - Potential loss of cultures, values & knowledges.
    - Research: Methodologies, epistemologies.

# SOME MODERN 'GLOBAL' NON-URBAN CHARACTERISTICS

- Ageing
- Less health care access
- Higher suicide rates
- Population decline, but
- Increasing Indigenous and Minority Group populations
- Less economic activity
- Less education outcomes
- Hard to attract professional staff  
e.g.. Doctors, Nurses, Teachers.

## Educationally, on average:

- Less early childhood education
- Literacy & numeracy scores decrease
- Retention decreases
- Senior secondary completion decreases
- Subject access decreases
- Less matriculation
- Greater vocational subjects

**Wicked Problem – no one has really solved this.**

## RURAL EDUCATION – THE FIELD

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- Persistent focus upon the different educational outcomes and achievement levels of rural, regional and remote students.
- Typically this revolves around issues of:
  - access to a full curriculum,
  - access to further education and training,
  - the attraction and retention of staff,
  - the socio-economic composition of rural populations and regions,
  - Higher, and increasing, Indigenous and Minority Group populations.
- Arguments in these areas are usually predicated upon notions of:
  - equity for rural regions and rural people,
  - economic development of regions,
  - the human capital development of rural populations.

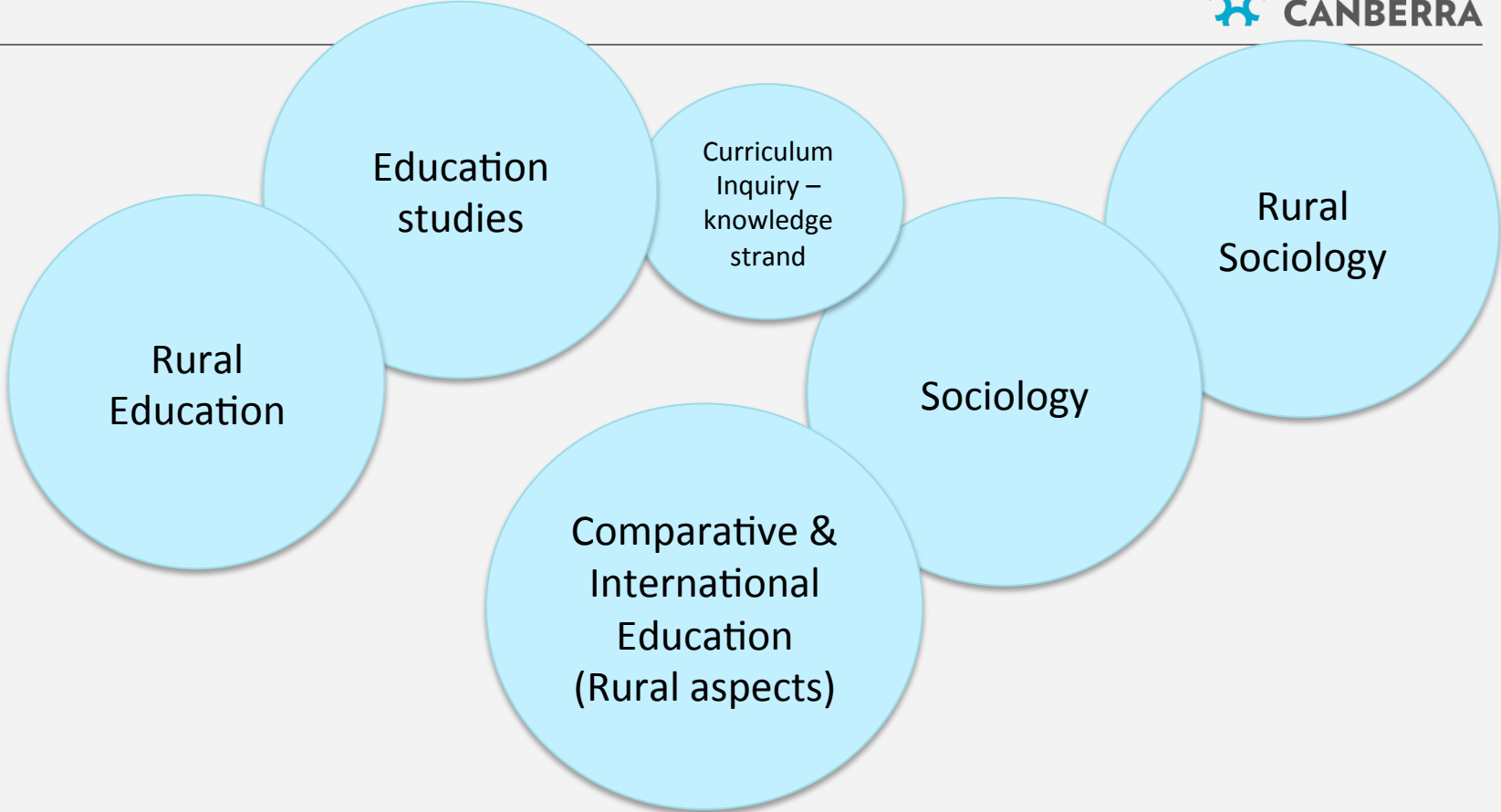
## THE PROBLEM

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- Arguments about the levels of rural achievement and development are usually framed in **comparison to a metro-centric norm**.
- The 'rural' has been defined by major centres of power in this research and not in its own terms. Rural education research has begun to problematize this construction.
- These arguments are often couched in romantic or nostalgic notions of the rural and the nation's past.
- These positions have tended to **emanate from within education studies** and often only draw on the broader fields of the humanities and the social sciences in a limited sense.
- Within nation studies.

# SEPARATE SPHERES

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# OPPORTUNITIES

- Spatial turn in social theory and education research
  - (Gulson & Symes, 2007)
- Rural Studies.
  - Rural Sociology
  - Rural Geography
  - (Woods, 2011)
  - (Shucksmith & Brown, 2016)
- Space as 'real-and-imaginary'
- Space as produced
- Trialectic of Space
  - Perceived
  - Conceived
  - LivedSoja (1996) & Henri Lefebvre (1991)
- Spatial Justice (Soja 2010)
  - Historical
  - Economic
  - Spatial

## WHY RURAL?

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- The multiplicity of rural places and perceptions of the rural remind us of the forces that have become otherwise invisible and that inevitably place matters.
- Much rural research in education uses the theoretical tools of place and situated practice (e.g. Gruenewald, Green, Sobel, Smith).
- Critically examine the influence of established, and powerful, methods on the construction of the rural.
  - (Gruenewald 2003)
- Examine the relationship between centres and their peripheries.
  - Nespor (2006)



# CONCEPTUALIZING RURALITY 1

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- Three-fold model of (rural) space
  - Rural locality (geographic)
  - Formal representations of the rural
  - Everyday lives of the rural
    - Halfacree 2006
- Generative Theory of Rurality
  - Rurality as context
  - Forces (Space, place & time)
  - Agencies (Movement, systems, will)
  - Resources (Situated, material & psychosocial)
    - Balfour, Mitchell & Molestone 2008
- 3 theoretical frames
  - **Functional** (land use & life linked to land)
  - **Political-economic** (social production)
  - **Social** (culture & values)
    - Cloke 2006

## CONCEPTUALIZING RURALITY 2

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- 3 rural community types
  - Durable-Agrarian
  - Resource extraction
  - Suburbanizing
- Each has particular equity challenges and opportunities
  - Howley & Howley 2010

### Rural is defined:

- Demographically
- Geographically
- Cultural

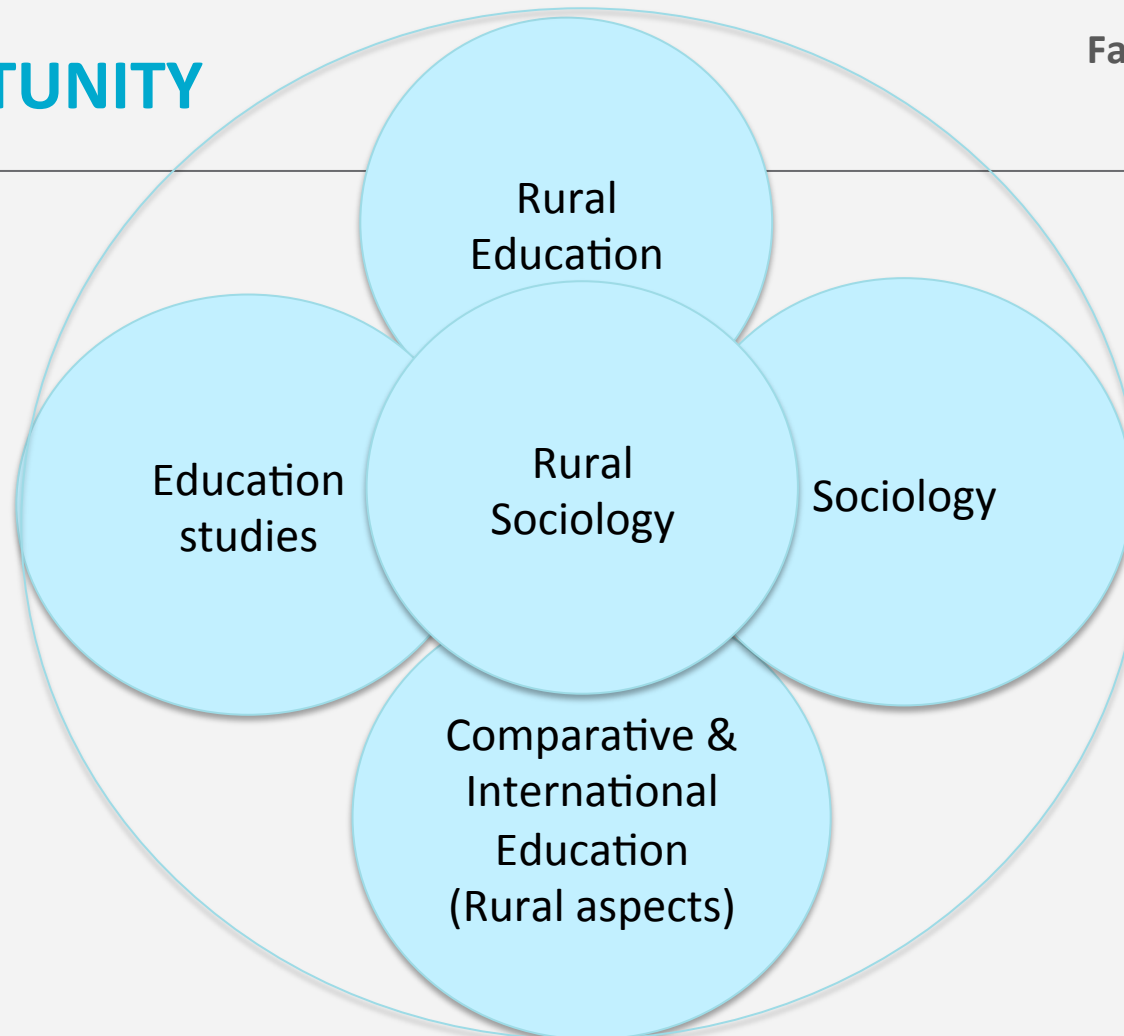
### Methods:

- Statistical
- Geographic (spatial)
- Cultural

# OPPORTUNITY

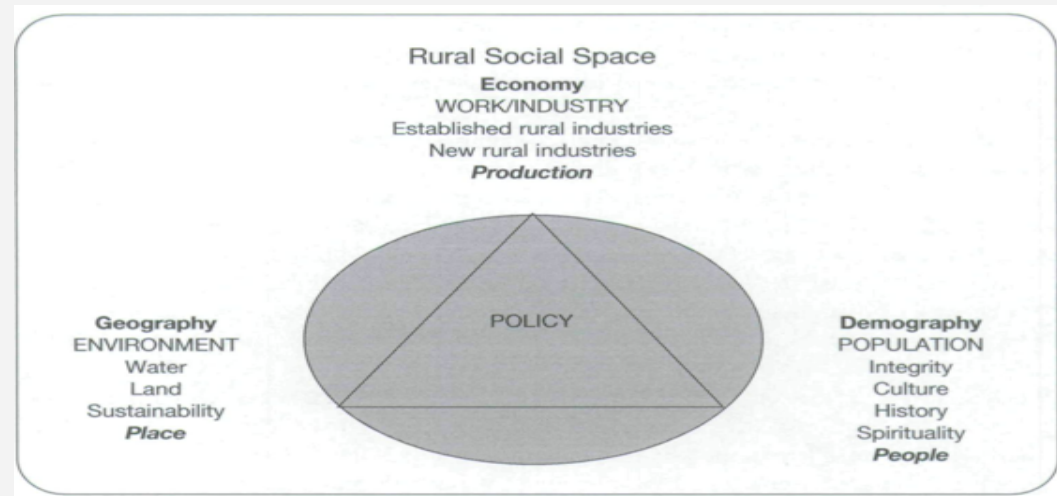
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# EXAMPLES

- Rural Literacies
  - (Donehower, Hogg & Schell, 2007; Green & Corbett, 2013)
- Rural Social Space
  - (Reid et al, 2010)
- Spatial reasoning in mathematics
  - (Lowrie)



# OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL STUDIES & EDUCATION RE CHINA

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- The study of rural education in China in the English language.
- There is a significant international body of work on the educational concerns of rural China in the English language **comparative education** literature.
  - This does not draw upon rural studies.
- Rural education in China is relatively unexamined **within the rural education field**.
- A rural education research program drawing from rural studies could expand the field of study, and generate new insights.
  - Rural Studies + Curriculum Inquiry = valuing new knowledges (& examination measures)
  - Rural Studies + Human Capital education research (staffing) =
  - Rural Studies + Policy Studies =

# POPULATION DENSITY

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FIGURE 1. ESTIMATED RESIDENT POPULATION DENSITY GRID, June 2017

