We often hear that there is no way out of the modern economic and political tensions that fall along geographic lines. Media commentary regularly declares that rural America is dying and that rural voters are driven only by anger. This narrative of hopelessness centers on the role that markets have played in abandoning rural regions and populations. In *Reviving Rural America*, Ann M. Eisenberg makes the case for hope by analyzing the role our society’s laws and policies play in the urban/rural divide. She demonstrates how law and policy, as well as decision-makers acting on their own subjective values, have contributed to modern rural challenges. Each chapter debunks a common myth about rural people, places, and policies, helping reveal how we got to where we are now. Ultimately calling for our laws and policies to steward rural America holistically, as a collective resource for all, this book envisions an alternative, more resilient and more just future.

Ann M. Eisenberg is Professor of Law at West Virginia University College of Law and Research Director at the Center for Energy and Sustainable Development. Her research examines how law shapes rural communities.
Reviving Rural America

TOWARD POLICIES FOR RESILIENCE

ANN M. EISENBERG

West Virginia University College of Law
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-108-83401-8 — Reviving Rural America
Ann M. Eisenberg
Frontmatter
More Information
Contents

List of Figures

Acknowledgments

1 Introduction

2 The Foundational Myths: The Myths of Rural Hyper-Simplicity, Rural Hyper-Complexity, and Rural Immateriality

3 The Myth of Rural Empowerment

4 The Myth of Rural Unsustainability

5 The Myth of Rural Decline

6 The Myth of Rural Radicalism

7 The Myth of Rural Whiteness

8 The Myth of Rural Obsolescence

Index
Figures

1.2 Old Coca Cola and local restaurant signs on a wall in downtown Morgantown, West Virginia  
1.3 Downtown Personal Rapid Transit station in Morgantown, West Virginia  
1.4 Map showing the fourteen coalfields of West Virginia  
2.1 Street view in downtown Ithaca, New York  
2.2 Ithaca Falls on Fall Creek, one of two prominent cascades that support a local slogan, “Ithaca Is Gorges” (a play on the word “gorgeous”) in Ithaca, New York  
2.3 Urbanized areas and urban clusters, 2010  
2.4 Metro and nonmetro counties, 2013  
2.5 Population change by metro/nonmetro status, 1976–2017  
3.1 The Warner Theatre marquee in Morgantown, WV, 2015  
7.1 Map of St. Helena Sound, and the coast between Charleston and Savannah

Page 3

Page 4

Page 6

Page 25

Page 26

Page 29

Page 30

Page 33

Page 49

Page 157
This project is the culmination of nearly a decade of lived experience, hands-on work, and scholarly research. It would not have been possible without a diverse set of supporters, collaborators, and readers over the course of that decade. I am grateful to the faculty and staff of the West Virginia University College of Law Land Use and Sustainable Development Clinic for taking a chance on hiring me as a young attorney and offering invaluable lessons about West Virginia, Appalachia, and being a good lawyer. My thanks goes to Kat Garvey especially for her mentorship. I am similarly grateful that my colleagues at the University of South Carolina School of Law saw my potential as a scholar and practitioner and for their feedback and encouragement on my research agenda over the years. Most recently, I am grateful to the Kluge Center at the Library of Congress and their generous support of my research on the Rural Electrification Act of 1936; to the West Virginia University College of Law and Arthur B. Hodges College of Law Fund for their support of this project in its final stages; and to the West Virginia University College of Law for the opportunity to return to West Virginia to join their faculty.

This book also would not have taken shape were it not for the literature, encouragement, and scholarly community in the Law and Rurality movement. The work, feedback, support, and organizing efforts of Lisa Pruitt, Jessica Shoemaker, Hannah Haksgaard, and many others have helped motivate and inform this project substantially. The same goes for the generosity of time and feedback from many of my colleagues in South Carolina and beyond, especially the ever-reliable readers Claire Raj, Emily Suski, and Shelley Welton.

This project benefited substantially from the incisive review of South Carolina’s Ashley Alvarado, Vanessa McQuinn, and Inge Lewis. Law student research assistants over the course of several years also contributed to this book. My thanks especially to Madison Chapel, Michael Crump, India Whaley, and Destinee Wilson.

Finally, I thank my family for their support, feedback, and sense of humor over the years. I especially thank my uncle, economic historian Gavin Wright, for his encouragement and feedback. My late father, Ted Eisenberg, mentioned on this book’s first page, did not live to see me follow in his footsteps as a law professor, but I think he would have been proud. I dedicate this book to his memory.

Acknowledgments