



Moving Nearer to Heaven: The Illusions and Disillusions of Migrants to Scenic Rural Places

Patrick C. Jobes

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While the dream of moving to a small town in a beautiful rural area is common among many Americans, that dream often turns into a nightmare for those who decide to follow it. More than half of the people who move to small towns in recreational places will move away in less than five years, and their rapid successive moves are often marked by anger and frustration as they encounter the realities of poor job possibilities, an impersonal life, and a deteriorating natural environment. Jobes describes the experiences of newcomers, and oldtimers, to Bozeman, Montana, a small Rocky Mountain town Jobes has observed and researched since the early 1970s. Through interviews and observations, Jobes has found that newcomers arrive with unrealistic illusions about life in a small town and that life in such places is simultaneously complex and dynamic.

According to Jobes, people who make the move to small towns surrounded by a beautiful natural environment tend to experience a short period of euphoria followed by disillusionment and the decision to move away, while those who stay accommodate to the inevitable transformations of the local community and the surrounding natural environment that they and other newcomers have created. Jobes examines the changes that take place in these areas as development and growth cause the natural environment to rapidly develop and as the influx and constant turnover of new residents gradually undermine the personal and familiar foundations for the social community. The demographic and environmental changes, Jobes concludes, impose dynamic adjustments within the community, and the slower patterns of small town life give way to the faster and disjointed styles of the city.



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