From Social Engineering to Social Movement: Power Sharing in Community Change in New York's Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains

Van sociale constructie naar sociale beweging: gedeelde macht in veranderingsprocessen in de Hudson Valley en de Catskill Mountains gemeenschappen van New York

Thesis

to obtain the degree of doctor from the
Erasmus University Rotterdam
by command of the
Rector Magnificus

Prof.dr. S.W.J. Lamberts

in accordance with the decision of the Doctorate Board

The public defence shall be held on
Thursday January 12th, 2006 at 11.00 hrs

by

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Introduction

As a nation with the world's largest per capita ecological footprint (Venetoulis 2004), expanding social inequities and political polarization, the U.S. is facing a need to re-invent its economic life to overcome the errors of recent history including uncontrolled land use, unsustainable industrial development, and inadequate integration of social and environmental criteria into economic development. While major environmental issues such as climate protection, natural resource depletion and toxics reduction are hotly contested at the national level, the discourse still primarily focuses on preservation and restoration rather than the preventive paradigm of sustainable development. By contrast, the notion of sustainable development is more visibly gaining acceptance at the scale of the municipality, the county, and the bioregion. In the contemporary political context of devolution of government and growing emphasis on property rights, this is a prime example of the need to "think globally and strategize locally." The proving ground for sustainable development in the U.S. is the land use and economic development decisions of villages, towns, cities, counties, and occasionally states.

Ideally, because it is a meeting place where environmental, social and economic well-being must be reconciled, sustainable economic development at the local level could be a common ground for citizens across ideologies, and an arena for the integration of a community's commitments to quality-of-life issues from education to violence prevention to income distribution to public health. After a generation of focus on building models and establishing methodologies, the sustainable development movement is more than ripe to bring its principles into widespread practice, build political will for more participative and robust approaches, and engage communities in creating viable strategies that reflect local values. This complex idea can be captured more simply as a shift from "social engineering" to "social movement." That is a move away from primary reliance on the efforts of the few who are in formal positions of leadership, and into a more inclusive, generative collaboration and power sharing within institutions and across their boundaries, so that sustainable development activities are self-perpetuating and democratic, while at the same time having the buy-in of local political and economic power structures that is necessary for implementation.

The terms "social engineering" and "social movement" are both used with some liberty. "Social engineering" refers to the extremes of hierarchical leadership that have occurred in some local communities historically, and "social movement" connotes any widely embraced, vibrant, personally meaningful, self-perpetuating, potentially risky set of changes in people's lives and patterns of commitment that may include advocacy but also involves direct collaborative action to change patterns of living, working and governing. The overall social movement under discussion here has been called "civic entrepreneurship" (Henton et al p. 34), the creation of new institutions and partnerships for social and economic revitalization. Civic entrepreneurship exists within a broader trend of institutional innovation that is often called the reinvention of government. The hope here is to identify and explore settings in which local economic development efforts, guided by principles of sustainability, have transcended the "social engineering" approach of a small group holding formal power, to be embraced by participants and stakeholders with the vigor, commitment and personal relevance characteristic of a social movement. For purposes of this discussion, social engineering can be defined as an effort to change human behavior that is rule-based and guided by a small number of actors who want to achieve pre-conceived kinds of alterations in the behavior of others. By contrast, a social movement (at least a healthy one) is value-based, with decentralized leadership and latitude for innovation by participants at all levels of formal authority.

In the context of this discussion, such initiatives may cover a spectrum of what Korten terms "people-centered development" strategies including:

1. more vigorous citizen participation in local planning and development processes;
2. revitalization and enhancement of existing businesses in ways that enhance their sustainable qualities and foster greater stakeholder participation in setting their direction;
3. sustainably-oriented entrepreneurship;
4. creation of social conditions that give rise to healthy economy and environment, including intangibles like trust and reciprocity, and also including concrete aspects of economic capacity like business services or trade associations.

All these kinds of development initiatives are seen in the cases under analysis.

This vision of local development reflects Shutkin's notion of "civic environmentalism," the movement for local stakeholder participation, consensus building, joint problem-solving and community-led change. As he explains[1]:

> Increasingly communities are transforming their environmental problems into an opportunity to address underlying social and economic problems, and they are using the lever of environmental protection strategies to push for systemic changes in the way people relate to each other and to their environment. ... Civic environmentalism is the emerging model of social and environmental activism. It is a dynamic and transformative enterprise that moves beyond top-down, decentralized law and regulation to planning and implementation at the community and regional level.

However, most efforts that are purely citizen-led lack the financial resources and political standing to achieve their goals easily, and so can be doing "the right stuff" with results lagging substantially behind effort. In addition, there is a vast literature on grassroots-led community development initiatives. The quest here is for cases of initiative by people with authority and at least some resources, who need to involve a wider community and so to share power in order to be successful.

Where is this vitality and adaptiveness present? How can it be recognized in patterns of collaborative activity, diffusion of power and responsibility, and allocation of resources? How has participative change succeeded in creating or preserving sustainable livelihood options? Among exemplary local projects (whether they are run by private entrepreneurs, NGOs or governmental agencies), what aspects of internal structure and stakeholder relations help them to sustain and renew themselves? In their formation, what aspects of design and planning process allow them to make the most of individual contribution by both insiders and stakeholders, generate creative options, manage and even constructively utilize conflict? Where and how do ordinary people interact with the processes of local economic and community development? Can economic and social development, at a relatively local scale, be animated and rendered more socially and environmentally sustainable, by helping stakeholders find personal meaning and significant levels of participation in selected strategies? These were the questions conceived at the outset of the study.

The focus, then, is the "civic connective tissue" in the organism of local communities, as reflected in the relationships and resource flows that aid in the achievement of a community's goals. These elements have been examined under such rubrics as "social capital," "communities of practice," "knowledge networks," and related applications of group and network theories to economic and civic life. These topics are extensively studied, as they should be. This study scopes out a range of structural and cultural characteristics of selected institutions that address economic and social development at the local level. Based on this detailed overview it proposes an agenda for further research and local leadership.

[1] P. 238.

One purpose of this study is to review the current state of this theory and practice – and the relevance of theory to practice -- for the benefit of citizens and community leaders alike. Such a review advances theory of organizational and community change. In order to conceive of alternatives to reliance on global economic institutions, local policymakers need to know what it takes to create healthy, locally-controlled economic alternatives out of indigenous resources, including people and institutions. By focusing on the interplay between participatory strategy and the three bottom lines for sustainable development, this research will explore the characteristics of best practices in galvanizing support for sustainable development and building the capacity of communities to achieve it. It is hoped that these insights will provide guidance for local actors – including civil society leaders, entrepreneurs, individual citizens and public officials at every level of government – in the necessary effort to build local control and accountability for sustainable development choices.

An additional research purpose is to experiment with approaches to qualitative investigation of community change efforts that can be implemented at low cost by a wide variety of civic actors and generate data of acceptable validity to guide program refinement in the typical scenarios of local government and NGO operations, where there is a general lack of sophisticated program evaluation tools and the professionals with time or skill to utilize them. Most of the research literature is limited in its qualitative description of the nuances of social relations as they are experienced, the subtlety of impacts of fluctuations in social capital and liability, and the range of outcomes that these differences can bring about in otherwise similar social systems. The study employs a straightforward, commonly used protocol of semi-structured interviews with key actors, focusing on their personal experience and direct observations, and then identifies the full range of themes identified by these informants as background data for future, in-depth exploration. The method aims to move from the crude to the subtle in an evolutionary way.

In this respect, an additional motivating factor for the exploration of subtle social dimensions of organizational efficacy lies in my personal and professional experience, and efforts to understand the difference between "stuck" and effective advocacy organizations. In this quest, the subtle qualities of social connections have been significant. I have been hired into challenging and life-defining jobs based on the strong recommendations of people I have only met two or three times, with whom I have sensed mutual "resonance" in terms of shared values, experiences and world views communicated through brief but charged verbal exchanges. I have experienced deep differences in my self-definition based on the depth, stability, and quality of relationships in my communities of place, interest and practice. I have experienced my own extremes of functionality and paralysis, and seen similar extremes in others, in workplace and civic cultures, depending on the degree of trust, shared norms, and common language that were perceived in group settings. These experiences – and no evidence to the contrary that I am aware of – give rise to a set of guiding principles underlying this work:

1. that, to generate meaningful data and explanation of community phenomena, a research framework must make room for the subjective experience and interpretations of actors;
2. that important experiences of individuals and communities occur outside the range of the "probable," so field investigation tools must allow for – and even seek out – low-probability events and causal factors that may have high importance;
3. that investigative approaches based on forced-choice and on sharpening contrasts (e.g. network analysis tools that assume people are unambiguously in or out of a given relationship) do a disservice to the complexity of human and social experience and can function as a distorting lens when brought to bear on community change processes.

Therefore the research approach here focuses descriptively and analytically on whole community systems, on the face value of testimonies of key actors as partial truths for the system as a whole; and on the weaving together of narrative elements into a synthetic community picture, to draw out success factors in the scenarios under study.

The conceptual discussion is introduced in Chapter One with an exploration of two key dimensions of sustainable solutions – that they be indigenous (based on local resources, values and capacities) within the global context; and that they be integrative (weaving together, for example, social, ecological, economic and governance criteria for strong sustainability, and weaving together the knowledge of diverse disciplines, at diverse scales, and interpreted through diverse cultural lenses – a demanding undertaking. The existing picture of economic and social development is reviewed in Chapter Two; the social and institutional climate in Chapter Three; and the overall state of the art in sustainable community development in Chapter Four.

In Chapters 5, the social science literature review frames a theory of institutional adaptiveness drawn from two separate strands of analysis. The first explores the conditions for empowerment, efficacy and collaboration within organizations. The second explores the conditions for empowerment of individuals into a stance of socially responsible effectiveness, through participation in ever widening groups and communities. Initially brought together under the rubric of the simple key terms "social movements" and "social capital" – and surveyed before the choice was made to focus on one government and two large development agencies as cases -- this analysis draws from fields including small group dynamics, team and partnership literature, the sociology of institutional and organizational change, and the cognitive, developmental and social psychology of social movement participation. The literature review gives rise to a three-stage model for cataloguing observations of an institution's evolution (where the stages can richly overlap and interweave):

1. **Enfranchisement through personalization**: Individual awareness-raising as issues become salient and meaningful, and people establish a sense of commitment.

2. **Efficacy through connection**: Coalescence of networks defined by shared values and interests, and by self-identification with the initiative for change – occurring when concerned individuals are appropriately distributed and outwardly-focused enough to find each other, and when mediating structures such as interest networks and committees function effectively; diffusion of new behaviors, within and beyond the initial networks, builds toward critical mass, when enough individuals are receptive and when the influence of catalytic leaders reaches their audiences.

3. **Institutional adaptation** to the new behaviors through policies and programs, when the pressures created by informal changes mount and when advocacy for institutional change is carried out effectively.

What is most relevant to the research question, about these model elements, touches their qualitative, subjective dimensions. For example:

- What brings issues to the surface in the minds of individuals and the lives of communities?
- How much must a network coalesce in order to be an effective conduit for civic engagement, ideas and consensus building, and how is that coalescence made visible?
- What does critical mass look and feel like in a community, with respect to a new set of approaches to civic participation?
- What conditions are present in institutions and their surroundings to make possible their receptivity to new practices?

Therefore the field study approach is qualitative, and predicated on respect for the subjective, complex aspects of community phenomena. Interviews with informants representing key internal actors and external partners, combined with selected participant-observation in public meetings and review of each study site's formal records, provided the basis for creating systems maps and social histories of the three study sites with a focus on the research

question. The study method – open-ended interviews combined with participant-observation and literature review -- is aimed at consistent observation of complex systems and identification of themes that can be expected to be generally visible, hence potentially relevant in evaluation research.

The characteristics of these projects that led to their selection are related, above all to their complexity, scale and visibility as study sites. They are similar in scale and complexity in order to facilitate qualitative comparison; they are among the largest and most visibly successful initiatives in the region. They are all in or near a regionally significant environmentally protected area – the Catskill Park and contiguous areas in the Shawangunk Mountains and Hudson River Watershed. In that respect, they are subject to similar demands with respect to sustainable development (though their local distinctions are many). In particular, to be environmentally sound, development in all these areas must rigorously minimize negative impacts on water quality, directly through the development of clean industries and commerce, and indirectly by managing such factors as population, recreational impacts, traffic, and other nonpoint sources of pollution and pressure on watersheds. Finally, the field study sites share some common dynamics in terms of inter-institutional relations and resource flows, although their individual differences have emerged in the final analysis as much larger than they were expected to be at the outset. In all three sites, there is a mandate to promote some degree of sustainable development, and it is backed up by the investment of at least adequate financial and political resources. In each case, individuals and groups, with sufficient socioeconomic power, want to experiment with new ways to approach development, and consciously recognize that they will need the support and participation of external stakeholders in order to be successful. In each case, the local power structure needs the approval of stakeholders, clientele, and citizens to be successful, and recognizes this.

At the same time, the three study sites are different in some straightforward ways. One is a municipality, one a privately funded development effort, and one a complex NGO with strong governmental ties. However, there is no intrinsic reason not to compare structures across these differences, and arguably this diversity can add to the value of any patterns that appear across the field sites. All three cases involve agricultural and forest-based natural resource economies, Main Street commercial centers, infrastructure issues, debates about appropriate forms of tourism, urban-rural tensions, and other socioeconomic similarities. The final chapter includes a discussion of limits to the comparability of these cases, which might appear self-evident in light of these differences; however, the limits discussed are not related to these basic differences, but to a more detailed analysis of resources, structural features, constraints, and incentives.

While there is a copious case literature on grassroots-led sustainable development initiatives whose foundations are more broadly participatory, and these have enormous value from the standpoint of political and economic enfranchisement, such efforts are often constrained by the limited financial and human resources of volunteer-led, community-based groups. From the perspective of social research, it is easier to focus attention on the social sources of effective group action, in situations where the resources and political mandate are present, than when their absence may undermine even those community initiatives that are following all the "right" strategies. In practical terms, a great deal of leverage can be gained by identifying local leadership strategies for sharing power to achieve results that pass muster with local stakeholders.

The term "strategies" may be misleading, because the characteristics of leadership and of organizational structure addressed here are by no means all consciously chosen. The quest is for a wide-angle perspective on community development initiatives that show promise in contributing to sustainable communities, and an appreciation of the leadership choices that can enhance their effectiveness.

In the change processes of institutional communities, it can be predicted that the social experience of participation will matter a great deal in recruiting and retaining individual participants and achieving desired outcomes, and can further predict that this experience will vary in subtle and subjective ways that may not be observable by a given leader and yet matter greatly in the leader's ability to create a coherent system and achieve desired outcomes. Therefore, the demographic and psychographic diversity of participants whose collaboration and common understanding must be achieved, will require continuous renegotiation and frequent compromise among points of view. In addition, the community development processes are inevitably "messy" in human terms, requiring a degree of emotional and social intelligence among leaders and participants, which may not yet be fully recognized in literature or practice. The cases support this initial perspective as they reveal continuous negotiation of conflict dynamics and of basic organizational norms.

Drawing permission for breadth from this review of theory, the study shifts into an empirical mode, making use of key actors in the three field cases essentially as research advisors. Two of the cases, characterized as nontraditional economic development agencies (WAC and CMF), show strong records of achieving the major environmental, social and economic outcomes for which they were founded. But, in their core operations, they do not make the shift from "social engineering" to "social movement." That is, their strategies and modes of operations continue in a relatively stable mode, even as their progress toward goals continues to be effective. They do not create the kind of self-reflexive capacity and empowerment – a common theme in organizational learning -- to strengthen members as leaders, or to engage of stakeholders outside their formal power structures as full partners. Both organizations have "founding narratives" of awakening of leadership groups to the need for new practices; both have created mediating structures to address their chosen issues (such as WAC's council meetings and whole farm planning process, and CMF's markets and producer networks). Both have created institutional structures for the implementation of their visions and have used them successfully to a point – but without so far transcending the initial imbalance of institutional and economic power. What is lacking, it appears, is a parallel awakening among stakeholders with respect to the self-interest inherent in less passive participation, and a stakeholder-based leadership structure to counter the original power centers. However, in their evolution, CMF and WAC appear to be seeding the stakeholder relationships that can give rise to this changed power relationship, an outcome that took the third case, Marbletown, nearly a decade to make visible in its present form. While initially framed as qualitative comparative research, the study achieves some comparative insight but goes on to explore one case, Marbletown, in more depth because it yields both more richness and more transparency.

Marbletown, a cluster of cosmopolitan villages rich in intellectual and cultural capital, has crossed the bridge from "social engineering" to "social movement" in the quality, quantity, and forms of participation of citizens in an innovative government structure that has, over a ten year period, created a proactive policy consensus on potentially divisive land use issues such as property tax valuation and major zoning issues, and has enacted a "vision to action" approach to development more generally, working in partnership with citizens to create an arts council, growers' association, eco-tourism initiative, youth center and online master plan updating process. The concluding chapter of this study draws out the distinctive features of the Marbletown case in light of the four-stage model: awakening of governmental officials and citizens, initially in conflict, and engagement of bipartisan leaders in an iterative process for engaging stakeholders and renegotiating norms. Marbletown's innovative government structure is frequently re-tuned in its details to provide an effective mediating function among stakeholders, citizen committees and elected officials, while its guiding rules and norms increasingly reflect a shared system of meaning of "open government" – while by no means leaving behind the ordinary polarization and competition that may always characterize local politics. It has reached this point through incremental expansion of participation, to a great extent through social networks of original leaders who share the values and norms of the

experiment, combined with opening to the initiatives of citizens with ideas not conceived by the original leadership group such as the creation of a trademark local chamber music festival.

The exploration of these complex institutions leads to conclusions on two levels: the factors that contribute to the shift from "social engineering" to "social movement" in the power structure of the institution, and the limitations of qualitative research by external observers in such sensitive, ambiguous matters. Anchored in the fields of community development and social psychology, the study aims to generate a detailed, meaningful qualitative picture of politically realistic options for engaging stakeholders in sustainable development processes, and to draw some connection between particular leadership efforts and their social, environmental and economic outcomes. It also explores the relationships of individual psychosocial development and small scale social processes such as small group formation and social movement participation at the local level, to community economic and social development outcomes. In this way it aims to further the subspecialty known as person-centered community development. The purpose here, however, is not only to understand these processes of social and economic innovation for their intrinsic intrigue, but to inform local economic actors about options, models and strategies, and thus support the scaling-up of sustainable community development efforts in the U.S. in our lifetime.

Chapter 1 From "Social Engineering" to Social Movement

Indigenous and Integrative: Two Characteristics of Sustainable Solutions

With the largest per capita ecological footprint of any country, the United States economy is unsustainable -- socially, environmentally, and, for many citizens, economically. The U.S., as a cultural model and economic force, is fast transmitting its unsustainable model internationally. Vital signs of continuing unsustainable development are measured by a variety of disciplinary specialists -- from environmental toxicologists to demographers to women's studies researchers. They are addressed, for the most part, by separate advocacy groups and movements, none yet with the political power to turn the tide by itself. This fragmentation of knowledge, skill and advocacy is arguably a barrier to the vigorous, resourceful collaborative work needed to build sustainable institutions and practices. While some is ideological and some is circumstantial, some of that fragmentation is deeply rooted in the disciplinary structure of our trusted ways of knowing. In the sciences, for example, Norgaard[2] reflects on the absence of integrative meta-models to facilitate dialogue within and among specialties.

> This is the situation. Ecologists have seven or eight ways of thinking about natural systems, ranging from population biology to biogeochemistry. They are comfortable with that. Economists have a similar number of models, including the neoclassical, Keynsian, and Marxist. They are not so comfortable with that, but they are learning to live with it. In this context, with no meta-model into which knowledge can somehow fit, the only way that knowledge can be integrated is through social processes, social learning. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is an illustration of this process, with some scientists thinking at submolecular levels, and others working at the scale of continental landscapes. The American agricultural system is another example. We don't farm the way we do because of any integrative model; we farm as we do because of the social processes that have given rise to the land grant colleges and the whole system of agricultural policy.

The depth of the society's need for integration among specialties that need each other, and the social nature of this process, are invoked by Leopold, whose observation of fragmentation between natural and social sciences in the 1930s[3] still rings true[4]:

> One of the anomalies of modern ecology is the creation of two groups, each of which seems barely aware of the existence of the other. The one studies the human community, almost as if it were a separate entity, and calls its findings sociology, economics and history. The other studies the plant and animal community and comfortably relegates the hodge-podge of politics to the liberal arts. The inevitable fusion of these two lines of thought will, perhaps, constitute the outstanding advance of this century.

In light of the pressing and pervasive need for integration of knowledge in the service of sustainability, it is valuable to look for an integrating concept that encompasses and connects these separate disciplinary and policy areas, and makes them meaningful for both cross-disciplinary collaboration and committed citizen action. The notion of sustainable livelihoods will be explored here as such an integrative, animating idea that can foster broad and solution-oriented participation in sustainable development activities, on the part of scholars, political actors, and citizens alike. Such participation is critically important because

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[2] Keynote presentation, Greening the Campus biennial conference, Ball State University, 2001

[3] Bradley, Nina Leopold, "A Man for all Seasons," National Wildlife Apr/ may 1998, v. 36 no. 3.

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the complexity and particularity of sustainable development challenges, at the local level, call for depth of local knowledge, and care in its application, in crafting solutions that address the specifics of place and community. As Durning reflects:

> "...to seek durable answers to global challenges, the conscientious must -- without losing sight of the universal -- begin with place, and specifically with one place."

For the generation and diffusion of technical and social innovations, in a way that advances authentic sustainable development, indigenous actors who reside in a given community must be at least involved, and preferably in charge of that community's social and economic choices. Otherwise, political viability becomes more difficult (and externally imposed, undemocratic solutions more tempting). Additionally, the particularities of communities, cultures, and ecosystems are key factors in determining what forms of development are ecologically and economically viable, and what it takes to meet local human needs (Cash et al 2003). Local stakeholder participation is built into the Rio Principles, which specified in 1992 that Local Agenda 21 plans were to be in place by 1996. Principle 10 affirms the responsibility of governments to involve concerned citizens; Principle 20 emphasizes the equal and important role of women, and Principle 22 does the same for indigenous peoples. According to Blackburn:

> At least two major social structural themes can be distilled from these sections of the Rio Declaration... one which is more philosophical and one which is more practical. The philosophical theme is that co-operative mechanisms and equitable processes are necessary, rather than structures imposed by domination. The practical theme, which reflects the philosophical, is that community concerns must be integrated into decision making processes through meaningful stakeholder process.

In practice, few communities in the U.S. have responded to this challenge in an integrated fashion, although increasing numbers at least are engaging in comprehensive land use planning.

A much more visible challenge, in the public discourse of news media and political debate, is the direction of the economy itself. Ten years after the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the flight of capital and jobs to lower-wage countries has been steady, although its magnitude is debated. Outsourcing of increasingly skilled labor – epitomized by large-scale appliance customer service centers in India, software production companies in Russia and bookkeeping services in Ghana – is the unanticipated consequence of globalization for the U.S. Information technology, writing, and other professional skills are increasingly migrating offshore. In a time of wrenching debate and power struggles concerning economic and political globalization, and a search for alternative structures for economic governance at the most basic levels, a general commitment to sustainable approaches by government and industry does not assure serious attention to local detail, and the enfranchisement of local stakeholders. These efforts require a distinct set of skills, insights, and commitments to bring the diverse interested parties to the same table and keep them there.

Under the rubric of sustainable development, an extremely diverse range of economic, social and environmental initiatives has shown up in the early years of the new millennium. Key actors initiating and having a share in the control of these efforts include transnational corporations, business associations, grassroots NGOs, entrepreneurs, universities, faith communities, youth groups, government agencies with diverse mandates working at scales from local to global, community development corporations, and a variety of public-private partnerships formed to address resource and infrastructure issues. It would be surprising if the missions and methods, institutional structures and interests of these actors did not shape their

interpretation of the agenda for sustainable development. It would be surprising if there were not sharply contested views in circulation, as to what is sustainable and in the public interest. In their comments on a 1999 international conference of the Greening of Industry Network -- the tenth in an annual sequence -- Rossi et al (2000) note "two striking conclusions": the widely differing conceptions of the relative roles of corporations, governments and the society in setting the sustainability agenda, and the confidence with which the corporate sector defines itself as a leading agent of change toward sustainability.

These concerns are compounded by the imbalances of economic and political power among the actors involved in local economies. Hawken (1994) notes that:

> Even a declining General Motors still employs nearly 600,000 people. A supermarket chain such as American Stores employs 200,000 or more. The 400 companies profiled in Everybody's Business Almanac employ or support one-fourth of the U.S. population. The largest 1000 companies in America account for over sixty percent of the GNP, leaving the balance to 11 million small businesses. The average large business is 16,500 times larger than the average small business.

While large and small firms do not compare or contrast in any simple way, in terms of their accountability to stakeholders, Shuman (2000) argues that locally-owned businesses have the autonomy, and at the same time the local interconnections and interdependence, to be (at least modestly) more socially and environmentally responsible than their absentee-owned counterparts -- and receive more direct rewards for their virtues in terms of customer loyalty and community good will. This does not mean they will automatically do so, but simply that they are free of one particularly constraining set of entanglements with external stakeholders that are remote and may sometimes wield disproportionate economic and political power.

Two examples illustrate the magnitude of errors that can be made when local factors are ignored. The first is the rioting targeted against McDonald's food enterprise by Hindus in 2000. This incident was triggered by public discovery that the company's famous and popular French fry -- which had been widely publicized as being cooked in vegetable oil -- was pre-treated with animal-based beef flavoring unacceptable to some populations for religious reasons and others on moral, ecological, health or aesthetic grounds. Company spokespeople quickly asserted that the choice of vegetable oil, and advertising campaigns built on it, had only been connected to the issue of cardiac health, and not to the much wider range of concerns of consumers. However, previous sustained advertising of the product in the obviously meat-sensitive Indian market (as well as to vegetarians globally) had failed to clarify this point.

A second example is drawn from the experience of Sirolli (1999), as part of a team of Italian development experts seeking to revolutionize agriculture in an African riverside village by the introduction of Italian gourmet tomatoes as an export crop some years ago. Just before harvest, the limitation of this crop choice was revealed when the entire field of tomatoes vanished in less than a day's time. On the riverbank, the development experts were dismayed to see a population of extremely contented, well-fed hippopotami sunning themselves after their tomato banquet.

The complexity of effort needed to identify local natural resource issues and social concerns, and then to work with these as a basis for development strategies, calls for special attention to the deliberative structures and processes at the local level for gathering, sorting, evaluating and acting on inputs from communities. This, in turn, calls for an examination of

development strategies with discrimination, courage, and patience for what Orr[5] calls "slow knowledge." He illustrates the notion with another cautionary tale similar to those above:

> Between 1978 and 1984, the Asian Development Bank spent twenty-four million dollars to improve agriculture on the island of Bali. The target for improvement was an ancient agricultural system organized around one hundred and seventy-three village cooperatives linked by a network of temples. The temples were operated by 'water priests' working in the service of the water goddess, Dewi Danu, a diety seldom included in the pantheon of development economists. Not surprisingly, the new plan called for large capital investment to build dams and canals, and to purchase pesticides and fertilizers. The plan also included efforts to make idle resources, both the Balinese and their land, productive year-round. Old practices of fallowing were ended, along with community celebrations and rituals. The results were remarkable but inconvenient: yields declined, pests proliferated, and the village society began to unravel. On later examination, it turned out that the priests' role in the religion of Agama Tirtha was that of ecological master planners whose task was to keep a finely-tuned system operating productively. Western development experts dismantled a system that had worked well for more than a millennium, and replaced it with something that did not work at all. The priests have reportedly resumed control.

The Balinese water priests, by virtue of their social roles, were in a position to serve a variety of functions in support of more sustainable patterns of living. They understood the carrying capacity of the region and the early signs of its being overwhelmed. They were institutionally positioned to carry out long term monitoring of environmental quality and local resource use, in the aggregate and by individual households. They established community norms regarding work and leisure that were consistent with environmental needs for the optimization of resource use, over the long haul, and for the vitality of natural systems, as well as meeting the community's physical and spiritual needs. In both their religious and secular roles, they helped to shape a culture of stewardship based on these understandings. They did so by means of their ability to guide social structures and cultural norms, with sensitivity to their impacts on resources and environmental conditions.

These anecdotes may seem to be more satires of development efforts than legitimate accounts. But they are true. They concern large private and public sector organizations, still in operation, with global reach. And there is no evidence that they are isolated examples. The common theme that commands attention is how a body of local knowledge, of such importance for the perceived and objective well being of a community, could be so easily available and obvious to local actors, and yet so completely disregarded by apparently well-meaning intervenors from outside.

In the U.S. today, we are witnessing the continuation of a more than twenty year trend of devolution of government in scale, from federal to local, and the increasingly embattled status of governmental solutions to social or environmental problems. This leaves the municipality as an important unit of human organization for protecting citizens from inappropriate external influences and effecting collaborative problem solving for sustainable development. Cities like Chicago and Burlington, Vermont, and numerous rural communities are experimenting with sustainable practices in ways that larger political bodies may lack the adaptiveness to adopt. Advocating for "smart community" at the local level, using both face-to-face civic ties and electronic communications, Eger (2001) frames the context as follows:

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5 Orr, David. "Slow Knowledge."

> No longer dependent upon national governments for ideas and information, and no longer content to be bound by the one-size-fits-all pronouncements of national legislators, local leaders are taking social and economic matters into their own hands, pursuing policies that will promote job creation, economic growth, and an improved quality of life within their region, regardless of the policies enacted at the national level. This reverse flow of sovereignty, by which local governments are assuming more responsibility than ever before for their residents' well-being, has come at a time when information and markets of all types are becoming increasingly globalized. News, currency, and economic and political intelligence --not to mention products and services -- can no longer be contained within our national borders. Increasingly they flow, often instantaneously, to all corners of the globe, making it difficult or even impossible for national governments to influence political situations or economic conditions over which, not long ago, they held unquestioned control. The result is a geopolitical paradox in which the nation-state, too large and distant to solve the problems of localities, has become too small to solve the borderless problems of the world.

This formulation makes it clear that the point here is not any simple dichotomy between the local and the global, but rather a number of interrelated power shifts that place new expectations and mandates into the hands of local political and socioeconomic units – sometimes beyond their capacity to respond. Humanity has become capable of global impacts, global measurements, and aspirations toward a global economy, and paradoxically these make the anchor of local knowledge and participation in decision making essential, in order to preserve and renew resources and quality of life. Local ownership and participatory decision making are not, in principle, necessary for sustainable choices, but local sensitivity is, and the global cases discussed above suggest that the "absentee" quality of decision making can lead to omissions of key data and perspectives that would be harder to ignore if decisions were made geographically closer to their points of implementation (e.g. McDonald's) and with longer, more subtle cultural observation (the Asian Development Bank). Of course, global enterprises can be capable of local sensitivity, as illustrated by initiatives on the part of Starbucks (recycled and locally sourced café construction materials, fair trade and organic coffee lines, composting programs, community philanthropy), Dell (design for the environment and product takeback) and Office Max (sourcing and recycling). But, at least in the Dell case, concerted pressure from activist investor groups, rather than internal sensitivity, gave rise to the environmental initiative. Further, when "ordinary" multinational consumer products companies and locally owned counterparts are compared in terms of simple measures such as their degree of local purchasing and philanthropy, those with local ownership tend to contribute much more economic multiplier to local economies[6]. Therefore there is value in studying the way that indigenous knowledge and values are brought forward in the decision making of institutions that are primarily controlled at a local or regional level, and in the process exploring how the influences of larger and more distant institutions may make themselves felt.

Definitions and rationales

Today, fueled by advocacy and opportunity as well as need, a new field is being articulated (with ancient roots) under several roughly interchangeable names: sustainable community development, human-scale development (Max-Neef et al), and people-centered development (Korten 1997, 2000). Max-Neef points to the need for broad-based redesign of economic systems to make peace with social and environmental values, and more, a re-

[6] Mitchell, Stacy (2003) … "The Economic Impact of Locally Owned Businesses vs. Chains: A Case Study in Midcoast Maine" – Institute for Local Self-Reliance

imagining of the spectrum of resources available, and human needs to be served, in this venture. Human-scale development, in his view,

> means acknowledging that the social and economic theories which have sustained and directed the processes of development, are not only incomplete but inadequate. It entails becoming aware that new and more disquieting frustrations will dominate our increasingly heterogeneous and interdependent world if development models based on mechanistic theories and misleading aggregate indicators are applied. Human Scale Development, geared to meeting human needs, requires a new approach to understanding reality. It compels us to perceive and assess the world, that is, people and their processes, in a manner which differs completely from the conventional one. Likewise, a theory of human needs for development must be understood precisely in those terms -- as a theory *for development*.

In the discussion that follows, "development" can be defined as the purposeful evolution of social and economic systems in keeping with some set of articulated values. This encompasses both quantitative and qualitative change, without requiring quantitative increases in any particular indicator. This allows decoupling of development from growth without necessarily eliminating selective growth from the picture. Integrating a number of definitions in common use, *the concept of sustainable development can then be seen as development to meet today's human needs equitably, and stabilize or improve environmental quality, in such a way that future generations of humans will be at least as capable of meeting their material and developmental needs as we are today*. In recognition of the extreme levels, and synergistic effects, of contemporary environmental degradation, the notion of a "restorative" economy, one that attaches incentives to environmental benefits and innovations rather than simply reducing environmental harm, has been advanced as a greater benefit and necessary guiding principle for our time (Hawken 1994). This is typically articulated as the "high end" potential and the desirable goal of sustainable development initiatives.

"Economic" development concerns the manner in which we produce goods and services for human consumption, allocate purchasing power among individuals and communities, and provide for meaningful human labor. Economic development is the selected focus here because economic well-being is an American cultural and political preoccupation that has, until recently, been understood to be intrinsically at odds with environmental health. As recently as early 2001, the US executive branch reversed the nation's negotiated commitment to climate protection through the Kyoto Protocol, citing economic risk, in spite of copious research indicating minimal trade-off between environmental and economic benefits, and considerable potential for synergy. Goodstein ((1999) reviews both environmental regulatory initiatives and economic indicators such as firm downsizings and unemployment rates, and finds limited connection (e.g. mainly in the extractive industries and in large technology-based industries such as utilities that have high levels of stranded costs connected with unsustainable technologies). Yet environmental opponents continue to rely on political strategies rooted in the "environment versus jobs" premise (Goodstein 1999; Gelbspan 1999). Under these circumstances, it is doubly important that economic development occur through locally driven, accountable, transparent processes that make it easier for ordinary people to understand the range of environmentally sound, socially beneficial economic options, and find their own ways onto a sustainable path.

While the proliferation of theory and models for sustainable economic development today is unprecedented, this linkage between individual and collective well being as the goal of economic activity fits into the tradition of welfare economic theory, defined by Mishan (1969) as "that branch of the study which endeavors to formulate propositions by which we may rank, on a scale of better or worse, alternative economic situations open to society." This tradition is consistent with contemporary work on economic justice (e.g. Sen 1973) and on ecological

economics (e.g. Daly and Cobb, 1987). These may be viewed as situated in a disciplinary boundary between economics per se, and the more socially oriented field of economic development.

Continuing with basic definitions, a "community" can be seen as a group of individuals united by some common organizing principle(s) and aware of it. A community does not need to be homogeneous, yet it is characterized by some degree of cooperation on matters of shared concern. As a corollary to this definition, a community must exist on a scale and in a proximity that makes such cooperation realistic. While communities of interest may span the globe, and online communities may be anonymous from a conventional standpoint, this research seeks out the most robust kinds of cooperative capacity. Therefore, it will focus on communities defined primarily by place and secondarily by some particular interest, that still remain diverse in terms of members' additional interests and identities. By this definition, a community might be an institution, a neighborhood, a municipality, or the population of a bioregion. These scales are generally a little larger and more diverse than the nuclear groupings of family, sports team or social club. A common feature of community is that its members do not necessarily have an automatic or unambiguous basis for relationship, yet they are interdependent and so have reasons to grapple with the demands of coexistence and collaboration. Whether they are brought together primarily by shared commitment to place or profession or culture, a common adversary or a common challenge, a community is a group of people who need to deal with each other and have some awareness of that need, with no easy blueprint for doing so. Community economic development is imperfect short-hand for economic development that produces not only revenue, employment and other conventionally understood rewards, but also reflects a social community's values, builds its productive capacity and autonomy, and enhances its quality of life *as a community*.

If "sustainable community economic development" is the desired end, then this study will explore strategies and tools for achieving it. But this language, while chosen to be as clear and definable as possible, is an inadequate abstraction to describe the kinds of social change that must occur in the world's largest per capita consumer of materials and energy – and one of the world's most socioeconomically stratified societies -- before we can aspire to patterns of development that can remotely be considered sustainable. The underpinnings of a consumer culture and consumption-driven economy must be replaced with one in which people are able to "meet their material needs materially, and their non-material needs [such as aesthetics and enjoyment, self-esteem and social affiliation] non-materially", in the words of Meadows, Meadows and Randers (1993). Rising indicators of unsustainable lifestyles, from vehicle miles traveled to consumer debt, reflect definitions of success that deeply influence the goals we work for individually, and the economic development strategies we choose on the collective level. Therefore the study focuses attention on communities as systems, and their interplay with individual influences and small group norms.

The focal research question is this. In local sustainable community economic development initiatives, where do we see a shift from "social engineering" to "social movement", or from a relatively one-way exertion of influence in the initial organizing efforts, to power sharing, continuous learning, and active engagement of constituents in fundamental direction-setting, so that the effort can self-perpetuate?

The term "social engineering," as used here, refers somewhat informally to any top-down effort by a small number of individuals with political, economic or social power, to influence a larger number of people in ways that the originators seek to predict and control. In this usage, it is not intended to imply the degree of mobilization and mandate illustrated, for example, by postwar reconstruction projects or refugee resettlement efforts, but only a concerted effort to influence a given group in a relatively pre-determined way.

A social movement, in contrast, is shaped by the visions and initiatives of participants. When this shift occurs, what local conditions and inputs can be observed that might play a causal role? This is not a study of effective grassroots social movements in general, but of a particular kind of empowerment of key stakeholders in local development strategies: to engage stakeholders, in ways that encompass their political and economic roles, as creative participants in the development of sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their neighbors in the contemporary North American countryside and small towns.

"Sustainable livelihoods" is an integrative concept, in that it encompasses both specific choices of vocation, and underlying lifestyle goals for earning and consumption. While valuable for this reason, the notion of sustainable livelihoods presents a number of challenges of definition worth discussing here. First, it cannot be defined simply in terms of industries. With rare and debatable exceptions, industries are not intrinsically sustainable or unsustainable, but must be evaluated based on social and environmental criteria in a given context. The trade in endangered elephant tusks, strip mining of coal, child prostitution and the export of "slasher" movies for viewing by semi-literate adolescents in mega-cities might be proposed as candidates for intrinsically unsustainable industries due to their direct, violent and difficult-to-reverse impacts on humans, threatened animal species and/or ecosystems. Even here, this claim could be debated by reference to the economic benefits they may each bring to economically and socially marginalized communities. Going beyond these propositions carries us into even more ambiguous territory. For example, the emerging industries of organic agriculture and ecological restoration might be proposed as sources of intrinsically sustainable livelihoods, in light of their benefits to the biosphere and human settlements, and their roles in mitigating past environmental abuses and reducing future ones. However, at a large enough scale, even organic agriculture may challenge local carrying capacity (depending, for example, on crop choice and land use history); in addition, the trend in organic agro-entrepreneurship toward cultivating luxury crops (from shiitake mushrooms to exotic wines to ginseng), as a means of keeping farms viable, raises questions of social sustainability while hunger remains a pressing issue.

For similar reasons, the designation of an employment opportunity as offering a sustainable livelihood cannot be evaluated based on occupational characteristics alone. This is illustrated by variations in the occupation of Environmental Manager, which is commonly analyzed as a bellweather of environmental progress for particular industries, and the economy as a whole. Environmental Managers in one company may be responsible for occupational health and safety for the industrial site and surrounding community, reporting to the CEO, with a high budget and a charge to address problems proactively. In another company, the same title may be held by individuals in the legal department whose responsibility is to ensure regulatory compliance and interface with the community relations office to anticipate community controversies, but not otherwise to influence production. However, these two companies might have multiple locations in states with a wide range of policies regarding more sustainable practices, such as community right-to-know (affecting the community relations climate), and energy efficiency tax credits (affecting the economics of climate-friendly initiatives). An Environmental Manager in Company A might be able to achieve significant breakthroughs in climate protection in Minnesota, while watching a counterpart struggle in Mississippi, due to differences in the policy climates of the states. Thus the potential for members of an occupation to contribute to sustainability through their work is influenced, at least, by:

a. the macro-organizational context of the position;
b. the policy context of the work site, organization and industry;
c. the resources available for "doing the right thing" and
d. the vision, enterprise, skill and courage of the individual holding the position.

In short, potential opportunities for sustainable livelihoods must be evaluated in the specific contexts of environmental and social needs; environmental and social resources;

characteristics of a proposed workplace and its fit with the sensibilities and skills of the work force; and the way a given set of options compares with available alternatives. Taking these considerations into account, a definition of sustainable livelihoods has been developed by a consensus process involving over 50 NGOs, under the umbrella of the North American Consultation on Sustainable Livelihoods, in 1996:

Sustainable livelihoods provide meaningful work that fulfills the social, economic, cultural and spiritual needs of all members of a community -- human, non-human, present and future -- and safeguards cultural and biological diversity.

The consultation further proposes, as key features of sustainable livelihoods, that they:

- *Promote equity between and among generations, races, genders, and ethnic groups; in the access to and distribution of wealth and resources; in the sharing of productive and reproductive roles; and the transfer of knowledge and skills.*
- *Nurture a sense of place and connection to the local community, and adapt to and restore regional ecosystems.*
- *Stimulate local investment in the community and help to retain capital within the local economy;*
- *Base production on renewable energy and on regenerating local resource endowments while reducing intensity of energy use, eliminating overconsumption of local and global resources and assuring no net loss of biodiversity.*
- *Utilize appropriate technology that is ecologically fitting, socially just and humane, and that enhances rather than displaces community knowledge and skills.*
- *Reduce as much as possible travel to the workplace, and distance between producers and consumers.*
- *Generate social as well as economic returns, and value nonmonetized as well as paid work;*
- *Provide secure access to opportunity and meaningful activity in community life.*

These considerations go beyond the direct performance of work to encompass aspects of lifestyle such as transportation and consumption levels, and aspects of the workplace's position in the community including hiring practices and social goals. This approach allows for the integrated examination of behaviors that are usually considered under the separate rubrics of sustainable production and consumption. It allows the evaluation of working lives as more or less sustainable based upon choice of work, performance of work, consumption choices and overall patterns of living. This particular definition is selected for use here for several reasons:

1) it represents a consensus of practitioners and thinkers from a variety of national organizations and disciplines, arrived at through a formal deliberation;

2) through this network of organizations, some efforts have been made to carry the definition forward as a foundation for policy deliberations and public education;

3) it addresses both the content and the structure of work;

4) it addresses the personal, social and environmental ramifications of work in an integrated fashion;

5) precisely because it is a "stretch" definition -- that is, few work opportunities in the U.S. economy today fulfill this definition thoroughly -- it points toward a way of thinking about work that, if implemented, might actually lead to an ecologically and socially sustainable economy.

Some commentators have noted the "people-centered" quality of the idea of sustainable livelihoods as an additional advantage, since it addresses not only people's productive capacity but their developmental needs, and the subjective values that guide work and life choices. For example, Korten (1996) frames the issue as a choice between standardized jobs, defined primarily by their function in an organization, and individualized livelihoods, defined primarily by their ability to provide working people with the capacity to live lives of meaning and contribution:

> An important part of the demand for economic growth comes from the carefully cultivated myth that the only way we can keep people employed is to expand aggregate consumption, to create jobs at a rate faster than corporations invest in labor-saving technology to eliminate them. We neglect an important alternative -- to redefine the problem and concentrate on creating livelihoods rather than jobs.
>
> A job is defined by *Webster's New World Dictionary* as "a specific piece of work, as in one's trade, or done by agreement for pay; anything one has to do; task; chore; duty." A livelihood is defined as "a means of living or supporting life." A job is a source of money. A livelihood is a means of living. Speaking of jobs evokes images of people working in the factories and fast-food outlets of the world's largest corporations. Speaking of sustainable livelihoods evokes images of people and communities engaged in meeting individual and collective needs in environmentally responsible ways -- the vision of a localized system of self-managing communities.

Compared with "sustainable development," the language of "sustainable livelihoods" provides a more personally relevant discourse for engaging the general public as well as local decision makers, and one that may therefore be more capable of capturing imagination. At the outset of this investigation, it was anticipated that a fruitful area for study would be found in projects focused on creating sustainable and meaningful work opportunities, and to this end the following analysis was developed. In fact, the investigation focused on a combination of job creation, job retention and capacity building efforts, but these are all nevertheless a reflection of the cultural resonance of the idea of sustainable livelihoods.

Political will for sustainability: the role of livelihoods and community well-being

In a sustainably organized post-industrial economy, how would we live and work? What is the proper mix of occupations and industries that figure in this scenario in each community? And, perhaps even harder to imagine, what kind of lifestyle change is required to reduce our ecological footprint to an environmentally acceptable range? In the industrialized world, the absence of a meaningful discourse, and a coherent body of information, about sustainable livelihoods, makes it more difficult to generate politically viable options for ways of making a living that sustain the lives of human and ecological communities. This gap in research and civic dialogue has direct impact on communities wishing to take a fundamental look at the possibilities for sustainable livelihoods, as reflected in this 1998 letter from a Midwestern U.S. mother to an Internet chat group concerned with ecological lifestyles[7]:

> Eight years ago we moved from Los Angeles to a small town of 35,000 in southern Indiana. The move was for many reasons, some of which had to do with finding a smaller scale for day to day life, safer environment for the children, etc . A couple of years ago, while doing dissertation research, I had the opportunity to have extended conversations with all of the local community leaders on issues of local economic development. These community leaders all pride themselves on the very aggressive and "successful" actions that they are taking to bring our community into the global marketplace (as they would describe it). They are seen in some ways as local heroes. Nowhere on the radar screen in these meetings was any awareness of the need to focus on local, sustainable development strategies. Our community is rushing headlong toward an eventual dead-end. I don't feel very hopeful that the "coming back around" of that cycle will happen any time soon or that I will find the voice to influence it. The irony is that communities like ours are in some ways very

[7] Fredericka Joyner, used with permission

> favorably positioned to make the move toward sustainable living patterns with relatively less pain. I wonder how this message can be heard in communities such as ours, where is the voice(s) that can draw attention to the relevant issues, where are the data that will drive toward new action and possibilities?

An economy is not only a system of production and consumption. It is also a social web of human beings who continuously negotiate their roles as producers and consumers, whose behavior and attitudes cannot help but be shaped by these interwoven, interdependent and sometimes conflicting demands. Strengthening the case that these roles matter, work is a primary source of self-definition for many adults. It is also an arena where most of us are more or less required to "show up" in good form, in order to meet basic economic requirements. Personal choices about livelihood -- including vocation, perceived needs and goals for compensation, and the organization of our working lives -- are among the most complex, and least avoidable, choices faced by most adults today. When initiatives related to sustainability are seen as extraneous to the "real work" we have taken responsibility for each day, they are unlikely to be enthusiastically adopted by more than a minority in the work force. However, when the vision of sustainable development generated by a community provides members with an opportunity for meaningful, interesting participation in the work itself (not just the planning), on fair terms with enough material rewards, it is reasonable to think that the working members of that community would back the sustainable vision with some enthusiasm. It stands to reason that the agenda of "putting sustainability on the map" will be advanced when it is shown to be at least compatible with, if not essential to, the economic and social well-being of particular actors (not just a vaguely defined "general population").

This thinking is the underpinning of sustainable business strategies such as those based on eco-efficiency, eco-innovation, green marketing, design for the environment, and so forth. But all these strategies are primarily marketed to managers and policymakers. For the most part, today, "sustainable development" is a discourse for those relatively small groups, in policy and management, who see themselves as part of development decision making. Its benefits are articulated primarily in terms of the well-being *of the firm*. However, a generation of downsizings and reorganizations has made it abundantly clear to the U.S. population that the prosperity of their employers is not strongly linked to their own well-being and economic opportunity. Therefore it stands to reason that political will for sustainable development, in all its forms, would increase if working people could understand its benefits and strategies in terms of *their own* vocational lives and local opportunities more directly, not just for a group of employers with whom they may or may not identify. Sustainable livelihoods may therefore provide a better framework than eco-efficiency, for example, in advancing community-led economic development. Conceivably, if larger numbers of working people could begin to see sustainable development as a doorway into more interesting, viable and promising working lives for themselves and their loved ones -- rather than as one more civic-minded abstraction to think about in the course of an already full life -- political receptivity to sustainable development initiatives and supportive policies could follow. Boyte and Kari (1996), as participant-observers in the field of community organization, make a related point by arguing that the loss of meaning of work is central to contemporary disenfranchisement and disempowerment, and that a recommitment to public works as a policy thrust could be a key strategy for democratic renewal.

There is a special psychological potency to this idea because of the extent to which work provides a basis for adults' identity and self-esteem in American culture, and the extent to which that sense of identity has been shaken by the waves of downsizing and other dislocations that have come to characterize economic life. Even though there has been a sharp decrease in the tendency to identify with one's work organization in any permanent sense, acceptance at work and continuity on the job are still significant psychological anchors for all but the most entrepreneurial of free agents. As Rayman (2001) observes based on interviews

with employed and unemployed workers, "Through the eyes of those who have lost their jobs, we see how important work is in our society for self-respect." The process of collectively identifying sustainable economic options, and shaping plans for their realization, can be understood as an act of self-assertion and self-empowerment for communities and for the individuals who participate most actively.

In important ways, the creation of sustainable livelihoods is a challenge for public and corporate policy. However, policies require political will. As people find ways to personalize the exploration of economic options, and to see that the difficult processes of civic participation for sustainable development can beneficially impact their own lives, there is potential for overcoming this individualist bias, and its byproducts of self-judgment and unrealistic expectations for career achievement in this time of vulnerability. Civic processes of sufficient vitality and relevance might restore private economic hope in a way that personal exploration of vocation, values and lifestyle, by itself, is unable to do.

There has been no shortage of exploration of vocation and values in contemporary America, in both scholarship and popular culture. In economics and history as well as sociology and psychology, there is active exploration of the societal and cultural meaning of vocational choices, and the connection between work ethic and sustainability. This is reflected in such works as Schumacher's classic Small is Beautiful plus the later Good Work, and Korten's more recent scholarship including When Corporations Rule the World and The Post-Corporate World. Roszak's 1979 Person/Planet examined "the creative dis-integration of industrial society" with a long-range optimism, and proposed that a major socioeconomic force for more sustainable societies would be working people's widespread assertion of "the right to right livelihood." Henderson's 1989 analysis of shifting economic paradigms (Paradigms in Progress) includes attention to changing valuation attached by society to occupations and industries. These themes are echoed by Barbara Brandt, who reviews the literature on the sometimes sharp inconsistencies in valuation of labor, depending upon whether it is mainly performed by men or women, and on whether it is rooted in the commercial/ industrial or domestic arenas. Her "whole life economics" calls for a "re-valuation of daily life" as the standard for economic decision making generally. Fox's The Re-Invention of Work further anchors this discussion at the level of philosophy, theology and sociology, suggesting that values underlying our ethical judgments about work are a reflection of deep and partly unconscious aspects of worldview and perspectives about where we humans belong in the world order.

For the most part, however, these manifestoes have not moved the debate substantially beyond a utopian conversation about what is desirable, into a pragmatic examination of change strategies. The same can be argued for the discussion of sustainable livelihoods more generally, as a practical topic for work force development in the industrialized world. "Education for Sustainability," a consensus document prepared in the mid-1990's by representatives of over 100 government agencies and NGOs (in conjunction with the President's Council for Sustainable Development), identifies professional and work force development as one of eight priority areas in formal and nonformal education. However, relatively little has been done in terms of organized followup, compared to the need -- at the federal level, there have been some pilot efforts, including partial funding of several eco-industrial park projects and a brownfields program within the Environmental Protection Agency; and at the state level, a variety of efforts including market development for local agricultural products, recycled materials and renewable energy. Developing and popularizing the notion of sustainable livelihoods, and seeking out models where they are available on a meaningful scale, has a distinctive potential to spark political will for sustainable development, in essence, by catalyzing a cultural change with regard to the norms of possibility regarding economic and social development.

The way a society understands human labor and economic opportunity is one of the most revealing indicators of its values and capacities. When individual choices about

production and consumption are considered as an arena for the exercise of social responsibility and the pursuit of personal development, then daily workplace choices will be correspondingly guided by a range of non-monetary values in addition to monetary ones. So will the economy as a whole -- to the extent that it is shaped by the sum of individual choices. Thomas Berry[8] (1999), a cultural historian, explores some of the ways that aggregate economic activity is shaped by the ethical norms practiced at work by individuals and occupational groups such as the major professions.

> Such issues [as the environmental crisis] require a reorientation of all the professions, especially the legal profession, which is still preoccupied with individual 'human' rights, especially with the limitless freedom to acquire property and exploit land. ... Universities are still preparing students for professional careers in the industrial-commercial world, even as this world continues its planetary destruction. The medical profession is only beginning to recognize that no amount of medical technology will enable us to have healthy humans on a sick planet. ...Among the controlling professions in America, the educational and the religious professions should be especially sensitive in discerning what is happening to the planet and the value of these symbols in restoring a certain integrity to the human process. These professions present themselves as guiding our sense of reality and value at its ultimate level of significance.

In essence, Berry asserts the bankruptcy of a work ethic founded solely on a notion of private self-interest, especially if it is built on a tacit assumption of the self as isolated and its interests as competing with those of others in the social and natural environments. The premise here is that a work ethic of private self-interest requires, and in a sense creates, an economic development paradigm of top-down decision making rather than community-generated initiative, because it restricts the capacity of individuals to see significant self-interest in participating in processes of community-scale self-determination. Berry points to historic evidence that civilizations which have left strong legacies have been clearly organized around one or more achievements, larger in scope than individual lifecycles but encompassing the life-work of many individuals, which he calls the "Great Work" of a society. The pyramids of Egypt and the cathedrals of Italy are obvious examples. He reflects[9]:

> History is governed by those overarching movements that give shape and meaning to life by relating the human venture to the larger destinies of the universe. Creating such a movement might be called the Great Work of a people …
>
> The Great Work now, as we move into a new millennium, is to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner… Such a transition has no historical parallel since the geobiological transition that took place 67 million years ago when the period of the dinosaurs was terminated and a new biological age begun.

The "Great Work" of developing a more sustainable economic order can further be seen as an area of common interest between work forces concerned with the continuity and predictability of employment opportunities, and managements increasingly concerned with the retention of talent. Former U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich (1998) notes that work force retention and cohesion is now understood as a major competitive advantage, especially for

[8] p. 1
[9] p. 3

knowledge-based enterprises. He proposes six major factors in attracting talent in this "new economy": equity, education, fun, pride, life/ work balance, and mission. Reich reflects:

> Xerox Parc guru John Seely Brown said it best: "The job of leadership today is not just to make money. It's to make meaning." When it comes to attracting, keeping, and making teams out of talented people, money alone won't do it. Talented people want to be part of something that they can believe in, something that confers meaning on their work and on their lives -- something that involves a mission. And they don't want that mission to turn into the kind of predictable "mission statement" that plasters many a corporate board-room wall. Rather, they want spiritual goals that energize an organization by resonating with the personal values of the people who work there -- the kind of mission that offers people a chance to do work that makes a difference.

In a society as work-centric and proud of its work ethic as the U.S. is, a widespread re-imagining of work could touch everyone in the society. It encompasses our understanding of jobs and our approaches to work force development, the balance of work and other aspects of life, work ethics, workplace cultures -- issues of equal concern to members of the work force and to the policy community. For working people, "sustainable livelihoods" provides a unifying and accessible notion, relevant to nearly everyone, yet it derives its meaning from each individual's personal interpretation and application of basic principles. It addresses workplace issues of widespread concern (from occupational stresses to possible career paths to autonomy and rights on the job) in a way that makes it possible to compare alternatives and clarify aspirations. In particular, three features of contemporary American culture may provide leverage to galvanize a social movement of sorts from these concerns, if properly channeled:

1. ambivalence about lifestyle;
2. identification with career, especially among older generations; and
3. lack of identification with, and sometimes alienation from, particular employers (sometimes with maturity and sometimes with cynicism) and a growing appreciation that, in Hakim's (1995) words, "We are all self-employed."

As a result, civic dialogues on sustainable livelihoods could conceivably engage the public imagination on a significant scale. Thus, the related notions of sustainable community economic development and sustainable livelihoods provide a conceptual bridge for reconciling individual self-interest with societal and environmental values. In the state of relatively low civic participation and high institutional instability that exists in the U.S. today, a conceptual bridge of this kind is necessary but not sufficient. Equally important is the creation of civic and organizational structures by which people can come together for deliberation and collaborative action with respect to the kinds of economic and social development that reflect their values, that they therefore view as sustainable and desirable for their own communities. If sustainable livelihoods and lifestyles are an important driver for sustainable development, and if there is a need for renegotiation of fundamental social relations to achieve important aspects of these, then the qualitative aspects of social relations that support positive social change are worth the attention of scholars and practitioners.

Social relations as pre-requisite for effective local strategies

Theoretically, in Orr's vignette discussed earlier, the tangible contribution of the water priests to the health of agriculture could have been made by a large multinational corporation or multilateral agency, acting with enough ecological and cultural sensitivity and perhaps using cutting edge sustainable development planning software. This contribution could have been made by spinoffs or subsidiary agencies, such as new ventures created by a large enterprise in the course of its "creative dis-integration." In theory, a savvy and culturally sensitive

marketing executive at McDonald's could have figured out that beef derivatives in its French fries would not go over well with Hindus or other principled vegetarians. The Italian development experts chronicled by Sirolli could have researched the suitability of tomatoes for growing on the banks of the Zambezi. But in each case – whether resulting from institutional boundaries, imbalances in organizational power, cultural differences or other barriers -- something prevented this level of care, and some barriers continue to impede even honest attempts at local sensitivity on the part of many global institutions today. There is a simple logic to the idea that some good work in local sustainable development, responsive to local conditions and concerns about sustainable livelihoods, will be spearheaded by good local organizations created for the purpose. In the language of economic development, these are called self-development strategies (Sharp and Flora, 1999), as contrasted with industrial and commercial recruitment. Given the sheer scale of the need for innovative, effective, pluralistic approaches, it is timely to study these organizational forms and the conditions underlying their success. In a majority of local cases, Selman suggests, to create effective sustainable development programs and build the political will for their implementation, communities must dramatically raise their standards with regard to citizen involvement:

> Sustainability programmes must find some way of overcoming our deeply ingrained civic sclerosis, and persuading people not only to modify their own actions, but also to participate in partnerships and networks of wider community change.

In addition to overcoming "civic sclerosis" among citizens, sustainable development initiatives must assist economic and civic actors such as businesses, NGOs, public agencies, and informal stakeholder groups in breaking out of competitive isolationism at the institutional level, seeking cooperative solutions, and involving those members of the public who are willing to be involved. Increasingly, however, this need is being understood, and the demands of revitalized process are being taken into account by developers, planners, governmental agencies and civil society organizations seeking more livable communities and greater equity in their development. Shutkin (2000) calls this movement toward enhanced, more deeply consultative and deliberate citizen participation "civic environmentalism." He observes:

> Increasingly communities are transforming their environmental problems into an opportunity to address underlying social and economic problems, and they are using the lever of environmental protection strategies to push for systemic changes in the way people relate to each other and to their environment. ... Civic environmentalism is the emerging model of social and environmental activism. It is a dynamic and transformative enterprise that moves beyond top-down, decentralized law and regulation to planning and implementation at the community and regional level.

Prusak and Cohen (2000) point to one important reason for the value of social relations in knowledge-dependent processes such as sustainable development. They begin by noting that critical knowledge is more than consciously constructed theory; it is the more unconscious "ground knowledge" that arises from direct experience. In the life of complex organizations, a good deal of the knowledge that guides day-to-day behavior is ground knowledge that is articulated in group behavior, much more than in individual thought, and so it is intrinsically social. This further supports the emphasis on two attributes of sustainable solutions: the mobilization of *indigenous* knowledge that exists, within a community, in the context of culture and values (including the articulation of tacit knowledge); and the *integrative* process of weaving together a commonly accepted path of action from the diverse, incomplete and sometimes contested bodies of knowledge and belief brought in by each individual.

Subsequent chapters will explore the interpersonal and institutional conditions that support civic environmentalism in a region long characterized by partisanship, environmental

pressures, and socioeconomic stratification – the rural and suburbanizing region of eastern New York, north of New York City and south of the Capitol District, encompassing the Catskill Mountains and Hudson River Valley of New York.

Chapter 2 Who Cares About the Catskills and the Hudson Valley?

The regional development context

Throughout the Catskill Park and adjacent communities in the mid-Hudson Valley, elements of sustainable economic institutions and practices can be seen. And so can a distinctive form of damaging economic opportunism. As diverse as the community's ways of understanding the good life and a healthy environment, exemplary businesses range from gourmet organic restaurants with art deco ambience to ammunition and hunting supply shops aimed toward traditional outdoor enthusiasts, and from "art" furniture suppliers using local materials, to a craft boutique whose product line is predominantly made of recycled objects. The region's enterprises are housed in Main Streets in every state of repair, from dilapidated to lovingly restored, and in hastily constructed commercial subdivisions.In the Hudson Valley, population has grown in ten years from approximately 800,000 in 1990 to 2.2 million in 2000. Local patterns of development differ strikingly, with some communities focused entirely on mall-style commerce and others focused entirely on diversified, Main Street based commerce and small industry. In the Catskills, most new development is occurring along a few commercial corridors such as east-west Route 28, where brightly colored faux Indian tipis, and B grade bear and moose carvings, assure the tourist that the Catskills have not lost their essence.

Farming, tourism, small-scale manufacturing and commerce are the regional economy's historic foundations -- these plus remnants of the natural resource based industries such as agriculture, timber, tanning and bluestone quarrying. These are industries whose unsustainable practices a century ago were behind the region's ecological devastation. Today they fall along a wide continuum in terms of sustainability: farms and food retailers emphasizing local, high-value-added products, and conventional supermarkets where foods come from an average of 3000 miles away; small-scale outdoor recreation such as white-water rafting, canoeing, horseback riding and trout fishing coexist with a struggling ski industry and a range of proposals for a new generation of resorts and casinos that are an order of magnitude larger than those in operation now. In every industry, a continuum can be seen between local models emphasizing value-added, environmentally sustainable and socially sensitive operations, and those emphasizing cost minimization and integration with the global corporate economy -- from the few remaining department stores whose merchandise generally comes from afar, to the revitalizing artisan economy of producing household goods and clothing locally (but at generally higher prices). Development in the region is also grappling with the issue of scale. After a period of relative stagnation, private sector actors have recently appeared with the ability to alter the landscape significantly, by virtue of the scale and pace of the developments they hope to introduce. Resorts, casinos, and large re-industrialization proposals (including a riverfront cement factory) have been prominent in the debate around economic development in the region. In 2005, citizens defeated a major proposal by St. Lawrence Cement for a towering facility in Greenport, across the river from the study area, establishing a new sense of a mandate for more asset-based, sustainable development approaches.

Especially in the Catskills, tourism has roots in the tradition of resorts appealing to families, and to ethnic and artistic subcultures. Many resorts of earlier generations are so energy-inefficient that they have grown unaffordable to operate without significant investment in infrastructure. But there is a notable absence of consensus on the real social and economic reasons for the decline of the region as a tourist destination, and the disinvestment of once-committed owners in keeping these facilities attractive by contemporary standards. Heritage tourism, which attracts slower-paced and higher-spending visitors, is an aspiration of the region, capitalizing on the spectacular estates along the Hudson River. At times, heritage tourist schemes have ironically called attention to the economic vitality of earlier eras –

illustrated by a two-car antique railroad that moves through the woods between the Catskill towns of Mt. Pleasant and Phoenicia -- where once a full-fledged rail transportation system operated.

Skiing -- a cornerstone of regional economic planning in light of its traditional potential for profit margins and scale -- is centered around three resorts: Belleayre, Hunter Mountain, and Windham. All are situated on mountains approximately 3,000 feet high and short on natural snow in recent years, making them poor competition with relatively convenient higher peaks of Vermont or New York's Adirondack Park. However, established low-impact recreational opportunities include the water sports of rafting, canoeing, and kayaking; swimming in a few lakes; selective hunting and fishing. Major tourist industries, notably golf and to some extent skiing, are in states of decline in the region, due in part to operating costs and in part to over-expansion of capacity. In an effort to overcome the seasonal fluctuations of many tourist employers, there has been a major upsurge in the promotion of festivals that bring together performing arts, food and other forms of entertainment.

Reflecting the local demographics, with many affluent part-time residents and tourists, this economy relies significantly on luxury and convenience amenities. In hastily constructed strip malls with Early American motifs along Route 28, convenience stores and wine shops coexist with acupuncturists and florists and video stores. In the mix, at least a few growing local businesses that have sought to participate in the global economy in a way that advances sustainable practices. These included Catskill Mountain Coffee Roasters, an importer and regional distributor of organic, kosher and Fair Trade certified coffees; and Woodstock Percussion, a maker of wind chimes which is also known for high levels of philanthropic activity, and which has recently entered into a social venture partnership with South African craftspeople.

The linked issues of employment and work force development remain a challenge in the Catskills due to outmigration of educated youth, and moderate to low educational levels for the majority of stable residents. The service industries, which constitute 10% of rural jobs in the U.S. compared with 25% in urban areas, vary widely in their skill requirements and pay scales. Some of the most prevalent in the Catskills, such as tourist services, are among the least skill-intensive and least compensated industries. With a vivid social memory of its inequities and struggles, Catskill culture at times heavily scrutinizes potential external employers and local entrepreneurs alike for trustworthiness. The paradoxes of local commerce in the Catskill forest today are illustrated by a popular paint and wallpaper store on the main street in the Delaware County town of Delhi, with a basement showroom full of unfinished, simply-styled, well-made wooden furniture – all from Oregon in the Pacific Northwest. None of this product has been sourced locally for several years. According to the proprietor, the only producer of competitively priced furniture from local wood had been a business with two branches, one in the Catskills and the other in Pennsylvania; in a consolidation, that business had closed its Catskill operations and laid off 150 workers. As an act of personal protest, the store's owners withdrew their business from the regional supplier in favor of a business farther away, which they regarded as more sustainable with regard to employment and community trust.

In addition to the private sector, significant employers in and around the Catskill region are government, community services and higher education.

- Government: The governmental sector includes significant environmental infrastructure for monitoring, education, research and even restoration -- for example, the Ashokan Field Campus of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection is a site where environmental professionals monitor water quality, conduct biodiversity studies, maintain trails and parks, and develop public educational programs in the name of

protecting the city's water supply. In 2003 DEP announced plans to expand its Catskill area field staff by up to 80 positions.

- Public and private social services: Health care, which provides 10 – 15% of rural jobs in the U.S., includes private practices, clinics and hospitals (in uneven supply around the region). Social services range from private mental health and personal growth services, county and state agencies, and nonprofit multi-service agencies such as Family of Woodstock, formed in the aftermath of the historic Woodstock rock concert in 1970 and now a respected United Way agency with a social work and counseling staff of over 100.

- Higher education: including the State University of New York's Delhi and Oneonta campuses, as well as private universities such as Hartwick College and Cornell University, the higher education/ research complex maintains significant outreach in the area as well as being large institutional employers. New York State's community college system, traditionally awarding two-year degrees in vocationally oriented trade and technology fields, has been increasingly integrated with the four year state university system and is a cornerstone of organized work force development efforts in this region.

The regional economy is highly stratified, and economic inequities are worsening. Economic development strategies that aspire to be called "sustainable" must address realistic material needs of diverse households and communities, the developmental needs of individuals, and the capacity needs of communities as a whole. There is complex interplay between the livelihoods of individuals, and a community's physical and social infrastructure. For example, a strategy for Main Street preservation may create an unknown mix of jobs in bookstore-cafes, boutiques, antique shops, educational game stores, health clubs, garden supply centers, bicycle shops, natural food stores, and toyshops, through aggregate demand for aspects of the lifestyles they embrace. The same Main Street strategy may create additional demand for some of these businesses -- perhaps a garden supply center and a bike shop -- by virtue of its reorientation of the working lives of citizens employed by the initial business cluster, in a way that reduces commutes, freeing up even a few hours per week to bicycle or plant a garden.

Also supporting economic and community development is a variety of innovative NGOs, whose purpose is not advocacy or policy or service, but social affiliation and collaborative community projects. These include vibrant, well-established communities of interest such as the Olive Natural Heritage Society, a group of natural history enthusiasts who have published a guide to rare and endangered species in the town of Olive. They include volunteer-driven community arts programs such as the Green Room Players. They include commercially oriented ventures which also draw together communities of place (e.g. the successful Pakatakan Farmers Market) and communities of interest (e.g. the Shandakan Women's Network, a mutual support organization formed by and for businesswomen).

Recreation and cultural activities in the region show a distinctly entrepreneurial flair, illustrated by many summer festivals and activities, such as the town of Roxbury's popular antique baseball league (playing the game as it was a century ago), the City of Kingston's "Artists' Soap Box Derby" in which bizarre home-built vehicles race down a major street, and the town of Saugerties' annual Garlic Festival. While many of these efforts are grassroots traditions, the region has also benefited from ad hoc efforts that have made tangible contributions without institutional permanence -- for example, a commemoration of the U.N. Year of the Mountains, spearheaded by an informal group of women environmental professionals who solicited the backing of the Catskill Center and developed a year's worth of arts and cultural programming celebrating women photographers, explorers and others who shaped the life of the region.

The interplay of information and communications technology with the purposeful development of sustainable business shows further potential for enhancing the effectiveness of networks, communities of interest, and commercial ventures, as adoption of these technologies rises, and providing solutions are found to existing environmental and social challenges. Telecommunications in the form of telephones, television and Internet access are available on a nearly universal basis thanks to the common practice of offering publicly accessible computers in libraries. From the ambitious GIS cataloguing of the region's natural and cultural resources undertaken by county agencies, universities, and NGOs such as the Catskill Center and Hudson River Valley Institute, to the websites of many commercial farms, to the increasing use of email communication, the region is taking advantage of digital technologies without obvious difficulty. At the same time, the list of "shadow elements" of ICT is familiar: the blight of cellular phone towers, the toxic elements and non-recyclability of computers, the digital divide between those with and without access to technologies, and the quality of life issues that arise when electronic community goes too far in displacing face to face human relations. In the Catskills, mountain terrain presents a special challenge for cellular technology, which is a high priority for the business community and a point of environmental contention. This challenge is being managed, if not fully addressed, by initiatives of the Catskill Center and Scenic Hudson to create equitable standards for balancing technology access with environmental protection.

Land tenure and sense of place in the Catskills: home rule in a culture of mistrust

Northwest of New York City, the Catskill Mountain range sprawls across the five counties of Ulster, Sullivan, Greene, Delaware and Schohairie. The region's exact boundaries are debated by old-timers and newcomers alike. According to Evers' (1972) widely cited history "Anyone who thinks he has arrived at a working knowledge of the boundaries of the Catskills has only to speak to a geologist to come all undone."

Three separate definitions of the region, and a caveat, are offered by Chase[10] et al (2003):

- The New York State Legislature defined the Catskill region politically in 1971 as the whole of Greene, Ulster, Sullivan, Delaware, Otsego, and Schoharie counties, plus the six southwest townships of Albany County.
- Geologists define the Catskills as that dissected, upland plateau west of the Hudson River, south of the Mohawk River and north and northeast of the Poconos of Pennsylvania, with an ill defined western limit in the headwater area of the east branch of the Susquehanna River.
- The Catskills are viewed by the State of New York through the eyes of three Comprehensive Planning and Development Regions (Southern Tier East, Upper Hudson, and Mid-Hudson). The political region is divided into two jurisdictions by the important New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), into three by the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) and by other agencies (the federal government assigns the southwestern part of the region to "Appalachia").

Further and most importantly, New York is a home-rule state, and each township in the Catskills is self-centered, and often suspicious of and antagonistic toward its neighboring towns, and certainly toward Albany, New York City, and Washington. But while the ambiguities of geological and political terrain confound the outsider, and make political

[10] Concept paper for Catskill Interpretive Center, 2002.

cooperation more complex, the broad scope of this mountain region is clear enough for the explorer interested in the economic life of its small town and rural communities

The region has a long history of natural resource based industries, developing along with tourism, arts and service industries. By Evers' account, beginning in the seventeenth century, Dutch, English, Irish and German immigrants established forest-based industries including logging, fishing, and trapping; wintergreen, blueberry and ginseng harvesting; charcoal production, and bluestone quarrying. Local economic activity also included a large-scale leather tanning industry that peaked during the Civil War and eventually, along with logging, exhausted the forest for a time. During World War II, the area was intensively used for pilot training.

The economic life of Catskill communities is significantly influenced by the geologic and ecological context of this mountain region, which has given rise to social and economic enclaves in villages and hamlets, joined by several main corridors but with most access between towns by means of small rural roads. Interwoven with these, and strongly influencing the uses that can be made of the working landscape, is a very large patchwork of protected land, designated by state law as the "forever wild" Catskill Park. This is a four-county expanse of boreal mountaintops, wetlands, old-growth forests, meadows, trout streams and lakes. The forested mountain ecosystem is home to coyotes, bears, fishers, minks, bobcats and rattlesnakes, as well as diverse bird and fish populations. World-class trout streams, and over 300 miles of recreational trails, are among the outdoor and tourist attractions. The preserves owned by New York State constitutes about 40% of the land mass of the area -- some 300,000 acres. While some development is permitted on the remaining 60% of lands in private hands, this state-owed property is protected by an 1894 amendment to the New York constitution, which provides that:

> the lands of the State now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed.

This "forever wild" provision and the region's overall sparse population have created a challenging economic climate due to dispersed settlements, high reliance on tourism as an economic strategy, and a self-reinforcing perception of the lack of local alternatives.

According to the region's pre-eminent historian (Evers 1972), the roots of this amendment may not have been entirely public-spirited. A movement of landowners, villagers and some local elected officials to include the Catskills in the much larger Adirondack Park, to the north, was initially rejected because, after a century of tanning and timbering, the New York State Legislature considered the region too ecologically and socially devastated to be worth protecting. While the details of the last-minute change in policy are undocumented, the surrender of this land to the state of New York, by the notoriously corrupt Ulster County Legislature of that era, coincided with the state's forgiveness of the County's tax indebtedness on the order of $40,000. Thus the politics of land stewardship have been fraught with conflict and mistrust for centuries, a second historic legacy that deeply affects sustainable development possibilities today.

Roots of this mistrust can be found in the region's original occupation by British and German settlers in 1730, displacing the Algonquin Indians and giving rise to a land tenure system whose inequities were evident from the start. The Hardenburg Patent of 1730 was an initial gauntlet thrown down by the British crown, in the form of a massive transfer of Indian lands to a list of recipients that mysteriously included seven living men of European descent, as well as one who had already died. That land transfer gave rise to a system of tenant farming that drew criticism and eventually strong resistance. Among its sources of tension was the

prohibition of the use of stone or any other durable building materials for tenant farmers' homes, leading to an entire region of dilapidated working class housing stock that remains visible even today. In the mid-nineteenth century, landlord-tenant conflict built into the protracted rebellion known as the Rent Wars. In the heat of this conflict, tenant farmers, mainly of British and German descent, began to show up in political meetings disguised in full mock Native tribal masks and calling themselves "Calico Indians. This movement eventually developed a paramilitary quality and, in an outburst of unexpected violence, a group of "Calico Indians" killed a local sheriff who was believed to be trespassing on tenants' land. After a politically charged trial, most of the rebels were executed.

A frontier for European immigrants pressing westward, starting in the 1800s, the region experienced population expansion based upon relationships with New York City and, to a lesser extent, New England and the Middle Atlantic region. Its rural and wild character especially attracted artists and outdoor enthusiasts. As New York became a mega-city and a railroad hub, the Catskills gave rise to a substantial tourist industry centered around showplace hotels and resorts such as the Catskill Mountain House. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were characterized by cycles of rebellion and reform within the tenant farming system, and the subdivision of some large properties, combined with grandiose development projects as the region became a recreational and cultural attraction for urban New Yorkers. Enclaves known as residential "parks" were established in the nineteenth century, with private ownership and collaborative infrastructure development, a less elite precursor of the gated communities of today. Embryonic environmental awareness was entering the public mind in conjunction with the publication of early seminal works like George Perkins Marsh's (1862) Man and Nature, and the regional visibility of great nature writers such as John Burroughs. The proximity of the region to the city, combined with its cooler climate, made it particularly attractive as a summer destination, until the revolution in transportation of the mid- to late twentieth century led New Yorkers to travel farther for their recreation.

Waves of tourism and resettlement, primarily from the New York metropolitan area, have given rise to a variety of ethnic and subcultural enclaves in the mostly Caucasian region, including an African-American population in the small Greene County cities of Catskill and Cairo, and a growing gay community in and around Margaretville. The best known of these enclaves, the Jewish community centered in Sullivan County's "Borscht Belt", brought to life a significant rural entertainment industry of resorts, night clubs, and arts centers in the early twentieth century, maintaining a rich cultural life and channeling much talent into the venues of New York City. Comedy and drama, visual art and scholarship, were nurtured within the context of a religious and cultural community that faced both urban and rural anti-Semitism. For several generations, the Catskill resort system was both an economic and a cultural engine. The physicist Richard Feynman, for example, is known to have made his way through graduate school as a restaurant worker in Catskill resorts. Since this population influx began, the relationship between New York City and the Catskills has been characterized by a homegrown blend of interdependence and mistrust.

Within the self-defined communities of place around the Catskills, however, an ethic of cooperative stewardship was able to develop much more effectively after the dissolution of the tenant farming system. Some of its roots were in a traditional agricultural organization, the Grange, which fostered basic cooperative activities such as barn raising and disaster relief, and established a collaborative social fabric and a social outlet for otherwise isolated rural households.

By the late nineteenth century, New York City's demand for water gave rise to the construction of the massive Ashokan Reservoir system, flooding nine towns and displacing their populations over a twenty-year period. Technologically, the creation of this water supply system has been called one of the modern world's wonders. Bitterness toward "the City" took a dramatic upturn at this time, and continues with some vigor today. The Ashokan region was

transformed from a network of viable, self-reliant and cohesive settlements, to a reservoir surrounded by remnants of ghost towns. As Galusha observes:

> While some communities were completely obliterated, homes, barns and businesses bulldozed and burned, others were relocated, lock, stock and blacksmith shop, using horses, stout ropes and strong backs to move them out of the water's way. Lives were altered slowly, as small towns worried for decades about rumored New York City takeovers. Or they were changed in an instant, by a fall from scaffolding atop a 100-foot dam, or in a premature dynamite explosion in a tunnel 1,000 feet beneath the surface.

This transformation of the landscape and of social relations established the City's resource dependency on upstate rural communities and, with it, deep divisions in public opinion about natural resource management. Throughout this saga, the politics of land claims has been guided by a distinctive mixture of grief, outrage and opportunism. Evers observes that:

> As each project reached its final stage, the same sequence of events followed among mountain people: First the sense of shock at having to leave their homes; then the merging of the images of the old time landlords and New York City politicians; then the invocation of the spirits of the anti-rent warriors; then the realization that, after all, there might be money in it; and finally the retention of lawyers to fight for every possible penny.

Thus an embryonic vision of sustainable development in the Catskill region dates back to the identification and demarcation of the Catskill Park itself. A rural and apparently bucolic region has entered the twenty-first century in a state of socioeconomic fragmentation, due to the natural influences of mountain terrain and the social complexity of its population growth. It is further polarized against the very entity on which its future most depends, the City of New York. Weaving together these historic dynamics with cautious optimism, Evers reflects on the Catskills' evolution as environmental advocacy came into its own in the 1970s:

> The Catskills have taken much punishment in the past from land speculators, absentee landlords, tan lords, quarry men, charcoal makers, and others. After each assault the mountains have had enough vitality left to bounce back and become covered again with healthy living things. The Catskill bungled their way into the protection of the Constitution as part of the State Forest Preserve. Now there are signs that they may be bungling their way toward joining the devastated regions of America in which market values override all others. At the same time, Americans - and especially younger Americans - have shown an awakening unmatched anywhere else on earth to the necessity of defending their environment against further deterioration. Ninety years ago people of many kinds joined in battling to save the Adirondacks. The people of our own generation, if they make the effort, may still save the Catskills.

Additional polarization has arisen within and across communities, as their demographic complexity has increased, based on sometimes strong differences in perception of self-interest at the most basic level. Related to upstate-downstate tensions is the often-invoked gulf between "traditionals" and "newcomers" in the Catskills, the latter including owners of vacation homes and part-time workers who may continue to have a base in the City. Further complicating this picture is the common perception -- with some supporting evidence -- that environmental issues have at times been invoked as a political smokescreen for concentrating land ownership, restricting unpopular land uses, or building political influence. The interplay of watershed protection and property rights issues, in the environmental politics of the region, illustrate the basis for this concern.

The political and social polarization connected with land stewardship issues in the Catskills is reflected in a local drive to designate the region as a research reserve within UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program, in the mid-nineties. This international program, in place since 1974, provides a voluntary framework as part of national plans for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity. The program's statutory framework -- the "Seville Strategy" crafted in 1995 -- gives the sponsoring agencies no rights to ownership, development, or alteration of landscapes or extraction of resources, but instead defines the program as a vehicle for studying, monitoring, and conserving biological resources, and optionally for creating sustainable development demonstration projects in collaboration with local communities. As of 2002, 408 reserves in 92 countries were participating. However, when public debate on this initiative arose in the Catskills, these principles were by no means clear. In 1995, the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development prepared and submitted a proposal to the Biosphere review committee, with an inadequate process of consulting community stakeholders who could be expected to have strong concerns. Swift and focused response came from the Property Rights Foundation of America and its local affiliates, in the form of local resistance and a campaign to require Congressional approval for Biosphere designations launched in coordination with property rights groups around the U.S. Before the bitter battle was over, Carole W. LaGrasse of the New York State Property Rights Clearinghouse had painted the initiative as an effort to expand New York City's ability to regulate landowners, and Dr. Sherrett Chase, a co-founder and board member of the Catskill Center, had suggested in print that the local opposition to the Biosphere was connected to right-wing paramilitary organizations. Ultimately, the Catskill Center withdrew its application and suffered significant loss of stature in some communities, though by no means all. Environmental research and preservation, and community cohesion, both suffered as a result of this unwisely orchestrated campaign and the aggressive opposition waiting in the wings for a triggering episode.

The New York City Watershed Agreement: a regional context for development

By the end of the twentieth century, however, Catskill communities began to be united to address environmental and financial pressures connected with natural resource management and quality of life at the most basic level. A catalytic issue was the need to reduce environmental stresses on New York City's deteriorating water system, and to break out of the costly paradigm of pollution remediation that had characterized the management of water resources, in favor of a preventive approach. By the early 1980s, the city of New York faced the near-certainty that it would soon need to build a massive filtration plant, with an estimated $6 billion price tag, or else change its approach to water management. The New York City Department of Environmental Protection, prodded by federal and state agencies and citizen groups, began exploring ways to protect the upstate water supply at its source. Its first effort was to issue a set of regulations, in 1992. But these met high resistance throughout the region. This public sentiment was strong enough to be rapidly reflected in municipal action, through the formation of a high-profile Coalition of Watershed Towns, composed of elected officials, to negotiate alternatives with the City. The six-year negotiation among stakeholder agencies, municipalities, and NGOs -- facilitated by the office of the Governor -- resulted in the 1997 New York City Watershed Agreement. The formal memorandum of agreement, backed up by the city's financial commitment of $238 million, is designed to preserve water supplies in the Catskill Watershed (and the smaller Croton Watershed across the Hudson River) through preventive steps taken by upstate landowners but financed by New York City. Administered by a specially created agency, the Catskill Watershed Corporation, and a 27-member advisory Watershed Protection and Partnership Council, the agreement operates through a program of land acquisition, conservation easements, infrastructure upgrades, and pollution prevention, accomplished by means of both land use restrictions and investment in compatible economic development.

Throughout the negotiation process, the rhetoric of geographic identity and allegiance was translated into tensions between "upstate" and "The City" as a source of legal and moral authority, as each side attempted to create communities of interest and place that would translate into political support. A major impetus for resolution of the conflict was the alternative construct of "upstate-downstate partnership," devised as a framework for addressing the common concerns of affordable water quality and compatible economic development. After the publication of a draft agreement, a formal and extensive public comment process followed. The implementation of the agreement was further guided by the ongoing presence of advisory groups on sporting and public education.

Five years after its creation, the CWC faced a major evaluation by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and New York City Department of Environmental Protection to determine whether water quality goals had been sufficiently achieved to meet the Agreement's criteria for continuation of the Filtration Avoidance Determination (freeing the City from building the filtration system). At that time, CWC reported that it had invested $32 million in Catskill Watershed programs that:

- Replaced 1,353 failed septic systems at no cost to their owners;
- Constructed 37 facilities for safe storage of road de-icing materials, a significant pollutant;
- Paid over $600,000 to owners of 22 new construction projects to cover the costs of required Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans;
- Invested $3.1 million in the prevention of pollution-causing runoff through 20 stormwater projects carried out by municipalities and businesses;
- Provided 38 businesses and nonprofit groups with low-interest community development loans totaling $6.9 million;
- Contributed $500 toward a regional tourism promotion effort;
- Made 29 grants to municipalities, community organizations, businesses and cooperative to spur economic development through hamlet revitalization and enhancement of the business climate;
- Made 78 environmental education grants to schools and nonprofit organizations, in the Watershed and in New York City, totaling $577,000.

CWC established a significant institutional and financial presence in the region, and appears successful in neutralizing the worst of the civic mistrust. By far its primary strategy has been simply to implement, or directly finance, needed changes rather than requiring investment or commitment from local stakeholders. With an Executive Director drawn from the leadership in the Coalition of Watershed Towns, the CWC's public message is one of honoring local home rule and affirming the practicality of economic development that is compatible with watershed protection.

Today, regulatory responsibility for the regional environment is shared by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, and the governments of counties and towns (as implementers of state and occasionally federal requirements, generally through planning an zoning statutes). These political entities enforce a patchwork of environmental laws and, at times, carry out independent projects for environmental protection and restoration. Inheriting environmental enforcement responsibility from the unpopular Bureau of Water Supply, the Department of Environmental Protection in the late 1990s suffered from its own difficulties in effective enforcement and sustaining public trust including Federal felony charges for allowing the discharge of toxic mercury into the public water supply.

Development and the New York City Watershed Agreement

Although the New York City Watershed Agreement formally applies in a specific region in the Catskill and Croton watersheds, the premise of land and water protection as a guiding principle for development has sent a strong signal throughout eastern New York and provided impetus for other natural resource based development initiatives such as county programs in agricultural land protection through the transfer of development rights in the mid-Hudson Valley.

The major institutional actor charged with spearheading and coordinating sustainable development, as well as ensuring the environmental suitability of area business operations, is the Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC), the agency created for the purpose of implementing the New York City Watershed Agreement. Reviewing the natural, cultural, and social resources and infrastructure of the region, a regional study commissioned by the Catskill Watershed Corporation (Alshuler 1999) identified as primary assets:

- the location, near New York City and the state capitol of Albany, allowing for import-export relationships with 15 million consumers and many businesses within two to three hours' driving distance;
- "quality of life" characterized by open space, clean air and water, diverse recreational and educational opportunities, and proximity to farms for fresh produce;
- "beautiful and plentiful natural resources" including forests, clean water and fishing opportunities, vistas and undeveloped land;
- a strong farming tradition, contributing an estimated $115 million per year to the Watershed economy;
- attractive communities with preserved historic sites.

At the same time, the study took note of serious limitations at the local and regional level, including infrastructure constraints such as limited wastewater treatment capacity; obsolete and poorly developed resorts and recreational facilities; an inefficient transportation network with no rail or air service and little public transportation; inadequate signage to help visitors find their way; a lack of amenities such as retail shops and restaurants; and three areas reflective of the state of social capital in the civic and economic realms within the Watershed:

- "deterioration of farm support infrastructure" including business services, secondary processing facilities, and labor;
- "no coordinated regional marketing efforts"; and
- "lack of cooperation among key players".

In terms of the relational health of Catskill communities, the CWC study comments pointedly on the ramifications of this lack of cooperation, including interpersonal tensions, failure to collaborate, and attitudinal blinders that limit the ability of leaders to take stock of their situation:

> Elected officials are frequently at odds with one another, and there is little partnership between public and private agencies. This, combined with a persistent local rather than regional focus, has led to an area that does not have a network of community leaders well-poised to affect systemic change. That the region has no common newspaper and no consistent signage are symptoms of this situation.

To capitalize on the region's natural, historic and social strengths while minimizing vulnerability to its social and infrastructural challenges, the CWC adopted a "diversified" economic development strategy with a foundation of:

- revitalizing hamlets and villages as a basis for local commerce and amenities;
- tourism, skiing, recreation and the arts;
- manufacturing and business based on small to medium sized enterprises capturing niche opportunities

- natural resource-based business chosen to enhance water quality and preserve the rural character of the region.

The asset-based approach adopted by CWC prioritizes and organizes the options based upon the existing strengths that may distinguish the community and provide impetus for development, such as:

- natural and scenic resources, giving rise to conservation-based development strategies that aim to replace industries that deplete resources with those that preserve, restore, and/or sustainably use natural resources as the cornerstones for economic activity (e.g. agri-tourism, value-added wood products);
- infrastructure resources including mass transit systems, bicycle paths and trail systems, parking, power grids, and high speed telecommunications lines;
- cultural resources including ethnic and cultural diversity, local history, and historic sites and facilities;
- human resources such as the talent pools of university graduates, artists, multilingual community residents, and those with technological knowledge to provide a basis for attraction of compatible, low-impact industry and commerce.

In its first five years, the Catskill Watershed Corporation invested $32 million in the implementation of its watershed protection measures including water supply and treatment infrastructure, and compatible economic development. In the economic arena, it:

- contributed $500,000 toward a $1.6 million, three-year regional tourism promotion effort;
- awarded 29 grants totaling $425,000, plus $6.9 million in low-interest loans, to municipalities, community organizations, businesses and cooperatives for economic development and hamlet revitalization in the Watershed;
- invested $577,000 in the efforts of schools and NGOs to educate the public about the Watershed and water quality issues.

In terms of dollars invested, hamlet revitalization is the initiative's largest and most visible program. It has included renovation of commercial spaces such as a general store; demolition of abandoned buildings to create strategic open space; tree planting; signage; and various promotional efforts. The increase of small business viability and the enhancement of some small towns as tourist stops are both seen by CWC as benefits of this investment thrust. However, the connection between tourism and actual economic well being in Catskill communities is not simple. For example, local planning bodies have noted that casual (or frugal) visitors do not spend at a level that provides much economic stimulus. As the report of a 1997 economic development commission in the hamlet of Woodstock noted, "The ice cream cone and t-shirt tourists are not going to save our economy."

To date, the CWC's investments in arts, culture and tourism have focused substantially on improving the infrastructure, operating budgets and marketing of established cultural centers with community appeal, such as playhouses and art galleries, as well as school-based programs. Projects funded in 2003 included visitor's centers, museums, theatres, public infrastructure such as fire stations, a retail outlet, two food production businesses, and a small business incubator. Manufacturing investment through the Watershed Agreement has been limited but is tentatively increasing, with criteria for sustainability established on a case-by-case basis[11]. In natural resource based industries, early investments included support for craft cooperatives, value added wool products, and a study of the feasibility of raising cattle for use as research animals for the pharmaceutical industry. Investments have reflected a wide range of industries and approaches to both economic development and sustainability criteria.

A growing dimension of the CWC's economic vision and strategy is the use of telecommunications, either to enhance the ability of local communities to participate in the

[11] Danielle Cordier, Senior Counsel, telephone interview 2002

wider economy, or as a sector for economic activity directly. This parallels the situation in the nearby Hudson River Valley where I.T. advocates have gained visibility promoting the "regional brand" of "Info River Valley" as a region courting such enterprises as well as providing them for the use of citizens and businesses. Advocates of rural telecommunications as a key aspect of economic infrastructure argue that:

Telecommunications is fundamental to service industries as well as to rural economic diversification strategies. Telecommunications can provide communities with an opportunity to compete in the fast- growing service sector. It represents a tool with which rural businesses and citizens can directly participate in national and global economies. As an electronic highway, telecommunications allows urban-based industries and customers to access rural products, services, and markets more easily.

This includes access to telemedicine, information resources, and markets for rural businesses as well as consumers. Telecommunications -- as an industry, and as a source of support for the economy and quality of life – is generally accepted by residents as a boon to economic development, while the potential environmental impacts (e.g. land use, health impacts of technologies) have been less a focus, with the exception of a conference on cellular phone towers sponsored by the Catskill Center in 1999. A study commissioned by the CWC (Southern Tier Board 2002) identified, as the major barriers to commercial access to telecommunications services, lack of equipment and infrastructure, and work force training needs. Major institutions such as universities, school systems and health care facilities, have fairly advanced capabilities including teleconferencing capability, fiber optic supported distance learning systems, and web interactivity. But widespread residential access is constrained by low population density in most of the region, with the threshold of about 1,800 people per square mile attained in only the more populated villages. Significant public investment may well be needed to bring a commercially valuable telecommunications infrastructure into the Catskills (Malone 2002), since "no firm is willing to build the infrastructure needed to deliver content at a cost comparable to the more densely populated locales." Given its significant ability to generate, and to solve, environmental problems, exploration of this industry's potential and of guidelines for truly sustainable development should continue to grow in relevance, in the next wave of economic development research and planning.

Overall, the principles for development adopted by the CWC in consultation with New York City, to guide local business practices and business recruitment for the watershed, appear to meet the criteria established by applicable regulations (such as the State Environmental Quality Review process and the New York City Watershed Agreement), as they are interpreted through mainstream local values. This does not necessarily imply that the aggregate impacts of implementing these principles will in fact be sustainable. It does suggest that ongoing refinement of economic strategies can only be done in the context of an empirical evaluation of environmental and social indicators. Currently there is no encompassing system for sustainability indicators in place in the region. However, as this study was being completed, exploratory work in this direction was being undertaken by the nonprofit Catskills Institute for the Environment.

In light of the political potency of home rule in rural New York, and the reality of economic and social depression in many Catskill communities, the Catskill Watershed Corporation chose the initial strategies of financial support and technical assistance to support new and established business ventures and the local infrastructure on which they depend, positioning itself as a support agency for the private sector and substantially empowering local business to set the direction for economic development. This has taken such forms as a business network and an annual program called Local Government Days to address the challenges of intermunicipal cooperation and coordination. Social and professional gatherings with speakers on "smart growth" and good governance topics, these annual events have built leadership capacity while providing a forum for local elected officials, business leaders, and

selected NGO leaders to establish the bridging social capital of informal relationships, information exchange, dialogue and shared learning. In 2002, the business community was convened in an Economic Development Summit which explored four priorities from the private sector point of view:

- Infrastructure and technology
- "one stop shopping" i.e. a centralized clearinghouse for businesses considering relocation to the area;
- regional branding; and
- work force development.

With facilitation by CWC staff and strong emphasis on the need for the private sector to set the agenda, this gathering gave rise to an ongoing Business Round Table with topical working groups. Alongside the regional business community, agencies identified as key players in implementing of the group's plans include regional Workforce Investment Boards, Chambers of Commerce, Catskill Watershed Corporation, state Offices of Employment and Training, ARC, the Board of Cooperative Educational Services which provides the public schools with curriculum and support, high schools/boards of education, colleges, private training organizations, STRIVE, the BEST program, Executive Service Corps, the New York Departments of Labor and State. This represents the primary governmental funding, training and technical assistance programs operating at the local, regional and state level. Thus the participating small businesses and the associations they represent, along with the CWC, are positioned at the center of a network that has very high potential to concentrate and leverage the available funds and in-kind resources to achieve its goals. Within its first few months, this Round Table had commissioned a broad study of business telecommunication needs and issues; conceptualized a One Stop Shopping facility for business recruitment and identified options for its housing and funding; worked with the New York City public relations firm Ruder-Finn on a draft logo for regional branding, and planned its implementation; and mapped out an agenda for work force development.

In the political context of home rule and high levels of sensitivity connected to the Watershed Agreement, the CWC and cooperating agencies have faced an unusually rigorous test of their ability to create and sustain social capital. CWC's thrust has been to convene isolated local actors in government and also in business, and facilitate collaborative action at a regional scale to increase economic capacity. A turnaround is beginning, in the region's self-image as fragmented and incapable of cooperation, as these groups establish the norms of attendance, information sharing, collaboration, and proactive outreach to additional resources.

Contemporary development networks

At the same time, diverse and fragmented economic development initiatives are underway through a patchwork of agencies and organizations: local business associations, county Chambers of Commerce, regional agencies such as Cornell Cooperative Extension, NGOs such as the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development. Ulster County, the home of Marbletown and some of the Catskill Park, has its own independent nonprofit development agency, whose function has come under review by the county legislature. There is increasing attention to coordination among their efforts, but much work lies ahead.

Supplementing the work of the CWC and state and local agencies, development in eastern New York -- sustainable or otherwise -- is strongly shaped by the programs of external actors including the New York State Department of Transportation; the Department of State, which promotes and regulates commerce and has a variety of funding mechanisms available to guide development; and economically oriented bureaus and agencies such as the New York State Energy Research and Development Agency, Empire State Development Corporation; and

the Office of Agriculture and Markets. Because the many state agencies with mandates to work in the region (as regulators, funders, and/or providers of technical assistance) lack a consistent pattern of internal organization or jurisdictional boundaries, development projects routinely involve governmental actors based in diverse parts of this large state, making coordination complex. This challenge is exacerbated by New York's deepening budget crisis, leading to overall difficulty in sustaining collaboration with and among agencies.

State and private universities constitute another significant social and financial force, as they generate research data, funding and technical assistance; educate the region's work force; and establish norms for the acceptable environmental and social impacts of many economic activities through the conduct of their outreach programs. Two institutions dwarf the rest in terms of size, financial resources, and institutional relations: Cornell University (based in Ithaca, to the west) and the State University of New York system, with multiple campuses in and around the Catskills. Cornell's research and graduate education in rural sociology have been heavily focused on building rural New York's self-awareness, and providing technical assistance to communities as well as research support for public policy. The Cornell Cooperative Extension, one of the nation's largest land-grant agencies, provides research support, training and technical assistance, and community outreach on topics from pesticide alternatives to stress management. SUNY's presence includes a major graduate and research program in Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, with research programs in biofuels, forestry and farm nutrient management issues. SUNY's two-year colleges in the region focus on agricultural science and other trades relevant to the rural setting. Active experimentation in distance learning has enhanced the accessibility of these programs.

Complementing and challenging this network of governmental and university actors is an environmental NGO sector consisting of a modest number of well-entrenched regional organizations plus more localized, ad hoc efforts related to specific environmental and development issues. Outdoor recreation, the region's most visible pastime, is organized to some extent by clubs devoted to hunting, fishing, trapping and other pursuits, some of which own and manage significant lands. Chapters of national sporting organizations such as Trout Unlimited have been instrumental in shaping fisheries policy and establishing standards of outdoor courtesy. The national NGO Appalachian Mountain Club, and the regional Adirondack Mountain Club have played a similar role in promoting mountain hiking, trail maintenance, and outdoor education. Recently, The Nature Conservancy, one of the largest land protection NGOs, expanded its eastern New York regional operation and established a presence in Delaware County in order to focus on the restoration of fragmented forest habitat, viewing the Catskills as an ecologically strategic and overlooked bioregion for northeastern sustainable development. In addition, traditional social institutions such as faith communities and youth clubs play their usual role.

Many of the above organizations have found one or two characteristic modes of operation and established levels of activity that are pragmatic but not wildly ambitious -- for example, pursuing conservation easements for ecologically significant lands or advocating for particular resource management practices. However, multi-issue organizations have also arisen, with mandates from members and founders regarding environment and development. At scales from a few municipalities to the entire Hudson Valley or Catskill region, these organizations include:

- The Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District, which has built up a major program in environmental monitoring and remediation, education and training, volunteer stream monitoring, and technical review of permits for economic development;
- Scenic Hudson, a prominent land preservation organization that purchases land for scenic preservation and park development, has aided communities in opposing inappropriate development and is also acting as developer for a model "green"

riverfront complex next to a major art gallery and railway station, in the city of Beacon;

- Sustainable Hudson Valley, a regional organization working to support sustainable development strategies at the municipal level and educate consumers about sustainable lifestyle and livelihood options[12];
- Mid-Hudson Pattern for Progress, a membership organization focused on major businesses and public agencies, advocating for planned development aligned with the global economy, which in 2005 launched a major "Global Hudson Valley Initiative" for collaborative planning and economic strategy development whose parameters were being defined as this study was completed.

In the Catskills, by far the most significant citizen-led NGO is the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, which has adjusted its strategies and changed its leadership since the Biosphere debacle. Now positioned as an educational and cultural organization with an extremely careful approach to advocacy, the Center has provided a focal point to craft a narrative of possibility, a quiet "good life" in the natural beauty, economic well being and cultural vibrancy engendered by many modest efforts to preserve, restore and steward local resources of every kind. Its tools include conventional vehicles such as publications and conferences; interactive programs of outdoor recreation and land stewardship education; direct land conservation through purchases and conservation easements; historic preservation projects with symbolic value, such as a rural Grange hall in the farm community of Halcott; training and technical assistance in grant writing for local government and nonprofit agencies; an art gallery that gives equal weight to representational and protest art; a writer's retreat center, "virtual hikes" and ambitious use of Geographic Information Systems to create a regional atlas of natural and cultural resources.

Since 1999, the Catskill Center has also operated a program of community development assistance using an asset-based process adapted from the Rocky Mountain Institute's Economic Renewal Guide (Kinsley 1993). The program has assisted with community visioning processes in the villages, hamlets and towns of Andes (1999); Phoenicia (1999); Hunter (2000); Downsville (2000); Hobart (2001); Hamden (2001); Pine Hill (2001); Fleischmann's (2002). The flexible process emphasizes empowering residents and implementation of visible outcomes, aided by financial assistance from the Center. The program has also assisted with customized community development initiatives in Halcott (centering around the restoration of a local landmark for use as a community center); Marbletown; and Margaretville, where the Catskill Center collaborated with a local development agency to organize public participation in the design of re-use for Main Street properties that were part of a flood buy-out program. Small town beautification projects have also been supported, in partnership with a local landscape architect and students from SUNY in Delhi, to benefit the villages of Franklin, Walton, Middleburgh and Deposit. Informal "downtown assessment" dialogues and collaborative design have characterized these projects.

Who cares about the Hudson Valley? Almost everyone

Like the Catskills, New York's Hudson River Valley has a rich environmental and social history that shapes its capacities to address the contemporary challenge of sustainable development. While the Catskills' rural and remote character shapes its self-image as a neglected and fragile place, the Hudson Valley's relative social and economic dynamism, mobility and cosmopolitan local cultures have given rise to a denser web of networks and more complex communities of place, interest and concern. While resistance to change has

[12] As of January, 2004, the author became Acting Director and then Executive Director of this organization.

characterized the socioeconomic drama in the Catskills, the Hudson Valley is a place where change is recognized as inevitable but its dimensions are hotly contested.

The eight-county Hudson Valley region is typically defined as extending from New York City's borders up to the metropolitan cluster of Albany, Troy and Schenectady, known collectively as the Capitol District. The Hudson Valley holds small cities of historic importance including Kingston, New York's first capitol and Newburgh, where Thomas Edison invented the light bulb. The U.S. Military Academy at West Point is situated on the banks of the Hudson River. The Hudson River School of landscape painting is a well known facet of American art. The region's cultural history is a rich interweave of art, craft and architecture as reflected in sites like Olana in Hudson, the Moorish mansion build by painter Frederick Church using materials gathered from around the world. Hundreds of preserved cultural, residential, commercial and industial sites are distributed around the riverfront, mountain and village landscapes of the region. Preservation and compatible economic development are the focus of dozens of state and county agencies and NGOs, especially in the areas of agricultural preservation an d tourism.

Settled early in the history of the U.S., this region was an epicenter of military and social dramas including the American Revolution and the abolition of slavery; Sojourner Truth, one of the best known abolitionist leaders, was born in the region. Aristocratic families including the Roosevelts and the Rockefellers are prominent landowners; preserved estates of these dynasties provide not only tourist appeal but historic archives and museum collections, and frequently used spaces for public meetings. Rockefeller philanthropies have more recently been involved in sustainable development efforts through the 1994 President's Council for Sustainable Development regional consultation, and the creation of the Stone Barns sustainable agriculture project and restaurant in Westchester County.

The region's environmental history has roots in defining events such as the citizen movement to save the panoramic vista of Storm King Mountain from development in the 1960s, launching the NGO Scenic Hudson; and the movement to clean up the highly polluted river itself, led by such NGOs as Riverkeeper and Clearwater and eventually by an interagency initiative of New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation, the Hudson River Estuary Program. An estimated 80 environmental NGOs operate in the region. Most of them fall into the following categories:

- local groups focusing on land preservation or critical responses to development proposals
- local groups focusing on natural resource issues such as water or brownfields – these include a well developed volunteer stream monitoring and protection movement organized through Watershed Alliances;
- outdoor recreation groups focusing on parklands, trails, river access, and recreational facilities;
- chapters of national organizations such as the Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy, and Audubon Society;
- grassroots media organizations such as the quarterly environmental newsletter Hudson Valley GREEN Times;
- scientific organizations with research programs oriented toward the region's environmental preservation, education and consultation, including such NGOs as the Institute of Ecosystem Studies, Hudsonia, and the Metropolitan Conservation Alliance, as well as the state-funded New York Natural Heritage Program which maintains rare plant and animal surveys;
- regional NGOs including Scenic Hudson (a land trust that engages in selective advocacy and has moved into demonstration projects in compatible economic development); Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, a classroom on the river and an advocacy program currently directing its efforts toward toxics cleanup, shutting down the Indian Point

nuclear facility, and public education; and Sustainable Hudson Valley[13], whose focus is reframing economic development to enhance environmental and social well-being through education of communities and consumers, and model projects;

- coalitions and alliances bringing together local and regional groups around particular issues, including the Coalition to Close Indian Point (a nuclear plant), the Hudson River Watershed Alliance, the Hudson Valley Smart Growth Alliance, the Hudson River Preservation Coalition (focusing on opposition to a massive cement plant development in the adjacent communities of Hudson and Greenport);
- quasi-governmental initiatives originating with state agencies and leading to the formation of well-established NGOs with statutory mandates. These include the Hudson River Valley Greenway Consortium and Greenway Council, mandated by New York State to engage communities in "voluntary" land use planning with a focus on setting aside lands for parks and preservation and enhancing the public's riverfront access; and the recent initiative of Governor George Pataki to create a world class Rivers and Estuaries Institute for scientific research, and a companion Hudson River Valley Environmental Consortium of Colleges and Universities to coordinate initiatives in higher education.

Water quality is a fundamental environmental issue in the Hudson Valley as much as it is in the Catskills, although with different political and economic roots. While the Catskill Watershed has remained fairly pure in quality and stable in quantity, it is disputed in its control and destiny. By contrast, the environmental quality of the Hudson River has already been severely challenged and partially restored by the concerted effort of NGOs, governments and the public. Overfishing combined with unrestricted waste disposal from riverfront industries and the transport sector to create a moribund river ecosystem by the 1960s. A Hudson River Watershed Alliance, representing environmental NGOs, regulatory agencies and other stakeholders, arose in 2004 and has established itself in a coordinating role for information exchange and collaborative policy development.

In particular, a defining issue for the region has been the legal dumping of PCBs into the upper Hudson River by General Electric in the 1950s through 1970s, before such discharges were outlawed. Nearly twenty years of citizen pressure combined with enforcement action by federal and state agencies have now given rise to a settlement agreement in which GE will pay for dredging of the PCB "hot spots" with monitoring by a complex interagency working group. The controversy with GE, a prominent employer and investor in upper Hudson communities, has been highly polarized in a manner that resonates thematically with the Catskill Watershed controversy, with downriver communities and environmental organizations sharply challenging the ethics of GE and urging immediate, thorough dredging and secure disposal of PCB laden soils, and upriver communities, identified with the company, organizing in opposition to the dredging. The sustained, contentious nature of this dispute has left the region with a sense of commitment to more proactive resource management, and – at least in the environmental community – a sense of commitment to stakeholder engagement and consensus building approaches on controversial issues. The complexity of ideological divisions and the distinctiveness of issue-framing from controversy to controversy, is shown in a comparison of the community dynamics in the Catskill Watershed and the Hudson River PCB controversies. In the Catskill case, home rule supporters and self-styled "conservatives" aligned against the large and powerful interests of New York City and rallied sustained opposition against the Watershed Agreement. In the Hudson River case, that same demographic element aligned with the large and powerful interests of General Electric, perceived as an indigenous and honored institution, and against the "outsider" institutions such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the environmental community to oppose PCB dredging. In both cases, the "do nothing" alternative was viewed by these communities as preferable to any environmental

[13] As of January 2004 the author became Acting Director, and then in August 2004 Executive Director, of this organization.

intervention. However, in both controversies, a majority of citizens aligned with the active steps of the watershed agreement and cleaning up the riverbed's toxic sediments..

Economically, its proximity to New York City and the early development of railroad lines in the Hudson Valley have shaped the southern parts of the region as commuter areas, and the wider exurban reaches as tourist destinations. The region's small cities – Beacon, Poughkeepsie, Newburgh, Kingston and Hudson, for example – have had similar lifecycles with sharp socioeconomic decline in the 1960s through the 1980s, and redevelopment more recently. Woodstock, known today as an enclave for classical, folk and avant-garde artists as well as communications media professionals, has been an arts colony since the nineteenth century and was a haven for unemployed artists in the Great Depression. Like the Catskills, the Hudson Valley's socioeconomics show the stratification created by interplay with an affluent urban and inner-suburban work force that draws on the residential and tourist resources of the region, and the less economically successful agrarian, craft and service economies of Hudson Valley towns and villages. Unlike the Catskills, however, the Hudson River Valley has had a significant industrial base and at least an aspiration of defining itself as a technology corridor with global status. IBM, a major employer from the 1950s through the mid-1990s, gave the region a defining economic challenge by sharply downsizing in 1995. Economic development efforts by NGOs and county agencies in the contemporary period have focused equally on replacing large industrial employers with a resurgence in entrepreneurship, and on regional branding as a technology corridor in a manner that carries on the historic identification with IBM. Efforts by local entrepreneurs to create a regional brand such as "Info River Valley" have generated interest but have not created a dynamic economy.

Economic development since the downsizing of IBM has been actively spearheaded by public-private partnerships focusing on the legitimation of regional planning, the attraction and retention of industries that are generally compatible with communities' desires, supports for entrepreneurship such as business incubators and technical assistance programs housed at Community Colleges; and coordinated regional initiatives. Leadership in these efforts has historically come from the private sector, including banks and utilities, and at times the interests of these industries appear to be reflected in the development strategies themselves. For example, a partnership of county agencies, along with the regional planning collaborative Mid-Hudson Pattern for Progress, gave rise in 2002 to the Hudson Valley Economic Development Corporation (HVEDC). With funding of $7.5 million from Central Hudson Gas and Electric Company, this quasi-governmental agency launched an initiative to bring 10,000 new jobs to the region, with a focus on high technology – consonant with the region's recent history and the goal of high compensation levels, but also some of the most energy-consuming industries.

The Hudson Valley was one of four sites of focus for the President's Council for Sustainable Development, a federal initiative responding to the Rio Earth Summit by disseminating information, funding model projects and investing in regional capacity for sustainable development. Limiting itself to voluntary initiatives, and with a steadily declining funding base after its formative years, the PCSD left behind a series of regional studies financed and framed by some of the major financial and planning institutions – in the case of the Hudson Valley, these included banks, foundations, planning agencies and university based programs, as well as corporate interests. However, the major corporation participating in this process, Ciba-Geigy, was in the process of being purchased and relocating away from the region. In its final form, the PCSD's report, "Two Futures for the Hudson Valley," focused on the dangers of unplanned development and the emergence of "smart growth" land use strategies to contain sprawl; it did not engage with themes of economic or social development. One of the primary regional legacies of this work has been the crystallizing of a network of NGOs and university-based programs aimed at providing communities with technical assistance and capacity building to implement "smart growth" strategies. Chief among these are:

- The Pace University Land Use Law Center, which provides training for elected officials, consultation and model ordinances for local adoption;
- The Glynwood Center, which focuses on farmland preservation and farm economic viability, and provides training for civic leaders and elected officials in consensus building methods and produces "countryside exchange" programs for US and European community leaders to share best practices;
- The Hudson Valley Smart Growth Alliance convened primarily by the NGO Scenic Hudson and the Hudson Valley Builders Association, which provides educational conferences and related outreach to promote seven principles of "smart growth" such as cluster development and the revitalization of town centers.

In the Hudson Valley region, in spite of its continuing environmental challenges and growth pressures, the arenas of economic development, land use planning, environmental protection and social well-being are still very much segmented activities. Informal communication initiatives constantly sprouting up but never attaining the scale, consistency or focus needed to bring sustainable approaches to economic development into widespread use.

Conclusion

The trends and countertrends discussed above should make it clear that the mid-Hudson Valley and Catskill regions of New York are at a crossroads in terms of development options, and are beginning to address these choices much more explicitly and concertedly than ever before. In light of the enormous financial and cultural influence of New York City and the growing economic power of the Capitol District to the north of the study area, the entire study region is contained within a force-field of powerfully, externally based institutions. This situation is more pronounced in the Catskills, where a spectrum of state, nonprofit and university agencies facilitate the development and regulation of the economy and social development for a relatively disengaged, change-resistant and fragmented population that is still seeking its own sense of economic direction. Residential fragmentation, due to geography, has given rise to strongly defined communities of place which often identify themselves also as communities of interest with limited understanding of the self-interest contained in wider cooperative patterns. Because the Hudson Valley is experiencing much faster demographic change, population growth, and integration with national and global economic and cultural life, there is a more dynamic quality to civic life and a wider variety of organizations in play. In both sub-regions, communities of place and communities of interest tend to take their self-definitions for granted, and tacitly view their historic grievances as the essential drivers of the politics of land, economy and social policy.

Chapter 3 Contemporary standards and strategies for sustainable community development

In the United States, there is no overarching system for incorporating the views of stakeholders into the content of economic development decision making. Although a signatory to the Rio accords of 1992, the U.S. has not undertaken any concerted national effort to abide by its mandate of creating Local Agenda 21 plans, over and above the voluntary initiatives and consultative work of the President's Council for Sustainable Development (1994 - 96) in implementing several grassroots models (through funding, technical assistance and partnership brokering) and providing some repositories for information on best practices. However, a variety of local and state laws do mandate public participation in particular kinds of development decisions -- for example, federal, state and a few local environmental and public service laws establishing review processes for the siting of new developments and power plants. New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) requires environmental impact statements and a public comment period for major land development and industrial projects. Shaped substantially by the mandates of state and local law, some community master planning processes also have guidelines for mandatory or voluntary citizen involvement.

Where they exist, organized processes aimed at promoting economic and social development generally occur through a web of interwoven private and public efforts, some legally mandated and some ad hoc. This leaves it to economic and civic actors to create locally appropriate institutions and adaptations of civic process in order to achieve sustainable local solutions, or appeal to external authority through legislative or electoral advocacy. But political processes, by their nature, are generally framed in terms of policy alternatives, winners and losers, and polarized debate rather than synthesis. Daniel Kemmis a former mayor of Missoula, Montana, even argues that the very political trade-offs that initially established the American system of constitutional democracy essentially sacrificed its most vibrant participatory impulse in favor of the present system checks and balances between government branches, and among agencies; these may make it easier for parties to neutralize each other's initiatives than to achieve synthesis and collaborative outcomes. Nowhere in the constitutional process, or in the basic operating plans of most state and local government agencies, is the requirement or even encouragement for consensus-building and collaborative planning to achieve sound, politically viable solutions to shared challenges. These participative processes, while gaining attention as a field of study and entering into use in some communities under the rubric of "reinventing government" and regionalism, are still the exception rather than the rule in civic practice.

In all these dimensions of sustainable development effort, the professions of planning, community development, environmental protection, and corporate community relations have each given rise to their own participatory decision making methodologies and models; and to a landscape of diverse community partnerships formed to advance these practices in the arena of one issue or another. At the local level, the result is in an organizational patchwork that encompasses government, the private sector, civil society organizations, and partnerships among them, with diverse definitions of the basic social and environmental issues as well as diverse interests in play. In most communities, the climate is characterized by fragmentation and flux in terms of citizen and NGO actors and their relationship to development decision making, with no broad consensus on norms or standards of public participation, and no consistent discourse that can be said to characterize the majority of practitioners. When it arises, therefore, dynamic civic participation in conjunction with development decisions is often a product of organizing and self-assertion by citizens and groups responding to development proposals and thereby establish dialogue with government and the private sector. In the region of study, for example, the New York City Watershed Agreement is unusual in its proactive and preventive approach and the rigor with which stakeholder participation was designed into the process.

In the period since 1980, which has been characterized by dramatic devolution of government at the federal level and a deepening crisis of finance and management at the state level, a new institutional and civic reality has emerged in some communities, centered in local institutions. A kind of "globally aware localism," it has been shaped by a variety of trends:

1. A shift in community development thought away from focusing solely on community needs, in favor of asset development, and a rise in recognition of capacity factors such as leadership education and training, technical assistance, and especially the cultivation of the skills of collaboration and civic participation. There has been a rise in the investment of foundations and nongovernmental organizations (for example, Ford, Kellogg and Mott) in building community capacity, in the form of training, technical assistance, information and communications infrastructure, development of policies and procedures, documentation of best practices, and overall enhancement of self-awareness and social connection among local institutions.

2. The rise of regional partnerships to address issues that transcend traditional political boundaries, such as air and water quality, climate and biodiversity protection. It also includes proactive planning and coordination efforts spearheaded by nonprofit Regional Councils, which in some parts of the country have been prime movers in the "smart growth" movement.

3. Experiments with inter-municipal agreements in the context of local capacity building. For example, in the New York City suburbs, the Pace University Land Use Law Center convenes local elected officials and planning staff across a given county for training in best practices for minimizing sprawl and preserving natural resources, then helps them sustain linkages for mutual support in adopting best practices within their local political contexts.

4. The involvement of colleges and universities in community partnerships to conduct education, research, consultation, and in many cases the commercialization of new technologies, in a concerted fashion aimed at social and economic benefit.

5. The development and dissemination of technology tools for managing data and knowledge, facilitating communication in the context of complex issues and jurisdictions. This includes the proliferation of Geographic Information Systems; online conferencing and education; and e-government experiments from the mundane (such as online permitting and information systems, and the now routine television and radio coverage of government activities) to the innovative (such as online options for participating in planning and policy debates

Contemporary efforts to strengthen the voices of citizens in determining their economic futures arise in a context of high political polarization, reflected in a partisan climate nationally and a tradition of adversarial approaches to advocacy at the local level. Twentieth century America was a major site for the evolution of community organizing as a professional practice and a civic reality. Declining industrial cities gave rise to large-scale experiments in galvanizing citizens into a political bloc capable of commanding corporate attention, as illustrated by the work of Alinsky in Rochester, New York during the period, at mid-century, when the dominant industry, Kodak, was disinvesting from the community and beginning to globalize its operations. It is noteworthy that many of the initial strategies of community organizations were based on an adversarial model, rooted in a vision of social justice through redistribution of power and resources, but operating by deliberately magnifying the differences among parties in a dispute and dramatizing the human costs of the opposition's behavior. "Alinsky-style organizing" still has this meaning today.

However, in the last half century, some convergence of interests and ideologies has occurred among the actors involved in economic development decision making, including businesses, government, and civil society organizations. Each sector has developed its own paradigms and processes for stakeholder inclusion, with implicit perspectives on rights, responsibilities, and dynamics of change. True to its role, the NGO sector has shown particular dynamism, reflected in the widespread formation of community-based organizations to involve previously disenfranchised people and groups. It is also revealed in the development of replicable models for participatory sustainable development planning and implementation, by national organizations such as the Rocky Mountain Institute (Economic Renewal), the National Trust for Historic Preservation (Main Street Program), the Nature Conservancy (Compatible Economic Development), Audubon International (Sustainable Communities) and Global Community Initiatives (Taking Action for Sustainability: The EarthCat Guide to Community Development). While these differ in the range of social and economic issues they address – from the National Trust's strong focus on commercial districts, to the Nature Conservancy's focus on synergy between environmental and economic strategies, to the more systemic approaches of RMI and GCI. Il these are basically community organizing approaches focusing on the identification of assets, needs, gaps and opportunities, and the engagement of stakeholder groups in the planning and implementation of economic development projects and overall land use plans.

Many of these approaches have been refined through interaction among the private, governmental and NGO sectors, in modes ranging from cooperation to combat. The evolution toward proactive and collaborative approaches, still in a minority of communities, has been driven in part by active leadership on the part of sustainable development advocates and in part by a growing recognition of the high costs of conflict. These costs have been especially visible against the backdrop of devolution of federal and state government that have been accompanied economically by serious budgetary crises and politically by a reassertion of local home rule. With battle lines in local development disputes at times pitting ideological extremes against each other – from believers in intrinsic rights to private property, to believers in the legal standing of nonhuman species -- and with increasingly scarce resources for adjudicating conflicts within the legal system, even bitter ideological opponents are at times finding their way to the negotiating table. Today, although the requirements for public dialogue in conjunction with development planning and decision making are relatively light in terms of measurable results, political standards and public expectations are rising in many communities.

An additional motive force behind participatory approaches to economic development has been the profession of planning itself, represented in governmental agencies, volunteer boards, and private sector organizations. Arising in the 19th century and well established as a profession by the early twentieth, the field represents an ideological continuum from what might be called "professionalized" to "participatory." One of the earliest textbook authors on urban and regional planning, Geddes (1915) speculated that concerns about their quality of life would motivate urban residents to devise more and more sophisticated forms of public deliberation and cooperation. In his manifesto of nearly a century ago, on the role of the planner in promoting democratic process, tools ranging from survey research to community arts projects are explored. Planners in municipal government, and citizen volunteers on local planning boards, have been important players in creating structures for civic environmentalism. Over the generations, they have responded to the trends of industrialization, suburbanization, and finally the interconnected movements for "smart growth," sustainable cities, and effective stewardship of rural places. Beginning in the 1960s, spurred by activist citizens and critical scholarship, the profession challenged itself to more systemic approaches to sharing resources and power. Kennedy and Tilly identify two related approaches in this spirit. The first is redistributive planning, which focuses on community control of financial and institutional resources using such techniques as banking regulations and philanthropic funds. The second is

known as transformative planning, which focuses on redistributing political power by following the lead of citizens on the ends as well as means of development.

Professionals and institutions in the related movement of community development have played a parallel, and sometimes collaborative, role with planners. This movement has given rise to a new set of quasi-governmental institutions, Community Development Corporations (CDCs). First appearing on a large scale during the War on Poverty in the 1960s and 1970s, CDCs exist to devise and implement projects in economic and infrastructure development to achieve social goals, with housing predominant, but with a serious secondary focus on education, public health, safety and employment. CDCs have been test beds for the use of citizen advisory groups and voluntary stakeholder participation processes in the context of development. In some areas, they have also developed a symbiotic relationship with investor groups -- for example, through a national network, the Community Development Venture Capital Alliance.

In recent years, an additional cast of organizational actors has been gaining prominence in the community development process -- institutions of higher education that participate in community processes as a conscious educational strategy, and a research focus, as well as to manage their own community relations issues. One example of this phenomenon is the well known synergy in new technology development between major technological universities and their surrounding communities -- Stanford University and the high technology companies of Silicon Valley; MIT and Boston's Route 128 corridor; the University of North Carolina and the Research Triangle technology district; and, emanating from New York's Capitol District with influence on the Catskill region, an ambitious "Tech Valley" initiative that aims to develop seventeen counties in eastern New York with high technology industries. Coexisting with these urbanizing forces, major actors in agricultural research and practice are the Cooperative Extension systems of land grant universities, which have been a major force in research, education and standard-setting.

University-community partnerships have expanded greatly since the late 1980s, encompassing curriculum and research innovations for social and environmental aims. Such partnerships can support the revitalization strategies of both town and campus. Importantly, the roots of these efforts do not only lie in visionary educational strategies and community responsiveness on the part of colleges and universities. In many instances, they have also arisen in response to the advocacy of community residents to protect their rights in the face of university expansion, unpopular land uses by universities that impinge on community welfare or property values, and other genuine conflicts of interest between "town" and "gown". Nonetheless, university-community partnership is emerging as a model for community development with potentially high mutual benefit. The scale and significance of this work is reflected in the existence of an Office of University Partnerships within the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

These trends have given rise to a situation in which many institutional actors, some of them large, are attempting to assist communities at scales from neighborhoods to municipalities. This help takes such forms as technical assistance, collaborative programming, direct funding and other resources. While direct support for municipal and state initiatives in environmental preservation and social programs continues to shrink and to be more and more constrained in its forms, the resources available to third parties to intervene in communities are much less restricted. This has created a climate in which fortunate and persistent middle-class professionals, including academics, consultants and social service providers, can attract resources to work in low-income and environmentally threatened communities, while those communities have difficulty attracting funds directly to solve problems they can perfectly well identify. Often universities, planners, community development corporations, and other institutional actors play the role of convenor, supporter and multitasking volunteer assistant to communities in grappling with sustainability challenges.

In all these movements toward participative decision making and collaborative approaches to community economic development, practitioners are called upon to make complex, real-time judgments about the prioritization of goals and the choice of methods. These encompass, at a minimum, the identification of stakeholders, the definition of questions for deliberation, the framing of decision processes. Public health and safety, quality of life and the future of neighborhoods, are influenced in countless ways by "economic" decision making. Under the rubric of economic development, decisions are made about the siting of health care facilities, land fills and waste incinerators; access to affordable housing, good schools, transportation and green space, not to mention good jobs; standards for the cleanup of brownfields and the disposal of hazardous materials. Thus the questions of development strategy and participation are highly charged, and cannot be addressed meaningfully without compensating for inequities of political, social and economic power to create a level playing field. Since the early days of the contemporary environmental movement, and the interwoven social movements with interests in community development, a recurrent theme in scholarship and practice has been issues of equity in participation and control.

Sarkissian and Walsh (1994) identify the following questions as basic in consultative processes to involve citizens in land use decisions. With minor adaptation of language, these lines of questioning can be asked of any partnership or collaborative process:

- Who is consulted?
- How are they consulted?
- When are they consulted, in terms of the overall timeline of decisions and action?
- About what are they consulted?
- Where does the consultation take place?
- Who carries out the consultation?
- How is the process managed?

To aid in conceptualizing the levels of meaningful participation and equity in a given consultative or collaborative process, various hierarchies have been created (e.g. Arnstein 1969). One of the simplest and most generally applicable comes from Susskind (1983), who categorizes power relations in any civic process as fitting predominantly into one of three categories:

- paternalism;
- conflict; or
- co-production (defined as collaborative effort, with shared power, toward a mutually meaningful goal).

Co-production refers to a partnership that is meaningful in the eyes of participants, in which power, resources, authority and responsibility are shared in relevant ways according to context. Sarkissian and Walsh propose four defining characteristics for this desirable state:

- democratization of resource allocation decisions;
- decentralization of decision making
- deprofessionalization of bureaucratic judgments that affect the everyday lives of local people; and
- demystification of information and decisions, especially with regard to financial and technical matters.

The scholarly literatures and field studies in planning, community development, and sociology thus concur: organizational factors and power relations are important in the success of community development and resource stewardship efforts. But there is no straightforward road map for the creation and recognition of social capital. In the words of Kinsley, reflecting on twenty years as a NGO-based practitioner and refiner of public participation methods, "Culture and capacity are complex variables, and they matter greatly."

Thus, the dimensions of local organization that matter for this exploration are complex, ambiguous and fluid. To address the many levels of social process required to achieve sustainable development goals, and the social nature of the learning that must precede sound decision making, it is reasonable to expect a need for complex and diverse kinds of social relations. Peterman, writing in the tradition of community and neighborhood planning, reports on the widely accepted view that multiple structures and strategies are necessary to revitalize a community:

> A decade or so ago, it was thought that community development corporations and the work they did were sufficient mechanisms for revitalizing neighborhoods. Community organizing, particularly advocacy organizing, was thought to be counterproductive because organizers often targeted those groups with resources needed by the community. These groups, it was argued, were 'turned off' by the strident, 'non-business' approach of the organizers and their community groups. Planning also was viewed as being not particularly relevant to community revitalization because the basic issues associated with improvement, better housing, more jobs, and safer streets, were not only understood but were also areas that were only marginally addressed by the land use-oriented field of planning. But today, the issues of community revitalization are no longer seen as so straightforward, and are thought of as being quite complex and interrelated. Organizing has reappeared as a necessary element in a community development strategy, although it must work with and not against the activities of the CDCs. And planning is also no longer seen as irrelevant, because there is an increasing need for the development of innovative strategies -- short, mid, and long term -- that address the complexity of neighborhood revitalization and serve to guide community-based activities.

Just as a variety of organizations and actors, in complex relationship, are needed for economic development to occur at all, Fukuyama adds that a variety of development pathways characterize the countries of the modern industrialized world (at every scale from nation to neighborhood), arguing that a pluralistic approach must be accepted going forward:

> It has become much less widely accepted that there is a single path of economic development that all societies must follow as they modernize... The Japanese *keiretsu* system constitutes an alternative form of corporate organization based on networks rather than hierarchy and in effect achieves the scale economies of vertical integration with a much more flexible form of organization. An advanced industrialized country's economy can, moreover, remain dominated by modern family businesses... Craft traditions and small-scale production have survived alongside large-scale mass production facilities.

The preceding discussion suggests that there is much to be learned about the optimum conditions for sustainable community development through the study of a variety of institutional structures; at a variety of scales; and through a variety of organizational paradigms. Both formal and informal relationships, structure and culture, are important. Civic processes need to be clearly designed and equitable, yet resilient and flexible. The human experience of being changed, in some essential way, by participating in effective civic processes, is invoked by Forester, writing as a participant-observer in the field of planning:

> The process is one not simply of throwing together a group of rational decision makers, but one of changing those decision makers into a more deliberative political body. In this way, the ritual richness of participatory encounters provides the infrastructure, the materials and occasion for a deliberative

> political rationality, potentially transforming means and ends and self and other, *a rationality far richer than typical accounts of optimizing allow*.

The practical achievement of this richer rationality, rooted in culture and values, has been described in detailed cases in Shutkin's study of "civic environmentalism." This notion provides an integrative lens through which to examine local strategies, to resolve environmental and social problems, meet basic needs, and enhance quality of life. Here again our attention is directed to focus on the strengths of people and place. As it is able to "bring us back to the places where we live, work and play every day, and in the process help us reclaim those places, both physically and socially, " he notes, "civic environmentalism forces us to reckon with our own communities and ourselves as the citizens, corporations, and governments who comprise them." Shutkin provides a sociohistoric examination of four cases in detail: Boston's Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative; the Fruitvale Transit Village of Oakland, California; a cluster of interrelated land protection and sustainable ranching efforts undertaken by a Colorado coalition; and the Blueprint for a Sustainable New Jersey. These all combine elements of planning and development by governmental actors with the community organization of citizens and groups. These cases further attest to the importance of multiple structures, and complex relationships of interdependence, leading to sometimes challenging processes of negotiation and synthesis to build consensus for action. Reinforcing major themes from the research literature analyzed in earlier chapters, the following factors each play a central role in more than one of Shutkin's cases:

1. external relationships, (in the forms of business and foundation investment and technical assistance, support of government agencies and NGOs, and consultants with track records cross-fertilizing ideas and transferring technologies) all working alongside an organized community with locally controlled nongovernmental organizations;
2. internally, extensive planning and trust-building phases (generally following an initial conflictive phase), background research and stakeholder dialogues (formal and informal) before the beginning of visible work;
3. synergy among individual and institutional actors, bringing resources to the table that have much more leverage together than in isolation;
4. involvement of multiple organizations, with overlapping leadership and key players holding multiple roles; formal and informal collaborations; considerable thought put into the structure and strategy of new organizations created to serve particular functions;
5. innovative approaches to ownership, control and decision making in order to help participants manage risk and compensate for the concession of goods, rights, access, etc.; innovative use of conventional policy instruments by applying them to new or neglected constituencies, such as the organizing of Dudley Street residents for eminent domain control over vacant land in their neighborhood.
6. a combination of grassroots leaders and skilled professionals, working as peers with joint accountability;
7. affirming and sometimes reframing the cultural traditions of a given community. For example, in the case of Routt County, Colorado, these include rural ingenuity and eccentricity; self-determination and respect; ranching and open space as naturally coexisting values; in the case of Roxbury, a colonial farming village was seen as having been transformed into blighted urban sacrifice zone, then reclaimed as a new kind of farming village in the midst of the metropolis.

Forester's "richer rationality" reflects a complexity of human learning and deliberation, in which social knowledge is developed through interactive processes in ways that cannot be anticipated or controlled. It directs our attention to the emergent properties of any deliberative body as a social system, over and above the visible personalities and attitudes of individuals as they enter into the process. Because the subject at hand, sustainable local development, is multidisciplinary and complex, and few citizens at this time in history have more than a passing familiarity with it, the learning curve for effective majority participation generally appears steep. In light of the demographic and psychographic diversity of

participants in even the most apparently homogeneous communities, as discussed earlier, this suggests the need for an iterative, careful, subtle approach to the design of deliberative processes, in order to keep participants enfranchised and allow for the exploration of differences on multiple fronts. This reinforces the generally accepted principle of community development that, before a community can become an effective deliberative body with regard to its socioeconomic future on an endangered planet, it must first go through a formative process, creating cohesion out of a group of diverse individuals by building the internal social capital of trust and reciprocity, which take time and care to establish.

This principle is reflected in the contemporary practice known as asset-based community development, an approach that focuses primarily on the strengths of a community – material, social, intellectual, cultural and ecological -- and only secondarily on the challenges the community faces. It counters the tradition of needs-based intervention in communities, which has characterized unsuccessful social programs and given rise to critiques that it:

- fosters dependency on funding sources that are awarded based on continuing need;
- fosters dependency on external services at the expense of self-reliance; and
- evaluates efforts based on reduction of negatives, which in the best case scenario tunes people's aspirations toward a neutral outcome rather than inviting positive visions, therefore doing little or nothing to enhance participants' sense of self-esteem, efficacy or enfranchisement.

In contrast, Kretzman and McKnight (1993) clarify the implications of the asset-based approach as one that:

> starts with what is present in the community, the capacities of its residents and workers, the associational and institutional base of the area--not with what is absent, or with what is problematic, or with what the community needs.

Because this community development process is asset-based, it is by necessity 'internally focused.' That is, the development strategy concentrates first of all upon the agenda building and problem-solving capacities of local residents, local associations and local institutions. Again, this intense and self-conscious internal focus is not intended to minimize either the role external forces have played in helping to create the desperate conditions of lower income neighborhoods, nor the need to attract additional resources to these communities. Rather this strong internal focus is intended simply to stress the primacy of local definition, investment, creativity, hope and control.

> If a community development process is to be asset-based and internally focused, then it will be "relationship driven," in important ways. Thus, one of the central challenges for asset-based community developers is to constantly build and rebuild the relationships between and among local residents, local associations and local institutions.

These primary qualities of asset-based solutions -- as internally focused and relationship-driven -- provide a point of departure for examining the kinds of participatory processes that can be expected to lead to successful outcomes by agreed-upon indicators including participants' own evaluations. Kretzman and McKnight's key notion of "constantly building and rebuilding relationships," within and among complex networks, reveals the rationale for the concerted, patient, subtle and in some senses intimate qualities of group process that characterize successful community based problem solving.

Toward this objective, a variety of process tools and pedagogies have been developed through decades by social, family systems, community and developmental psychologists among others. Two illustrative and widely applied models are Bohm's Dialogue (extensively used in organization learning) and Peck's Community Building, a four-stage individual and group

evolutionary model that has found use in both corporate and community settings. Both operate by drawing out participants' personal histories, subjective experience and world views to promote the understanding that at least some of their differences are socially constructed rather than intrinsic, thus making them more reconcilable. Continued conversation across differences, focusing on individuals' experiences rather than on win-lose argumentation, essentially forge a group capable of tolerating difference and tension without loss of cohesion. Social and civic groups of this kind serve as a matrix in which individuals can reframe their private experience by viewing it in light of broader patterns and common themes. These processes share a common set of basic characteristics. Through group-based sense-making activities, they consciously forge a sense of shared identity among individuals who perceive their identities and needs as diverse. They are not psychotherapeutic per se, but use methods of clinical psychology in conjunction with teambuilding and process facilitation.

Methods of community-building, in this sense, generally include:

- a conscious enrollment of each participant with some formal affirmation of commitment;
- a conscious group formation process through somewhat formalized dialogues, and through social rituals such as meals and retreats;
- progressive decentralization of responsibility for setting and implementing the group's agenda, after the initial commitment and collaborative norms have been established;
- creation of reflective cultures by allowing for a wider range of behaviors than are the norm in conventional social settings, from extended silence, to more direct interpersonal communication than is generally accepted, to the expression of strong emotion.

These are some of the root processes, reappearing in a range of methodologies, that help participants gain awareness and acceptance of the extent to which their particular beliefs arise from their experience, thus reducing the drive to generalize and increasing their tolerance for pluralism. The depth of deliberation in these processes makes it possible to bring into view tacit assumptions that may bias individuals -- and in many cases tacit knowledge of value to the group -- allowing for synthesis of views and strategies in ways that cannot be anticipated. By this path, groups can at least move closer to a shared vision that takes into account the needs and rights of diverse others, from neighbors to future generations, better than would be the case without these tools.

While the application of these principles is now occurring on a scale too large to be discussed exhaustively here, several examples illustrate the extent and sophistication of the pedagogies in use to address contemporary social problems and conflicts:

- Scenario tools such as Future Search are in wide circulation in community settings.
- Family therapy principles extrapolated into civic controversies: The Public Conversations Project of the Cambridge Family Institute uses family therapy techniques to reduce hostility, foster understanding and hold out the possibility of new political solutions regarding one of the most polarizing issues in U.S. politics, the right of a woman to choose abortion versus the right of an embryo to life. Dialogues have resulted in new political coalitions and softened extremes within groups on both sides.
- Intergroup and intercultural relations: Sustained Dialogue, a process tested in the crucible of the Camp David Peace Accords (Saunders 2000), has been adapted for use on campuses such as Princeton University, for addressing the roots of racial and ethnic conflict to prevent crises and strengthen relationships (Nemeroff and Tukey 2003). Related principles have also been used in large-scale "truth and reconciliation" processes in conjunction with the restoration of civil society institutions after periods of intense and large-scale disruption such as the South African apartheid era and the Balkans conflict of the 1990s.
- Community building to create alternatives to violence: Project Return, an application of Peck's community building methodology within a prison-to-work transition program in New Orleans, which boasts an extremely low recidivism rate thanks to its ability to increase

participants' skill in resolving conflicts without violence, and their overall psychological resilience.

- Citizen assemblies for direct policy input: Citizen Panels for technology assessment and policy, initiated in Denmark in 1993 with replication in many cultures and focusing on many issues. These have explored genetically modified food sources, telecommunications and democracy, and other issues of equal complexity, and have been successful in European, American and Asian cultures with diverse organizational sponsorship.
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These elements are drawn upon in diverse ways, and to differing degrees, in local consensus building processes for sustainable development. Their existence, and the emergence of theory to guide their utilization, allows for a range of options and an enhanced level of expectation that was not present a generation ago.

Chapter 4 Empowerment, collaboration and mediating structures: elements of the transformation

We are looking at the seeding of participatory structures that allow, over time, for expanded participation and civic engagement, and motivate internal and external stakeholders to step into more active roles in bridging institutional boundaries. We are looking at what it takes for individuals and groups who hold institutional power, to distribute that power in such a way that their formal authority will ultimately be diminished and the course of their organizations will be substantially out of their control.

The psychosocial literature review in this chapter will cover this ground in two stages. The first, is organized toward construction of a guiding theory of individual enfranchisement in a collective endeavor that serves the common good and resonates in terms of community values – in short, a psychology of "social movement" participation. The second focuses on the mediating structures that align small groups, teams, and larger functional groupings in an institution – stated simply, the sociology of "social capital" formation. Synthesizing these, the chapter concludes with thoughts on the characteristics of organizations that effectively distribute power and engage stakeholders in sustainable community development.

In light of the use of terms like "social movement" and "social change," it is ironic that the literature on formation and functioning of autonomous or "grassroots" social movements is not a focus here, since these movements arise outside the structures of institutions. The purpose of the present study is to understand the diffusion of power and authority toward the boundaries of an organization, and then across them, to engage external stakeholders in leadership. The developmental psychology of individuals with respect to social movement participation is a substantial source of guidance in the theoretical framing. However, beyond that, the study relies on the psychology and sociology of small group and organizational dynamics in general, rather than focusing on social movement participation specifically. The organizational focus brings its own issues in terms of its sphere of influence on "inside" individuals who depend on the organization for livelihood, membership and other benefits, and thus may be at risk of they alter the structures and norms of that institution. Grassroots social movements, in contrast, are generally understood as mobilization of individuals and groups who stand to benefit from asserting their influence with respect to an institution that they may or may not be part of. Therefore "revolutions from within" organizations can be expected to have their own dynamics in terms of negotiated outcomes and organizational caution, giving rise to a more iterative and subtle set of processes than a grassroots social movement might exhibit.

The personal as "political" –enfranchisement through sense-making

What are the psychological processes involved in awakening concern and commitment on a particular issue, and mobilizing individuals to act? Most contemporary theories of human development hold that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from their relational context, and that they thrive when they are able to establish themselves in mutually enhancing relationships with a social matrix and natural environment. Implicit in this discussion is a view of human beings as embedded in a social, historical, cultural and ecological matrix -- the "self-in-relation" as a social unit (Surrey et al) that can be considered basic, with the relevant relationships ranging from intimate dyads to global networks. To the extent that we have (and recognize) genuine choices, humans act based on how we consciously and unconsciously experience the world, and ourselves in it. We develop personalities, worldviews and paradigms, and resultant capacities for a distinctive range of behavior and relationship, as we continuously reorient ourselves in the world. Who we think we are, and how we understand both responsibilities and opportunities, are thus connected to the breadth and depth of the social worlds we interact with, the sensory modalities through which we interact, our degree of

self-awareness, and the social forces in play in our environments. In this social-constructionist view, experience and behavior are mutually reinforcing. Any mature commitment to a social movement such as sustainable development, and to organizational change in support of that movement, arises from personalized systems of meaning.

Human development is commonly understood in terms of stages, and any randomly selected population of adults represents a wide range of developmental stages. These stages are sometimes considered in terms of a hierarchy of needs from survival through self-actualization (Maslow); or the unfolding of meanings (Frankl); or cognitive stages that provide an underpinning for moral development (Piaget, Kohlberg, Loevinger, Gilligan). In one way or another, developmental stages are characterized by a particular internal organization of our experience in the world. The stages of cognitive and moral development are generally understood to be somewhat predictable within a given culture, as people come to terms with physical laws and social norms, from self-absorbed infancy through the social conformity of the adolescent and into the more internally regulated and accountable behavior of high functioning adults. While some theorists emphasize rights and constructs of responsibility (e.g. Kohlberg), and others emphasize the evolution of social connection and empathy (e.g. Gilligan), a common denominator is the notion that people move from one stage to the next with a mix of evolutionary and revolutionary change -- with particular life experiences as catalysts for those discontinuous leaps. Kegan refers to this process as "hatching out" of one fundamental relationship to the wider world and into a wider "relational context" or field of awareness. These "hatchings" can occur at any point in the life cycle when the personality is open to re-interpretation of experience and there are forces in the social matrix to aid that re-interpretation. Ray Anderson, CEO of Interface Flooring Systems and Dee Hock, former CEO of Visa and board member of The Natural Step, have reported such experiences in autobiographical studies of their mid-career reorientation to concern about sustainability. Such experiences involved significant reorientation of world view, in the spirit of what Arne Naess calls "Self realization" – that is, awareness and understanding of oneself as interconnected with, and interdependent with, a social matrix that influences identity and agency. He observes that, "When the social self is sufficiently developed, I no longer want to eat a big cake alone. I want to share it with others."

This "hatching" process underlies basic moral development and the capacity for prosocial behavior such as acts of responsibility, empathy, and collaboration (Kohn 1987). The same process of continuous renegotiation of one's relationship with the world underpins the formation of civic engagement. Daloz et al (1996), studying one hundred committed social activists selected for their psychological maturity and effectiveness, identified the origins of such expansions of awareness and involvement in diverse, interwoven experiences of:

- **connection and complexity** (relating to the world with openness and grappling with its unwieldy realities even when they involve paradox)
- **community** (a supportive, nonjudgmental, diverse social matrix of friends, colleagues, extended family members, constituents and, importantly, mentors)
- **compassion** (given and received);
- **conviction** (based on significant experience and reflection, rarely coming easily)
- **courage** (for struggles in the political and economic realm, and in facing oneself)
- **confession** (taking public stands in a spirit of humility)
- **commitment** (long-term and mature, flexible in terms of means).

All these experiences are subjective, sustained, and relational. That is, they are not experiences of the individual in isolation, but of the expanding self-construct of the person in a social and ecological system.

These elements can be infinitely recombined in the formative experiences of individuals negotiating their way into, and within, social movements and, in the process, reconceptualizing their place in the world. In these narratives, social experience (in such forms as family and mentoring relationships, engagement with community issues and resources, and

participation in social movements) provided continuous opportunities for the sense of self to evolve. Commitments to the commons arose in the individual's imagination, out of a subjective sense of self-world connection that in turn was shaped by experiences of group membership, behavioral dilemmas and pressures, success and failure, loyalty and betrayal, and strategic thought processes -- such as re-interpretation of history and exploration of future scenarios -- that are essential to social movement strategy:

> In their responsiveness to the tug of life, these committed citizens have not only experienced the complexity of the contemporary commons, they have been able also to practice an imagination that continually builds bridges across boundaries between tribes, makes connections through the gaps between competing ideologies, dismantles the fortifications around alienated constituencies, forges bonds beneath cynical interpretations, and repeatedly reframes a more adequate embrace of the whole so as to recast prejudice, stereotypes, and inadequate assumptions into forms that are more truthful because they take more into account.

Daloz et al conclude that "lives of commitment" are cultivated through a complex evolutionary process that is advanced by a combination of ego strength and existential challenge, with emphasis on particular kinds of growth experiences. These formative experiences of committed activists fall into two categories: those that strengthen the core self; and those that define, extend and sometimes perturb the boundaries of social identity and the sense of efficacy. Challenge and loss figure heavily in these stories; but so do experiences of empathy and support from unexpected sources that allow for "constructive engagement with otherness."

The sense-making process underlying this interpretation of self in the world arises from screening of complex information gathered through a wide range of channels (the "multiple intelligences" of Gardiner). Attitudes and beliefs about self and world are constructed based on the filtering of sensory information, which in turn is based on the individual's existing world-view and criteria concerning what is important. As a result of this basic attribute of human information processing, "ordinary" education and civic engagement efforts cannot be expected to overcome entrenched attitudes and habits. In the section that follows, conceptualization of these cognitive processes, and their impacts on consciousness and behavior, is drawn from Goleman's review of cognitive processes, framed as "the psychology of self-deception." Because primary awareness (i.e. "conscious" experience) has an extremely limited capacity compared to unconscious long-term memory, conscious experience is filtered, and most information is stored by humans at an unconscious level. In the brain, the "intelligent filter" sorts incoming signals and releases them selectively into conscious awareness, and this filter involves the unconsciously stored long-term memory. This means that the subjective relevance of any information, in the individual's pre-existing world view, becomes part of the automatic criteria for attention to new information. We pay attention to what we think matters, logically enough; however, this appears to bias human information processing against straightforward acceptance of new ideas. According to Ayres (2001):

> The records of history, as well as of recent psychological research, suggest that on those extraordinary occasions when people are suddenly confronted with something that is utterly alien to their experience, they may in effect go blank while neurons race around in search of a familiar pattern of synapses -- some memory, or myth, or clear expectation. Consciousness is a connecting of sensory stimuli and meaning, and if no connection is made, there may be a failure of consciousness. You may not see anything at all.

The magnitude of direct, relevant experience that can remain literally unseen, by otherwise well functioning humans, is illustrated by the historic account of an encounter between island natives and European explorers. Ayres tells this story:

> For millennia, the Aborigines of eastern Australia used small bark canoes to fish off the coast of their isolated continent. They had no contact with whites. But on April 29, 1792, the British sailing ship Endeavour, under captain James Cook, sailed into a bay and encountered a group of natives -- the first known contact between Australians and Europeans. One of the passengers on the ship was an avid botanist, Joseph Banks, who was keeping a detailed journal of everything he saw on the journey. To the natives, the sudden appearance of this ship would have been as unprecedented and inexplicable as it might have been for today's New Yorkers to look up and see a city-sized space ship blocking out the sky. The English ship, as described by historian Robert Hughes, was "an object so huge, complex, and unfamiliar as to defy the natives' understanding." In any case, in their reactions, they showed no evidence of seeing anything at all. However, when the Europeans lowered their landing boats and started to row for shore, the more familiar small rowed boats provoked an intense reaction from the natives. As Hughes tells it, "The sight of men in a small boat was comprehensible to them; it meant invasion. Most of the Aborigines fled into the trees, but two naked warriors stood their ground and shouted."

Applying this metaphor to a typical organizational response to a typical civic issue – such as a petition drive, development controversy or electoral challenge -- some members of an organizational community are likely to be fishing as usual, some are in flight (metaphorically if not literally), and others are shouting on the shoreline at a perceived threat to their way of life, while those playing the role of "invader" will have an equally wide range of attitudes and responses to the "natives'" blend of distress and calm. This psychologically grounded social reality is a reason for the importance of change strategies that capture and make use of the richness of difference among the world views, assumptions, goals and expectations of any range of participants; and that go beyond accommodation of difference to allow for synthesis and transformation whenever possible.

Such personalization has been a consciously embraced strategy of modern social movements across the ideological spectrum: feminism (which birthed the slogan, "The personal is political"); civil rights, human rights, arms control, various peace movements, animal rights, and twelve-step recovery movements are a few examples. The staying power of social movements can be tied to cultural practices, backed up by organizational structures, that specifically link individual interests to those of the collective. Organizational efficacy is derived from the capacity to resolve conflict, in ways that honor participants' diverse views as well as the emerging consensus -- not by the absence of conflict. Interestingly, three cultures known for their relative nonviolent demeanor, material simplicity, and common quality of a strong cohesion which is not threatened by internal difference -- the Quakers, Native Americans, and Rastafarians of Jamaica -- all have well established cultural forms for such deliberation: respectively, the Clearness Committee, the Council, and the Reasoning. The latter is described as follows by Kebede et al (++):

> *Reasoning* refers to sessions held to discuss issues ranging from the life experiences of individual members to international issues. Reasoning is an important dimension of the Rastafarian collective identity because every member is allowed to speak his or her mind. The ritual provides a fertile ground for a diagnostic analysis of social reality. Thus, Reasoning is not only designed as an exercise in democratic expression; it is also a session in which

members think in unison. The participation in the examination of diagnostic and prognostic frames in the movement gives every member self-confidence. These processes, in turn, enforce collective identity.

Reinforcing the notion that "the personal is political," a number of commentators since the late 1970's have used observations about contemporary lifestyles and attitudes as a source of prediction about political and cultural changes coming into being. Roszak's (1979) far-reaching analysis of "the creative dis-integration of industrial society" covers practices in education (from Waldorf to home schooling); family and neighborhood life (intentional communities, recovering the commons with community gardens and other social innovations, etc.); less materialistic lifestyles and more selective use of technologies, as well as "the right to right livelihood" as a condition for dignified human life. Ferguson's (1980) similar discussion about personal and social transformation, arising from the development of new social networks reflecting shifts in worldviews, brings in the influence of cultural mixing, mass communication, new methods of stress management and consciousness expansion such as the popularization of meditation, preventive health care and other dimensions of personal lifestyle as a basis for societal changes. The common thread in this ecclectic mix of trends, she argues, is that they all support greater capacity for personal responsibility, accelerated learning, and shifts in world view that put sustainability in a position of higher priority. In the corporate change arena, as well, the link between institutional change and the behavior of individiduals and small groups is reflected by experiments with workplace democratization and early efforts to create what are now known as learning organizations, in which a key factor in the institutionalization of change is an expanded acceptance of a "vernacular" corporate culture allowing for individuality, greater autonomy, and expressiveness (Kleiner 1994).

Explorations of the linkage between personal and social transformation can be found in many contemporary discussions of social movements. In the examples that follow, powerful social changes are connected with linkages between the micro and the macro -- the "personal" and the "political" -- that show two characteristics. First, they engage people in committed participatory experiences that alter their usual social roles and power relations. This gives them an opportunity not only to think differently, but to act and experience themselves differently. Second, they involve qualities of experience that are out of the ordinary -- from danger to ecstasy -- and may therefore call forth inner resources that are not tapped in more conventional experience.

Social change scholarship supporting this notion includes Friere's (1961) participant-observer work with group education and action to help Brazilian peasants more effectively advocate for themselves economically and politically. Key elements of his strategy were literacy classes in which the study materials addressed the economic and social conditions of students' lives (e.g. "Why are we poor?"); and cycles of action on a democratically chosen civic project, interspersed with reflection on the sources of success and lessons for the future. Alinsky (1972) applied a similar personalization to his community organizing "rules for radicals." He used the same principles to sharpen polarization between interest groups, and the visible expression of class or group emotions such as anger, in order to build social movement identity, a sense of urgency, and negotiating power. Lerner (1980) applies the notions of group identity, expression, and empowerment into the support of industrial workers through "occupational stress groups" intended to help to reduce individual isolation, guilt and frustration about working conditions, by normalizing personal experience and identifying some of its systemic roots. And, in the contemporary literature of economic and social development, there are numerous examples of "passionate microcosms" with characteristics of social movement rather than social engineering, that are characterized by a very high level of personalization of the organization's mission, and high linkage between human development and organizational success. For example"

- Project Return, a prison-to-work program in New Orleans, uses the community-building model of M. Scott Peck to help former inmates develop new levels of resilience in situations of

conflict. Combining this with job training and workplace readiness skills, the program achieves one of the lowest rates of recidivism in the country.

- The Greyston Mandala in Yonkers, New York, a network of training and development programs implemented through small businesses, shows high success rates in helping former drug users and street people to enter the work force using a "life skills" teaching model that includes Zen meditation, cross-trainining in multiple functions, and a culture of "mindfulness".
- The "enterprise facilitation" model of the Minneapolis-based Sirolli Institute is based on the premise that entrepreneurial success and self-actualization are intimately connected. By sitting in public places and waiting to be approached by people with passions who want technical assistance, then helping those people to create businesses they can throw themselves into, Sirolli and the facilitators he has trained (in Australia, New Zealand, and the rural U.S. heartland) have achieved among the highest levels of local job creation and retention documented in self-development economic strategies.

The reason to believe that such thorough-going, personalized change is a condition for lasting empowerment as an organizational change-agent is the degree to which tacitly held views of self and world influence our ability, literally, to see both opportunities and responsibilities, including the degree of effort we exert for any purpose. Seligman studied the motivational significance of "explanatory style" -- the stories people tend to tell about events and patterns in their lives. He interviewed people who suffered from depression, and found that they differed from a control group in over-generalizing and over-personalizing unpleasant experiences. In organizational life, this pattern was borne out in Seligman's research with 104 sales agents from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, who were tested for optimistic versus pessimistic explanatory style at hiring and secretly classified as "eagles" or "turkeys." The eagles greatly outsold the turkeys from the start. Differences between the groups multiplied as the years went by.

Where we think we fit in the social order, in history, and in the web of life -- our rights and entitlements, our responsibilities, the legacy we hope to leave, and the values we implicitly assign to our fellow inhabitants of the planet -- all these factors affect the kinds of behavior we see as possible, as well as the actions we find compelling, and influence the degree to which we extend ourselves for particular others and the community as a whole. The way this works is illustrated by Mitroff and Pauchant's study of approaches to crisis management among top decision makers, contrasting "crisis prone" with "crisis prepared" organizations. The two groups differed, primarily, in the center and scope of the moral universe they inhabited, i.e. whose interests they considered worthy of attention at all:

> A crisis, for Crisis-Prone organizations, was something that affects them, e.g. their products, their top executives. On the other hand, a crisis for a Crisis-Prepared organization is something that affects not only them personally but also their customers, their surrounding communities, the families of their employees, and their general environment. The greatest distinction between these two types of organizations is in precisely this: how they relate to those outside of them, and particularly to those who do not have the same kind of power they have, e.g. the unborn and future generations. For Crisis-Prone organizations, the powerless tend not to exist, or their importance is discounted entirely.

Not only are personal choices derived from the self-world connection, and related attitudes about the social order, in the present. Also relevant are beliefs about the future, and about where we and those we care about fit into it. DeGeuss adds this dimension to the relevant maps of the self in the world:

> We will not perceive a signal from the outside world unless it is relevant to an option for the future that we have already worked out in our imaginations.

> The more 'memories of the future' we develop, the more open and receptive we will be to signals from the outside world.

As a consequence, helping people to participate effectively in complex deliberative processes requires supporting them not only in information gathering but in synthesis, exploration and imagination -- and supporting the larger group in assimilating the range of views held by members. Studying the processes of perception and learning that lead to effective participation in scenario planning followed by commitment to a chosen scenario, De Geuss came around to the dominant perspective in cognitive psychology, that:

> ... the act of perception is not simply a matter of collecting information -- of looking at an object and noting all sorts of observations and data about it. Perception, to a human being, is an active engagement with the world. And, in a company, it is similarly active. Perception requires the deliberate effort by management groups within the company to 'visit their future' and develop time paths and options. Otherwise, the observations and data that one has collected will have no meaning.

The pattern, the story line, the personal interpretation of what matters, and to whom -- these personal motivational concerns are taken quite seriously in organizational psychology. Meaning-making and decision-making require situating ourselves in place, time, and community, and continuously renewing our understanding as experience changes us. As Garfield notes based on many studies of peak performers in athletics and in organizational life, behavior is shaped not only by what we believe and feel, but how strongly:

> Values are the leverage point for the whole internal impulse to excel, because they encompass not only what and how but why. Depth of calling -- a strong feeling of commitment that a peak performer has for his or her mission -- is necessary but not by itself sufficient for high achievement. Intensity is incomplete if you don't know what you're intense about: the worth to you and to others of what you're being called by.

Subjective factors of these kinds are so important in guiding behavior -- and have been so under-explored by behaviorist and experimental traditions until the last few decades -- that Sperry speaks of the "cognitive revolution" which:

> represents a diametric turnaround in the centuries-old treatment of mind and consciousness in science. The contents of conscious experience, with their subjective qualities, long banned as being mere acausal epiphenomena or as just identical to brain activity or otherwise in conflict with the laws of conservation of energy, have now made a dramatic comeback. Reconceived in the new outlook, subjective mental states become functionally interactive and essential for a full explanation of conscious behavior... Subjective human values, no longer written off... become the most critically powerful force shaping today's civilized world, the underlying answer to current global ills and the key to world change.

The cultivation of organizational adaptiveness requires a level of individual development that allows for effective participation. This includes the cognitive and developmental maturity to seek collaborative solutions, the ego strength to participate in civic processes through difficulty, stress and boredom, the self-awareness to overcome unconstructive behaviors, and the courage to enter into a level of visibility that can carry risks from criticism to social ostracism to workplace discrimination to outright violence.

This discussion of cognitive psychology has an unrecognized implication in the form of the work to be done in interpreting experience – by leaders and members alike – in order to weave potential participants into a meaningful, coherent organizational fabric. If pre-conceived ideas are naturally entrenched or even self-reinforcing, as Goleman's "psychology of self-deception" suggests, then learners universally need teachers, whether face-to-face or through communications media. At the same time, if the goal is enfranchisement and empowerment, then the power relations of the educational process require the most careful attention. Anyone in a civic or institutional context who wishes to educate and motivate others must expect to be assertive and strategic – to exercise personal power in a real sense – and to take initiatives on behalf of others that they cannot completely give their informed consent to. Awakening others, without coercing or manipulating them, is one of the greatest challenges for strategy and ethics in contemporary social movements generally, and particularly in the movement for sustainability since it involves such complex, interdisciplinary and cross-scale inquiries and such a high reliance on socially constructed knowledge. This suggests that a compassionate, flexible, peer-to-peer form of leadership must be combined with sophistication and tenacity in assimilating new ideas and seeing their implications for the organization.

This observation gains in importance in light of the demographic and psychographic diversity of communities in the U.S. as they wrestle with the challenge of sustainable development. In order to qualify as "indigenous and integrative," the work of creating sustainable communities and livelihoods must engage people with many levels of skill, commitment, and psychological maturity, with a variety of personalities and cultural backgrounds and definitions of self-interest. This is not easy in a culture as diverse and balkanized as the United States, where the demographic and psychographic range is enormous. Our wage gap is the largest in the industrialized world, and our household economic indicators are sharply divergent along demographic lines. We are Jewish and Catholic and Buddhist and Moslem and Baptist and Rastafarian and Pentacostal. Twenty percent of us are illiterate, while hundreds of thousands hold advanced degrees. An estimated 10% of us are homosexual, bisexual or transsexual, while an approximately equal percentage of us are part of fundamentalist groups that abhor these lifestyles. We are living longer. Our longevity means that public life must make room for citizens whose attitudes and assumptions have been shaped by coming of age in one of at least four generations, since our oldest active citizens were children during World War I, and our youngest voting citizens were born in the era of devolving government and globalization of the 1980s.

In terms of culture and sociopolitical world view, too, our diversity is extreme. For example, Ray and Anderson's (2000) schema illustrates how some aspects of attitude and belief are related to key choices about lifestyle and vocation, power relations, economic and social development, and the appropriate locus of control for solving social and environmental problems. Based on survey and focus group data, they portray three subcultures within the American body politic:

- *Traditionals*, who see themselves as guardians of history and the values associated with the country's self-image of greatness; believe in differentiated gender roles and a system of "family values" based on tradition; tend to be part of mainline or fundamentalist religions; are disproportionately rural and male.
- *Moderns* who are better educated than the traditionals (on average); are relatively sophisticated with, and supportive of, new technologies; tend to be urban; and believe in a notion of progress through which new ideas continuously solve old problems.
- *Cultural Creatives*, an estimated 26% who characterize their values as including environmental stewardship, social justice and spiritual development; more likely than the other groups to participate in personal growth activities and in religious life that is ecclectic or interfaith; a group with high levels of civic activity, though it may not be through traditional channels; and disproportionately represented by women.

Finally, one of the major divides in American civic life concerns the fundamental moral framing of public issues, with strong subcultures committed to the rights of the individual as the primary value – for example, in decisions surrounding private property and political home rule -- and other strong subcultures emphasizing responsibility to the collective. Conventional political discourse calls the rights-based position "liberal." However, the communitarian alternative has attracted some of the strangest political bedfellows, representing a spectrum that includes traditional "liberals" as well as religious conservatives, with economic philosophies ranging from free market capitalists to democratic socialists, all sharing a conviction that individual rights must somehow be held within a framework of appropriate community values and that public institutions are effective, legitimate stewards of the public goods.

Biological and behavioral evidence suggest that the assimilation of new ideas is an emotional process as well as a cognitive one, and the converse: that a major source of cognitive distortion is repression of the emotions attached to our ongoing experience. This points to the high significance of emotional/ social intelligence in the kind of sense-making under discussion here. Goleman develops the thesis that "mental pain makes cognitive static" through reviews of experimental, biomedical, and social research, proposing that:

> The endorphin system... is rigged to reduce attention as it soothes pain. Pain relief and selective attention share common pathways through the brain, although their relationship is one of mutual exclusivity: as endorphins activate, pain lessens and attention dims.

While this mechanism can be traced back to primates' responses to purely physical pain, Goleman has proposed that the same "alarm system" responds to psychological pain such as radical affront to self-esteem, vulnerability, anxiety, loss. This alarm system may be triggered, and then "stuck in the 'on' position" by anxiety, "a particular blend of emotion and cognition" which is valuable for addressing crisis but which, when established as a chronic feature of the psychological landscape as it is for many contemporary people, can lead to an equally chronic state of mental confusion and poor focus. Goleman emphasizes that much research is still to be done on the similarities between physical and mental pain responses, to establish whether these are literally connected or merely analogous. While research on pain and attention have been separated by disciplinary boundaries within biomedical and psychosocial research, these fields converged beginning in the 1980s with the discovery, in the words of Buchsbaum, that "this separation is artificial, since the same neurotransmitters, anatomic structures, and information-processing systems" appear to modulate both attention and pain. This understanding is relatively new in biomedical research, and its implications have yet to be assimilated into psychology at the group and social levels. Its relevance here is to legitimate the role of emotional processing as a pre-requisite for cognitive clarity, and emotional/ social intelligence as a major ingredient in leadership for change.

Some of the most extreme emotional situations, namely trauma, have some of the deepest impacts on the experience of the self in the world, with ramifications for the capacity to participate in community activities and processes. Horowitz defines traumatic events as those that cannot be integrated with one's pre-existing picture of the self in the world. Herman (1992) reviews the clinical, experimental and social literatures of trauma and recovery, and sums up:

> Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis. The damage to relational life is not a

secondary effect of trauma, as originally thought. Traumatic events have primary effects not only on the psychological structures of the self but also on the systems of attachment and meaning that link individual and community.

The mass psychology of trauma is relevant to the framing of participatory strategies for sustainable development for two reasons. First, the magnitude of traumatic experience occurring in our societies (from family violence to school gang victimization to layoffs and unemployment) is large enough to affect the psychologies of significant numbers of people in any given community, and hence the pool of potential participants in civic processes of any kind. Second, some of the very events that give rise to a need for sustainable community development initiatives, such as environmental health hazards, layoffs, and the disinvestment of major institutions from communities that they have served, may also be sources of particularly relevant kinds of traumatic disruption for individuals, families, and communities. For example, the New York City Watershed communities of today are descendants of the inhabitants of over a dozen villages that were completely displaced by flooding during the construction of the massive Ashokan Reservoir early in the twentieth century, giving rise to the individual and family trauma of home loss and its economic ramifications, and the collective trauma related to the loss of communal identity and purpose.

The re-orientation of values and attitudes is a highly social process. In addition to the evolution of values and the development of enough ego strength to act on them, there is a need for some freedom from the self-reinforcing cycle in which we allow our individual pre-existing worldviews and group allegiances to serve as the primary screen for what we consider real and relevant, and in the process to continuously reassess prevailing social norms, freeing ourselves from participation in what Goleman calls "the social trance." Therefore, on psychological grounds, any process of "empowerment" for institutional adaptation that relies on a few cursory meetings, in a relatively sterile public space, is unlikely to do more than take the pulse of a community's pre-existing levels of cohesion and dissent; it is unlikely to create any living synthesis of diverse ideas, let alone to allow for shifts of viewpoint to increase the civic consensus. What Barber names "strong democracy" thus appears to require civic processes that are qualitatively rich in the potential for interaction and ongoing negotiation of shared norms and meanings, not just quantitatively sufficient.

When applied to the empowerment of individuals to collaborate in a shared vision of organizational change, these aspects of learning imply a need for carefully negotiated, iterative, customized education and cultivation of participants. They also imply a need for structures and cultures that encourage multilateral communication internally and externally, so that divergent worldviews and interests can be effectively reconciled. In light of all these kinds and degrees of diversity, the basic challenge of *sense-making* is to engage diverse organizational members and stakeholders based on their intrinsic motivations. Equally relevant are *extrinsic* motivations, which are discussed in the next section.

Efficacy and cooperation: support and the social matrix

What is the evidence that qualitative or structural aspects of a social matrix can foster well-being or the attainment of goals at all? What is known about the much-vaunted concept of "social capital" as a basis for effective community initiatives toward sustainable development?

At the most fundamental level, there is evidence that an individual's cultural and emotional environment is strongly connected with health and well-being. Ornish reviewed large-scale, mostly longitudinal studies on the relationship between simple social connection, such as healthy and supportive family and the existence of friendships, to measures of physical health such as longevity, resistance to life-threatening illness, and ease of recovery from major surgery. Across many demographic groups and health variables, these show without exception

that people with stronger social ties, and with a subjective experience of healthy relationships and social support, have significantly more resilience as measured by their longevity and ability to recover from major health crises. To cite a few examples out of several dozen:

- Nearly ten thousand married men, with no history of severe chest pain or angina, were studied by a research team from Case Western Reserve University. Those with high levels of risk factors such as elevated cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, age, diabetes, and abnormalities in their electrocardiogram readings were more than twenty times more likely than those without these characteristics, to develop chest pains in a five year period. However, within that at-risk population, the incidence of angina was reduced by half among those men who answered yes to the question "Does your wife show you her love?"

- A random sampling of 126 healthy men, selected from the Harvard classes of 1952 to 1954, received a questionnaire in which they were asked to rate their relationships with their father and mother as either: very close; warm and friendly; tolerant; or strained and cold. Thirty-five years later, the researchers consulted these subjects' medical records and carried out detailed medical and psychological histories. Of subjects who did not describe their relationships with their mothers as at least "warm," 91% had serious diagnosed diseases such as coronary artery disease high blood pressure, ulcers and alcoholism, as compared with 45% who characterized their maternal relationships as warm. Further, all the subjects who considered their parents low in warmth had diseases in midlife, compared with 47% who had rated both parents high in warmth and closeness.

- The Italian-American town of Roseto, Pennsylvania, known for a thirty year period of low rates of heart attack mortality compared to the neighboring Bangor and Nazareth, was studied as its family-centered, stable social fabric went through dramatic changes in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Starting in this period, with correction for risk factors such as smoking, diet and diabetes, the researchers found that heart attack incidence grew in proportion to the decline in social cohesion and stability.

These studies by no means establish a simple one-way causal link between nurturing relationships and health, but the fact that these signs of well-being are shown to coexist, on such a scale, and with no contradicting research, suggests at least that the same root conditions give rise to healthy bodies and a cohesive social fabric. This research may be viewed as a challenge to conventional paradigms in the fields of medicine and public health, since its rationale is not obvious in terms of purely physiological models of disease. However, the emerging field of psychoneuroimmunology has begun documenting a variety of linkages between emotions, attitudes and other forms of subjective experience, on the one hand, and functioning of the nervous and endocrine systems on the other. The Harvard coauthors speculate that "The perception of love itself... may turn out to be a core biopsychosocial-spiritual buffer, reducing the negative impact of stressors and pathogens and promoting immune function and healing."

Even the ultimate culturally American goal, happiness, appears to be more within reach in areas where social capital is high, as compared to areas with high material wealth. A nationwide survey by Putnam et al (2000), investigators learned that areas where residents had high civic involvement characterized themselves as happier than people did who had more material wealth but participated less in their communities. According to Putnam, "Social capital is really a very strong predictor of individual happiness and quality of life in a community, much more so than financial status. If you had to choose between a place rich in money and a place rich in social capital, I'd pick the place that has more social capital."

The literature on "social capital" provides a good orientation to the elements of structure and relationship, in an institution or society, that are a source of empowerment for individuals and collaborative efforts . This literature generally takes into account individual acts of citizenship and service such as volunteering, formal dimensions of organizations, and more subjective aspects of human systems (such as trust and social norms). Social capital can be found in the relationships of individuals in dyads, networks, formal and informal organizations. It also encompasses higher levels of organization, such as regional planning coalitions, corporate strategic alliances, or federations of NGOs, not to mention nation-states and international alliances. Inside organizations, social capital is associated with teams, departmental and organizational structures, as well as less formal relationships such as leader-member dyads, mentoring relationships, and various types of networks. Over and above the scholarship on social capital per se, understanding of the phenomenon requires reference to the much broader literatures on these specific organizational forms including small groups, teams, strategic alliances, stakeholder relationships, and civil society organizations. The exploration of social capital includes institutions and their structures; relationships among institutions; and relationships within institutions. Its cross-disciplinary scope makes the concept potentially valuable as a tool for integrating the exploration of these literatures as they relate to institutional power sharing for sustainable community development, while at the same time presenting the challenges of consistency in definition and use from domain to domain. Originally coined in the context of school reform in West Virginia in the 1930's[14], "social capital" has become a focal point for social scientists seeking to get closer to the intangible factors that enable human cooperation, civic vitality, and collective problem-solving, in institutions and civic life alike. Putnam (1997) frames the exploration as follows:

> Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals -- social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense, social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." The difference is that "social capital" calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital.

In a similar vein, Leenders and Gabbay define social capital as "the set of resources, tangible and virtual, that accrue to an organisation through social structure, facilitating the attainment of goals." These definitions focus not on social relations and structures for their own sake, but on the benefits that they bring with respect to an organization's or a community's particular objectives. Scholars of social capital have also identified useful kinds of relationships for advancing civic and economic goals:

- "bridging" and "bonding" relationships (Putnam)
- "horizontal" (connecting social peers) and "hierarchical" (connecting people at different levels of authority, power or status (Flora and Flora).

In human communities and organizations, these structures overlap and interweave, producing Putnam's "dense network of reciprocal social relations." These include relationships between individuals; relations of individuals to institutions (both as insiders and outsiders); and inter-institutional relationships.

Historically, the Progressive Era of the early twentieth century was the formative time for many of the contemporary social institutions that are taken for granted today, with the basic establishment of civil society organizations where there had been few. Labor unions, social service agencies, trade and professional associations, self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, and others became familiar entities in most communities during this time period. Putnam documents a sharp decline in participation in these, as well as in more recreationally

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oriented social structures such as bowling leagues; he interprets this trend as a reflection of grossly diminished civic engagement overall. In a similar spirit, Selman (1996) points to a participatory tradition in local development decisions, and yet laments its lack of imagination and the extent of "civic sclerosis" today.

Considerable scholarship has also addressed the root cultural predisposition to individualism and rights-based ethical reasoning in American economic and political life. Consistent with this, the culture places a very high priority on economic security and opportunity, and on the freedoms of individuals to choose the ways they provide for themselves. Bellah et al (1985) have remarked on the power of the individualist bias to influence individuals' thinking on their own vocational development, and thus the culture's underlying definitions of success:

> The American understanding of the autonomy of the self places the burden of one's own deepest self-definitions on one's own individual choice.. Most of us imagine an autonomous self existing independently, entirely outside any tradition and community, and then perhaps choosing one... We may assert the right to our dream of running a company or opening up a lovely little restaurant or leaving an ambitious career in midlife to go to seminary. But we expect ourselves to make all these choices without reference to the social framework, the needs we might be serving, or the struggles we might face.

Even Fukuyama (1995) -- who contends that the U.S. culture is not as lacking in cooperation and participation as citizens and commentators believe it is -- echoes the concern that:

> the United States has been changing rather dramatically over the past couple of generations with respect to its art of association. In many ways, American society is becoming as individualistic as Americans have always believed it was: the inherent tendency of rights-based liberalism to expand and multiply those rights against the authority of virtually all existing communities has been pushed toward its logical conclusion. The decline of trust and sociability in the United States is also evident in any number of changes in American society: the rise of violent crime and civil litigation; the breakdown of family structure; the decline of a wide range of intermediate social structures like neighborhoods, churches, unions, clubs and charities; and the general sense among Americans of a lack of shared values and community with those around them.

Other commentators have identified a counterbalancing rise in new organizational formation and heightened participation in a new wave of social organizations that may reflect different cultural values, appeal to different demographic groups, and/or offer more opportunities for addressing emerging social issues that are not on the agenda for more conventional groups (Lappe and DuBois 1994). In the last twenty years there has been a proliferation of adult education centers offering classes from auto mechanics to financial management to script writing; sports and outdoor groups that may be formally or informally organized; and purely voluntary organizations such as book clubs and personal growth support groups, that are not always included in the taxonomies of social scientists. The geographic dispersion of communities defined by place has been counterbalanced by a proliferation, and in some cases a deepening, of communities defined by values, interests, and patterns of living. Some of the innovative social structures connected with sustainable lifestyles -- from Local Exchange Trading Systems to co-housing communities to car-sharing groups -- fall into this category. These support a widening recognition of the value of healthy social relations and civic structures. For example, based on fifteen years' field work helping communities in economic decline to identify and develop new options for livelihood that reflect indigenous values and maximize the sustainable use of indigenous resources, Kinsley (1997) reflects that:

> Community is the foundation for prosperity. Economic development efforts are most successful in towns where residents work together for the common good, and where controversy isn't avoided but accommodated and channeled constructively. A community where locals have met, argued, agreed, and organized to revitalize their economy is far more attractive to someone looking for a place to locate their business than a town desperately grasping for any business to which it can sell itself.
> Economic development professionals tell stories of towns that have steadily declined despite having all the conventionally correct ingredients: a railhead, a nearby interstate highway, a resource to extract, etc. Consistently, these are towns where residents and leaders never seem to talk about -- much less agree on -- important decisions. Yet development professionals also tell of those few exceptional communities that have thrived with few physical advantages. Despite apparent shortcomings, they achieved success because residents were willing to work through their differences, develop a vision for the future, and put that vision to work. The primary barrier to successful economic development, therefore, is not the economy. It's not the price of wheat or coal, nor is it the number of tourists that come through. It's the capacity of community residents to work together.

Cooperative relationships and supportive institutional structures have, at times, been under-recognized as factors in the capacity of societies to manage both environmental and human resources sustainably and achieve meaningful development. Today, concerns about environmentally responsible decision making, social well being and equity, and the appropriate locus of control for critical public policy decisions, have led to new levels of scrutiny on the role of social factors in achieving sustainable development solutions that truly work. There has been a ripening interest in the qualitative dimensions of social capital, among scholars and practitioners who have become convinced of its relevance to economic, civic and environmental renewal. Pretty and Ward observe that:

> It is clear that new thinking and practice are needed, particularly to develop forms of social organization that are structurally suited for natural resource management and protection at the local level. This usually means more than just reviving old institutions and traditions. More commonly, it means new forms of organization, association, and platforms for common action. The past decade has seen a growing recognition of the effectiveness of such local groups and associations for sustainable environmental and economic outcomes.

The range of institutional and social relations that fit into the picture is illustrated by the work of Putnam[15] et al who identified eleven key forms of social capital within communities (including institutional communities):

- Social trust
- Inter-racial trust
- Diversity of friendships
- Conventional politics participation
- Protest politics participation
- Civic leadership
- Associational involvement
- Informal socializing
- Giving and volunteering
- Faith-based engagement

[15] "Community Social Capital Benchmarking Survey" (Putnam et al 2000)

- Equality of civic engagement across the community

Scoping out the nature of these forms of organization through review of the international literatures in sociology and community development, Pretty and Ward propose four essential dimensions of these relationships that are the source of "capital":

- trust
- reciprocity and exchanges
- common rules, norms, and sanctions
- connectedness, networks and groups

In systems terms, the premise of this focus on relationships is that systems show "emergent" properties not evident in the parts. These basic themes are borne out in the business and organizational literatures as well (e.g. Prusak and Cohen 2000).

Other studies have found community satisfaction to be tied only weakly to formal, institutional features of an area such as police protection, tax rates, or perceived effectiveness of political leadership, which are a common focus among sociologists. Filkins *et al*, seeking insight into the "intangibles" that underlie community satisfaction, found that higher levels of social support structures -- like volunteer services and social activities -- were much more strongly correlated with reported community satisfaction than any of these conventionally studied factors were.

In addition, overall community viability is related to the qualitative and quantitative aspects of leaders' social networks. Five rural communities, with populations ranging from 1,000 to 2,500, were studied by O'Brien et al in 1991, and followed up again five years later. Communities were ranked in terms of viability, defined as the ability of these communities to function as trade and service centers with active downtowns as well as residential areas. The general demographics of the communities' leaders were examined, and did not vary meaningfully, with the exception of a greater representation of women leaders in the more viable communities. However, leaders in the more viable communities showed two sets of distinguishing characteristics: a greater degree of external linkages into state and national networks, and a greater tendency to work with their counterparts in other communities to tackle common problems.

Workplace satisfaction, too, has been correlated with the quality of relationships as perceived by the work force. For example, communication channels that are seen as effective by workers contribute to their perceptions of an organizational climate that allow for trust, collaboration and other positive behaviors. The management communications research of Lee demonstrates that a high perception of quality communication between managers and subordinates (quantified as "leader-member exchanges") increases workers' perceptions of fairness in the workplace, perceptions which in turn increase work force commitment.

Supportive structures are especially helpful in promoting behavior changes that require coordination, cooperation, interdisciplinary integration, and other kinds of effort that are intrinsically collaborative. Pretty and Ward observe that:

> As it lowers the costs of working together, social capital facilitates co-operation. People have the confidence to invest in collective activities, knowing that others will also do so. They are also less likely to engage in unfettered private actions that result in negative impacts, such as resource degradation.

It is not just the existence of particular relationships that helps institutions and communities achieve their goals, but the qualities of self-awareness and resilience that organized groups possess. That is, an organized community has strengths that are derived from

the tested, committed and self-aware nature of the cooperative relationships within it. For example, Cernea, reviewing 25 completed World Bank agricultural projects, demonstrated a link between continued success (after the bank's involvement ended) and local institutional structure. The dozen projects that sustained themselves, as well as advancing their original environmental and social sustainability goals, were the ones with the strongest involvement of local institutions and participation of local stakeholders. Community organizing and relationship building, in the course of any development initiative, have been found to repay the effort into the future, well after the initial organizing process is complete. Pretty and Ward report that:

> A variety of studies of rural development have shown that when people are well organized in groups, and their knowledge is sought, incorporated and built upon during planning and implementation, then they are more likely to sustain activities after project completion.

Most of the research findings discussed above have addressed the role of social "capital" in achieving U.S. society's most universally shared goals: individual well-being and the success of voluntary enterprises, from businesses to families to sports teams. While not necessarily sufficient, well-being and individual success certainly reduces stresses on communities. For example, a population's resistance to serious illness translates into a community's savings in health care costs -- savings that could plausibly be re-invested in tackling environmental health hazards if there were the political will to do so. A population's satisfaction with its home place is also logically related to its potential for participation in planning and decision making to preserve that place through sustainable development strategies. Kunstler (1986) and other New Urbanist social commentators even suggest that one of the greatest pressures leading to suburban sprawl, and disinvestment in urban communities, is the lack of beauty and conviviality in contemporary cities, making them difficult places to care about. In a similar spirit, the novelist Alice Walker asserts that "anything we love can be saved." While Walker's claim may be wishful, its converse is plausible and worthy of attention: anything that a society does not care about is unlikely to be preserved or restored, even if doing so is a good idea from a rational point of view.

However, these factors of individual and family happiness, workplace satisfaction and vocational success are only part of the picture of environmentally sound socioeconomic development. Equally relevant is the advancement of social equity including the equitable use of resources, now and for future generations. Structures in organizations to foster collaboration and effectiveness are not just a tool for the pursuit of a group's or institution's direct self-interest. They also serve to mediate among divergent and competing interests of stakeholders, and bring institutions to the table for difficult political processes aimed at resolving conflicts and removing inequities. In this respect, the formalization of relationships among stakeholders and institutions for problem solving and long range planning, reflecting both the assertion of participating groups' self interest and the negotiation of a larger shared sense of the future, is the end state that is desired from the standpoint of this study. This is at least the potential of the multi-stakeholder groups that have driven economic revitalization in a number of post-industrial cities and regions in the U.S., and of the "Global Hudson Valley Initiative" now being launched in the study region. When they are diverse, principled, stable yet flexible, and able to negotiate wisely among diverse interests, these structures are the overarching social matrix in which healthy local initiatives can come to life. Loomis (1944), documenting an early coalition effort for community capacity building and multi-racial leadership in rural North Carolina in the 1930s, suggested that "community organizing is social maturity."

Along with mounting interest in the notion of social capital, however, there has been a significant critique of some of the contemporary scholarship using this concept, in particular, as "trying to explain too much with too little" and "sociologically *lite* ." Woolcock, quoted below, summarizes four commonly raised concerns:

1. Since it is grounded in a variety of sociological, political, cultural and economic discourses, it provides an arena for widely divergent ideologies to wrangle with details, without clarifying the extent of divergence of their basic premises, or, alternatively, it gives ideologues of every stripe an invitation to re-engage their characteristic debates in new guise.
2. Across and within the various bodies of scholarship, social capital is inconsistently defined -- sometimes as structures, sometimes as a nonlocalized "moral resource" and sometimes as a combination or synthesis of these, a little like light's dual properties as wave and particle -- giving rise to research literature with inconsistent premises and methodologies.
3. As a result of these two kinds of confusion, social capital concerns have been used to justify diverse and contradictory policy measures.
4. Finally, the term "capital" leads to tacit assumption that connections and connective structures are good, regardless of their nature, intentions, and observed impacts.

In this discussion so far, social connectivity has been implicitly regarded as positive, and the term "capital" has been applied without signs of ambiguity. The exploration of social structures and relations becomes more interesting when social capital scholars begin to address their problematic influences as well as benefits. Scholars have coined the term "social liability" (Putnam 2000) to define those relationships and structures that promote stagnation, inefficiency, unhealthy conformity, injustice, and even group violence -- undesirable outcomes as defined by participants, observers, established norms and/or a combination of these. Of special relevance for business and economic development is Kleiner's (1996) study of early efforts to bring more humanistic, systems-oriented, and socially responsible management practices into major American corporations, beginning in the 1950s and early 1960s. Even when these practices were proven valuable to the company from a financial and operational standpoint, efforts to institutionalize them (or to replicate the success of one department or division more widely in a firm) repeatedly ran aground due to the habit structures, disincentives, and self-protective tendencies of entrenched organizational systems and their champions, both within and outside the business unit where the change had been initiated.

Social support is a key in the adoption and diffusion of new practices in an institution. Group and societal norms are generally powerful motivators, and are difficult for most individuals to challenge. Countless experiments have been conducted -- in departments of psychology, state energy offices, university and governmental extension systems, grassroots environmental education centers, municipal recycling and water conservation programs -- to learn how to capitalize on social relations to encourage voluntary behavior change relevant to environmental stewardship. Some of the simplest have to do with simple resource conservation behaviors, but these are illustrative of the group and institutional issues in play in more complex situations as well. McKenzie-Mohr and Smith (1999), as well as Gardner and Stern (1995), have conducted extensive reviews of this experimental literature. Much of this research focuses on personal and household conservation behavior -- a popular research area among contemporary social psychologists because it involves behaviors that are easily observable, objectively measurable, and generally within individual control. Both research teams report that individual attitudes toward environmental problems are an inconclusive predictor of environmental lifestyle choices. Equally relevant is the availability of social and institutional supports (e.g. easy recycling pickup; information about environmentally preferable purchases that are otherwise competitive; convenient, safe and affordable public transportation) and social norms, as illustrated by the following observations by McKenzie-Mohr and Smith:

1. In the 1930s, when "dust bowl" conditions required fast changes to farming methods in large areas in the U.S. and Canada, government agencies first tried the mass distribution of informational brochures, with little impact. Then they reasoned that a change in social norms,

spread by peer-to-peer modeling, would capture the imagination of a larger number and perhaps reduce the perceived risk of new behaviors by demonstrating their effectiveness. The U.S. government provided direct financial and technical assistance to selected farmers to install wind screens and use less disruptive methods of tillage. These efforts were far more successful and "the new agricultural practices spread quickly."

2. In the 1990s, two approaches to stimulating water conservation were compared in the men's shower rooms at the University of California at Santa Cruz. The first was the use of prompts in the form of a simple sign: "Conserve water: 1. Wet down. 2. Water off. 3. Soap. 4. Rinse." This directive was followed by an average of 6% of users, although a survey of students indicated that 93% had noticed it. In the second approach, the sign remained; a research accomplice entered the shower room and began to shower. When another student entered, the accomplice turned off the water, soaped up and then rinsed in accordance with the instructional sign. In the presence of this model, 49% of students turned off the water to soap up. When two accomplices modeled the desired behavior at the same time, 67% of students adopted the water conserving approach.

3. Finally, in a study of littering behavior, a library parking lot was "rigged" with the distribution of flyers under the windshield wipers of patrons, and a variable distribution of littered flyers on the grounds, including a bulging bag of undistributed flyers. When the parking lot was filled with littered flyers, 1/3 of patrons returning to their cars added their own flyers to the litter. However, when a research accomplice walked through the lot, picking up the abandoned bag of flyers and placing it into the trash barrel, virtually none of the patrons violated this norm by dropping their own flyers on the ground.

These experiments show the power of norms to elicit positive action, and behavior change, toward more environmentally and socially responsible choices, in the arena of simple behaviors that are within the individual's control. However, groups can exert an opposite influence, drawing even highly principled individuals down to a "least common denominator" level of group behavior. In fact, the power of groups to influence human behavior and self-image has given rise to disconcerting findings about the plasticity of personality from one social setting to another, and the degree to which individuals can rationalize behaviors that are harmful to self and others, in opposition to their own perceptions and values. For example:

- Asch's conformity experiments with pattern recognition, asking volunteers to identify which of several parallel lines were the same length, in a series posted on a wall, showed that, when accomplices in a group began stating clearly inaccurate answers, subjects echoed those answers an average of 75% of the time. In the words of Asch, "That reasonably intelligent and well-meaning young people were willing to call white black is a matter of concern."
- When sociologist Phillip Zimbardo assigned his students an action-research project -- the simulation of a prison experience, with some students playing the roles of guards and others playing prisoners -- the experiment had to be stopped after a few days because the guards had slipped into such psychologically abusive, dominant behavior.
- Stanley Milgram's notorious social psychology experiment rallied volunteers, who believed they were experimental accomplices, testing others as to the impact of mild, and then increasingly severe, electroshocks on the ability to memorize information. When the (nonexistent) shocks gave rise to (simulated) expressions of pain, and the "subjects" (really accomplices) begged the volunteers to stop, a majority kept administering the shocks in response to the directives of an experimenter who quietly requested, "Please continue."
-

The initial interpretations of Milgram's work centered around abuse of power and authority, and the tendency of many toward unquestioning obedience in hierarchical situations. But later interpretations have pointed out that the actual power exercised toward subjects was entirely symbolic, with no risk of punishment or harm, and no reason to expect harm to others

as a result of stopping the questionable behavior. While the Zimbardo experiment involved symbolic differences in social stature, with punitive powers given to the guards, Milgram's study stood out for its relative lack of coerciveness, and its reliance on the social authority of the experimenter combined with verbal persuasion. When subjects protested the violence of the shocks and urged that the experiment be stopped, the researcher's responses were statements like "Please continue," and "The experiment requires that you continue." Ellsberg[16], re-interpreting Milgram's work in the 1980s, suggests that a major dynamic underlying social conformity, over and above obedience to an authority figure, is a simple drive for self-consistency and accountability, in keeping the agreements we make and attaining the approval of others. Kellerman (1981) calls the human tendencies of affiliation, in light of the conformity-inducing qualities of group cohesion and the unconscious momentum set by group norms, "an ominous theme".

Pressures toward conformity can even affect the actions of highly influential members of leadership groups who may see themselves as experts in the dispassionate evaluation of information and risk. Janis' analysis of foreign policy disasters -- based on intensive review of the historical record and interviews with senior policy officials involved in the decisions -- shows a pattern that skewed analysis of risks and benefits arise when leadership groups favor cohesion and conciliation, at the expense of critical challenging of assumptions that later proved faulty and unquestioned, such as the weakness of the adversary, the loyalty of allies, and a stronger internal consensus that in fact prevailed. For example, in the Kennedy Administration's senior working group's acceptance of the Central Intelligence Agency's proposal for invading Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, "The sense of group unity concerning the advisability of going ahead... appears to have been based on superficial appearances of complete concurrence, achieved at the cost of self-censorship of misgivings by several of the members."

Stepping back to explore the qualities that make groups work – whether or not for good - many schemas have been developed to represent the typical life cycle of a group as it establishes its norms and ability to achieve goals; for example, Yalom presents this sequence:

- orientation;
- conflicts (including member-member and member-leader) that test boundaries, rewards and sanctions within the group;
- working-through to reconcile conflict in a way that articulates and strengthens group norms; and
- high group cohesion with an ability to cooperate in the service of shared goals.

In real-life groups (as opposed to laboratory settings), norms are developed through ongoing negotiation, both verbal and behavioral, suggesting that important dimensions of communities to examine include their longevity, structural durability, and their receptivity to such negotiation in all its complexity.

The complexity of this issue is compounded by its high degree of dependence on context, and on the values of the observer. For example, Cohen and Bailey, in their summary and review of recent team effectiveness literature, note that "the type of team matters for the determinants of effectiveness"; for example, autonomy is associated with higher performance in regular work teams ranging from laborers to professionals, but not for special project teams composed mainly of professionals. They add that "the factors most associated with success vary based on who is rating the team's performance". Considering ambiguities of this kind, it is probably not possible in most cases to single out some kinds of relationships and structures as purely social capital, while labeling others as liability. Even without taking personal bias into account, observers may differ simply based on the scope and vantage point of their observations, as Fukuyama explains:

[16] Ellsberg, Daniel. Lecture, Center for Psychological Studies in the Nuclear Age, Harvard Medical School, 1988.

> Since social groups in any society overlap and crosscut each other, what looks like a strong sense of social solidarity from one perspective can seem to be atomization, divisiveness, and stratification from another.

Thus a community may show a reduction in "paternal social capital" -- perceived as a benefit by some and a loss by others -- while at the same time experiencing wider changes in social structure affecting horizontal social capital, altering citizens' options for participating in economic development decisions. This is clearly true in post-industrial towns and villages in transition, where the dominant influence of family or landowning networks, or "old boys networks" of economic actors, is being challenged while at the same time the population is expanding with newcomers from the New York metropolitan area. The analytical challenge here is not just related to the valuations made by different observers, but to intrinsic ambiguities in many situations, where positive and negative influences are interwoven in complex ways.

To draw on another extreme example, Shockley reflects that one of the primary deterrents to shooting rampages in inner city public schools in the U.S., even as these episodes tragically continue in the suburbs, may be the presence of urban gangs. He comments:

> There's no question that violence is just as pervasive, if not more so, in the 'hood as in the 'burbs. But there is a different social matrix in the inner city.

A gang is not conventionally regarded as a model of positive social relations, but serves a beneficial purpose in defining some kinds of violence as unacceptable and persuasively enforcing that definition through its power. Even generally negative attributes of gangs have their benefits, to society and the individual members. Specifically:

> Being a member of a gang allows [youth] to insulate themselves from the raw and seemingly relentless assaults on their ego that they would otherwise have to endure. As gang members, they are vicariously empowered by the fearful respect given to the group. Even the bullies are at bay because, in the inner city, the bullies are more typically the gang leaders.

Not only can a controversial social form such as a gang yield its own forms of positive outcomes, but positive outcomes in other types of groups have been shown to be connected with "gang-like" cultural factors reflecting high social cohesion, shared norms, interdependence and synergy, in spite of the potential of those forces for overpowering individual autonomy and belittling individual sensitivities. This has been observed in creative enclaves of artists, scholars and social movement leaders showing the prevalence of "gang-like" (though not violent) peer pressure behaviors, such as daring and goading each other on – for example, in highly creative and well-regarded groups like the Freudian circle, among women's suffrage leaders such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, among the Impressionist painters and in the literary circles surrounding C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkein at Oxford.

The ambiguity of these situations, finally, shows the limitation of the concept of "social capital" and invites more contextual kinds of analysis. Rather than attempting to categorize relationships and structures in a black-and-white manner, as either benefit or liability, we can draw on Kretzman and McKnight's notion of "constantly building and rebuilding relationships," underlying asset-based approaches to development, and look without judgment for the conditions that give rise to committed collaborative relationships. These are the "knowledge systems" of Cash et al (2003) and the "communities of practice" described by Wenger (1998). Their self-defining and self-organizing qualities are at the root of their effectiveness as conduits of organizational change.

In transmitting the "charge" of an innovative group vision, the structures and relationships that give rise to successful outcomes are quite situation-dependent, as Sethi and Nicholson observe:

> Some of the factors suggested by traditional social psychology research for enhancing team effectiveness (e.g. physical proximity and team longevity) may not necessarily create charged teams. Instead, charged teams need a special arrangement in which members are accountable to the team, and their evaluations and rewards are also linked to performance of the team.

An overarching organizational condition that creates the safety and the motivation to innovate, in Kofman and Senge's observation, is commitment:

> So, we are coming to see our efforts as building "communities of commitment." Without commitment, the hard work required will never be done. People will just keep asking for "examples of learning organizations" rather than seeking what they can do to build such organizations. They will keep believing that the purpose of learning is the survival of an organization rather than its generativeness. And the larger meaning of this work will elude them. Without communities of people genuinely committed, there is no real chance of going forward.

Based on Kofman and Senge's participant-observation in creating learning organizations, commitment to personal and organizational excellence is not compelling enough, for most people, to motivate the levels of adaptiveness that are needed. Instead:

> the nature of the commitment required to build learning organizations goes beyond people's typical commitment to their organizations. It encompasses commitment to changes needed in the larger world and to seeing our organizations as vehicles for bringing about such changes.

Commitment to a collective process, and the related notion of group cohesion, should not be equated with lack of conflict. However, social scientists in the U.S. have only recently shown wide recognition of this point. A central influence in equating functional cohesion with subjective harmony, and harmony with lack of dissent, was the theory of Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) defining cohesiveness as the sum of forces influencing a group to remain united. However, more recent research, in sports psychology and other areas, shows the risk of interpreting this idea too simply, and suggests that conflict is not intrinsically destructive to group continuity or effectiveness. Sullivan and Feltz tracked 62 recreational ice hockey players in a Canadian city, over multiple seasons, and found that increased cohesion was associated not with lack of conflict, but with use of constructive conflict styles (e.g. problem solving) and less use of negative styles (e.g. force or avoidance). Similarly, Lenk's four-year study of an elite rowing club showed that, in spite of splintering and intergroup conflicts, performance increased every season. Sullivan and Feltz observe that, while social psychology in the U.S. has tended to assume that an absence of conflict is required for group cohesion, other research traditions including that of the former Soviet Union have tended to focus on a group's modes of conflict resolution as the predictor of cohesion and effectiveness, with advantage drawn from positive conflict styles such as negotiation and accommodation, and disadvantage attached to negative conflict styles involving rigidity and hostility. This research reinforces the importance of qualitative factors in relationships within groups, teams, and larger human systems, over and above structural factors, incentives and other formal attributes.

By its nature, this kind of social learning requires respect for difference, and demands the continuous, challenging work of integrating diverse points of view. Thus, the kind of

learning community that gives rise to such solutions is one that achieves some measure of unity while preserving diversity, not by overriding or denying it. Generally, the socialization of the military unit, sports team, or gang is one of rapid assimilation, purposeful dissolution of the ego, and fostering of group *esprit* at the expense of the private individual. These processes are well known. They can be brought about swiftly and systematically. In contrast, the process of community building is a more deliberate negotiation of new relationships of individual to group, honoring both simultaneously.

For example, in Peck's (1992) model, an initial stage of "pseudo-community" is characterized by superficial trust and high levels of participation, with members exhibiting "good" behavior according to emerging group norms. This tentative negotiation of norms and boundaries is necessary to breathe some life into the group process, but does not by itself do justice to either the individuals or the whole. Inevitably differences arise. Discomforts follow, when the group experience overextends individuals' capabilities to integrate and negotiate. The next stage, "chaos," comes when enough individual differences are visible that the group undergoes a crisis of direction and even identity, and must let go of its confident initial stance to grapple with these differences. Only on the far side of candid communication and emotional risk-taking do groups arrive at true community, characterized by deep empathy combined with respect for diversity. By this point, having risen to the challenge of asserting their individuality in the group, members have become more secure individuals who are relaxed and at home with themselves *and* the group. Such groups, experienced as they are with nonviolent resolution of conflict, provide a social matrix for constructive participation in the wider civic arena, as well as a support system for their members in further self-development.

This discussion applies equally to relationships within defined groups and institutions, and those that transcend or blur those boundaries. Nooteboom (2000) observes that:

> According to an emerging view in the literature, innovations arise, in particular, from interactions between firms and other organizations... Networks, within and between firms, generate social capital.

The connection of individual actors to social change is complex in its details, but is often maintained by the mediating structures of social networks and/or formal groups. These take varied forms. In the world of advocacy, for example, there are the "affinity groups" that organize grassroots actions of well known organizations like Greenpeace, and of informal coalitions such as the international movement to democratize global economic institutions; study/action circles such as the Voluntary Simplicity study groups of the Northwest Earth Institute and Global Action Plan's EcoTeams; and chapter-based advocacy groups such as the Sierra Club. Whatever roles they perform in particular settings, these structures have the capacity to sustain participation, encourage exploration of the personal implications of a given social change agenda, and connect public advocacy with personal empowerment.

Wheatley's (1993) exploration of organizational change postulates that a small group serves this mediating function because it can simultaneously embody a tightly-held, personally meaningful value system reinforced by peer support, and at the same time through its diverse networks can have a wide reach throughout an organization. She portrays the cohesive small group as a bulwark against institutions' tendency toward reflexive neutralization of new ideas, a tendency that can overwhelm individuals in isolation:

> It is natural for any system, whether it be human or chemical, to attempt to quell a disturbance when it first appears. But if the disturbance survives those first attempts at suppression and remains lodged within the system, an iterative process begins. The disturbance increases as different parts of the system get a hold of it. Finally, it becomes so amplified that it cannot be ignored. This dynamic supports some current ideas that organizational change,

> even in large systems, can be created by a small group of committed individuals or champions.

Bohm calls such dynamically stable, significant small groups in a society "coherent microcultures," emphasizing that their impact comes from their internal cohesion combined with engagement with the wider social matrix.

Efficacy and cooperation: mediating structures

This presents a third dimension of the conditions needed to foster the empowerment and collaboration that transform an organization: mediating structures, beginning with self-organizing small groups.

A straightforward starting point for this discussion is the central phenomenon of the small group as a basic social unit. Small groups were widely studied in the middle of the last century, and have lately re-emerged as an interest among sociologists and sociologically oriented social psychologists. Bales (1950) defines a small group by members' experiences of each other as individuals rather than a mass:

> A small group is defined as any number of persons engaged in interaction with each other in a single face-to-face meeting or series of meetings, in which each member receives some impression or perception of each other member distinct enough so that he can, either at the time or in later questioning, give some reaction to each of the others as an individual person.

By this definition, a small group can be a management team, activist affinity group, congregation, basketball team, family, gospel choir or youth gang. Small groups include dyads, from therapist-patient alliances to romantic partnerships to professional mentoring relationships to parole officers and their charges. These may be embedded within other meaningful small groups, such as project teams in a class or couples in an extended family. Harrington and Fine link the importance of small groups as a focus for study to the fact that:

> Within sociological social psychology, small groups serve as a 'black box.' That is, they are used as a mediating form linking social structure and individual action.

Harrington and Fine, reviewing the literatures of sociology and social psychology, identify five distinct roles played by small groups in the overall social fabric. They:
1. provide for the socialization of individuals to communal standards;
2. simultaneously provide an arena in which to challenge convention and communal standards, and learn the skills of self-assertion and advocacy;
3. serve as "nodes" in social networks (where weak ties are replaced with stronger and more intimate connections), thus providing a mechanism for the diffusion of social innovations;
4. serve as cultural arenas for the interpretation of symbols, the enactment of rituals, and the perpetuation of meanings;
5. establish social roles, including functional responsibilities and hierarchical positions, and provide an arena for concretely acting on them.

In these ways the small group helps to bridge between individual participation and the requirements of larger-scale human systems. Each of these small-group functions has something to do with helping individuals to identify, negotiate, test, and refine their group roles, and helping the group as an entity to develop some mode of harmonizing these different roles through its chosen relationship to the social norms of the wider community, its ability to diffuse social innovations, its functioning as a cultural arena both for the achievement of

group's ends and as a means of participating in the larger society, and finally establishing social roles and responsibilities based upon the group's norms and goals. In terms of adult development, all these processes are related to the individual's negotiation of a degree of embeddedness, and of autonomy, within the social structure as a pre-requisite for effective civic and institutional engagement.

While bridging among individuals and from group to group, social structures must be flexible, responsive and respectful enough that they allow for the negotiation of meanings and action paths, rather than fostering conformity. This leads to a preference for decentralization and the specific delegation of responsibilities throughout an organizational structure, strategies that foster resilience by allowing for redundancy of key functions, such as information gathering and interpretation. This promotes diverse lines of thought and the responsibility to raise critical questions (Janis 1972; Kelman and Hamilton 1986). Complementary strategies include the cultivation of habits of awareness that enhance the ability to weigh and try on multiple viewpoints, such as the practice of empathy (Kelman and Hamilton 1986; Staub 1992) and compassion (Goleman 1986).

Kelman and Hamilton, analyzing the "binding forces" that hold groups together regardless of individuals' perspectives within them, and the "opposing forces" that reduce cohesion and enhance autonomy, argue that these forces exist at both the micro level of a particular individual's relationship to a group, and the macro level of the socioeconomic, cultural and historic context. Breaking out of a pattern of social relations, and the assumptions that hold it in place, is therefore far more difficult than continuing in a habitual pattern, they maintain. Focusing on deference to political authority as one common source of passivity, they observe:

> The ability to redefine the authority situation and hence to challenge authoritative demands -- at the macro- and the micro- levels -- presupposes two psychological conditions that are not readily available. In the cognitive sphere, individuals must be aware of -- or able to conceive of -- alternative definitions of the situation and interpretations of its requirements. In the motivational sphere, they must be prepared to disrupt the established social order and the smoothness of social interaction, and to suffer the consequences of such disruption.

Groups that give rise to the vigorous kinds of participatory attitude and behavior change, necessary for the "social movement" approach to sustainable community development, can be expected to promote a balance of cohesion and autonomy, and to have such characteristics as the promotion of self-awareness and self-reflection, encouragement of diverse approaches within an overall unifying context, strong but empowering leadership, and some personalization of the issues at hand in order to galvanize commitment (while avoiding the extremes that can lead to overwhelm). These behavioral principles have found wide application in smoking cessation, weight control, domestic violence prevention, and directly in sustainable lifestyle pedagogies such as those of Global Action Plan's EcoTeam Program and the Center for a New American Dream's "More Fun, Less Stuff" campaigns.

Complementing the well defined small group is the more fluid social network, a second critical mediating structure. The literatures of organizational dynamics and innovation reinforce the importance of social networks, as conduits of trust and reciprocity, in achieving business or social goals such as diffusing innovation (Nooteboom) and creative problem-solving (Sethi and Nicholson; Nooteboom). Social diffusion (Rogers 2000), a widely embraced notion about the spread of new ideas and practices through formal and informal interaction such as peer group discussions and social modeling, is directly related to such aspects of social capital as cohesive relationships, trust, and the existence of a common framework of discourse. Gladwell (2003) demonstrates the qualitative diversity and richness of characteristics of key

actors in social networks, including "connectors" who create dense networks with strong bridging among subcultures, "salesmen" who persuade people to try new behaviors, and "mavens" who provide concentrated, valuable information through their networks. In describing rapid contemporary social change processes, Gladwell proposes the key role of network relations[17] and also of these leadership archetypes who contribute particular kinds of influence and resources. Through relationship building, group learning, and the rapid movement of information through networks, subtle, seemingly disconnected, *sub rasa* changes in the behavior of individuals and small groups appear to link into larger grassroots movements in a self-organizing fashion and suddenly move into visibility as the system "tips" in their favor.

Similar observations were made on the American social change movements of the 1970's by anthropologists Gerlach and Hine, who observed that effective organizations (and overlapping webs of organizations) in the feminist, environmental, civil rights and other movements were characterized by cohesive, voluntary small groups joined by common purpose and values, and linked informally but meaningfully to larger network structures with a minimum of hierarchy in these relationships. Elgin (1980) proposes two reasons for the strength of these structures:

> Since each node, or group within the network, tends to be organizationally self-sufficient, any one group can survive the elimination of all the others. Further, given the multiplicity of voluntarily linked groups that comprise the whole network, there is no single leader or group that dominates or that is crucial to the continued functioning of the movement.

Such complex networks include strategic alliances, business-NGO partnerships, and the range of organizational actors in participatory planning connected with land use, infrastructure and economic development. For example, the study of strategic alliances in industry has provided data and a conceptual framework for considering the determinants of success in institutional partnerships generally. Judge and Ryman, reviewing literature on strategic alliances in the U.S. healthcare industry (which involve an estimated 2/3 of private sector businesses in the industry), identify several aspects of leadership and strategy that distinguish the successful alliances:

- effective shared leadership at high levels;
- coordinated priorities and a win/win approach to outcomes, with sufficiently open flow of information to make this possible;
- shared commitment to enhancing customer value;
- the capacity for structural re-invention within participating institutions, to make the most of synergies between/ among the partners.

Judge and Ryman note that a major rationale for such alliances is "managing intellectual activities and the interface to... service outputs," making these partnerships especially attractive in "industries that are characterized by rapid change and intense competition." In other words, to be genuinely useful to participants, strategic alliances must in some way facilitate exchanges and synthesis of knowledge that would not otherwise be possible, adding weight to the argument that some degree of transparency in information flow is important, at least within the alliances.

Another relevant body of research concerns corporate-NGO partnerships for more sustainably-oriented marketing and product development. Stafford and Hartman, reviewing "green alliances" from the vantage point of marketing, observe several features of healthy partnerships. They report:

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[17] Pp. 30 - 88

> that green alliance credibility is founded on the organizational and relationship credibilities of the green alliance partners, which are derived from stakeholders' perceptions of the linkages among four key elements, including the (1) marketer, (2) environmental NGO, (3) environmental issue, and (4) stakeholder's self-perception [as being able to make a difference by supporting the partnership].

This credibility, they continue, requires two further characteristics of the partnership: transparency of activities, and two-way communication -- a transformation in the historic pattern of corporate marketing communications and community relations in that:

> Marketing must turn away from the traditional one-way, pre-programmed messages to targets, and encourage interactive informational exchanges with customers and stakeholders to nurture environmental transparency and credibility. Sustainable marketing communications establish stakeholder relationships for responding to dynamic forces and channels involved in environmental performance and reputation. In short, sustainable marketing communications must strive to (1) educate diverse stakeholders about environmental issues; (2) build communications and relationships; and (3) establish and maintain environmental credibility.

In all the literatures reviewed here, the sources of participatory vitality and the ability to achieve communal goals goes beyond the simple factors of individual empowerment and supportive structuring to enliven them both with a sense of purpose and overarching significance. Kofman and Senge, reviewing the state of the art of promoting learning organizations, echo this point emphatically:

> Building learning organizations, we are discovering, requires basic shifts in how we think and interact. The changes go beyond individual corporate cultures, or even the culture of Western management; they penetrate to the bedrock assumptions and habits of our culture as a whole. We are also discovering that moving forward is an exercise in personal commitment and community building. As Dr. W. Edwards Deming says, nothing happens without "personal transformation."

This theme is echoed by Sethi and Nicholson, based on studies on the effectiveness of new product development teams. Reviewing literatures on commonly addressed variables such as cooperation and integration, these researchers suggest that something more than structural analysis is needed to understand the creative process in organizations:

> In order to capture the processes that led to excellent market performance of new products, we introduce the concept of *charged team behavior*, the extent to which cross-functional product development teams are enthusiastically and jointly driven to develop superior new products. Charged team behavior captures not only the drive, commitment, and joy of team members, but also their collaborative behaviors to achieve an exceptional outcome.

Terms like "charged team behavior" are difficult to operationalize, and to use as the basis for generalization. In spite of this, it is not unusual for researchers -- especially those working in a pragmatic, engaged tradition -- to assert the need for this kind of admittedly subjective, qualitative, *human* aspect of the investigation. Thus Cohen and Levinthal, in the management literature, advance the notion of an organization or group's "absorptive capacity" as a measure of its ability to assimilate knowledge usefully, and Hustedde, as president of the Community Development Society, urges attention to "the soul of community development." Since a number of the preceding studies suggest linkage between these subjective factors and

successful group processes, and none rule out the relevance of these themes, it is fair to say that these are necessary dimensions of the investigation of successful sustainable community development efforts. Conventional management tools and leadership strategies are far from sufficient to produce the creativity, open-mindedness and continuous learning that are necessary for excellence in product innovation -- to say nothing of the wider societal and institutional changes needed for a sustainable socioeconomic order.

While differing in their details, then, the studies reviewed here reinforce the notion that the structures and relationships most conducive to institutional adaptiveness are relatively but not purely egalitarian, characterized by tolerance and effective management of conflict, and the careful, incremental negotiation of shared values and commitments. Conspicuously missing from all the studies reviewed were such factors as charismatic leadership, competitive dynamics, or precise rules and policies -- trappings of organizational life and lore that may always have a place, but seem overshadowed by more human and subtle elements of structure and culture. As a result, "social movement" is sparked when ordinary perceptions and habits are transcended, giving way to "charged" conditions including commitment and inspiration. "Social movement" is sustained when the resulting innovations and relationships are supported by newly negotiated structures and procedures.

The social change of power sharing: a guiding theory

"Social change" can be roughly defined as aggregate behavior change, in a defined population, that is recognizable to a neutral observer, and is durable enough to be meaningful in the context of a particular discussion. Voluntary, "grassroots" social change is characterized by self-organization by actors across a population and without regard to formal authority. "Grassroots" change, in an institution such as a government or public agency, is exactly what we need to understand.

The discussion above suggests that conditions are most ripe for such a breakthrough when significant numbers of people are able to take it personally – *and* to apply their personal experience and observations toward social learning and collaborative discovery. Finally, it requires social structures capable of "holding" new knowledge and behaviors. Thus we move from personal choices, through group deliberation and action, into the aggregate priorities of the institution. Applying the preceding analysis of motivation and meaning-making to the increase in power-sharing within institutions, we can say that this is most likely to gain momentum when significant numbers of individuals personalize its value, so that it becomes a significant driver for action, and when they are able to create social supports for advocacy of change, and eventually new institutional structures that help them sustain effective action.

Based on the literatures reviewed here on individual and organizational change, then, it can be theorized that the process of self-perpetuating change toward power-sharing in civic institutions – with decentralization of authority and responsibility, softening of boundaries, and better developed communication and accountability to stakeholders, could progress through a three-stage model (where the stages can richly overlap and interweave):

1. **Enfranchisement through personalization**: Individual awareness-raising as issues become salient and meaningful, and people establish a sense of personalized commitment that gives rise to changes in self-concept and behavior patterns.

2. **Efficacy through connection**: Coalescence of networks defined by shared values and interests, and by self-identification with the initiative for change – occurring when concerned individuals are appropriately distributed and outwardly-focused enough to find each other, and when mediating structures such as community organizations and

governmental committees function effectively; This builds toward critical mass through diffusion of new behaviors within and beyond the initial networks, when enough individuals are receptive and when the influence of catalytic leaders reaches their audiences.

3. **Institutional adaptation** to the new behaviors through policies and programs, when the pressures created by informal changes mount and when advocacy for institutional change is carried out effectively.

These three dimensions will provide a thematic overlay for the field exploration. Thus the relationship between the psychosocial development of individuals, and the capacity of an institutional community to undergo the needed social transformation, is understandable in terms of psychological and social theory and research. Social change in an organization is the product of many interwoven changes in individual behavior and institutional relations. Substantial social change occurs when individuals experience a shift in the fundamental definition and experience of self in the world, which by definition includes a change in their experience of key relationships; then, when these changes pull an identified group in a similar direction enough to influence the practices of mediating institutions (or the formation of new ones); and when those institutional changes in turn allow additional waves of individual change, either adopting or advancing norms set by the original models, so that a positive feedback cycle is established. People, groups and networks push the organization to adapt its structure, and new structures in turn empower individuals, groups and networks to transcend their former limits.

Chapter 5 Research Methodology

Methodological orientation

The study takes a systems approach to examining individual actors in the context of their institutional and social relationships. Methodologically, this implies a need to probe formal and informal structures, inside and surrounding the organizations under study in a holistic fashion, and not to equate a variable's importance with its measurability. In Kinsley's words, "Culture and capacity are complex factors, and they matter greatly."[18]

Constructing a study whose scope covers multiple institutions, their internal dynamics, their relations to each other and to external actors, means combining elements of structuralist and post-structuralist worldview and methodological orientation. Gusterson explains the structuralist orientation this way[19]:

> Traditional forms of social and political analysis, which are mostly structuralist in derivation, tend to analyze political power in terms of institutions rather than practices. Looking at the structural relationships between institutions and individuals within institutions, they ask who is structurally located so as to have access to the levers of power.

The structuralist view recognizes that formalized aspects of organizations, such as hierarchical roles and responsibilities, can positively or negatively impact social capital internally, and also in communities affected by the organization's operations. People with authority can exercise direct impacts -- from the team structures and reporting requirements they establish, to the degree of intimacy and warmth in communication that they model. At the same time, structural factors and formal relationships are not definitive predictors of the robustness or value of social connections in any particular dimension of sustainable development.

The post-structuralist view recognizes this limit. Model programs, devised explicitly as sustainable solutions to vexing resource management and development problems, have done "the right stuff" in terms of mission statements, managerial structures and overall strategies, and yet not yielded major benefits, especially as a function of money and effort invested. What is missing in many cases is the less measurable, more subtle factors that turn social relations into capital, and the "charged" aspects of organizational and community experience that characterize social movements. An example of this is the federal program, Jobs in the Woods, which invested hundreds of millions of dollars for the creation of sustainable jobs in timber harvesting and processing, and environmental restoration, in the northwestern U.S. in the wake of the high-profile controversy over protection of the threatened Northern Spotted Owl. This program had high levels of relatively formalized stakeholder inclusion in its design; it had procedural consistency and transparency; it even had generous federal funding to create jobs for displaced timber workers. Yet it was ultimately under-subscribed in terms of actual demand by displaced workers and community agencies. In some counties, this visionary program actually withered for lack of use.

This project is undertaken at a time when the social sciences are in considerable flux and self-reflection with regard to their methodological norms. Contemporary social science is facing an unprecedented degree of fragmentation, diversification, and epistemological challenge that cannot help but affect prevailing attitudes with respect to research methods. Researchers face virtually unlimited options for the scale and scope of a study, technologies

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[18] Kinsley, Michael. Telephone interview, 2001.
[19] Gusterson, Hugh (1996). Nuclear Rites.

and techniques employed, choice of information sources and assessment of the value and limits of their contribution, and ways to factor in the attitudes and assumptions of the researcher in the study design. Schweder and Fiske observe that while "social science research institutions are hotbeds of pluralistic activity, each scientist holding that 'progress is being made on the problem on which I am working,'" there is still a "vague sense of unease about the overall rate of progress of the disciplines," to the extent that:

> A small, but visible, iconoclastic literature has emerged, either challenging the scientific status quo of social research or expressing concern about the accomplishments of the social sciences. Some have even talked of a "crisis" in social inquiry.

Some of this turbulence reflects the backdrop of epistemological uncertainty that characterizes the age. Roth observes:

> The unity-of-method thesis is still very much with us, but the notion of scientific rationality which motivated acceptance of the thesis has not been sustained. One of the chief glories of positivism, surely, was that it offered a cogent account of rationality. But, of course, the history of epistemology in the last half of [the 20th] century consists of the development of a host of critiques of the key assumptions of this account, assumptions that the positivists wrongly took to be unproblematic. The general collapse of positivism leaves uncertain just how the notions of rationality and rational justification are to be explicated and understood. Yet, and this is the central point, although the philosophical community concurs in the rejection of positivism, there has arisen no corresponding consensus concerning the replacement of that conception of rationality propagated by the Vienna Circle.

In an effort to provide some kind of map for the post-positivist qualitative research landscape, Benz and Shapiro list ten "postmodern" research approaches which, they propose, encompass not only methods but also cultures of inquiry -- that is, worldviews regarding the nature of research, knowledge, and social relations. These are:

- Phenomenology, focusing on the detailed, subjective nature of phenomena and the psychology surrounding their interpretation;
- critical social science, focusing on the analysis and interpretation of data, collected in diverse ways, through the lens of one or more theories;
- hermeneutics, the analysis of texts with an eye to the subtleties of language;
- action research, gathering data through participation in collaborative activities with subject groups that may test a hypothesis or be a source of data for inductive analysis;
- theoretical research, exploring and extending theories by analyzing them in light of new combinations of data and in light of each other;
- ethnography, the disciplined and sustained observation of group and social behavior at close range;
- quantitative and behavioral science, focusing on arenas of inquiry where positivist research approaches can be expected to yield useful results;
- historical research by consulting documentary records and/or living sources of historical data;
- evaluation research, assessing the results of governmental, NGO or business programs as a source of insight about the nature of social processes and social change.

Each of these methods has its relevance to the present research question. When we consider the aspects of institutions, networks and communities that could be studied, and the variety of paradigms through which they could be considered, and the views of sustainability against which their usefulness could be assessed, the possibilities are far reaching. Comparatively many studies address small clusters of these, while relatively few aim for

thoroughness and synthesis. The value of this latter kind of study is derived from several points, argued earlier: (1) the dispersed, fragmented nature of the relevant social literature; and (2) the need to continue moving the field forward from the descriptive to the analytical and finally to a prescriptive levels, *as an intrinsically interdisciplinary and pluralistic undertaking*. Wherever complex social systems are studied, the tension between focus and breadth is likely to occur. Schein (1993), for example, criticizes organizational science for "generating more and more precise results about more and more irrelevant questions." From the field of social work, which faces many similar analytical challenges, comes a similar expression of concern from Hudson, who suggests that the attempts to build a unified theoretical framework in that arena have foundered over a reliance on general systems theory as a standard for the effort, creating norms of scholarship that encourage the subdivision and conceptual dissection of knowledge, fostering precision at the expense of integration and applicability. Hudson reflects on the limitations of any system of inquiry that aspires to be perfectly systematic:

> that too great a level of rationality is expected on the part of its users (Siporin, 1980). For example, Drover and Schragge (1977) complain that even in a relatively simple situation with only 20 key systems, over a million possible relationships are created. Furthermore, when each set of actors brings a different set of goals and values, the problem of optimizing the common good becomes completely intractable.

Two complementary points are made here: that the kind of research most needed by solution-oriented social science is too broad and complex to be capable of great precision; and that solution-oriented studies are, by their nature, rooted in a chosen set of values. Myrdal (1958) stands out as a strong early voice in support of this perspective, and a challenger of the construction of American social science research on a foundation of natural science metaphor and method. He calls on social scientists instead to be more explicit and clear in stating the values and assumptions underlying any inquiry. Writing on the thorny qualities of poverty and racism in the mid-twentieth century, and the value-laden nature of relevant inquiries, he observes that no theory can be constructed without some pre-existing criteria or organizing principles. As a consequence:

> We are constantly attempting what in its perfection is impossible and we are never achieving more than makeshifts... The task is not, as is sometimes assumed, the relatively easy one of filling 'empty boxes' of theory with a content of empirical knowledge about reality. For our theoretical boxes are empty primarily because they are not built to hold reality. We need new theories which, however abstract, are more realistic in the sense that they are more adequate to the facts. Meanwhile, I believe it to be a disciplining force in our dispersed efforts in the field of under-development and development, that a clear concept of the ideal is constantly kept in mind and given a directing role in all our research.

Not only is pure objectivity in the social sciences a delusion; attempts at it are not the source of methodological insurance that they are often considered to be. Myrdal further reflects that "science becomes no better protected against biases by the entirely negative device of refusing to arrange its results for practical and political utilization," which cannot do away with the researcher's need to make assumptions about what is important and relevant, but only drives those assumptions underground. To take note of the value judgments inherent in this kind of research does not legitimate the kind of subjectivity that arises simply from a researcher's unexamined biases or attachments. On the contrary, the rigor of research in a value-laden context lies in the researcher's responsibility to make her values explicit, prioritize them, and justify the value-based choices made in the course of research with respect to some larger goal. The goal of this research is to provide credible guidance in the development of

systems and strategies for community decision making, in support of some balance of autonomy and innovation for their own sake, and responsible stewardship of resources. Trade-offs are necessarily involved here. The smoothest civic processes, leaving a community feeling the most satisfaction and self-determination, are not necessarily the most effective in solving entrenched problems of natural resource management or social development. In addition, the interpretation of the research findings will require explicitly or implicitly addressing such questions as:

1. How much cohesion should a human community have, and at what price in terms of diversity and members' autonomy?
2. How much should an institution with a public mandate open itself to participation by citizens and others, on what terms, with what degree of transparency in its operations?
3. How much should a community and its members self-reveal to outsiders, and under what circumstances?

In response to Myrdal's challenge, then, here is the set of ideals that the study seeks to promote: a vision of civic and economic life in which a knowledgeable local population, connected within the regional and global economy but choosing to focus on local institutions and relationships, works in partnership with elected government and the private sector to plan and implement key civic and economic institutions that support the community in meeting its needs, so that that community's values -- as well as the requirements of the natural environment -- are reflected in community development and resource stewardship. A spirit of pluralism is therefore in play, allowing for wide diversity among communities. Reflection and deliberation are valued intrinsically and for the benefits of knowledge, trust, reciprocity and other forms of social capital that they help to generate. Enfranchised communities are valued for their ability to generate social knowledge that would otherwise be unavailable, and to make deliberative decisions of generally higher benefit to the community than they would otherwise be (without for a moment implying that any civic process will ever break completely free of "groupthink" and collective blunders). Because this study is rooted in an understanding of the relationship of individual cognitive, emotional and spiritual development, and the efficacy of community development processes, individual development, respect and autonomy, and a freedom from ideological ridigity, are additional underlying values. Sustainable communities, in the sense we are exploring here, are living social organisms with myriad flaws and with the continuous creative involvement of citizens and leaders in overcoming those flaws. To borrow a phrase now circulating among social entrepreneurs, they are "living economies" characterized by dynamism and self-awareness.

With these concerns and values in mind, the study addresses structural features in concert with informal relationships and cultural aspects of the selected initiative, and leadership styles and visions of the primary innovators participating in it. The fundamental methodological choice has been between narratives and behavioral observation as the primary source of data. Narratives have been chosen, with awareness of their limits as well as their potential richness, because:

1. Much of the required data on these cases is a matter of contemporary history rather than current activity, so cannot be directly observed.
2. Much of the required data is related to internal decisions and processes within public and private agencies, where the extent of "observability" by outsiders can be expected to be limited to a matter-of-fact public record;
3. Narratives are a fundamental reflection of organizational culture, independent of their verifiability and even of their factual accuracy. The stories that organizations and their members want to tell about themselves are important in their own right as reflections of belief systems and cultural values.

Within this framework, the study employs a variety of tools including interviewing, selective participant-observation and social interaction, and review of the public record. These elements are combined with the intention of addressing a question that applies to whole

systems -- webs of governmental, civil society and business organizations, their internal structures and external stakeholders -- characterized by a degree of complexity and flux that defies precision.

Bringing fundamental structures and social characteristics into focus, in their context, is the research response to the study question, "What structures and processes support a shift in the modus operandi of a public institution focused on community development, from a primarily managerial model to a more substantial form of power sharing with stakeholders inside and outside the institution?" A vast array of hypotheses could be tested to identify and prioritize elements of this answer -- and research of this nature is common -- but the positivist approach does not address the sum of elements in a systemic, empirical way. That is the aim of this qualitative process of concept mapping and the integration of participants' narratives into an aggregate "community story".

This study takes the form of an in-depth, naturalistic investigation of a ten year social change process in the municipality of Marbletown, a progressive distribution of power and responsibility in pursuit of more sustainable strategies for development. A municipality, rather than a nonprofit community development corporation, was chosen because it was home to the most visible and credible sustainable development initiative in the region, and – as a public entity – could be expected to provide the transparency and accessibility of information needed to fulfill the study goals.

In the study overall, Marbletown is juxtaposed with the more hierarchical, though innovatively organized, nontraditional development agencies discussed earlier, that have also achieved economic and civic results, but have shown less ability to multiply those results and transcend their original structures and strategies.

Because the unit of analysis here is a complex institution within a community, the human systems under scrutiny are not straightforward to define and map out; subsystems are overlapping; causal relations are multiple and ambiguous. Ragin presents the rationale for holistic, comparative case research in this context:

> Unlike multivariate statistical analysis, which tends to be radically analytic (because it breaks cases into parts -- variables -- that are difficult to reassemble into wholes), qualitative comparison allows examination of constellations, configurations, and conjunctures. It is especially well suited for addressing questions about outcomes resulting from multiple and conjunctural causes -- where different conditions combine in different and sometimes contradictory ways to produce the same or similar outcomes. Multivariate statistical techniques start with simplifying assumptions about causes and their interrelation as variables. The method of qualitative comparison, by contrast, starts by assuming maximum causal complexity, and then mounts an assault on that complexity.

Methodologically, this implies a need to cast a wide net for themes that cannot be preconceived, thus suggesting a reliance on more open-ended forms of questioning as a central part of the field research process.

The final product was originally conceived as a qualitative comparative examination of Marbletown and two of the nontraditional agencies, the Watershed Agricultural Council and Catskill Mountain Foundation. However, this is not the outcome, due to limits in access to one study site (WAC), and limits in complexity in another (CMF). Still, retaining some comparative framework allows for navigating through the concluding discussion using points of similarity and contrast, and identification of common themes. That comparison is between communities in terms of the specific aspects of social relations that are visible in each, and the signs of ease of

implementation of each sustainable development project. If the projects are thought of in "input-output" terms, then elements of individual leadership choices and social structures are viewed as an input, and tangible sustainable development results are outputs. Examples of relevant inputs might include trust between an entrepreneur and a planning board based on previous cooperation, access of a citizen group to local media based on its historic credibility, and capacity for open communication between stakeholders and principals in a project based on their pre-existing relationships and communication skills. Examples of relevant outcomes are: success in specific sustainable development initiatives; increased health of industries and sectors as a result of their occurrence; and public support of a common direction for development. Obviously, no single form of social relations is the sole enabler of a single result; these influences are overlapping and interwoven. The basic "way of knowing" these webs of influence is direct evaluation research, where available, and the judgment of knowledgeable sources, when not contradicted by direct observation, logic or the countervailing arguments of others. Because much of the primary subject matter concerns social relations -- which are fluid, subjective, and sometimes have dimensions that are appropriately kept private -- the expectation for such a study is not accuracy in any pure sense, but an identification of factors that are likely to be true and relevant, and depth of insight about their interplay. In this respect, the research paradigm reflects the values of contemporary social science when it embraces some necessary subjectivity and chooses to stand apart from natural science. Speaking from the vantage point of sociology, Mogey asserts that:

> [Natural] science works as a ringmaster, commanding objects to act or staging experimental performances that can be repeated. Philosophy and sociology, on the other hand, work as if their disciplines were participating in the action or performance, sharing not only what is observed by outsiders but also the feelings and emotional states of organisms in the midst of the action.
>
> This distinction draws a line:
>
> between culture as abstract thoughts and social structures with members, between objective reality and reflexivity, between individual and network, between the sayable and the showable, between visible graphs of a network structure at rest and unseen flows of meanings across its symbolized positions.

In such a study, the essential discipline of the qualitative researcher is to listen for meaning and nuance, giving equal weight to testimonies of informants regardless of their views, charisma, centrality to the project or articulateness, once they have been screened for credibility and useful knowledge and are chosen as subjects. The anticipated work plan at the outset of this research was, first, to conduct semi-structured interviews, maintaining consistent lines of questioning overall, while selecting and prioritizing among the possible questions based upon the subset of experience and interest brought to the table by each subject; and, second, to organize the resulting textual data so that the interplay and overlap among the informants' responses can be seen. Qualitative content analysis of testimonies was the expected approach. While acknowledging some intrinsic subjectivity in an individual researcher's identification and screening of sources, the intent at the outset was to maximize objectivity and consistency, and thoughtfully scrutinize any deviations from a consistent research plan.

In keeping with another initial premise of this study, that learning about the conditions underlying local sustainable development is intrinsically social, this qualitative research has invited spokespeople working in or near Marbletown government to generate their own portraits of self and surroundings. Like much qualitative research, this approach is primarily inductive. By relatively simple scanning of language and landscape, this type of comparative research presents an opportunity for inductive observation of themes that did not occur to the

investigator in advance. It thus presents the opportunity for refinement of a research model based on field experience.

Over and above these arguments concerning investigative approach, an element of arbitrariness in the choice of method is inevitable. Two additional goals that have come into play involve subsidiary benefits of the study, and the author's aims for professional development and creative satisfaction. The first goal is to concentrate on patterns that can be detected with the "naked eye" of careful, qualitative interview methods that can be carried out by citizens, elected officials, and others without professional research credentials or costly consultants. In the interest of improvement in community sustainable development efforts, it is hoped that this will yield insights relevant to cost-effective program evaluation by both internal and external evaluators, and especially by community members themselves. The second goal is to bring the experiential aspects of these initiatives alive at a human scale in the final narrative, by means of case write-ups that are descriptive and engaging, as well as analytical. It is hoped that this will encourage the use of this document by government and community development professionals, students, and citizens in considering new ways to achieve community goals.

Selection of study sites

Although there is no comprehensive repository of information on sustainable development projects underway around the United States, a number of collections of case studies, professional society conference proceedings, review articles and the like have provided a diverse pool of cases for consideration. These have been reviewed as candidate sites with a view toward balance among the following criteria:

Current activity: initiatives that have been conceived in detail and are well underway in either permitting or implementation but not yet complete, are favored over those that are already established, so that at least some of the participatory processes under discussion can be directly observed.

Complexity: in order to compare these cases with reference to the widest possible range of variables that have been identified in the literatures on social capital, and yet maintain manageability of the research process, cases with an intermediate degree of institutional, social and economic complexity have been sought -- for example, local cases involving multiple related business ventures, and actors with some depth of relationship to the locales in question.

Participatory vision: the study focuses on initiatives launched in the hope of engaging citizens, consumers, outside institutions and other stakeholders in carrying the vision farther than its founders alone can do.

Applicability of results: while there is enormous value in the study of citizen-driven, truly grassroots economic development efforts such as those discussed in Section 3.6, the political climate in the U.S. so favors economic development driven by the private sector, and the greatest mitigation of negative social and environmental impacts can be achieved by learning ways for that sector to work collaboratively with stakeholders; therefore, the study focuses on situations in which the support of for-profit business is a key element in the sustainable development strategy.

Rich documentation: to maximize the quality of information that can be yielded by the research effort and to capture the historical record through the eyes of diverse sources, cases that have already been documented by present and past participants, the media, program evaluators, and fair-minded critics are preferable to those that have left less visible a "trail."

Commensurability: for purposes of comparison, projects of about the same age and scale were initially sought. WAC, CMF and Marbletown are all large enough to have a variety of social factors and actors in the mix, and a complex interplay of environmental and social issues, yet small enough to serve as a meaningful unit of analysis.

Geographic proximity: for ease of site visits and fact-checking, projects in the northeastern United States have been given priority.

Environmental context: the three projects are all situated in the same protected watershed, providing relative comparability of environmental context and a similar range of economic options.
Access to informants: for quality of insight and ease of building relationships with informants, projects have ultimately been selected near the author's home community, in order to gain access through established professional and social networks.

Defining the communities for study is not the same as defining the economic development projects themselves. The Catskill and Hudson Valley regions are comprised of many towns and villages that are relatively isolated. For long-time residents, the sense of regional identity is strong but at the same time may be vague. For newcomers, regional identification may be passionately felt yet only tentatively understood. In addition, the boundaries of each project under study are fluid (i.e. changing) and fuzzy (i.e. impossible to identify with precision even at a fixed point in time due to ambiguous definition in the ultimate study site and the two other candidate sites):

- In Marbletown, the boundaries between the "open government" process and citizens are fluid because the population is in flux, with many residents in a state of ambiguity about their full-time or part-time resident status. They are also fluid and fuzzy because of the changing scope and membership of town committees and separate organizations related to the open government process.
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- In Hunter, too, the population is changing (although not as fast as in Marbletown) and many with second homes or transient careers are ambiguous in their self-definition as residents. In both of these communities, the orientation of economic strategies toward the tourist market, whose demographics are fluid and not well understood, is a source of additional ambiguity in conceptualizing the study – and would be a greater handicap in research aiming for statistically valid measures of public opinion or market behavior – an added rationale for the current focus on some of the most stable actors in each system as primary informants.
-
- In the case of the Watershed Agricultural Council, the greatest source of ambiguity in defining the boundaries of the study community has been the flux in organizational strategy and a major discontinuity in leadership during the period of study, when both the Chairman of the Board and the Executive Director resigned their positions suddenly, and a process of strategic planning was undertaken for the first time. In its ordinary operations, however, WAC is the least ambiguous in defining farm and forest sites as participants by contract, with categories of participation corresponding with stages of project planning and implementation.

The qualitative study of social networks takes two primary forms: structure-based (identifying relationships and using these to produce some conceptual mapping of the network as an entity), and attribute-based (focusing on characteristics of network members and/or of relationships that can be objectively evaluated). McCarty notes that attribute-based research is more common in the study of personal networks (i.e. those defined by a central figure within them), while structural research is more often used for the study of "whole" networks, defined in terms of an overall group identity. He notes that "there are no mathematical or statistical reasons that prohibit the application of [structural] matrix techniques to personal network data." However, in the present study, there are reasons for skepticism about high ambition in either of these methodological directions, grounded in the highly political and to some extent controversial nature of the institutions under scrutiny. The present study aims at descriptive structural documentation at the level of formal relationships and structural history, but not at the level of informal relations, influential though they are. It aims to identify major attributes of relationships within institutions and networks, and to call these to attention for further study; however, it does not aim for an exhaustive list of these, or for any quantification of their occurrence, based on the conviction that a greater degree of trust and/or sustained access to internal operations would be required for reliability of data this sensitive.

For the purposes of this study, the exploration is focused on the central institutions that are most influential in channeling resources into and around the region, facilitating town and village level economic development, and coordinating activities among the local governmental and economic actors. That is, this study uses an operational definition of the Catskill region as the area of watershed and human settlements whose economic, social and ecological options are substantially shaped by the mountains' ecology and the resource protection mandate of the New York City Watershed Agreement. The Mid-Hudson Valley region is viewed as covering, at a minimum, the counties of Ulster, Dutchess and Orange, and therefore surrounding the mid-Ulster location of Marbletown. The study sites are defined by geographic boundaries of their formal operations.

Field study protocols

Because social relations are so situation-dependent, and may wax and wane with social and political conditions over a short period of time, a desirable qualitative research strategy is one that focuses on present day phenomena, and yet allows for access to historical context through some combination of informed, involved observers and the printed record. Therefore, the chosen primary strategy is in-depth interviewing of knowledgeable participant-observers, supported by a review of the public record including press reports and organizational documents (which, by themselves, may reflect a thoughtful but time-limited observation). Pre-existing studies of economic and social development in the region were reviewed as a source of background-- for example, to assist with establishing criteria for field site selection; identifying basic structural features of the initiatives to be studied; refining the field research protocols; and selecting informants within and outside these projects. However, because previous observers have had diverse objectives -- from covering breaking news to documenting natural resource issues to providing simple entertainment -- the absence of social capital themes in existing bodies of scholarship or popular media in no way proves their absence, historically or currently.

As a foundation, the government structure of Marbletown was mapped as a system in terms of basic operational features, participant and stakeholder networks, and impacts. This was done using literature review, some participant-observation, and semi-structured interviews, with basic lines of questioning consistently posed to all sources, and followup questions asked as needed for clarity and completeness of answers. These interviews sought a thoughtful understanding of the organizational architecture and its use by human actors, in the establishment of and implementation of the program. The interviews had two goals: to establish history and structure, and then to address interpretive questions about organizational and cultural characteristics of the project and the sources of its success.

In studying any human community, one of the most basic questions is the relationship of the researcher to the subjects. The degree of disclosure with regard to the existence of the research, and the degree and kind of interaction between observer and subjects, vary according to the goals and norms of major research traditions. For example:

- *Experimental* social science research is generally predicated on the assumption of detachment between observer and subject(s). By creating some set of conditions that remain fixed while a purposeful intervention is delivered with some consistency in a social system or systems, experimental research focuses on the variations in selected dependent variables that result. A guiding premise of this tradition is the value of direct observation of behavior, in settings that subjects believe to be "natural," in building an understanding of human behavior and capabilities.

- *Naturalistic / ethnographic* observation of behavior differs from the experimental tradition in that it does not involve the construction of situations or the manipulation of behavior to test outcomes. An equally rich and productive tradition among sociologists and anthropologists, among others, this mode involves direct observation of human beings in social systems, but does not require the anonymity or detachment of the experimental mode. Typically the researcher is at least identified and makes an agreement for cooperation with at least some members of the community under study.

Within the naturalistic/ ethnographic tradition, in fact, there is a continuum of thinking about the optimal nature of that partnership, from the standpoints of both research ethics and efficacy. Schein, cited above, urges organizational researchers to take seriously what anthropologists and sociologists have long understood, that the ability of a neutral observer to gain meaningful information about the life of an organization is limited by the perceived degree of relevance of that observer's agenda to the organization and its members. He goes so far as to advocate for wider use of "clinical" research -- the testing of change interventions of value to the organization, in conscious partnership with at least some of its members, as a way to strengthen subjects' interest in cooperation with the research. In a similar vein, the fields of sociology, social work, community psychology and community development are all making considerable, growing use of participatory action research and documenting the applications of this methodology to achieve community changes of value to residents.

In the present study, community actors possess considerable historic perspective and expertise of value to the research agenda. Some are professionals in planning, economic and/or social development, environmental protection, management, and other relevant fields. Some are elected officials and others with deep ties to the community and practical skills in consensus building. Some have conducted research of their own on sustainable development, and on the needs and values of their fellow citizens. Some are strong believers in the strategies that have been embraced; others have countervailing views that may be quite valuable. To conduct observational studies on them without their knowledge might provide intriguing challenges in terms of clever research design, but it would disregard a priceless repository of insight as well as information accumulated over years. The "strength perspective," articulated especially well in the research and intervention strategies of modern social work, makes clear the legitimacy and power of tapping into these repositories by working with community informants as co-investigators who will help to refine the research protocols, identify further sources of information, and expand upon answers of clear relevance to the investigator. This is also affirmed in the asset-based schools of community development discussed earlier. By utilizing community members as expert sources in their own right, as well as subjects whose behavior can be directly observed, the study seeks a balance between journalism and ethnography, while probably erring on the side of the former out of deference to the seasoned perspectives of many local economic actors in this region of entrenched political conflict.

In spite of the value of these perspectives, real methodological challenges are present in any research design that selects, as key informants, social actors who have deep involvement and, in some cases, investment in the social systems being studied. Conscious political agendas and intrinsic human bias have inevitably come into play. Actors who are influential -- including but not limited to the central entrepreneurs themselves -- may try to use interviews as a way to alter the public agenda. Those who see themselves as vulnerable -- such as employees or those hoping for employment as a result of the new venture -- may regard the interviews as a means of communicating a "correct" point of view for personal benefit. Managing these risks has two components -- protection of testimonies from the distortion of subjects' agendas, and protecting research subjects from repercussions as a result of their statements. Protection of subjects was addressed by means of confidential interviewing, and anonymity in the text except when specific attributed quotes were

authorized. The "management" of observant bias was addressed primarily by making it as overt as possible -- by asking informants to self-evaluate regarding any agendas they may have, as well as by employing a nonjudgmental interview style and the liberal use of open-ended probes to clarify meaning.

In establishing relationships with informants, there is a need to balance the benefits of disclosure and of restraint. On the one hand, disclosure promotes active partnership with subjects and educates them on the kinds of help that are most useful to the researcher. But restraint also has benefits, mainly in reducing the influence of social desirability in responses. In pursuit of this balance, the management of relationships with informants was based upon a limited, consistent disclosure of the research agenda -- revealing its scope and areas of interest, but not previous results or any tentative conclusions under consideration. This way, subjects could be informed collaborators in identifying data of likely relevance that would be difficult for an outside questioner to anticipate, from their own experiments in leadership to factors taken into account in decision making.

Interview studies appear to be coming back into popularity in sociology and organizational studies, after an era of preference for survey instruments as the primary means of qualitative data collection. Thus, Harper, writing in 1991, could observe that:

> In rural sociology's ongoing self examination, "methodological monism" -- the dominance of the quantitatively analyzed social survey as the primary data source and analytic orientation -- is well documented. For example, Picou et al classify 91.6 percent of all Rural Sociology articles published between 1965 and 1976 as within the "social Facts" paradigm, which draw their data from primary or secondary surveys, while 6.4 percent fall under what the authors call the "Social Definition" paradigm which, broadly speaking, derive from qualitative methods.

Followup studies in the 1980s and 1990s show little variation. Stokes and Miller further observe that "observational studies stemming from the social anthropological tradition have largely disappeared from the journal." They report an additional shift, away from face to face administration of surveys, toward mail questionnaires or telephone interviews. The value of the interview, and the reason for its resurgence, is in the words of Merton, Fiske and Kendall "to uncover a diversity of relevant responses, whether or not these have been anticipated by the inquirer." Guidelines from this manual were generally followed here, including their perspectives stated below on:

1. Range. The interview should enable interviewees to maximize the reported range of evocative elements and patterns in the stimulus situation as well as the range of responses.
2. Specificity. The interview should elicit highly specific reports of the aspects of the stimulus situation to which the interviewees have responded.
3. Depth. The interview should help interviewees to describe the affective, cognitive and evaluative meanings of the situation and the degree of their involvement in it.
4. Personal context. The interview should bring out the attributes and prior experience of interviewees which endow the situation with these distinctive meanings.

Selection of informants

The semi-structured questionnaire was verbally administered, in face to face interviews and a few telephone conversations, to at least twelve informants selected for their close relationships with each of the cases. The principal of the organization, i.e. town supervisor, was interviewed first, followed by all primary managers of programs, boards and committees responsible for areas of activity relevant to the study. This minimum number is small enough to be realistic and allow for depth in the conversations. Yet it is large enough to ensure the generation of diverse perspectives.

Gaining valuable, detailed, reflective insights about the history of a community development initiative requires mobilizing informants for lengthy, sometimes demanding conversations. This process is labor- and energy-intensive in human terms, for both interviewer and informant. Motives for cooperating with such a study naturally vary, and -- depending on the informant's sense of enfranchisement with the effort, among other factors -- this motivation may or may not be strong. However, it is assumed that the individuals who have self-selected to participate in these efforts, have done so out of some degree of caring about the outcomes, and that the more neutral informants were at least somewhat receptive to an appeal based upon the benefits of the study to their own community and to others walking a similar path.

The politically charged nature of land stewardship and ownership issues cannot help but influence the accessibility of qualitative data for studies like the present one. The extent of this influence was brought home, in particular, by several moments in the background research:

- An attorney who had been part of the management team for a major tourism development project, and had become sharply critical of the project's environmental impacts and community relations strategies, declined to be interviewed, citing a nondisclosure agreement he had signed as part of the severance arrangement when he left the company.

- A background source on consensus processes in natural resource protection, being interviewed anonymously, requested that the tape of our conversation be destroyed after use because "careers are made and broken on the misuse of information like this."

- A regulatory agency professional, commenting on a power struggle that displaced two consecutive directors in a key agency within two months' time, said, "I've never in my life seen such a 'pissing contest'[20] in which both parties lost -- that's off the record."

By its nature, this challenge is not completely resolvable without inappropriate intrusion into the lives of informants. It has been minimized in the present study by refraining from attributing quotes to individual sources, and further by turning off the tape recorder for intervals to receive background information that informants viewed as sensitive. It has also been minimized by a continuous emphasis on the positive -- that is, on success factors and lessons learned, rather than on revealing problems or tensions except as they have been necessary for the basic understanding of these histories.

Lines of questioning

The interviews were anchored by a set of 6 open-ended questions asked of each project representative:

1. What is the basic history of this project?
2. How have you evaluated success?
3. What is different in this community since your work began?
4. What do you see as the "glue" that holds this project together?
5. What kinds of knowledge and skill have been important in getting as far as you have?
6. What have you discovered about how to do this work successfully?

Followup questions and probes were used in customized ways to elicit clarification, detail, and further uncovering of history and analysis based upon each informant's initial responses and scope of awareness and involvement.

[20] American slang for an undignified power struggle. Europeans, don't think too hard here.

Content analysis approach

Content analysis of communications is a widely used, overarching method for social and cultural studies for several reasons. It can be applied equally to historic records and to contemporary interviews conducted within the context of a research initiative, providing a disciplining consistency among disparate data sources. It can serve as an organizing framework for both qualitative and quantitative examinations, as dictated by a particular research agenda. Because the content analysis strategy of a given study can be derived with careful attention to local circumstances as well as research aims, the method encourages appropriate rigor with minimal reductionism. Qualitative analysis done in a spirit of curiosity and with respect to the nuance of language can open up lines of inquiry over and above those identified in background research.

Procedurally, qualitative content analysis involves organizing verbal data into conceptual categories related to the research hypothesis and central lines of questioning, and then, after testing the basic categories for validity, setting up a system for coding units of data (e.g. sentences, ideas) to organize and quantify the occurrences of responses in each category. This allows for categories of response to arise from the questioning process itself, rather than the researcher's preconception. For example, a study of women's and men's leadership styles in community development might ask citizens open-ended questions about their impressions of designated leaders in action, and out of the responses identify such categories of content as "strength and determination," "vision," and "empathy for residents' economic needs." Groups of subjects (people, communities) can then be compared in terms of respondents' descriptions with regard to each of the chosen categories.

In the current study, content analysis of the interviews has addressed two issues. First is thematic similarities and contrasts among the community projects. Second is the insights these reveal about the relationships between social capital, and the success of sustainable community development efforts. What seems to work, and what questions are generated for further research?

Strengths and limitations of the methodology

This method is intended to work collaboratively with key actors in local sustainable development scenarios, to interpret the strategies they have employed and the results that are plausibly connected to them. The aspiration toward "thick description" (Geertz) of a single case is intended to convey nuance, as well as fact, in the experience of creating and nurturing these initiatives, as well as to allow for richness of detail in the comparison of the cases. Therefore this approach can open up areas for further inquiry both by researchers and by practitioners. In addressing social phenomena that are complex and interconnected, it reflects acceptance of the necessity of what Lifton calls "disciplined subjectivity." This acceptance is derived from the belief that a human observer brings more benefits than handicaps to the task of listening for context as well as content in a testimony. At the same time, Ragin fairly observes a limitation that can arise in this kind of case investigation:

> One weakness of case-oriented studies is the fact that they are very private products; they contradict the communal norms of scientific investigation (Merton 1973). A case-oriented investigator labors in isolation to produce a study which, in the end, bears his or her mark. Typically, a case-oriented study elaborates the ideas and theories of the investigator with data that are not generally known or accessible to other investigators, and often only perfunctory consideration of alternative explanations and arguments is offered. In essence, case-oriented analyses usually stack the deck in favor of the preferred theory.

In the present study, these limitations are addressed by the conscious courting of knowledgable informants with multiple points of view; by extensive use of open-ended questions that have minimal ability to carry embedded signals about desirable responses; and by letting informants know the domain of the interviewer's interests, but not the actual hypothesis being tested. This methodological approach is intended to identify patterns that can be directly observed, not to establish causal relationships beyond doubt. On balance, then, this approach to testing the research hypothesis is viewed as the most promising for a study guided by the current perceptions and sensibilities of the three community development initiatives, and aimed at uncovering the socially constructed meanings these communities attach to the themes of social capital and sustainable development.

Chapter 6 Nontraditional Development Agencies: The Benign Face of 'Social Engineering"

Introduction

Since the New York City Watershed regulations came into circulation and the communities of the Catskills began crafting an indigenous response, the institutional landscape has evolved in a number of ways. The Catskill Watershed Corporation (CC) has emerged as a major regional economic development agency, working on parallel tracks with local governments and with the business community to facilitate economic development that satisfies its basic criteria for environmental and social sustainability.

The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, surviving its turbulent era discussed at the beginning of this study, has emerged as a strengthened, somewhat repositioned NGO. Today, the Catskill Center builds on its historic conservation focus to guide development through planning, technical assistance, and educational capabilities. As the study was completed, the Center had also entered into an advocacy role to stop or scale back a controversial development proposal in the form of a mountaintop resort complex in the town of Shandakan.

CWC works "one business at a time" to preserve employment and enhance environmental sustainability. The Catskill Center works "one main street at a time" enhancing the climate for sustainable local development. In the face of chronic poverty, deterioration of infrastructure, and underemployment, more work is needed. This chapter showcases the role of two large, unorthodox "development agencies" that have channeled substantial new resources into economic life, one a quasi-public agency formed to protect water quality in the farming and forestry sectors, and the other a private foundation spearheading entrepreneurial business ventures for community revitalization and sustainable lifestyles.

Interdependence and the Watershed Agricultural Council

The Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) is an independent nonprofit organization formed to protect New York City's water quality from agricultural runoff without forcing farmers to sacrifice either economics or autonomy. WAC has invested a decade in popularizing a method of "whole farm planning" for better environmental and financial management while preserving or enhancing the economic viability of participating farms. The plans focus on reduction of nonpoint source pollution in the form of nutrients, stormwater, and animal-related pathogens. This approach had achieved a 91% participation rate at the time of the study. Its strategies have included direct investment, farmer-to-farmer outreach, technical assistance, financial incentives for pollution prevention, grants for value-added agricultural products and overall capacity building in the region's natural resource based industries. Initial work in pollution prevention has been supplemented by economic development programs including marketing supports, grantmaking, and small business technical assistance. All these programs are aimed at strengthening the economic viability of farms as an environmentally preferable land use as compared with the likely alternative of residential subdivision. Originally focused on agriculture, the Council has expanded its work to encompass the forestry sector – actually the largest land user in the region in terms of acreage – using a similar approach.

In addition to the basic strategy of planning with individual businesses to implement best management practices in the farming and forestry sectors, the Council addresses its mission through programs in:

- *Conservation easements*, whereby landowners receive payments in exchange for agreements to conserve land from general or specific development; by 2003, WAC had

4000 acres under contract for protection, with an additional 4,500 acres under negotiation, and anticipated expanded funding from New York City for this program.

- *Research farm facilities*, established with a variety of academic and governmental partners, to address technical issues such as cost-effective management of pathogens in young livestock
- *Education* of farmers, loggers, and the community at large, substantially through contracts with established agencies including Cornell's Cooperative Extension Service, the Catskill Center, and school systems in the City and the watershed;
- *Economic development* programs working directly with the farming and forestry sectors.

The Council was formed by county extension agents and local agricultural leaders, as an alternative to regulations proposed by New York City that were perceived as fatally flawed and incompatible with the very survival of the farm economy. When New York City presented a set of discussion draft environmental regulations to Watershed farmers in 1990, they were characterized by one WAC co-founder as having been "obviously written on the 33rd floor of a skyscraper by someone who had never set foot on a farm." Their stumbling block was requirements believed by farmers to be financially or pragmatically unworkable – such as the establishment of wide buffers along all stream banks, regardless of local geology and economic considerations. Additional aspects of the regulations revealed lack of compatibility with the local context in terms of geology, hydrology and land uses – for example, the requirement for construction of berms around pastures, which in the context of heavy soil compacting could actually have increased flooding rather than preventing it. Immediate resistance among farmers led to the convening of meetings with the support of technical assistance staff within key agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service, County-level Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Cornell Cooperative Extension Service. Supportive relationships with farmers through the provision of technical assistance, established over generations by these agencies, have been a primary source of social trust making the WAC experiment viable. Agency professionals have assisted, sometimes with little public recognition, by convening farmers, advising on strategy, providing personal support to agricultural sector leaders, and participating side by side with farming sector leaders in negotiations with the City.

The original Watershed Agricultural Program consisted of ten pilot farms that first agreed to develop Whole Farm Plans. These plans were designed to embody best practices for managing nutrient and storm water runoff and other nonpoint source pollutants; protecting streams and their banks; and otherwise preserving water quality while maintaining farm viability. The Watershed Agricultural Council was incorporated in its current form in 1993, and implementation of the full-scale program began in 1994.

The primary strategic thrust for building participation was farmer-to-farmer outreach in the form of home visits publicized as "kitchen-table meetings." This approach to outreach was drawn directly from the work of the Farm Bureau, an established national nonprofit organization providing technical assistance and advocacy in rural communities.

The Council (legally a board of directors) consists of eighteen members, and by its founding mandate includes the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, plus local farmers and agribusiness leaders. (Because the term "Council" refers both to the organization as a whole, and to the governing structure of 18, the term "Board" will be used here in reference to this governing structure.) The composition of the board has been intensively debated, and often refined, to balance factors including the proportionality of representation of large and small farms, daity and other industries, farmers and other stakeholders in the region. In particular, the identification of the Board as "farmer led" or "agency led" has been a point of ongoing tension. Board/staff relations have also been a source of challenge and controversy. Members of the board, in part because of their

relationships with stakeholder communities, have been involved in a quasi-staff capacity in many project, with per diem compensation as consultants a common practice. Board representatives describe this as a necessary dimension of implementing a representative program, while current and former staff have noted its potential to create confusion about roles and responsibilities in the implementation of programs.

WAC is funded primarily by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, along with state and federal sources. Funding has taken the form of multi-year contracts for core operations and specific programs that are linked with water quality outcomes. These contracts are planned and negotiated with considerable effort and investment of time, based on WAC's achievement of performance goals and the evaluation of collaborators, giving New York City and various other stakeholder agencies enormous influence through the funding process. Because these very large city and state agencies, in turn, have complex webs of stakeholder accountability, an organization in WAC's position must maintain not only the confidence of directly involved stakeholders, but those they answer to – for example, property rights advocates influencing state law regarding conservation easements, and environmental regulatory agencies that establish the rules for water quality.

WAC seeks to bridge a historic divide that is wide and characterized by historic animosity: between the communities of place of New York City and the Catskills; the communities of interest of farmers, forest managers and regulators; the ethical cultures of property rights advocates as compared to environmental stewards who focus on the interests and value of the commons. This means creating a common discourse, trust, and shared norms among constituencies with very different basic definitions of the issues at stake in terms of rights, responsibilities and interests. From the perspectives of both farmers and the agencies charged with stewardship of the water supply of one of the world's largest cities, what is at stake is survival issues. At the same time, the council must weigh the interests of diverse farm and forest constituents who make the case for WAC's assistance and advance particular land management plans that must be evaluated equitably across industries and the community. The situation calls for bridging social capital that is extremely resilient, and so, in addition to effective design, it demands enormous skill in governance and communication on the part of the board, staff, agency partners and community stakeholders.

As a result, WAC is by far the most complex and difficult institutional case discussed in this study. WAC involves multiple programs affecting a wide geographic area, crossing municipal and county lines; hundreds of enterprises; individual and institutional actors with multi-layered agendas and a wide range of socioeconomic and political power sources; agency partners with their own bureaucratic realities including external and internal stakeholders and decision making processes that are not always each to reconcile from agency to agency.

Primary interview sources for the exploration of WAC's core structure and success factors were four spokesmen:

- Fred Huneke, a career dairy farmer and the current Chairman of the Council;
- Richard Coombe, his predecessor as Chairman, who also served for sustained periods as executive Director on the staff; a beef farmer with a master's degree in economics who joined WAC after five terms as a county legislator and was the primary public spokesperson during most of its history;
- Alan White, the immediate past Executive Director, who had also been involved in the formation of the Council in an earlier position as an extension agent and had held a variety of positions within it.
- Dan Palm, the acting Executive Director, with a PhD in natural resource economics and a career in public agency management, who was hired to manage WAC for the duration of a staff search, strategic planning process and restructuring of the Watershed Agricultural Council after the resignations of Coombe and White under circumstances that have not been made fully public.

All four were cooperative with this research, with Mr. Coombe speaking from his farmhouse in Grahamsville, New York, while caring for his year-old granddaughter and deciding his next steps, and Mr. White speaking on the porch of his office in his new position with The Nature Conservancy's Catskill operations. In all cases, the lines of questioning focused on success factors, challenges, and lessons learned, with primary attention to the agency's basic history, overall structure, and accomplishments, and only secondary attention to the sensitive transition that was then underway.

Ten years into its history and with a steady record of achieving many of its objectives the Council is addressing tensions arising from its difficult mandate as a mediating institution between the conflicting cultures of watershed farmers and regulatory agencies charged with protecting New York City's water supply. Dilemmas of strategy, and deeper dilemmas of organizational definition, included:

- Whether the continuous negotiation of authority and boundaries between board and staff was a sign of appropriate dynamism in this complex organization, or of individual power struggles or management problems;

- Whether the rich and varied external networking activities cultivated by Mr. Coombe, including travel to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, should be viewed as necessary cultivating of funding contacts and opportunities to disseminate the model, or as a diversion from leadership in the region;

- Whether the combining of board and staff roles during Mr. Coombe's tenure as both Chair and Executive Director constituted necessary coordination in a complex system, or a problematic concentration of authority;

- Whether the financial compensation of board members should be viewed as a structural innovation to build needed participation, or as a source of the potential for inappropriate conflict of interest, or both;

- How to balance the rights of land owners to confidentiality in the review of their management plans – which, by identifying environmental problems on the farms could set them up for regulatory compliance challenges in the future – with the rights of the community to witness deliberations and decisions.

Complementing the council's range of water quality and farmland preservation programs are direct economic development initiatives, one focused on farm viability and the other on the forest sector. These, too, are voluntary, but take the form of direct supports including business investment and technical assistance. On the agricultural side, the effort is in an early stage but has used a variety of tools to engage farm businesses in taking control of their economic future, including cooperative distribution and international exchanges as a catalyst for local planning. On the forestry side, a substantial granting fund was created with the support of the U.S. Forest Service, and has channeled $2 million into forest-related enterprises. The forestry program is designed to achieve job attraction and retention, business growth, quality enhancements, and increased capacity. Formal program evaluation was being developed as this study ended.

The WAC forestry program has shown steady performance over its first two years in the form of business investments, while the agricultural economic development program has overcome more startup struggles and engaged in more varied efforts to create peer support among farmers for simple activities that enhance business viability, like cooperative marketing. This difference arises from several factors: the forest program focus on forest products rather than timber harvesting per se, a more straightforwardly defined sector allowing for more

standardized approaches, while the farm program supports more links in the supply chain from far to processing, wholesale and retail operations. The forest program focuses on building businesses' internal capacity through technical assistance, infrastructure investments, training and financing that allows for internal development, thus for the most part dealing with each business separately; in the case of the farm program, the isolation of producers, duplication of efforts and lack of access to economies of scale have been a fundamental problem, requiring a strategy of creating collaboration in a culture that is somewhat resistant to it. Most of the program's short history has focused on trust-building, education, experimentation and conceptually simple projects like cooperative delivery and marketing to New York City outlets. Several exploratory projects have worked with clusters of farms to assess the potential for farm-based cheese production and for cooperative marketing of fingerling potatoes. The significance of these projects, in terms of culture change, is reflected in the fact that, until WAC stepped forward to offer coordination, it was common for neighboring farmers to drive separately to New York City, at the same time, with partially filled trucks of produce.

In late 2003, WAC's agricultural economic development program adopted an additional strategy which was showing additional promise as this study was completed: an international partnership of agricultural economic development leaders involving the Catskills and several mountain regions in western Europe. The project applied a "Countryside Exchange" model developed by a regional NGO, the Glynwood Center, and used with a variety of intermunicipal groups over more than a decade. European visitors spent a week in the Catskills in small group visits to production facilities, public meetings, social and cultural events, fact-finding on the local situation and sharing parallel experiences with possible relevance for the Catskill region. Farmer's markets, regional branding, equipment sharing and cooperative financing schemes – all ideas that had been outside the interests of most Catskill farmers – were discussed as promising innovations in the company of farming peers who could attest to their viability. The culminating meeting of the Exchange – at the State University's campus in Delhi, in a surprise October snowstorm – was attended by over 70 members of the community, and a followup meeting was set for late January 2004.

While WAC's agricultural programs have managed water pollution an Durban-rural tensions, these economic initiatives have been the primary arena for fostering voluntary collaboration and achieving economic multiplier effects. Because of its capacity for direct grantwriting, the forestry program of WAC is better positioned to spark a "social movement" of sorts – in the form of entrepreneurs developing business proposals in response to the council's solicitations. WAC's Request for Proposals may, in fact, be an elegant way to catalyze assessment of needs and identification of strategies for agricultural economic development. In particular, the mechanism of matching grants has required social and financial capital to be marshaled in support of sustainable business ideas. A second mobilizing force for participation in collaborative economic development initiatives has been the WAC Countryside Exchange, and the farmer-led followup it has inspired. In case case, grassroots participation has been achieved by appealing to both personal ethics and reasonable self-interest.

By the summer of 2003, the Watershed Agricultural Council had achieved the following results:
315 out of 350 dairy and livestock farms enrolled, with oer 20 Whole Farm Plans approved by WAC;
50 Watershed Forestry grants made to regional furniture makers, dry kiln operators, craftspeople and value-added merchants;
sufficient water quality results and political credibility to allow new York City to continue its preventive strategy.

WAC's operations were continuing under a third contract with New York City's Department of Environmental Protection, signed in 2002 and covering the period through 2005. In addition to the City's support, supplemental funding was secured or under negotiation with

regional foundations such as the O'Connor Foundation and New York Community Trust. Today a variety of measures of success are regularly monitored and reported internally, including the degree of participation of farms and forest enterprises; environmental and economic results achieved; contribution to the City's capacity to avoid construction of a water filtration plant; and the continued political viability of the partnerships with the City and rural landowners. There is considerable agreement among agricultural leaders that the program has increased the use of best management practices on the region's farms, played a role in stabilizing the Catskill farm economy, and held off the twin threats of regulatory intervention and costly water filtration.

However, WAC has not been able to enlist all the region's large farms and influential farmers, nor to support environmental or economic improvements in all the farms that could benefit. For example, in spite of the program's voluntary and fully financed approach, a dozen large agricultural landowners have continued to refuse participation. In addition, the program's focus on reducing behaviors with the highest risks to water quality has limited its usefulness for an important emerging sector, farms that have already undertaken voluntary pollution reduction measures to achieve baseline environmental compliance, and have gone on to institute organic standards or other model practices.

Furthermore, the jury is still out with regard to the durability of these efforts and their ability to self-sustain without continuing dependence on the program's financial and technical assistance. Senior leadership is consistent in reporting this as their largest concern: when the infrastructure improvements financed and installed through WAC's programs have exceeded their useful lives and need replacement, will landowners voluntarily invest to maintain them? When repairs are needed – for example, to hurricane fencing along streambanks – will landowners develop the norms of taking care of them, or will they continue, as many do now, to telephone WAC with the request to "come and fix *your* fence"?

Clearly, WAC's viability rests foremost on the negotiated balance of power and sense of equity between the upstate and downstate partners, by adhering to three principles demanded by the farmers that the program be voluntary, fully funded by New York City, and locally controlled. The City's acceptance of these demands illustrates the potency of the partnership and the distastefulness of the alternatives for all parties. In this way, the necessity of finding an alternative approach to environmental protection that also meets economic criteria – an alternative to both the City's investment in water filtration and the proposed agricultural regulations – has compelled the region to achieve levels of inventiveness and cooperation that were hardly thinkable a generation ago.

Entrepreneurship and the Caskill Mountain Foundation

The northern Catskill community of Hunter is a classic unlucky ski town in the era of global warming, a community where – in the words of an engineer for the local ski slope – "most of the businesses people try to start are bars." Situated on a mountaintop with spectacular views in every direction, the town looks across valleys where preserved beauty is fragmented by condominium development, small commercial and recreational facilities, resorts and roads. The main street and few side streets consist mostly of housing stock from the last century, some elegant and some in disrepair. In recent years, the primary organizing principle for the local economy has been a blend of tourism and historic preservation. Within this framework, small services businesses come and go.

The Town of Hunter is currently assembling manufacturing enterprises for a small industrial park with an emphasis on value-added natural resource based industries, but otherwise economic development initiatives are few. In the mid-1990s, an upsurge in arson with apparent financial motivations suggested a sense of desperation in at least parts of the

business community. Until concerted efforts were made to fund a medical clinic, the region did not have its own physician. Scattered within and around the uninspiring built environment are highly cared-for places where locally significant NGOs have established their roots: the Mountaintop Historical Society, the Mountaintop Arboretum, the Green Room Players theatre troupe, the Enoch Pratt House historic renovation, and others. The challenges of capacity building had been faced and explored by a loose coalition including town chambers of commerce and preservation-oriented NGOs, many under the umbrella of an aesthetic revitalization initiative known as the Hunter Foundation. In this context, the Catskill Mountain Foundation was created by a small group of part-time mountaintop residents, the Finn Family, owners of the Ruder-Finn public relations firm.

Since its incorporation in 1997 and launch in 1998, the Catskill Mountain Foundation has created and operated a cluster of businesses on and around the Main Street of Hunter, encompassing fine arts, culture, educational tourism, farming and food retail. They include a double movie theatre; a bookstore with adjoining café and reading areas; an Elderhostel (part of a national nonprofit program of low cost educational vacations for older people); an ambitious series of performances and festivals; a sophisticated regional tourist directory distributed free of charge, the Catskill Mountain Guide; and an organic greengrocer and community-supported farm (an increasingly popular strategy for economically strengthening small farms by selling shares to consumers as a source of capital independent of the banks and then dividing a designated part of the farm's yield among shareholders in return). These enterprises function as a well integrated and effective business cluster focused on providing public education, civic spaces, and food for body and spirit:

- The CMF double movie theatre, the first facility to be renovated in town, offers two separate theatres, one specializing in contemporary Hollywood offerings, the other in classic and foreign films.
- The adjacent bookstore and café provide a social space for locals and tourists, with adult and children's book sections, a few gift items for sale, and a home-style lounge area equipped with educational toys for children.
- Performing arts and festivals are held on CMF property outdoors, and indoor in nearby spaces with the cooperation of property owners and in some cases their financial support.
- The Elderhostel programming interweaves the Foundation's themes of interest including local history, arts, health, natural history and sustainable living.
- The farm, supported by community purchases of shares, is managed by Japanese experts in the techniqe of Natural Agriculture, a movement that views itelf as more rigorous than organic farming because it customizes organic methods in light of local ecological conditions.
- The Farm Market is the primary outlet for the farm's produce, cheeses and specialty products, and also sources agricultural products from other regional farms, including cheese, yogurt, eggs, jams and jellies, mustards, honey, maple syrup, bread and pastries, soap and other personal care products, and organic kosher Fair trade coffee imported by a regional wholesaler.

Working with these elements, the Catskill Mountain foundation's stated goal is to become a significant cultural center and demonstration site for year-round organic farming using renewable energy sources.

The Foundation is staffed by 35 professionals, with Peter Finn working from his New York City office during the week and spending most of his weekends at the Foundation's office in Hunter. A five-member board of directors includes Peter Finn as Chairman, his wife Sarah as President, his father David Finn (a co-founder of Ruder-Finn and a nationally recognized photographer), artist and entrepreneur Gillian Rem (whose husband is supervisor of the nearby town of Windham), and Ethel Slutzky, a co-owner of the nearby Hunter Mountain ski resort

complex, which until the Foundation's emergence, was the primary large tourist attraction on the mountaintop.

Aspiring to projects on a scale larger than is covered by the family's substantial philanthropic commitment by itself, CMF has drawn on relationships with a variety of public and private funding agencies. Governmental funding sources for CMF projects include the New York State Council on the Arts, Greene County Legislature, Greene County Office of Community and Economic Development, and Greene County Office of Promotion. In the context of U.S. public financing and philanthropic fundraising, partnerships among grantees greatly increase the attractiveness of a funding proposal, and partnerships among funders likewise are seen as an effective way to share risks and maximize leverage. In essence, the Foundation functions as a community development agency, supplementing its own projects with leadership in a network of public and private institutions working to revitalize Main Street, attract investment and business, and strengthen social capital on the mountaintop. CMF is an active member of the Mountain Top Cooperative council, which also includes the hunter foundation (focusing on aesthetic revitalization of town and village centers, and capacity building such as financing medical offices to attract a doctor to this under-served region), the Greene Room Players (a community theatre troupe), the Mountain Top Arboretum (a nature preserve featuring native plants, natural landscaping and natural history education), and the Mountain Top Historical Society (devoted to archiving and popularizing local history).

The Finn family has lived in Hunter for generations, a strong benefit for the venture's credibility. This is true not just for the usual reason of continuity and interpersonal trust, but due to the enormous resources connected with the family's business, the Ruder-Finn Group, currently the top public relations firm in New York in terms of revenues, staff size and client satisfaction. The firm, with a global work force of 500 and revenues of $250 million, has a fifty-five year track record in working with some of the most prominent figures in the arts and entertainment, beginning in the 1950s when the young photographer David Finn and a friend began promoting the career of an unknown vocalist named Perry Como, who achieved world fame, and developing exploratory partnerships between industry and the arts. Today, the firm's industry specific business units encompass health care, technology, entertainment and more, and are integrated into a global agency with offices on four continents. Beginning with David Finn's writings on humanistic management, and reflected today in the inclusion of a corporate social responsibility specialist in the top management team, Ruder-Finn has helped to reframe public relations to encompass management consulting for effective communications, positioning, leadership development, crisis response and change management. This implies both an interest in the potential of institutional change, and a history of hands-on involvement in the adaptive efforts of companies with very mixed public records. For example, Ruder-Finn helped to manage the Chevron-Texaco and Glaxo-SmithKline mergers, and to position the new companies for success. The firm's principals have been involved at a high level in campaigns with hundreds of private firms, national and international agencies including the World Bank, industry associations including the Public Relations Society of America and Ad Council. Some of these institutions have global work forces as large as the Village of Hunter. In the course of normal operations, Ruder-Finn has worked closely with major media, funding agencies and industry associations for a generation. The firm employs a retired state assembly party leader as its government affairs liaison. All these relationships bring an enormous financial and institutional clout to bear.

Within the company, Peter Finn has spent 14 of his 24 years in the role of Chief Executive Officer, a position he now shares with Dr. Kathy Bloomgarden, who founded Ruder-Finn's health care public relations practice in 1980. Finn's official biography characterizes him as strong in creating teams across specialties and offices through a consensus building approach, and in attracting and retaining top talent within the industry. His longevity in the company is characteristic: in the management team, the shortest-lived member has been with the firm seven years, and the longest – David Finn – fifty-five.

Beyond the social and professional networks of CMF's founders, the Foundation has drawn upon the educational, cultural and technical resources of national and international programs it is able to access. Primary among these are networks of artists, promoters, funders and other support professionals that attract significant performers to the area. Other key external relationships incude the national Elderhostel program and the Natural Agriculture movement in Japan.

The Catskill Mountain Foundation stands out as an entity with the resources and will to achieve the goals it sets, in a climate of few barriers (other than the intrinsic difficulty of the work). Hunter has no zoning regulations, and the Foundation has been able to finance its projects, one at a time, with available funds and fundraising. As a result, the work of the Catskill Mountain Foundation has been able to proceed without relying on prior public approval. However, as a commercial experiment, it relies on the patronage of both local residents and tourists. As a de facto community development agency, it also relies on funding sources within and outside the community, and on the credibility and access needed to cultivate these.

Consistently, employees and observers identify the personal commitment and financial investment of Peter Finn and the board he has assembled, and the power of their networks, as the primary source of the Catskill Mountain Foundation's influence. A second, frequently identified strength is the caliber and commitment of the staff, characterized by an extremely high work ethic, which may be viewed in part as a byproduct of the founder's resources and access to talent. In a number of ways, the characteristics of his organizational and social position that give him strength, are also connected with potential liability, in that:

- His continuing involvement with Ruder-Finn in a leadership capacity requires him to manage the Foundation at a distance during the work week, although communication is frequent and staff indicate no limits to their access to him electronically.
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- The obvious value of his professional and social stature in providing access to supplemental funding sources and cementing community partnerships has, at times, overshadowed the ordinary functioning of professionals on the staff. For example, the staff member responsible for writing funding proposals observed that "Peter Finn is really the fundraising guy. You could say I help him in the office."

These factors generally appear to be managed by virtue of the professionalism of Mr. Finn and his staff at all levels, and the abundance of work to be done.

The Foundation's development office has conducted an informal survey of area businesses to determine the impact of its operations on theirs, and on the economy overall. Seven hotel/ motel/ innkeepers, and five realtors were interviewed in the spring of 2002, and each one identified some way in which the Foundation's presence and programs had been an asset. Four of the hotel spokespeople identified specific revenues that were directly tied to Foundation programs. Because this investigation was done by means of direct interviews by foundation staff, these data can by no means be regarded as scientifically valid. However, in view of the Catskill culture's plain-spoken style, and the ease with which strongly critical views are routinely expressed in public forums on controversial issues, it is reasonable to consider the positive statements gathered here as a legitimate part of the picture. This anecdotal data provides insights into the mechanisms underlying the Foundation's community influence, specifically in the roles of:

- "content providers" whose programs give the hospitality industry more to sell;
- a source of year-round programs to extend the region's tourist attractiveness beyond ski season
- a draw for a more diverse, educated and affluent population characterized by interests in arts and culture, some of whom have evolved from tourists to part-time or even full-time

residents, altering the demographics of the town; and

- a symbol of socioeconomic improvement on the mountaintop, building confidence of potential home buyers and entrepreneurs, over and above those interested in the specific programs of the Foundation.

From the standpoint of social equity and environmental sustainability, the Catskill Mountain Foundation's impacts have been significant and complex. Tourism, an economic mainstay in rural New York, is all about mobility and about interactions between people who would not otherwise need to deal with each other. An economy based on tourism must grapple with social stratification, between people with disposable income and people working at or near minimum wage to support their more affluent neighbors' recreation. The Foundation has consistently made programs and benefits available to local residents, including free classical and popular concerts, free tickets to festivals for town residents, low-cost commuter passes to Elderhostel programs, and availability of the farm for school and public tours. It has been resourceful in making products affordable; for example, a significant part of the bookstore is devoted to publisher's overstock copies which are discounted up to 50%. At the same time, its programming targets cultural tourists with disposable income – for example, its Mountain Culture Festivals feature such items as luxury furniture and household items, fabric arts, musical instruments and canoes, and it is doubtful that the Festivals would be financially viable or attractive to exhibitors otherwise. On the positive side, the Foundation's outreach to a relatively educated public may be connected with one social benefit for the town: voters in Hunter recently approved new taxes to support the public schools, soon after voters in neighboring Windham (a socioeconomically similar community) had rejected a similar measure.

The impacts of the Foundation's programs and products on lifestyles present an interesting paradox, with improvements in one arena bringing their own pressures. The farm and market have achieved enough popularity to draw customers from a considerable radius in search of healthy, natural foods, local crafts, and community activities, increasing traffic in the town and personal vehicle miles traveled from neighboring communities. With no apparent sense of irony, the Foundation's website notes that "We are delighted to have customers driving thirty minutes or more just to buy our fresh, unique salad mix."

Studying and understanding the nontraditional development agencies

Returning to the initial research question – where do we see signs of a transition from "social engineering" to "social movement" in the creation or preservation of sustainable livelihoods – we are directed to the boundaries between each of these major agencies and the markets they serve: the relationship of WAC's water protection and economic development programs to the farm and forest businesses of the region, and the relationship of the Catskill Mountain Foundation's business cluster both to consumer markets and to the wider business community.

In order to evaluate the relative success of each model, it is necessary to know more than we presently do, and especially to settle on a methodology for evaluating the livelihoods created and preserved, and the financial and social capital invested. This is not simple to compute or to evaluate. Each program's direct job creation can be documented; but their effectiveness can only be evaluated with reference to some baseline scenario of business as usual. Job creation outcomes are directly documented for the Catskill Mountain Foundation and could easily be measured by an email survey to businesses supported by WAC's economic programs. Cost per job created is an important variable, and is especially difficult to compute in the context of enterprises created for multiple purposes, including environmental and social outcomes as well as economic indicators. The particular social and environmental goals of each project shape strategies and costs, and the labor economics of each industry make the cases discussed here non-comparable in this respect. In terms of creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods, both agencies can be viewed as long-range in their strategies. Both

have created a physical infrastructure and a policy climate for sustainable economic activity whose employment potential can only be fully understood in the longer term, after the initial goals of environmental and social stabilization have been achieved.

These very different cases show the power and challenge of concentrating large amounts of external social and financial capital in regions with fragile social infrastructures and complex political circumstances. They shed light on the ease of achieving particular results by means of concerted investment, policy mandate and committed leadership, but at the same time they reveal the high risk of creating dependency on an institutional change agent and only empowering the community in limited ways. In this picture, neither CMF nor WAC's Whole Farm Planning program has fully resonated with the host community at large, in spite of concerted and reasonable efforts. These agencies have achieved results by making large investments while asking very little in return, which is not a terrible thing. They have stepped in with good will and high motivation, and helped to break through situations of entrenched resignation to problems that clearly needed to be faced. In the case of Watershed farms, the focal problem was the necessity of protecting the water, and in the case of the mountaintop community, it was the necessity of addressing extreme economic and social stagnation. These agencies have created structures that expand the possibilities for each region and have (at times reluctantly) kept open to re-assessment of their own approaches. This is exemplified by WAC's 2003 strategic planning process and CMF's hiring of a business manager with explicit mandate to address financially unsustainable strategies. The arena in which the shift from social engineering to social movement seems most visible is in WAC's economic development programs with farm and forest related businesses. Here we see the decentralized approach of offering assistance, coordination, models, financial resources and recognition to efforts defined by local entrepreneurs, and using the process to assist them in better defining their own goals and methods. It could be described as a process that gently engineers a movement, but does so with enough restraint that community entrepreneurs are able to set their own agenda. A less developed but highly promising arena of "social movement" is the Catskill Mountain Foundation's annual Mountain Culture Festival weekends that feature hundreds of area artisans, forging an embryonic network that has the financial and human resources to become substantially more active and engaged in regional sustainable development if it should emerge as a self-aware community of practice with the interest in taking this step.

The challenge of further research into these important institutional models is the political quality of institutions and legitimate reasons for confidentiality; subjectivity and subtlety in the aspects of networks that matter. It is clear that various basic tools for promoting trust and creating reciprocity work when they are competently used, e.g. community investment structures (CMF's farm); contracts with accountability and performance based incentives; peer-to-peer outreach. It is also clear that the world looks different inside these institutions and outside them. In human terms, it is easier to be hopeful in Hunter if you have a fairly secure job at CMF than if you work for a less stable community nonprofit and primarily relate to CMF as a customer in the bookstore or farm market.

In the additional levels of partnership that are now arising – such as the WAC Countryside Exchange -- a more resilient sense of security could be beginning to take form. Political and economic leadership from outside these driving institutions – working alongside the dynamic leadership of the organizations themselves -- will be necessary to realize this vision.

Chapter 7 Power Sharing in Marbletown

Introduction

Marbletown is a cosmopolitan rural township on the edge of the New York City Watershed, encompassing Hudson Valley lowlands as well as the foothills of the Catskill and Shawangunk mountain ranges. One hundred miles north of New York City, and relatively unspoiled visually, it is a flashpoint for population growth through the migration of a variety of second home owners, retirees, and professionals seeking higher quality of life.

For over a decade, local officials and citizens, with the support of NGOs and funding agencies, have been experimenting with a visibly effective process for citizen involvement to develop the civic infrastructure for moving toward a sustainable local economy. This has taken the form of work toward equitable land use and resource protection policies, creation of catalytic business and youth organizations, intermunicipal collaboration, and innovative public-private partnerships to achieve community goals. Named "open government" by its creators, this model engages citizens as responsible participants in planning and implementation of economic, social and environmental policies including open space and farmland protection, public facilities acquisition and management, and economic development, especially focused in the arts and agricultural sectors.

Primary tools in the process have included the use of scientifically designed surveys of citizen concerns; proactive planning and policy development; a "Future of Marbletown" visioning process conducted twice and institutionalized as part of the community's master planning process; a government structure designed for citizen participation; policies to encourage consensus based decision making; and a newly developed, web-based interactive process for updating the town's master plan. Citizen-led projects arising directly from the process include a community and youth center, an active arts council, and an agricultural trade association. In addition, the process has energized the local business association and supported the town's active participation in a regional Scenic Byway initiative, involving inter-municipal cooperation among thirteen municipalities for the designation of tourist routes, development of bicycle corridors, low-impact tourist industries, main street revitalization and overall regional self-awareness.

These processes have built a solid volunteer base for implementing aspects of the town's vision, and documented results in the creation of programs and services, leveraging of funds, and development of autonomous civic organizations to supplement the work of local government. They h ave decreased political polarization as compared to a decade ago, while attracting unexpected backlash in the form of a successful electoral challenge that, as this research was being completed, put the group responsible for this experiment into a minority position requiring a power-sharing relationship with a new administration. By virtue of the structural innovations in the Marbletown model, and the cohesion among leaders within the original "open government" group, many of the innovations discussed here have continued with the leadership of the subsequent Town Supervisor (who was re-elected in 2005), providing an unusual opportunity to observe the preservation and evolution of social capital within a governmental structure during a transition in elected leadership.

Marbletown continues to face severe challenges in growth management that are typical for the region, from school budget crises to groundwater contamination problems. However, the mechanisms for cooperation and participation being put into place at this time appear well matched to the primary concerns of citizens, allowing for collaborative problem solving in a climate best described as dynamic tension between social engineering and social movement.

Marbletown has built significant social capital through diverse volunteer involvement in governmental and civic activity; a culture of reciprocity in civic and economic life; and strongly

overlapping social and professional networks that provide conduits for information and social norms. Social liability, in the form of continuing partisan identification, remains, but it is less dominant than it was when the experiment began. This evolution has been anchored by a thorough, but gradual, change in the norms regarding citizen participation and local government's role. This has been achieved by a paradoxical blend of consultative yet authoritative decision making and opportunities for skilled, responsible participation of citizens. Trust has been enhanced, for the most part, by means of transparency and a code of conduct for participation in local boards and committees. At the same time, the "networky" culture in the town – characterized by the complex overlapping of social, political and professional networks experienced by virtually all elected officials and active citizens, creates an unavoidable sense of ambiguity with potential for conflict of interest and perceptions of mistrust. Norms of cooperation and reciprocity, within the government and in its work with citizen volunteers, appear to be an outgrowth of a local culture of small businesspeople, artist and other knowledge workers who appreciate this dimension of social capital.

Socioeconomic overview

Marbletown was selected for study based on attention it has attracted as a model for the civic, social and economic participation locally known as "open government." A panel of key actors as of November 2002 came to the author's attention when they presented their experience as one of two cases selected for focus at a regional conference sponsored by the Hudson Valley Smart Growth Alliance. Marbletown's spokespeople came directly from government and its supporting institutions. They included then Town Supervisor Tom Jackson, the Chair of the Community Development Committee (Carl Pezzino), the Chair of the Planning and Zoning Advisory Committee (Will Husta), and a local architect who had been active in the open government process (Peter Reynolds of Ashokan Architecture and Planning in Stone Ridge).

Marbletown is a decentralized rural community that encompasses nine incorporated villages, with High Falls and Stone Ridge standing out as population, cultural and economic centers. Located partially within the Catskill portion of the New York City Watershed, Marbletown includes the foothills of the Catskill and Shawangunk Mountains, as well as lowland areas extending to the edges of the Ashokan Reservior, a major component of New York City's water supply. Other lowlands are part of the watershed of the Rondout Creek, a tributary of the Hudson River. Culturally, therefore, the region views itself as part Hudson Valley and part Catskills – a distinction that is significant in terms of political and social affinities, and especially the Hudson Valley's historic alignment and intersection with New York City's interests, in contrast with the more remote, inward-focused and defensive cultural orientation of the Catskills.

From its earliest years, Marbletown has been a seat of active civic and cultural life, serving briefly as the capitol of New York in 1777 and sustaining a century of open town meetings that began in colonial times. In the twentieth century, it was known as a center for cosmopolitan summer residents with deep involvement in the arts and cultural life. Half a century ago, the Legatt residence (now a historic monument) was a center for international hospitality, including lodgings for merchant marines and educational programs with swamis from India. Today, Ulster County's historical society and community college are both near the center of Marbletown.

The local economic base consists of agriculture, light industry and commerce concentrated in the larger villages of High Falls and Stone Ridge as well as the Route 209 corridor. Agriculture takes the form of small to medium commercial operations that supply dairy products, fruit and vegetables, meats, and specialty crops, to regional markets and beyond. Light industry is significant, although its visual impacts along the major corridors are well mitigated. It includes, for example, Kinetics, an industrial equipment manufacturer, and

the Charles River Laboratory, the largest producer of laboratory mice and rats for research use. The town's main commercial district is organized around Highway 209, a moderately busy (and sometimes congested) two-lane road that extends from the Hudson River southwest through the Shawangunk Mountains into the adjacent state of Pennsylvania. The commerce along this road illustrates the range of activity in the town: a major New York bank branch across the road from an arts center housed in a converted church; an acupuncture practice next to a bagel shop, a restored historic tavern and inn, as well as antiques, farm markets, convenience stores, fitness salons, small industrial facilities, and tourist-oriented craft businesses like the Bird Watcher's County Store. A small shopping mall facing Route 209, designed in contemporary style, provides the amenities of gourmet supermarket, wine shop, video store, pharmacy and Chinese take-out restaurant. Upscale restaurants coexist with neighborhood eateries. Some large-scale resorts, built in the 19th century, still operate. But the tourist economy is mostly decentralized, with inns, camping, hiking, rock climbing as well as museums, galleries, a crafts market and pottery train, historic preservation and performing arts. Unlike most towns its size, Marbletown has its own (twice monthly) newspaper, the Bluestone Press, which is widely read in the community.

These features, combined with a low level of acute poverty, adequately managed local services, and open spaces in close proximity to town, have made the region an attractive destination for migration from the New York- New Jersey metropolitan area. This has drawn second home owners, retirees and art time professionals and entrepreneurs into the region. The summer influx of tourists, as well as conspicuous population pressures in Orange County to the south, have brought home the need for a concerted response in order to preserve quality of life in its social, economic and environmental dimensions. Politically, Ulster County has a tradition of Republican rule, while Democratic affiliation (or Independent status) is more typical for newer residents in and around Marbletown.

In terms of the civic and demographic factors that shape the town's political and economic life, then, the following themes are significant.

- There is a social and economic power base of long time residents, landowning families, and political alliances that extends through generations and includes many linkages between local and county power structures.

- There has been an idiosyncratic evolution of political parties and interest groups in the town over the generations, with the conventional parties subdivided informally into "old" and "new" factions of Democrats and Republicans, not to mention citizens who register as Independent, perhaps to avoid these complexities.

- There is a decentralized quality to settlements within and around the village clusters. There is also a fragmentation and diversity of lifestyles connected with long commutes, multiple residences, and the common practice of working multiple jobs to sustain a lifestyle. This leads to social networks that are highly individualized and heterogeneous – here as in many suburbanizing rural areas in the U.S. That is, rather than being characterized as one large community -- or even as a finite number of communities of place or interest, that a majority of residents would agree on -- social and civic life is characterized by an ambiguous quality of identification and participation in overlapping, fluid, ambiguous networks of social affiliation, political and economic interest, and community service. While sharing a sense of engagement with the local community of Marbletown, active citizens may move fluidly among roles as residents of Lomontville, parents in the Rondout Valley school system, employees in Stone Ridge and voters in Marbletown.

Environmental issues and sustainable development criteria

In spite of the region's relatively pristine appearance, environmental issues are significant and will become more so without strong intervention. Water supply and quality, open space, habitat preservation, agriculture and transportation issues are on the town's ongoing agenda.

Water supply and quality are widespread concerns. Without a central water district, the primary supply is private wells. Complaints and controversies abound regarding the quality of drilling efforts, the encroachment of pollutants, and the adequacy of the aquifer for anticipated population growth. Within the town of High Falls, a federally designated superfund site at the former Mohonk Road Industrial Park awaits cleanup of solvents and other chemical pollutants. Data on aquifer quality and distribution is limited, and its quality debated. In 2003, the town received a commitment for funding of an aquifer study from the Catskill Watershed Corporation, and had begun work as this study was completed.

Open space and habitat preservation are also significant issues. Within the town's boundaries is an abundance of ecologically significant wetlands that are too small to fall into the state's regulatory authority and therefore are threatened. Roadway expansion, with related traffic impacts including air quality and noise, is a related focus, with Highway 209 scheduled for upgrading by the New York State Department of Transportation in 2006. One of the three gambling casino proposals under consideration in eastern New York, in or near Ellenville (about 20 miles south of Marbletown), would rely on this corridor as the only straight connecting route to the nearest interstate highway, the New York Thruway.

Development pressures specifically impinge upon open space that provides critical habitat and a basis for the eco-tourist dimensions of the region's economy. The Shawangunk Ridge, bordering the town on the southeast, is a world-reknowned rock climbing area and the site of periodic development controversies. A biodiversity hot spot known as the Awosting Reserve has been a part of the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership with the Nature Conservancy, the Mohonk Preserve, two New York state agencies and six other groups. That consortium has called for protecting 15,000 to 25,000 additional acres on and around the Ridge, currently vulnerable to development proposals. The Nature Conservancy (an international land protection NGO) and the Open Space Institute (a strong regional NGO), which bought thousands of acres on the Ridge, have each tried for years without success to purchase this privately owned land for preservation in its entirety.

Sustainable development concerns therefore encompass land use, transportation planning, infrastructure, groundwater protection and restoration, and sustainable practices in pivotal industries such as agriculture, tourism, the remaining manufacturing base, and the service economy. In the context of the region's struggling farm economy and long-standing rural development challenges, including devolution of government and scarcity of financial resources, sustainable development today is very much dependent on galvanizing a vision for economic and civic life that addresses these complex issues in an integrative way, so that a solution in one arena does not deepen a problem in another. It is therefore about bringing a vision into reality that organizes civic and economic actors within a shared commitment to community well being. In a community like Marbletown, where reliance on tourism and the influx of second homeowners has led to some social stratification, the political challenge here is to address perceived inequities, build trust, and enfranchise citizens as partners with government, NGOs, and the private sector.

"Open Government" process and results

Since the mid-1990s, Marbletown has been governed by elected officials interested in more effective management of civic conflict, and in greater citizen participation in the

development and implementation of policies generally. A process of citizen participation, now commonly referred to in the community as "open government," began with the election of a Town Board slate whose members valued effective conflict management. This group included the Town Supervisor, Thomas H. Jackson, Jr., who had personal experience in consensus-based decision making prior to entering public office through his religious affiliation as a Quaker.

The roots of local government's deliberate civic consensus building date back at least to 1994, with town government's efforts to respond to the twin political problems of citizen disenfranchisement and community polarization. Supervisor Jackson traces the process back to an initiative, early in his first term, to improve the equity of the property tax system – a source of general mistrust and particular tensions between long-time residents and newcomers. This took place through a town-wide reassessment characterized by careful preparation, communication with citizens, and well publicized procedures for citizen complaints. The town even offered an unprecedented series of workshops entitled "How to grieve your taxes." This was based on the premises that citizens should know their rights, and that citizen complaints are easier to handle when they are prepared in accordance with polity. Jackson recalls, "I had officials from other towns calling me to ask whether I was crazy, but I prefer to deal with citizens who know their rights and how to prepare an effective appeal."

Then, in the mid-1990s, a proposal for a small but visible shopping mall on Route 209 gave rise to a new level of polarized debate in Marbletown. The battle lines were drawn, substantially, between long time residents (many of whom welcomed the convenient access to basics and amenities) and new or part-time residents (many of whom shopped elsewhere and placed a higher value on minimizing new commercial development in order to preserve open space for recreation and aesthetics. A Marbletown Residents Association was created to stop the project, but it lost. An ensuing lawsuit against the town became a singular focus for government for over a year, and in the longer term catalyzed a search for mechanisms to bring diverse citizen views into more constructive dialogue. Immediate responses were the establishment, in 1997, of a Planning and Zoning Advisory Committee to provide a bridge between government and residents in deliberating land use issues; and a town-wide survey addressing residents' visions and values.

In the U.S. land use policy context, the nearly ubiquitous regulatory tool of zoning has come under critique by some sustainable development advocates, such as the Congress for a New Urbanism, because it is prescriptive an din some senses restrictive. Zoning regulates land use by means of categories, and so can restrict mixed or creative uses. Yet zoning is a reality in the U.S., suburban-rural interface. Zoning is a focal point for local political participation, often triggered by perceived injustices and for the pursuit of self-interest, because it touches every land owner's finances and discretion over land use. Recognizing this, the first standing committee created by the administration was the Planning and Zoning Advisory Committee which grew from an ad hoc council. While this committee's mandate was to pay attention to the political pulse of the town, and advise the Town Board of the need for initiatives related to land use, it carried out that function by developing initiatives that forged a policy consensus on a range of potentially divisive development issues, in essence raising the social capital connected with the political process by identifying a set of norms endorsed by a majority in an open political process. Between 1997 and 2002, the Planning and Zoning Advisory Committee (and its predecessor council) guided the Town Board through the adoption of:

- Adult entertainment regulations
- Commercial telecommunication facility guidelines
- Town wide opinion poll
- Commercial design guidelines
- Zoning audit
- Open space preservation plan
- Upgrade of wireless facility siting regulations.

Today the committee's work continues with the formulation of plans and policies for farmland preservation, subdivision regulation, and a comprehensive plan which is conceived as a living document and integrally connected to the complementary processes of visioning and community development.

The Future of Marbletown survey can be viewed as the first phase of a process of engaging citizens in articulating their own visions for the town, that later gave rise to the town's visioning and development initiatives. While previous outreach to citizens had been consultative on particular issues, this phase began a tentative involvement of citizens in more openly establishing the political agenda as well as anticipating controversial issues. Town officials retrospectively describe the design process as a three-way partnership involving government, citizens and a university-based survey research consultant from outside the region. The partnership was characterized by differentiated roles, with the Town Board proposing an initial scope of issues, residents voicing their sentiments in public planning meetings, and the questions jointly developed by town officials and the consultant.

Attention was paid to the administration of the survey, as well as its design. Advance notification was mailed to citizens with information on the purpose and scope of the survey, its voluntary nature, and the hours during which authorized survey teams would be visiting. Surveyors were organized into teams of two or three, representing diverse constituencies including the Town Board, the Residents' Association, and students from a local high school class. Elected officials described the planning and strategy process for the survey as a significant learning process in itself. Supervisor Jackson recalls, "I asked Dr. Warren (the consultant), 'Who is going to go knock on all those doors?' and he answered, 'You are.' Only then did I understand what this was really about." Twenty-five percent of adult citizens participated in the survey.

Based on survey data, a standing Economic Development Committee was formed to explore what the town could do toward guiding economic development to reflect public sentiments. The EDC soon concluded that it was mis-named, and that its effective functioning would require focus beyond the economic to encompass quality-of-life issues. It sought and won approval from the Town Board to become the Community Development Committee (CDC), and, in negotiation with the Town Board, established itself in a mode of operation that is advisory but highly influential. In both structure and scope, the committee was a creation of local volunteers, initially with an intuitive affinity for the wider movement for governmental reform and sustainable development, but without drawing on any specific external models; in the words of initial committee chairman Carl Pezzino, "We thought Smart Growth, but we really didn't know from Smart Growth." Essentially, the CDC serves as a liaison between the formal town government and citizens, to support the implementation of the town's vision for itself – in other words, the work of local government that is neither administrative nor regulatory, but works proactively to improve conditions based on citizens' stated priorities and values.

Spearheaded by the CDC, with assistance from the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, the town held two public "Future of Marbletown" visioning processes, the first in March 2000 and the second in November 2002. Similar in structure, both processes used public meetings open to all residents, publicized through newspapers, posters and word of mouth. Spearheaded by the Community Development Committee, the meetings were jointly facilitated by Catskill Center staff and Town Board members. While the 1997 survey had captured public opinion based on a range of preconceived issues, the visioning process expanded the potential for citizen influence by allowing for an unlimited range of inputs to essentially open-ended questioning. The visioning process was addressed in terms of three categories:

1. What we love about Marbletown and what we wish to change
2. Assets, problems and needs

3. Priorities for action.

Responsibility for reviewing and acting upon citizens' inputs rests with the Community Development Committee, with project implementation through its subcommittees and with the overall approval of the Town Board. Each subcommittee has negotiated its mandate with the committee as a whole, and is charged with implementing its work plan with regular reporting to the committee. Through the CDC, subcommittees request funds and other resources, and policy initiatives, from the Town Board and other committees as needed to authorize and support their actions. In sustaining communications between local government and citizens, and implementing the results of the visioning process, the CDC is a strategic center. The committee is the locus of ongoing work to translate vision into action by the identification of subcommittees to research, develop and refine proposals and build consensus among citizens for each element in the plan prior to their presentation to Town Board and other authorities for formal approval. After project proposals have been refined and accepted, eight subcommittees work with government in their implementation by providing skilled volunteer labor and in many cases leadership, in-kind contributions, connection to external resources, and continuing refinement of the plan.

The Town Supervisor is an active participant in the Community Development Committee. At his discretion, he attends public meetings and major events produced by subcommittees. He substantially delegates work to these subcommittees, yet regularly expresses opinions and maintains contact with members between meetings by email as well as phone and personal meetings.

The committees' orientation is structured but informal. Meetings observed in spring-summer 2003 were characterized by convivial, flowing dialogue with minimal need for the chair to recognize speakers, and with some decisions made by consensus while other required voting. Frequent reference to bylaws and clarification of the group's mandate were observed, with committee members appearing well educated about protocols and responsibilities, and consulting the law or previous resolutions when in doubt.

Noteworthy among subcommittees is the Community Participation Subcommittee, initially formed to lead the creation of the Community Center. This subcommittee reassessed its mission and successfully secured a new mandate to foster healthy communication between government and citizens, in general and in response to emerging issues. In the summer of 2003, against a backdrop of routine work such as the examination of alternative ways to inform the public about town meetings, the subcommittee mobilized itself to produce a high-profile public meeting on the three proposed gambling casinos in the Catskills nearby, bringing out over ninety citizens and elected officials from town and county agencies to express their views.

Town committees are constituted to draw in diverse and bipartisan participation wherever possible, and are expected to develop an internal consensus on issues through research, option-generation and thoughtful dialogue independently of the Town Board. To encourage this process, the town developed a set of General Criteria for Committee Appointment, which established these norms for volunteer selection and committee operations:

- Committees should include Town Board members and/or Supervisor to insure maximum interface and to facilitate public input into the legislative process;
- Members should collectively represent a wide variety of community interests and include leaders of various community organizations
- They should possess a compelling interest in the work of the committee
- They must be capable of setting aside special interest and political agendas in favor of community interest
- They should be able to work in a consensus based decision making environment

- As all committee meetings are open to the public, they must be willing to share ideas and debate opinions in an open environment.

Together, these norms establish "bridging social capital" – that is, horizontal, reciprocal links – between the Community Development Committee and the elected government structure, as well as bridging with external constituencies. They further the norms of transparency and consensus based decision making, which implicitly requires bipartisan or nonpartisan thinking and so strengthens the political center. As the result of this partnership approach, outside the conventional structure of government – but formally empowered by it and accountable to it – during the period from 2000 – 2003, an estimated 150 citizen volunteers in Marbletown worked together to:

- Create the Marbletown Arts Association, an independent nonprofit organization with over 120 members including artists, promoters, educators, wholesalers and retailers, suppliers, gallery owners and others united by appreciation of the cultural and economic value of art in the community.

- Create the Marbletown Community Center by purchasing (for the symbolic fee of $1) and renovating an under-utilized hall previously owned by the American Legion, a declining civic group formed after World War I to advance veterans' concerns and promote nationalism. The Community Center hosts youth programs, meetings of town and civic organizations, and fundraising and educational activities of local civic groups. Use of the Center is available, free of charge, to local residents for their own civic and recreational gatherings. Administered by a subcommittee of the CDC, the Center has been able to hire a staff person to coordinate and conduct youth programming.

- Create the Rondout Valley Growers Association to strengthen the farm economy within and around Marbletown through marketing and technical assistance to area farms. The Association is composed of farm owners, operators and supporters – within and around Marbletown –aimed at improving efficiencies of the local farm economy through cooperative marketing, building of a regional "brand identity" and supporting the development of value-added products.

- Work extensively with the regional Shawangunk Mountain Scenic Byway project to develop sustainable tourism and transportation planning. This is an inter-municipal initiative involving 15 towns and villages in the planning and development of a regional eco-=tourism effort focusing on low-impact enjoyment of the Shawangunk Mountains and support for a decentralized, community= and environmentally friendly tourism industry.

Sketch out and begin the implementation for an e-government initiative, intended to encompass administrative functions such as permit applications, and the development of a web-based, interactive platform to support updating of the Town's master plan.

The Marbletown Business Association, a nongovernmental organization formed around the same time as the town's initial community survey. It is formally distinct from the "open government" process but has partnered with the town to discuss business promotion strategies. In Pezzino's words, the MBA "has nothing to do with government, except that everything has something to do with government." Members and observers describe the association as a support network for local businesses, and as a driver for additional economic development by drawing business owners' attention to the favorable local climate and by engaging in cross-promotional activities through the development of a visitors' center with extensive space for the advertisements of local businesses. The Association has been described as a training ground for local political leadership, especially that connected with the Republican Party.

Networks of participation and influence

Marbletown is "a network-y town," in the words of Marbletown Business Association president Laurel Sweeney. Historically, it was a typical small town in which "the same dozen volunteers did everything," according to planning consultant Peter Reynolds. The last decade's open government initiatives have increased those numbers more than tenfold. They have brought skilled volunteers into leadership positions with experience and connections in such local institutions as the library board, parent-teacher organizations, the business community, environmental agencies, farming and the art world. The effort has drawn on the pro bono expertise of professionals living in town, from environmental regulators to planners to graphic designers to artists. Not surprisingly, creative efforts such as the arts council and community center projects have seen rapid growth in volunteer participation, while more mundane and difficult functions such as emergency services remain challenging to staff. Here as well, though, the synergy of decentralized leadership appears to be useful, as the Public Participation subcommittee has tekan initiative to assist the emergency services volunteers with recruitment.

The resulting structure of overlapping networks – civic, professional, and social – and the fluid nature of roles in which volunteers find themselves as they move through a typical day, can "make it hard to keep track of which hat you are wearing," according to community development committee member and volunteer computer consultant Karen Williams. Active citizens have mentioned their sense that many actions and statements have multiple layers of meaning, as illustrated by the complex roles of civic associations as political training ground and bases for advocacy on particular issues.

The complexity of this social and economic interconnection is reflected in the fact that the Town Supervisor in office during most of the study period, and an additional member of the Town Board, Tim Sweeney, are joint owners of a local real estate firm, Nutshell Realty. The growing firm employs nine realtors, including the board member's wife, who was also the elected president of the Marbletown Business Association. These relationships are typical in small businesses and in civic life, and can be seen as complementary (since the public visibility of one role enhances effectiveness in another, and since a well-managed town authentically attracts new residents). At the same time, because open space protection implies restraint in land development, the potential exists for conflict of interest between real estate sales objectives and civic leadership responsibilities. In the political life of New York State, many local decisions are made by extremely small voting margins, and it is common for political challenges to be veiled in accusations of conflict of interest that are aimed at disqualifying opponents from crucial votes. In this context, in spite of Mr. Jackson's strong reputation for personal integrity and judiciousness, this dimension of his civic and professional networks has been both an asset and a liability, and discomfort with thie role ambiguity may have been a factor in his decision not to run for re-election in 2003.

External linkages have further strengthened the Marbletown effort. Since its early days, the town's administration has sought and utilized resources outside local government, and outside the town's boundaries, including:

- The consultant services of the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development in implementing the community visioning process (Helen Budrock, Associate Director), creating linkage with several dozen other towns engaged in similar processes and with the Catskill Center's extensive civic networks;
- The consultant services of State University of New York faculty in designing and implementing a survey of community attitudes and priorities (Dr. Barry Warren), creating linkage with the university system and the faculty's community-based networks;
- The technical assistance of a professional grant writing firim to help finance the implementation of programs resulting from these outreach efforts (Shingebiss

> Associates of New Paltz – Glenn Gidaly, principal), creating linkages with an extensive database of funding agencies and with the many other governments and NGOs with whom this firm has worked.

Federal and state agencies have also been key partners, in protecting natural resources such as water, and providing resources for development. In the resource protection arena, the High Falls Superfund Site Remediation is an example of a complex collaboration involving the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and other public and private agencies. In the development arena, the New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal was the source of a $25,600 grant for interior and exterior renovations to the Community Center based on a competitive application process. The process of application for this grant illustrates the practical relationship between internal networks and external influence. In the words of consultant Gidaly:

> We identified a grant opportunity fairly close to the deadline, but agreed to put in extra effort to submit the proposal. The Town Supervisor, the head of the Community Development Committee, and I were all working "down to the wire" on the weekend before the deadline. I realized that letters of endorsement from business and civic leaders would make a huge difference in the competitiveness of the grant; but as an outsider to the community, I had very little leverage in getting those letters written on a weekend. The Chair of the Community Development Committee took on this task. On Monday morning, he dropped fourteen letters onto my desk. I believe these were a critical factor in the town's winning of the grant.

In the future of Marbletown, the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) is a major player due to its scheduled upgrading of Highway 209, expected in 2006. The DOT is charged with maintaining and upgrading highways and working with local transportation plans in the interest of harmony with local values and priorities. Funded by a combination of federal and state sources, the DOT is also responsible for public transportation planning at the state level, but has invested only limited resources in this direction. In the course of Marbletown's process of visioning and strategizing, local government has taken an unusually proactive stance toward the DOT by developing a detailed vision for local transportation, roadways, and Main Street for presentation to the state agency with hopes for a negotiated outcome.

Another kind of external social capital, in the form of public recognition and relationships with the wider "smart growth" movement, has been created since the town's participatory process began to gain regional attention. Supervisor Jackson observed that this visibility at the HVSGA's 2002 conference was both a source of validation and a platform for building and strengthening external relationships, for example with funding agencies, county and state government.

Success factors and discussion

Participant-observers in the Marbletown open government process identify a wide range of success factors that encompass leadership style and strategy; government structures; ground rules and norms developed purposefully to bring citizens into the process as responsible partners with government; the dense, overlapping and social quality of networks in the community; and socioeconomic advantages such as relative education and affluence.

Supervisor Jackson's leadership style and credibility during his term were the most widely cited single success factor in Marbletown's civic transformation. He is characterized as a natural consensus builder and a proactive communicator. For example, a local reporter who covered the town for ten years notes that, when the discovery of toxic hazards in the water supply years ago led to an emergency closing of the school, Mr. Jackson called the news media

to inform them of the situation. He attributes the positive climate in town to an incremental approach, a commitment to consensus building, careful preparatory work before bringing hard choices into the political process, commitment to the principles of equity and responsibility as a basis for public policy, and the deliberate crafting of policies and priorities based on citizens' inputs through surveying, visioning and an open-door management style. Several observers note the value of a combination of openness with realism – in CDC Chair Pezzino's language, "open but not too open."

These factors add up to a combination of government structure and leadership culture that favor collaboration and a devolution of responsibility to citizens to make decisions that balance self-interest with the community's well-being. In the words of Planning and Zoning Committee Chair Will Husta:

> The unique thing is what kinds of initiatives popped out once we had the structure and climate established. I'm an engineer by training, and what's interesting to me is creating a climate and environment where innovation and deliberation can happen safely. In most institutions, you look to the leader to see what's OK and safe to say, but when you consider the levels of change we have to address, you can't stay in the range of safety. What we do is identify a problem larger than any individual, that people can't solve on their own, and bring them together with encouragement to cooperate. As a participant, it's the problem and the authorization by the boss that it's something he wants us to go after, that makes me look at you in a totally different way. Until now, you might have been challenging my output, but now you're looking at me as a resource. People come together that way.
>
> Normal politics is that the 5% at each extreme are working against each other, and the core is sitting home bored stiff about politics. Here we engage the core and find out what's interesting to them, build on that, and aim for results so that they will keep coming back.

Sociologically, there is a high degree of intellectual capital in circulation, in the form of a relatively affluent and educated population, and an influx of new residents with exposure to many different civic processes. Recent arrivals point to an absence of crises as a basis for general receptivity to these civic experiments, while residents of longer duration comment on the success of the process in defusing historic crises and heading off others. The CDC's subcommittee structure, and the strategy of launching independent organizations in sectors such as arts and agriculture, add up to significant leverage in the mobilization of skilled volunteers, and in access to both civic and economic networks.

An informal but professional style and a civil, often congenial spirit, characterize public meetings. Creativity is reflected in the style with which many events are produced, including in 2003:

- A 300th anniversary celebration for the town, featuring a performance of Thornton Wilder's play, "Our Town" by volunteers including many civic and business leaders;
- A "death by chocolate" fundraiser for youth programming at the Community Center;
- The Marbletown Arts Association's popular annual celebration called Illuminations, at which the community joins together to make hundreds of paper-covered hanging lanterns that decorate the outdoor pavilion, where a musical performance by candlelight ends the evening.

In terms of local government structure, the Community Development Committee and Planning and Zoning Advisory Committee are distinctive in their proactive approaches and their clear structures for engaging with citizens as partners to achieve results. The CDC was described by

committee participant Peter Reynolds as "the human resources department for government" because the structure it creates is a container for the ongoing participation of skilled volunteers.

Following the November 2003 election, Marbletown again found itself at a crossroads. With Supervisor Jackson's decision not to seek re-election, CDC Chairman Pezzino became a Republican candidate for Town Supervisor, making open government a central pillar of his platform. In a national and state context of extreme polarization and conflict between the parties, and in the dawning of a presidential election year, the New York State Democratic Party made a heavy commitment to recruit candidates in local races in the hope of influencing the balance of political power in the state. In Marbletown, the Democratic opposition built its campaign in large part on opposition to the Republican-dominated county legislature, which had twice raised the county sales tax and had blessed a gambling casino proposal on the fast track with negligible public input. At the local level, the Democratic opponents concentrated on registering new voters and critiquing the limitations of the open government process. Meanwhile, the incumbents engaged in a fairly limited campaign, relying on their track record and the existing political base, and were defeated. Pezzino's campaign lost by twenty-two votes.

Between Election Day (November 4, 2003) and the official transfer of power (January 1, 2004), Marbletown's "open government" process changed and yet held steady. The long-awaited, enhanced town website, developed substantially by CDC subcommittee volunteers, was brought online, with greatly enhanced information and access to government services such as building permit applications, and, most importantly, with an interactive "online master plan" designed to allow citizens continuous input and discussion about the future of Marbletown. History of the process, from the early surveying and visioning efforts, is included. Concurrently with this launch, the CDC invited newly elected Town Supervisor Vincent Martello to its November meeting and provided him with a cordial welcome and a thorough briefing about its work, subcommittee by subcommittee. This was followed by a recommendation from the CDC's nominating subcommittee, which by law recommends its leadership on an annual basis. This year's committee recommendation for CDC Chair was outgoing Town Supervisor Tom Jackson, who by virtue of this appointment would retain a place on the Town Board. In characteristic style, Mr. Jackson responded to the nomination with a conditional acceptance, offering to step aside or to defer the election until the New Year, in case the newly elected supervisor preferred to advance his own slate of candidates. Into this dialogue stepped several subcommittee heads, who affirmed their support for Mr. Jackson and added that "This is not a committee that exists at the pleasure of the Town Board. This is a committee that takes its mandate from the visioning process." Jackson's leadership role on the committee – and thus the continuity of the "open government" bloc in Marbletown's new administration – was voted in unanimously.

Observed in the first months of his term, Supervisor Martello established himself in a path that visibly built on the initiatives of his predecessors and, in some respects, carried them farther. Under his leadership the community brought in noted "smart growth" land use expert Randell Arendt to advise on planning and zoning matters. He continued work with the regional Scenic Byway, joined with town supervisors in neighboring municipalities to coordinate activities, became involved in a number of regional sustainable development initiatives including a regional watershed alliance, and later in his term formed a discussion group on economic development from an asset-based perspective to expand the town's alternatives.

In decentralizing responsibility in a manner that achieves both results and continuing enfranchisement of citizens, the Marbletown process has been built on a continuous learning curve and the ongoing development of coalitions by elected officials, community activists and sectoral leaders; negotiating and renegotiating shared norms for civic life, and inventing supportive structures for effective participation by citizens at a level that makes use of their

expertise and their social/ professional networks, providing significant leverage of municipal resources and significant communication channels into the community. In spite of its limitations, this process has created a culture of greater trust than in the average small town government, and an ethos of civic engagement, through an incremental process of refining and expanding local law, formally structuring the process of soliciting citizen inputs to the process, and building up the transparency and accountability of government so that citizens can better perceive their connection to it. Trust has been established over time by such means as:

- Personal modeling by elected officials, and preferential recruitment of volunteers who are willing and able to "leave politics at the door"
- rejecting standard assumptions about the range of possibility in local government operations
- actively reaching out to citizens across the ideological spectrum in the initial creation of a political agenda
- and using each participatory activity to build a base and further the definition of Marbletown as an engaged community.

Over time, these activity cycles have altered the ground rules for citizen/ government interaction, by virtue of their incrementalism which allows for assimilation and testing of each wave of change.

The discourses of "social capital," knowledge networks," and "community of practice" can be usefully applied to Marbletown's effort. The structure is rich in bridging social capital, both internally and externally, in the form of deliberate schemes of cross-representation on boards and committees, systematic reporting and coordination, and regular participation of elected officials in the volunteer civic and cultural life of the town. The town goverment and allied structures are also rich in bonding social capital, in the form of business alliances, family friendships, and diverse, interwoven communities of interest. External and internal connectivity supports the work of government on behalf of a continuously updated community vision. Knowledge is understood as currency and exchanged with relative generosity as creative initiatives emanate equally from government, formal structures created through the "vision to action" process, and informal initiatives. As a community of place that has evolved a system for articulating shared interest and acting upon these, the government and its allied civic structures effectively serve as a community of practice. In the coming era, as the new administration and historic actors find their ways of working together, the test for this web of alliances as a true community will emerge.

Chapter 8 Community-Based Development Comes of Age in Eastern New York

Organizational patterns and contrasts

In each of the cases discussed here, an organizational whole has emerged that visibly draws strength from internal synergy, and from the ability of multiple related projects to leverage external resources better than isolated ones could.. However, the three cases show structural features, and characteristics of critical mass, that differ in many respects.

In the Catskill Mountain Foundation model, business clustering has created a destination on a mountaintop main street that had been a symbol of disinvestment and hopelessness. Business clustering also provides a focal point for investment with clear leverage. Success of the business cluster, and the buildup of critical mass on Main Street, have stabilized and at least marginally strengthened the market for complementary local businesses such as hotels, and for nonprofits such as performing arts groups, the arboretum and the historical society.

In the case of the Watershed Agricultural Council, critical mass has required very high participation rates in the farming sector, and fairly high rates in the forest managers. These have been essential to the basic performance criteria of meeting New York City's water quality goals and thus for sustaining funding. Because of the founding premise of the Council to implement a pollution prevention strategy with high performance requirements, partial success would have had little value. The widespread acceptance of the Council as a legitimate agency, providing a politically viable approach to water protection, in turn has given it the standing to exercise leadership in the economic development arena. WAC first had to find a way to protect water quality while preserving existing agricultural livelihoods, by acting as an intermediary in the upstate-downstate water protection debate, before it could have the credibility needed to help farm and forest-based businesses and the regional economy as a whole.

In the rural communities where CMF and WAC operate, where economic challenges interact with a historic culture of poverty and victimization (even among those who are financially stable), the concentrated resources available to each institution could be expected to produce a kind of credibility that more dispersed, less conspicuous successes would not. In each of these cases, the existence of a large external source of revenue (i.e. Ruder-Finn and New York City) has created conditions for unorthodox success that are necessary, but not sufficient, for empowering the host communities. Without farmer support, the Watershed Agricultural Council would have had no place to invest its resources and no way to achieve results. Without consumer support, the Catskill Mountain Foundation's program could have gone the way of Euro-Disney, rather than visibly revitalizing the tourist economy and slowly restoring hope on Main Street as it has.

Marbletown, too, has constructed a successful model based on an extensive web of internal and external connectivity. This is the only one of the three cases that appears to have followed the originally proposed stage model (Chapter 6) to fruition by creating the complexity and appropriateness of mediating institutions, and awakening in participants a combined sense of personal meaning and collective responsibility. Here, social capital takes the form of greatly strengthened civic communication, some honest bipartisan cooperation within government, intergovernmental cooperation at several levels, and the mobilization of skilled volunteers and citizens in significant numbers. For the town government and its participating citizens, the sequence of surveying, visioning, planning initiatives, and volunteer mobilization have cumulatively boosted credibility, reinforcing each other by sending consistent messages

on the community's desires, and in addition cultivating a base of skilled volunteers who understand how the town operates and have working relationships with each other. Internally, the design of boards and committees for overlapping membership aids coordination. Whether citizen participation has been attracted, in part, by the growing notoriety of the process, cannot be said without further research. However, leaders including the two successive Town Supervisors have been emphatic that the elevated profile of the Open Government process has fed itself, in their view, by increasing their confidence in the model and the enthusiasm of their outreach to citizens.

Marbletown has not had access to the relatively unrestricted external resources that have been available in the other two cases, at least not in terms of financing or an obvious mandate from outside. However, it entered the era of civic experimentation with financial solvency, some reserves and sound financial management, and with its own precipitating political crisis. The town has had the human capital of an educated and fairly cosmopolitan population, with ties to New York City and other metropolitan areas and to high-leverage industries such as arts and entertainment. Marbletown uses diverse relationships of citizens and entrepreneurs, to access relatively modest amounts of funding, institutional support and other forms of social capital, weaving a complex web of collaboration and reciprocity in its internal relationships to leverage financial, physical and social resources.

These cases can also be considered from the perspective of public versus private ownership and control. The Catskill Mountain Foundation, with its powerful connections to financing and to performing artists, and its private ownership, has been able to work more decisively and with more unity of purpose than either of the other two publicly controlled entities could aspire to. While complementing each other as a business cluster, the CMF's projects did not serve as midwives in each other's birth in the complex way that appears to characterize the other two cases. The organizational structures of WAC and of Marbletown are characterized by a particularly complex interweave and overlap of programs, committees, and actors – complex enough to defy "mapping" in two dimensions. Dimensions of WAC's program are organized by region (East and West of the Hudson River), by farm size, by program goal (water quality, farm and forest economic viability), by program method (pollution prevention, education, research farms, economic development grants and loans, and technical assistance), with continuously negotiated integration and overlap among these centers of activity. Marbletown's internal structures are more autonomous, and with clearer division of responsibilities among them. But here, too, there is an integrative quality among structures and actors that may well be a source of the community's resilience and ability to disseminate and apply social knowledge. In the case of WAC, the empirical basis for this observation is in the conceptual inconsistency and lack of integration among program descriptions in written and online sources, and the parallel observation of challenging working relationships between departments internally, as well as ambiguity and role conflict between board and staff. In the case of Marbletown, the empirical basis for this observation is the high level of interconnection among boards, committees and ad hoc volunteer groups as a result of multiple roles held by several dozen key individuals; the formal integrative roles played by committee chairs as they interface with the Town Board, and by subcommittee chairs as they interface with the Community Development Committee; and the culture of attention to detail and consistency of actions with law, policy and operational agreements. Evaluating the relative organizational health of these two complex systems requires a great deal more of an insider perspective than this investigation was able to establish. However, the greater logical consistency of Marbletown's internal structure appears to allow for more streamlined functioning, less internal tension and self-contradiction, and a greater subjective sense of clarity for internal actors. In this case, the ratio of "social capital" to "social liability" seems to be optimized by conscious, focused negotiation among actors of the details of their roles and responsibilities.

From social engineering to social movement

The four-stage model of social change proposed earlier appears to apply generally in the behavior of these communities as they handle change scenarios. Awakening, connection, diffusion of new behaviors and structural adaptation are visible themes throughout the cases. Each case features an initial "awakening narrative" by a primary actor:

- In Marbletown, Supervisor Jackson's response to property tax inequities and citizen unrest over development issues;
- In Hunter, the Finn family's dismay at the closing of the cinema; and
- In the farmlands of Delaware County, the awakening of farmers and government agency personnel to the politically explosive nature of the water protection regulations issued by New York City.

Those awakenings led to the enrollment of initial task groups and the creation of organizational structures to accommodate them, including Marbletown's initial planning and zoning advisory committee, the Catskill Mountain Foundation and the pilot Watershed Agricultural Program which in turn gave rise to the Council. From that point onward, each organization progressed through many iterations between the diffusion of new behaviors and structural adaptation.

The cases generally confirm that the emergence of "social movements" of self-perpetuating change can emerge from institutional initiatives, progressing through the three stages of the model that was originally proposed (where the stages can richly overlap and interweave):

1. **Enfranchisement through personalization**: Individual awareness-raising as issues become salient and personally meaningful, and people establish a sense of commitment that gives rise to changed behaviors and patterns of social relations.

2. **Efficacy through connection**: Coalescence of networks defined by shared values and interests, and by self-identification with the initiative for change – occurring when concerned individuals are appropriately distributed and outwardly-focused enough to find each other, and when mediating structures such as community organizations and governmental committees function effectively; This builds toward critical mass through diffusion of new behaviors within and beyond the initial networks, when enough individuals are receptive and when the influence of catalytic leaders reaches their audiences.

3. **Institutional adaptation** to the new behaviors through policies and programs, when the pressures created by informal changes mount and when advocacy for institutional change is carried out effectively.

In two of the three cases, the raising of individual leaders' awareness was clearly brought about by unrest in the community: a crisis in the agricultural community gave rise to WAC, and a crisis in local development gave rise to Marbletown's more enlightened approach to government. In the case of the Catskill Mountain Foundation, the stagnation of the local economy was an impetus for the Finn family's engagement with the town; while the term "crisis" suggests a more dramatic and fast-moving situation, here too the figure who is generally credited with leadership had his own consciousness raised by external forces and sources.

In each case, the coalescence of networks was seen by the project initiators as necessary to achieve results, and was carried out in a largely intuitive manner as they reached out to involve others with the skills or kindred ideas to make their initiatives successful. In each case, a new behavior was invited, modeled and incentivized by the originators of the initiative –

preventing pollution in Catskill farms, patronizing the businesses on the mountaintop in Hunter, and participation in the civic and economic life of Marbletown. Multiple methods have been needed in each case, including marketing, regulatory initiatives, and technical assistance to grassroots initiatives. In each case, because the change strategies were initiated from central points in institutions capable of influencing local policy, the institutionalization of new behaviors began at the point when the behaviors were beginning to be widely adopted in the target communities, but before they were visibly widespread.

The cases generally bear out the themes discussed earlier. Structures make a difference, over and above the good will of individual actors. Effective internal and external communication, including conflict management mechanisms, is essential, complex and delicate. No single approach to teambuilding and institutional leadership is obviously superior. Whatever their structures, healthy adaptive communities are characterized by leaders who draw on external support and work collaboratively to solve common problems. The hard work that goes into building trust, reciprocity, and shared norms is evident throughout the cases. So is the destabilizing effect of even moderate amounts of confusion, mistrust, or missteps in coordination. The value of bridging and bonding social capital is evident, as is the enormous difficulty of creating suitable bridges across disputes of both interest and ideology (WAC), or even bridging between the cosmopolitan cultural standards of the Catskill Mountain Foundation and a village accustomed to an economy built on more ordinary tourist fare.

In and around each community, there is a social and political context of "hierarchical social capital" – that is, a well-established political and economic power structure with interlocking resources and a low public profile, reflected in business associations, economically powerful families, and quasi-governmental agencies involved in economic development using public funds but with limited public scrutiny. In each, there is a measure of what several authors have called "social liability" - in such forms as cultures of mistrust among watershed farmers toward the city, low morale and stagnation in Hunter, and a fairly entrenched political and economic power structure combined with low participation levels in and around Marbletown at the beginning of the Open Government experiment. This context has meant that, while building up some structures, the leaders in these institutions have had to dismantle, neutralize or at least moderate the influence of others. These challenges have been manageable for CMF by virtue of the Finn family's tradition of civic engagement as well as its socioeconomic stature; by WAC's deliberate representational structure involving farm and agency constituencies; and by the political skills and incremental approaches of Marbletown's leadership group. The evolution of Marbletown began in a mode of leadership that might be called "managerial," with initial moves toward equitable policy being framed by the small group in power who actually extended themselves to educate citizens on effective participation. It moved through its series of consensus building initiatives in planning and zoning, in a fairly conventional democratic mode. And then the nature of the game began to shift with clearly unusual degrees of outreach to establish a public mandate and direction through surveying and the two consecutive visioning processes. This was followed up by the creation of government structures to institutionalize the visions, notably the Community Development Committee and the online M-Plan. With this evolution came increasing debate and contested elections – backed up by county and larger-scale trends. The most dramatic form of power-sharing in Marbletown may be its ability to change the faces in elected office and committees while maintaining continuity of work and structure.

In each case, institutions have been created that are substantially more than the original visions of founders and early participants. That is, their emergent properties as systems cannot be predicted from examination of their component units. In the case of the Catskill Mountain Foundation, the Finn family's original objective was to restore the local movie theatre for their own enjoyment, and for an anticipated but imprecisely specified community benefit. The Watershed Agricultural Council began as a partnership of ten pilot farms to demonstrate water quality benefits through pollution prevention, spurred by necessity

but without much reason for hope that a regional initiative would be politically viable. Marbletown's open government began as a response by elected officials to the equity concerns expressed by citizens regarding property taxes, and used a consultative management approach whose uniqueness only came into view after it had achieved results that had, in turn, opened up new possibilities. In each case, gambles with innovative structures and processes brought success, raising participants' and constituents' sense of efficacy (and, in the case of WAC, inevitability). Over time, these successes built up mandates for further and more ambitious experimentation. Each effort began by addressing a deficiency or an inequity, and each one evolved into its role as a more proactive change agent. In each case, initial naivete may have had its benefits, in allowing for risk taking that was ultimately beneficial.

These projects may also have achieved some of their results by virtue of the staying power reflected in repeated cycles of activity, allowing for early participants to

- spread awareness of benefits by word of mouth and giving more hesitant
- members of the public time to build up motivation. For example, while the
- social, economic and environmental issues faced by Marbletown did not
- change greatly in a three year period, and levels of citizen discontent did not notably rise, the town's second visioning process drew out a wider range of issues, as well as generating higher levels of public participation in the implementation of the vision.

In every one of the cases explored here, a nontraditional structure and approach have been key elements for success. Selected for their visibility and measurable impacts, and for the diversity of their approaches and resource bases, these cases could all have fallen within conventional community development paradigms. They could have derived their excellence from individual leadership, citizen and consumer commitment, lack of barriers, or good fortune. While good leadership, shared commitment, and certain auspicious conditions have been present, they have not been the sole success factors. WAC's local leadership council model and generous external financing, Marbletown's creation of innovative committee structures and practices to facilitate consultation and consensus, and the Catskill Mountain Foundation's external connections to talent and capital, are distinctive in the region. However, they could be replicated, with equally strong commitments of people and resources, and with equal willingness to abandon conventional thinking. The potential contribution of each model to the development and preservation of livable rural communities is substantial.

Some of the same aspects of "social capital" that have given each of these models their competitive edge, can also be interpreted as "social liability" – not only by critics, but in the self-reports of participant-observers. In particular, the complexity of the social relationships, within and surrounding each organization, make it almost inevitable that individuals functioning within these systems will face the challenge of conflict of interest to some extent. In addition, leadership of these institutions is fraught with trade-offs between internal cohesion and openness of participation. The Finn family's love of film and culture, WAC's embeddedness in complex regional and national politics, and the high proportion of participants in Marbletown's open government process who are realtors, architects, and other professionals with a stake in local development policies, have been sources of social capital through the commitment and expertise they mobilize. Over and above the circumstances of these leadership groups, the multiple social roles played by professionals as citizens, and as representatives of communities of interest and place, present rich opportunities to create collaboration in one sphere by brokering resources that colleagues can use in another. For example, the citizen volunteers of Marbletown bring enormous access to knowledge and technology from their "day jobs," from planning, marketing and management skills to scientific and technical knowledge, to access to technology tools, databases and other private resources. But they can suffer consequences – properly – if there is an appearance that these benefits may have been shared at all inappropriately. This is a genuine leadership challenge. It also creates a special level of difficulty for qualitative research based on interviews with individuals about their own roles in a complex system. These will be discussed in more detail below.

In all these communities, though to different extents, political polarization and mistrust are facts of life. The community served by WAC is clearly the most historically contentious and continuously divided. In the case of Marbletown, major historic divisions have existed between old-timers and newcomers, informally represented by the Republican and Democratic parties, with the balance of power shifting back and forth. Much historic bitterness appears to have been moderated by the Open Government process – based upon the generally civil and informed quality of public meetings and the absence of crises that were more common in the past, such as the 1996 citizen lawsuit. At the same time, the 2003 election demonstrates that party lines have not vanished, and that people of good will can differ widely in their interpretation of civic patterns, reflected in the debate as to "how open should the government be?"

This points to the importance of a common narrative of the shared experience of community development, in allowing the decentralization of leadership and diversification of efforts within a framework of coherence and overall effectiveness. The significance of narrative in the healthy evolution of both communities of practice and learning organizations is commonly invoked. With only two exceptions – both individuals who were either inarticulate or resistant to providing detailed answers to questions – all informants speaking on the Marbletown case showed agreement with the basic factual narrative as laid out by Supervisor Jackson. While differing on some points of evaluation and in some cases adding details based on their own eyewitness experience, none differed with the facts of his narrative. The same is true for Catskill Mountain Foundation staff and community informants in their basic concurrence with Peter Finn's story of the evolution of the Foundation's programs. WAC, in contrast, is contested ground, even in terms of the very basics of the organization's founding, with some sources crediting farmers while others point to agency personnel as the originators and prime movers of the idea.

None of the cases here has fully succeeded in making the transition from "social engineering" to "social movement," though each one has established a visible foundation in terms of expanding circles of participation and anecdotal signs of external initiative. Future research should look in greater depth at the boundary conditions present between the "engineering" original visionaries and the "movements" who take up and adapt their visions. This could take such forms as social network mapping and narrative interviews to understand the widening circles of relationship and the patterns through which they evolve.

However, the following observations can be made straightforwardly based on the cases. In Marbletown, the arts community has responded to the idea of an Arts Association, initially introduced by the Town Board in response to visioning data; the Association quickly became self-governing and built a membership base of over 100 through word of mouth and successful events such as the Illuminations celebration. Diversification of programs, and of volunteer responsibilities, has made possible the more ambitious autumn Art Harvest weekend of exhibits, studio tours and performances. The strengthening of Marbletown's image as an arts-intensive community has had at least one noteworthy byproduct in the form of an independent initiative, brought to the Town Board just at the end of the study period. This is the proposal to create a top-flight classical music festival in the town – brought to the table by a new resident who had previously been the successful promoter of a similar, signature event in Rockport, on the Massachusetts coast. The Rondout Valley Growers Association had achieved independent NGO status at the end of the study period and was engaged in collaborative marketing and fundraising events such as a barn dance and dinner featuring local farm delicacies. In this startup season any evaluation of economic impacts would be premature, but the visible leadership of independent farmers rather than government is a promising sign.

In the communities served by WAC, the lack of farmer initiative was noted as a problem by several key informants during the study period. Subsequently, through the

agency's economic development arm, the farmer-to-farmer interaction of the Countryside Exchange was beginning to attract participation in proactive planning.

In Hunter, while consumers and vendors have increasingly participated in the activities spearheaded by the Catskill Mountain Foundation and have expressed appreciation for their role in local revitalization, this success has provided some impetus for the supervisor of nearby Windham to engage in economic development activity, in the form of a planned small business park, but otherwise has not empowered the Hunter business community economically in terms of job creation or retention. Further study should explore whether rural entrepreneurship in the surrounding mountainside communities has increased in quantity or economic vitality as a result of the CMF's presence in town.

The cases are instructive in one more way: each one has achieved, basically, what it has been designed to do. Each one is a success model on its own terms. That is, Marbletown, which created the most ambitious design for political and civic participation and consensus building over time, achieved the most in that arena with the empowerment of independent community organizations. WAC, which established quantitative measures of success in terms of water protection, filtration avoidance, and secondarily economic development, has achieved its goals in order of their rigor and focus. The Catskill Mountain Foundation, which has generously created successful enterprises and asked little more than for people to enjoy the movies and participate in festivals, has achieved this goal and won community gratitude

Reflections on qualitative research in complex organizations

This points to the sensitive quality of interview studies of this kind, well beyond initial expectations in the case of the present research. The potential of one informant's reflection to have an adverse effect on his or her reputation, or that of another -- in a context of overall political sensitivity -- created an unanticipated barrier to the level of frank reflection and interactive dialogue that was the premise of the initial research approach. It became clear that the necessary degree of trust – rather than building up in a few interviews – could only be built up over seasons of interaction, as illustrated by the slow cultivation of confidence, achieved over years by reporters covering several of the cases. In light of the consistency of testimonies, with each other and the public record, for the most part, this does not imply any limitation in the veracity or validity of narratives collected here, but points to their inevitable incompleteness and the degree to which they are subject to interpretation.

This emerging understanding led, in mid-study, to a methodological shift. First, the list of potential questions and the expectations for each informant's contribution was revised in a conservative direction to be less ambitious and more carefully focused. This resulted in a core cluster of four simple questions**:**

1. What is different in this community since your work began?
2. What is the "glue" that holds your project together?
3. What kinds of knowledge and skill have been important in making the progress you have made?
4. What have you discovered about how to do this work successfully?

This was, first of all, an acknowledgment that the majority of narrative details would not come from insider informants as planned, but also from the public record and the thorough narratives of selected informants, cross-checked for consistency. It was also triggered by the realization that a great deal of redundancy of detail was building up in the narratives, potentially using up the good will and time of informants in corroborating non-controversial points for the sake of methodological consistency. As a result, the emphasis shifted from depth of "insider" perspectives, to greater care in the basic portraiture and justification of basic observations in terms of a consistent "way of knowing." This process began with the

identification of the key economic and social actors in each situation by means of the public record, eliciting their basic narratives to provide scope and organizing principles for the subsequent research, then drawing in additional themes and details based on interviews with other informants (either insiders or close observers with access to the organizations). "Secondary informants" included middle and senior managers and board members, committed volunteers with access to inside information, and long-time interested observers. In all cases, interviews were focused on the direct observations of informants; interpretation and speculation used in the discussion are identified as such.

The limits of disclosure

Even at the local level, public speech in the U.S. has become highly politicized. Subjects interviewed for this study showed ease with taped interviews and general articulateness about the subjects at hand. Moreover, they often influenced the interview process by the practice of responding to some questions in depth and to others at a minimal level. The initial approach to this qualitative research was a consistent set of open-ended questions and a "clean slate" entry with limited background research to avoid bias. This was useful for finding out what key spokespeople would say and how they would attempt to define the issues. However, this approach was not so good for getting at a more objective meta-narrative beyond their individual story lines, because it allowed for considerable agenda-setting by subjects. In the case of WAC, two of the key informants (Coombe and White) had just left the board and staff respectively, in a situation of conflict whose dimensions were not publicly disclosed. They had been replaced by a third and fourth (Huneke and Palm). In such a situation, the potential for self-protective "spin" by even the most well-meaning and fair-minded individuals is evident. In contexts of this kind, an interesting measure of internal social capital, in the form of trust and shared norms, is the degree of common narrative that emerges from sources interviewed separately without knowledge of each other's statements. In the cases of Marbletown and the Catskill Mountain Foundation, the architects of each model (Jackson, Finn) brought forth a clear, coherent and relatively thorough narrative that was able to contain the narratives of virtually all internal informants, where "containing" means including major points and being logically consistent with the occasional diversions of other sources into details of special relevance to their own experience. This consistency occurred in spite of the fact that all sources were interviewed without observers present.

Several key insights about these three models came, without warning, in the context of conversations or interviews connected with some other purpose. During a social visit, a professional musician who lives just a few miles south of Marbletown, and socializes with Marbletown artists, volunteered the comment that the Marbletown Arts Association's programs actually tended to help the least needy by focusing on modest sized scholarships to send high school students to arts-related colleges. In her view, because Marbletown is so affluent and so many young people are already college bound, it is unclear that a modest sized scholarship given on a competitive basis will add value or be taken seriously as an incentive for lifelong learning, as compared with needs-based scholarships or other financial assistance that could be given to lower-income artists and art students. In a similar vein, reflecting on the contributions made by WAC to environmentally sound agriculture, the proprietors of a farm market volunteered the observation that WAC's focus on reducing gross water pollution means that the most problematic farms will receive financial assistance to achieve basic regulatory compliance, while those that are already ahead of the trend line with organic practices and careful stewardship do not receive financial assistance to sustain these more advanced steps toward a truly sustainable regional food system. Finally, in the midst of a general discussion about the Catskills and stakeholders in regional development, one long-time resident spontaneously observed that the Catskill Mountain Foundation's guidebooks, while creating employment for a professional design staff, had displaced an unknown number of independent publicists working in the region. In each case, these comments had to do with stakeholder relations and the ranking of benefits achieved by the three model organizations for specific

communities – with outside observers bringing up concerns about social equity and exclusion that had not been raised by the insider sources whose reflections are the basis of this study.

The limits of comparability

Ragin's introduction to qualitative comparative research (1987) asks the practitioner to examine cases, first, with acknowledgment of their complexity and without rushing to conceptual reductionism, and then to use empirical exploration to "mount an … assault on that complexity." In practice, the potential of that assault is shaped by the limits to comparability of complex institutional cases, and at times the high relevance of factors that most elude rigorous comparison. The three cases studied here were selected, in part, for some legitimate similarities: their approximate scale, their overall complexity as measured by number of internal units and major external stakeholders, their regional prominence, the data-richness of the organizations and their environments, and the knowledge- and skill-intensiveness of their cultures. At the same time, the three institutions differ in important factors:

- their civic and regulatory contexts, with WAC at one extreme as a heavily scrutinized agency in which all decisions must be weighed against the legally mandated goal of water quality protection, and with the Catskill Mountain Foundation at the opposite extreme as a private, well-funded enterprise in a minimally regulated local economy, working in lightly regulated industries and with voluntary adherence to methods (e.g. natural agriculture) that far exceed the regulations in place;
- psychosocial dynamics, with complex stakeholder communities and relations that differ, among other things, in the social backdrop, from the open animosity in WAC's farming communities, to despair in Hunter, to a climate of more ordinary, intermittent mistrust in Marbletown's early days that was tempered by the optimism of relatively affluent, successful newcomers;
- specific environmental issues relating to sustainable development differ from Hunter's mountaintop to WAC's lowland farms and forests, to Marbletown's toxic troubles on the edge of the Watershed;
- local and institutional governance structures differ in form and complexity, with CMF's simplicity in sharp contrast with the complexity of Marbletown and WAC;
- program evaluation criteria, guided by all the factors above;
- and the positioning of various industries in the global economy (from dairy farming to performing arts).

To make a meaningful connection between the social conditions that give rise to self-perpetuating dynamics of increased participation, on the one hand, and policy instruments on the other – including metrics and indicators for sustainability – no body of theory has been entirely satisfying. The concepts of social capital and liability have served to locate and define value with respect to particular organizational change goals. The concept of the knowledge network has usefully described some of the initial aggregations of individuals and small groups which have evolved into mature communities of practice.

Agendas for research and leadership

What can be measured? The human capital provided by citizens – as voters, participants in public meetings, and so forth – is crudely quantifiable by counting volunteered person-hours, votes, and the like. But the subjective and fluid nature of the interactive patterns of community development, as documented in the cases, reveals the "soul" of community development as less dependent on numbers of participants than on qualitative and even subjective aspects of participation that give rise to a sense of enfranchisement or alienation, satisfaction or frustration. Patterns such as the percentages of volunteers who make steady or escalating commitments can also conceivably be tracked. Aspects of consumer

behavior could also be usefully measured by surveys, such as the degree to which local residents patronize the businesses of Marbletown, Hunter and the agricultural region served by WAC (for example, percentage of their total consumer spending, number of key purchases, etc.). New business formation, supplier relations, and the retention of dollars in local or regional business networks can be documented, and even tracked over time, as a measure of the multiplier effects of these enterprises. In this objective domain, impacts of interest include:

- Net job creation and mountaintop business stabilization by the Catskill Mountain Foundation – directly through its own enterprises, and indirectly in the surrounding commercial and recreational areas;

- Preservation of agricultural and forestry employment by the Watershed Agricultural Council through its ability to prevent the collapse of these sectors due to regulations perceived as deadly to their functioning; and enhancement of employment within and around these sectors by strengthening the viability of natural resource based businesses;

- In Marbletown, preservation or expansion of employment through the strengthening of businesses in sectors addressed by dedicated organizations that grew out of the Open Government process directly (i.e. arts and agriculture); projects that gained legitimacy through the Open Government Process (the Scenic Byway effort as an umbrella for cultural and eco-tourism); and overall enhancement of employment and business health due to a revitalized business association, proactive approaches to planning and zoning, and heightened trust in government.

None of the institutions studied has gathered this data, nor have outside organizations. In every case, the core populations needing further study can be identified and located – that is, WAC's farm and forest business constituencies, Hunter's mountaintop business community, and the businesses of Marbletown. Survey research on their economic indicators over time – profits, employment levels, and/or market share, for example – could establish a circumstantial connection with the efforts of the three institutional actors being studied; interview and focus group research with these populations could be expected to uncover their perceptions of positive influence from the efforts of WAC, CMF and the Marbletown government; based upon the above discussion on limits to disclosure, these would be expected to be less useful in uncovering negative influences – for which an anonymous survey instrument would serve better.

Moreover, none of these measures gives us a conclusive picture of the links between desired outcomes and the initiatives under study, which might be more fruitfully addressed through comparison between models with and without the initiatives under study here (e.g. Marbletown and neighboring Rochester, Hunter and nearby Windham, farms working with WAC and those declining to do so). Such studies, though, would be handicapped by the numbers of variables in play and the limits to comparability discussed above. A second path toward stronger understanding of causal relationships would be far more detailed qualitative comparative research based on more detailed interviews preceded by far more trust-building. Most valuable of all might be a combination of "insider" and "outsider" documentation running along parallel tracks, with testing of narratives for consistency.

Understanding the webs of institutional influence in play in these cases is a second important dimension, and a daunting one covering large numbers of dyadic relationships and their interplay. But in-depth investigation of the historic record is possible (including internal archives, if available, and news coverage), and unknown patterns might emerge from this. The most difficult aspect of social relations to assess, even qualitatively, is the dimension of informal relationships, the trust and reciprocity that give rise to cooperation and lowers costs

of getting things done. The study reinforces the value of these factors, as well as their intrinsic subjectivity. The boundary most in need of investigation may not be the one between local government and its citizens, but the one in each participant's mind between the public and private domains, governing what they will speak about and to whom.

Intentionally broad and only moderately detailed, the qualitative approach used here has scoped out a range of issues for further investigation. Additional light could be shed by moving, either, to a broader or a narrower focus. That is, Marbletown could be compared to other municipalities that have "reinvented government" over a similar timeframe and in similar depth, to see what alternate approaches are taken in structure and norms of functioning, and what outcomes are produced in terms of economic and social benefits. Alternatively, it would be beneficial to "drill down" into the organizational structures and social networks in the town in order to understand their dynamics in depth. Illuminating directions for research would include:

- The institutional learning process in play as a relatively stable administration carried out a sequence of initiatives that gave rise to the town's current landscape of policies, institutional structures, webs of participation, and distinctive political culture;
- The subsequent communication and learning process as knowledge from this era was transferred to the new administration, elected in 2003, and from there as bipartisan participation and cooperation were negotiated;
- The degree to which learning, about effective modes of public outreach and citizen participation, was built upon and passed along, and the channels of institutional memory that made a difference in this process;
- In expanding public participation over time, the comparative roles of social relationships, communities of interest and practice, and political appeals to the common good;
- The approaches to planning and action that have guided the citizen-government task forces and "spinoff" organizations such as the Growers Association and Arts Association;
- Power relations between elected government, citizen volunteers, and interest groups in the community today.

The weakest aspect of an interview-based descriptive study of this kind is its inability to address causal connections, beyond the speculation of participants, within changing socioeconomic and institutional systems. Many factors have been established as plausible in creating greater economic stability in the context of environmental protection and community goals, but their connection and relative weight is not satisfactorily explored this way.

In light of the basic issue of divergent narratives and the challenges of disclosure, as noted above, a fruitful although challenging direction for further study of these cases, and others like them, might be focus groups with skilled facilitation and an intentionally "layered" questioning protocol, beginning with a focus on areas of agreement and then carefully probing areas of divergence. A focus group in Marbletown, as followup to the interviews, was proposed by the author in the aftermath of the November 2003 election, but was discouraged by one key informant who said, "We are still licking our wounds here. Come back in six months."

Above all, this exploration points to the difficulties connected with research strategies based on detached observation and interviewing in situations involving sensitive civic dynamics, without much greater incentives and supports for disclosure and greater capacity for verification. Some of the most interesting issues – such as the kinds of connection between aspects of social relations and economic outcomes – can only be observed over time, from the thick of community engagement, if at all. This suggests that there is value in participatory action research that would allow a disciplined observer to build trust and access by helping in the achievement of community goals. By creating a different set of roles and relationships

among participants and researchers, this appears to be the most promising strategy for understanding relationships at the boundary of this complex civic structure.

Capitalizing on community for sustainable livelihoods in the Catskills and Mid-Hudson Valley

In each of the cases, economic outcomes are part of the picture. Marbletown, as a government, shows the least direct business development as compared to WAC and CMF; it has no financial resources dedicated to this specifically. But the "vision to action" strategy has helped to create a community where the regulatory climate for business is predictable and not onerous. It has also affected the economic landscape through community capacity building by creating support structures to preserve and expand commercial activity among farms and the arts. Since the conclusion of the study, the central strip mall has nearly doubled in size with expansion facilities for the local bank, realtor and other small businesses. The Growers Association has achieved high visibility with "buy local" billboards and fundraising events such as barn dances. The Arts Association continues to produce an annual studio tour and the summer picnic with hand-crafted lanterns, "Illuminations." A Hudson Valley Pottery Trail aimed at selling craft wares to tourists has been launched by a Marbletown artist. Chamber Music at Marbletown has begun on a small scale in rented space while fundraising for the initiative continues. Along Route 209, financed by New York State, several miles of biking and pedestrian pathways have appeared. The causal connections among these efforts cannot be proven, but their complementarity is clear.

In this respect, not only is power shared. Responsibility is also. The entrepreneurial nature of citizens and NGOs in actually implementing new development approaches is one of the most encouraging aspects of Marbletown's community based approach. NGOs, government and private sector actors are working together in the region as never before, pushed by necessity, aided by communications technology and a gradually increasing regional perspective, and supported by a tool kit of consensus building methods that provide no guarantees but generally increase institutions' viability.

In the rapidly suburbanizing rural communities of the Hudson Valley, and the challenged, polarized communities of the Catskills, as this study concludes, two economic and political paradigms are at war. One focuses on recruitment of external employers by the county and regional development corporations. The other paradigm is asset-based and thus implicitly community based, designing local economic activity to build upon human, social and natural resources in a manner that can be guided by the cases discussed here. The value-added enterprises supported by the Catskill Watershed Corporation, as well as the main street revitalization and capacity building work of the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, reflect this approach. So do the cases covered in this research. The Catskill Mountain Foundation's concerted work in adaptive re-use of Hunter's existing infrastructure has revitalized the town with a minimum of unexpected consequences, externalized costs, and controversies. The natural resource-based strategies of WAC are designed, primarily, around preserving working farm and forest landscapes and deriving economic benefits from environmental improvement. The Open Government process in Marbletown has created conditions for the human resources of knowledge workers, artists, and existing small businesses to function well and strengthen collaborative success.

These models demonstrate the diversity of ways to create economic networks that are decentralized yet synergetic, diversified and coordinated. They illustrate practical applications of the economics of Max-Neef as they satisfy local needs and involve local communities. The contrast here is subtle and somewhat subjective; the resort and gaming industries also point to "needs" they address, such as needs for entertainment and revenues. As rural communities debate the relative risks and contributions of these two visions, they are struggling to open up a discourse about sustainable livelihoods and quality of life that is rarely

achieved without difficulty but that ultimately allows for more conscious choices. These cases, above all, should provide encouragement to keep that prize in sight.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Occupations and Industries Illustrating Key Characteristics of Sustainable Livelihoods

1. Promote equity between and among generations, races, genders, and ethnic groups; in the access to and distribution of wealth and resources; in the sharing of productive and reproductive roles; and the transfer of knowledge and skills.
-- the fields of mediation, cross-cultural communication, cross-cultural training and organizational development;
-- workplaces with established salary ceilings or ratios of management to entry-level compensation;
-- worker-owned and/or community-owned enterprises;
-- "aggressively diverse" workplaces;
-- workplaces with effective programs to prevent discrimination based on age, ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, handicaps and other differences;
-- workplaces that encourage job-sharing and other flexibility schemes that facilitate the sharing of productive and reproductive roles between parents;
-- training and development professionals;
-- technology transfer enterprises;
-- librarians;
-- communications professionals;
-- communications technology developers and marketers;
-- workplaces that emphasize cross-training, mentoring, dual career tracks and other approaches to encourage knowledge transfer and nurture knowledge workers;
-- family businesses or job-sharing between couples that allow for more effective sharing of productive and reproductive roles;
-- facilitation of, and advocacy for, any of the above.

2. Nurture a sense of place and connection to the local community, and adapt to and restore regional ecosystems.
-- heritage tourism
-- ecotourism
-- environmental education, including arts and culture
-- transit-based development
-- enterprises that preferentially hire from nearby communities
-- land use planning
-- environmental restoration

3. Stimulate local investment in the community and help to retain capital within the local economy;
-- the fields of community economic development and enterprise facilitation; community banking;
-- locally owned and worker owned enterprises, especially those with effective work force development programs and policies of hiring and purchasing locally
-- "time dollar" and local exchange systems

4. Base production on renewable energy and on regenerating local resource endowments while reducing intensity of energy use, eliminating overconsumption of local and global resources and assuring no net loss of biodiversity.
-- the fields of renewable energy R & D and commercialization (with occupations including engineering, venture capital, legislative and electoral advocacy, regulatory administration, law, management and marketing)

-- chemical and environmental engineering to regenerate resource endowments and develop a nontoxic/ renewable materials base for the economy
-- restoration ecology theory and practice

5. Utilize appropriate technology that is ecologically fitting, socially just and humane, and that enhances rather than displaces community knowledge and skills.
-- possible positions in mechanical, civil, chemical and environmental engineering
-- technology policy analysts and advocates

6. Reduce as much as possible travel to the workplace, and distance between producers and consumers.
-- transit-based development
-- flexible manufacturing systems
-- industrial ecology
-- "buy local" programs (e.g. for food, crafts)
-- telework in any field

7. Generate social as well as economic returns, and value nonmonetized as well as paid work;
-- multiple-bottom-line enterprises with social missions
-- service industries
-- advocacy careers
-- "portfolio careers" that may combine several part-time jobs, a job and a business, or job(s) plus non-monetized work such as child care, civic participation or creative arts

8. Provide secure access to opportunity and meaningful activity in community life.
-- the relatively few fields with tenure or the equivalent, such as civil service, some unionized trades, and academia;
-- industries or workplaces with viable collective bargaining structures such as unions or guilds;
-- employee- and/or community-owned enterprises;
-- occupations and/or industries (or niches within them) that exhibit reasonable stability and coherence in their development through management skill and choices;
-- workplaces with employee community service programs and/or service sabbaticals.

Appendix 2

Putnam's 11 Dimensions of Social Capital
Condensed from Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey

Social trust: transcends from trust of *specific* individuals - combines trust of people in one's neighborhood, coworkers, shop clerks, co-religionists, local police, and finally "most people."

Inter-racial trust: looks at the extent to which different racial groups (whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians) trust one another and is thus one proxy for the health of inter-racial relations in a community.

Diversity of friendships: Index measuring demographic diversity of friendships including at least one personal friend who is: a business owner, was on welfare, owned a vacation home, is gay, is a manual worker, is White, is Black, is Hispanic, is Asian, is a community leader, and was of a different faith. These "bridging ties" are especially valuable in producing community solidarity and in forging a larger consensus on how communities need to change or work together.

Conventional politics participation: This measure looks at how many in our communities are registered to vote, actually vote, express interest in politics, are knowledgeable about political affairs and read the newspaper regularly.

Protest politics participation: composite of such forms as taking part in marches, demonstrations, boycotts, rallies, participating in groups that took action for local reform, participating in labor and ethnically-related groups.

Civic Leadership: this is a composite measure both of how frequently respondents were engaged in groups, clubs and local discussions of town or school affairs, and also whether the respondent took a leadership role within these groups.

Associational involvement: measured across 18 broad categories of groups (including an "other" category): organizations affiliated with religion; sports clubs, leagues, or outdoor activities; youth organizations; parent associations or other school support groups; veterans groups; neighborhood associations; seniors groups; charity or social welfare organizations; labor unions; professional, trade, farm or business associations; service or fraternal organizations; ethnic, nationality, or civil rights organizations; political groups; literary, art, or musical groups; hobby, investment, or garden clubs; self-help programs; groups that meet only over the Internet; and any other type of groups or associations.

Informal socializing: measures the degree to which residents had friends over to their home, hung out with friends in a public place, socialized with co-workers outside of work, played cards or board games with others, and visited with relatives.

Giving and volunteering: This dimension measures how often community residents volunteer at various venues and how generous they are in giving.

Faith-based engagement: This measure of faith-based engagement looks at: religious attendance and membership, participation in church activities besides services, participation in organization affiliated with religion, giving to religious causes and volunteering at place of worship.

Equality of civic engagement across the community: This measure is an average correlation across 8 different types of civic participation and across three measures of class (race, income, and education) to see how skewed civic participation in a community is. Since it is important to

the community health, this measure scores highly those communities with more egalitarian civic participation.

Appendix 3

New York City Watershed Agreement – Agencies Represented

City of New York

State of New York

United States Environmental Protection Agency

Coalition of Watershed Towns

individual watershed communities

Catskill Center for Conservation and Development

Hudson Riverkeeper

The Trust for Public Land

Open Space Institute

New York Public Interest Research Group

Source: Catskill Center for Conservation and Development (1997), "Summary Guide to the New York City Watershed Agreement," Arkville, NY. P. 2.

Appendix 4

Catskills Regional Development Timeline

1986 Federal Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments

1989 Surface Water Treatment Rule issued by U.S. EPA

September 1990 Draft Watershed Prtection Plan made public by NYC Department of Environmental Protection

March 1991 Coalition of Watershed Towns formed to oppose NYC watershed protection policies

March 1992 State regulations establishing conditions for required water filtration adopted by NYS Department of Health

Jan. 1993 One year waiver of filtration requirement granted to NYC by US EPA

December 1993, Second waiver of filtration requirement granted, to last through December 1996.

August 1994 Proposed watershed protection rules released by New York City Department of Environmental Protection

April 1995, New York Governor's Office convenes interested parties and assigns his counsel to mediate settlement agreements

November 1995 Conceptual agreement reached

January 1997 Memorandum of Agreement formally executed

Source: Catskill Center for Conservation and Development (1997), "Summary Guide to the New York City Watershed Agreement," Arkville, NY. PP. 3 - 4.

Appendix 5

Illustrative Eco-tourism and Sustainability Criteria

"Ecotourism: Principles, Policies and Practices"
Megan Epler Wood, 1993, The Ecotourism Society, North Burlington, VT, USA

SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES FOR NATURE TOUR OPERATORS

<u>Predeparture Programs -- Visitor Information And Education</u>

Prepare travelers to minimize their negative impacts while visiting sensitive environments and cultures before departure.

Prepare travelers for each encounter with local cultures and with native animals and plants.

Minimize visitor impacts on the environment by offering literature, briefings, leading by example, and taking corrective actions.

Guiding Programs -- Prevention Of Cultural Impacts

Minimize traveler impacts on local cultures by offering literature, briefings, leading by example, and taking corrective actions.

Use adequate leadership, and maintain small enough groups to ensure minimum group impact on destinations. Avoid areas that are undermanaged and overvisited.

Ensure managers, staff and contract employees know and participate in all aspects of company policy to prevent impacts on the environment and local cultures.

Give managers, staff and contract employees access to programs that will upgrade their ability to communicate with and manage clients in sensitive natural and cultural settings.

Be a contributor to the conservation of the regions being visited.

Provide competitive, local employment in all aspects of business operations.

Offer site-sensitive accomodations that are not wasteful of local resources or destructive to the environment that provide ample opportunity for learning about the environment and sensitive interchange with local communities.

Appendix 6

Thesis Case Studies – Informant Names and Affiliations

Catskills general:

Tom Alworth, Executive Director, Catskill Center for Conservation and Development
Helen Budrock, Associate Director, Catskill Center for Conservation and Development
Larry Roadman, CEO, Margaretville Telephone Company
Deborah Myer DeWan, former program director, Catskill Center for Conservation and Development (and representative to the New York City Watershed Agreement)
Alan Rosa, Executive Director, Catskill Watershed Commission
Bethia Waterman, Catskills Institute for the Environment
Diane Galusha, Director of Communications, Catskill Watershed Corporation
Peg Ellsworth, community development specialist, town of Roxbury
Paul Smart, publisher, Phoenicia Times and Greene County citizen activist
Richard Giles and Holley White, proprietors, Lucky Dog Farms

Watershed Agricultural Council:

Richard Coombe, former Chairman
Fred Hunecke, Chairman
Dan Palm, Acting Director
Allan White, former Executive Director
Amy Kenyon, program director, agricultural economic development
Victor Brunet, acting director, forestry program
Kevin Brazill, forestry economic development director

Catskill Mountain Foundation

Peter Finn, President
Chad Walsh, Director of Development
Cathy Penna, Business Manager
Scott Berwick, facilities manager at Hunter Mountain
Gillian Rem, merchant

Marbletown

Tom Jackson, Town Supervisor through the study period and subsequently chair of Community Development Committee (CDC)
Vincent Martello, Town Supervisor as of January 2004
Carl Pezzino, Chair of Community Development Committee through 2003
Will Husta, Chair of Planning and Zoning Committee
Peter Reynolds, Principal of Ashokan Architecture and Planning, active participant in open government process
Brooke Pickering-Cole, merchant and participant in Civic Participation subcommittee of CDC
Bruce Littlefield, Co-Chair of Marbletown Arts Council
Tim Sweeney, Town Board
James Terwilliger, Town Board
Mark McLean, Town Board
Al Wegener, Shawangunk Valley Scenic Byway project
Laurel Sweeney, President, Marbletown Business Association
Jenn Cairo, Environmental Committee (now Commission)
Mary Ranges, participant in Civic Participation subcommittee of CDC
Bruce Davenport, Rondout Valley Growers Association

Karen Williams, information technology consultant to town and member of Marbletown Business Association
Patricia Rowe, staff reporter, Kingston Daily Freeman covering Marbletown

Appendix 7

Catskill Mountain Foundation Summer 2003 Selected Programs

May 2003	
May 3	Taylor 2 2nd company of world's greatest living modern dance coreographer
May 10	Small Press Fair
May 24	"The Piano – King of Instruments" Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff and The Magic Circle of Golden Age Pianists with Vladimir Pleshakov
May 31	Waxing Poetic (Exhibit Opening)
June 2003	
June 7	Jean Cocteau Repertory Theater "The Triumph of Love" by Marivaux
June 7	Pulitzer Prize winning poet Maxine Kumin
June 8	Jean Cocteau Repertory Theater "The Importance of Being Earnest" by Oscar Wilde
July 2003	
July 5	Reflections of the Mountains (Exhibit Opening)
July 5	Chuck Jackson Show
July 6	Amati Music Festival Resident Artists (Faculty) Concert
July 11, 12, 13	Mountain Culture Festival
July 14, 15, 16	Woodlanders' Gathering
July 19	Amati Music Festival Guest Artist and Young Artist (Student) Concerts
July 19	Ben Murray and Siobhan Quinn (Free)
July 26	Amati Music Festival
August 2003	
August 2	Amati Music Festival Guest Artist and Young Artist (Student) Concerts
August 16	Puppet Pageantry (Exhibit Opening)
August 23	Jane Abramson Memorial Concert featuring "Barnaby": Master Juggler and Comedian
August 23	Sonando (Free)
August 23, 24	Puppetry Workshops
August 31	Cashore Marionettes
October 2003	
October 4	Theater Ten Ten "Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. William Shakespeare!"
October 4	The Elements Exhibit Opening

Appendix 8

Watershed Agricultural Council – Primary Institutional Partners

New York City Department of Environmental Protection: financing, program goals and evaluation

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: financing, technical assistance

American Farmland Trust: technical assistance for conservation easement program

U.S. Department of Agriculture (Natural Resources Conservation Service): technical assistance

Private foundations (e.g. W. K. Kellogg Foundation, O'Connor Foundation, Earth Pledge Foundation): program funding

New York State Soil and Water Conservation Districts: technical assistance

Cornell Cooperative Extension: technical assistance

State University of New York, College of Environmental Studies and Forestry: supporting research and monitoring

Cornell University: supporting research

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation: farm-scale monitoring

Consulting engineering firms: professional services

Independent nonprofits and land trusts: siting for model forests (Frost Valley YMCA), education and training partnerships (Catskill Forest Association, Empire State Forest Products Association)

Appendix 9

Marbletown "Vision to Action" top 10 citizen priorities

1. Community center
2. Trail development
3. Arts and Culture Commission
4. Sidewalk improvement
5. Farm preservation
6. Update comprehensive plan
7. Infrastructure enhancements
8. Multi-purpose community center
9. Communications upgrade
10. Teen center

Appendix 10

Marbletown Community Development Committee – subcommittee structure 2003

Executive Committee

Open Space

Environment and Water

Parks and Recreation

Economic Development

Public Safety

Streetscape

Arts and Culture

Community Participation

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Executive Summary

As a nation with the world's largest per capita ecological footprint (Venetoulis 2004), expanding social inequities and political polarization, the U.S. is facing a need to re-invent its economic life to overcome the errors of recent history including uncontrolled land use, unsustainable industrial development, and inadequate integration of social and environmental criteria into economic development. Ideally, because it is a meeting place where environmental, social and economic well-being must be reconciled, sustainable economic development at the local level could be a common ground for citizens across ideologies, and an arena for the integration of a community's commitments to quality-of-life issues from education to violence prevention to income distribution to public health. To move beyond the building of models and the uphill climb to political legitimacy, this notion must shift approaches from "social engineering" to "social movement" -- that is, a move away from primary reliance on the efforts of the few who are in formal positions of leadership, and into a more inclusive, generative collaboration among stakeholders, so that sustainable development activities are self-perpetuating and democratic, while at the same time having the buy-in of local political and economic power structures that is necessary for implementation. While much research exists on grassroots community change efforts, these often suffer from lack of financial resources and from "outsider" status. The present study, instead, looks at the potential for established institutions to change by consciously and strategically sharing power with stakeholders. Where is this vitality and adaptiveness present?

Two adjacent regions in eastern New York, the Catskill Mountains and Mid-Hudson Valley, form the study region. Situated within the New York City Watershed and an increasingly suburbanized peri-urban corridor along the Hudson River, this region is home to a growing population of ex-urbanites seeking security, quality of life, and environmental preservation, and to a base of long-time residents who greatly value home rule and economic pragmatism. In creating futures that meet any objective sustainability criteria and the approval of this diverse population, local governments and regional agencies must test the limits of possibility in creating solutions that are at once indigenous and integrative.

Structure of the study: Three introductory chapters orient readers to the theme, and to the socioeconomics of the study region. Then a second major section explores the social science literature for insights into the coalescence of social movements and the institutionalization of change. A chapter on research methods builds on the analysis of the issues and kinds of useful qualitative data, weighing options and establishing the course of the field work. Three cases are identified: The Catskill Mountain Foundation, Watershed Agricultural Council, and Town of Marbletown. These are explored in two chapters. CMF and WAC are discussed together as a pair of large, unorthodox development agencies formed to create the buy-in of initially disinterested publics (in one case dairy farmers and foresters, and in the other case the disillusioned client base for a mountaintop Main Street). Both these efforts illustrate the limits of good intentions, financial resources and an essentially managerial model – create it and they will come. Marbletown is explored separately as a local government painstakingly redesigned over more than ten years, to incorporate a wide bandwidth of citizen inputs and engagement. While still facing many challenges – environmental, socioeconomic and political – Marbletown has learned through many cycles of negotiation with stakeholders inside and outside government, and has created a greater foundation of trust, shared norms, reciprocity and collaboration by doing so.

The social science literature review frames a theory of social change through which to consider the desired end state of effective "social movement", drawing from fields including small group dynamics, team and partnership literature, the sociology of institutional and organizational change, and the sociology of social movements. The literature review gives rise to the theory that "grassroots" or democratically-driven social change occurs when individuals

are able to personalize the value of an agenda for changes in private behavior and public policy so that it becomes a significant driver for action, and when they are able to create social support structures that help them sustain effective action to advance this agenda. In other words, social change arises from individuals' changing experience and evaluation of their lives in the context of the wider world, and from resulting changes in social organization to support new values in action.

"Social capital" serves as an entry point into the exploration, although the limits in this conceptual framework are discussed at some length. There has been a ripening interest in the qualitative dimensions of social capital, among scholars and practitioners who have become convinced of its relevance to economic, civic and environmental renewal. Pretty and Ward conclude:

> It is clear that new thinking and practice are needed, particularly to develop forms of social organization that are structurally suited for natural resource management and protection at the local level. This usually means more than just reviving old institutions and traditions. More commonly, it means new forms of organization, association, and platforms for common action. The past decade has seen a growing recognition of the effectiveness of such local groups and associations for sustainable environmental and economic outcomes.

To assert that a strengthening of social organization is needed -- and not simply more assertive leadership, wiser strategies, or greater inspiration -- is to focus attention on the structural and relational aspects of social systems. It is to presume a contribution of formal political, social and economic structure, and of less formal social relationships, over and above the contribution of the participating individuals. In the language of systems theory, it is to accept the notion that whole systems show "emergent" properties not evident in the parts (Kelly 1994). In their review of the international literatures in sociology and community development, Pretty and Ward propose four essential dimensions of social capital:

- trust
- reciprocity and exchanges
- common rules, norms, and sanctions
- connectedness, networks and groups

These basic themes are borne out in the business and organizational literatures as well (e.g. Prusak and Cohen 2000).

Based on the literatures on individual and community dynamics that support individual behavior change and transmit new norms through social systems, then, it can be theorized that the emergence of "social movements" of self-perpetuating change, arising from institutional initiatives for sustainability, could progress through a three-stage model (where the stages can richly overlap and interweave):

1. **Enfranchisement through personalization**: Individual awareness-raising as issues become salient and meaningful, and people establish a sense of commitment.

2. **Efficacy through connection**: Coalescence of networks defined by shared values and interests, and by self-identification with the initiative for change – occurring when concerned individuals are appropriately distributed and outwardly-focused enough to find each other, and when mediating structures such as interest networks and committees function effectively; diffusion of new behaviors, within and beyond the initial networks, builds toward critical mass, when enough individuals are receptive and when the influence of catalytic leaders reaches their audiences.

3. **Institutional adaptation** to the new behaviors through policies and programs, when the pressures created by informal changes mount and when advocacy for institutional change is carried out effectively.

   What is most relevant to the research question, about these model elements, can be framed as a series of questions. For example:

   - What brings issues to the surface in the minds of individuals and the lives of communities?
   - How much must a network coalesce in order to be an effective conduit for civic engagement, ideas and consensus building, and how is that coalescence made visible?
   - What does critical mass look and feel like in a community, with respect to a new set of approaches to civic participation?
   - What conditions are present in institutions and their surroundings to make possible their receptivity to new practices?

Therefore the field study approach is qualitative. Interviews with informants representing key internal actors and external partners, combined with selected participant-observation in public meetings and review of the public record, provided the basis for conceptualizing the systems and constructing social histories with a focus on the research question.

The study takes a systems approach to examining individual actors in the context of their institutional and social relationships. It aspires to look freshly at the definition and scope of each system under study. Methodologically, this implies a need to probe formal and informal structures, inside and surrounding the organizations under study in a holistic fashion, and not to equate a variable's importance with its measurability. In Kinsley's words, "Culture and capacity are complex factors, and they matter greatly." Constructing a study whose scope covers multiple institutions, their internal dynamics, their relations to each other and to external actors, means combining elements of structuralist and post-structuralist worldview and methodological orientation.

Myrdal () reminds us that social research is not value-neutral. here is the set of ideals that the present study seeks to promote: a vision of civic and economic life in which a knowledgeable local population, connected within the regional and global economy but choosing to focus on local institutions and relationships, works in partnership with elected government and the private sector to plan and implement the development of economic institutions, so that the whole community's values as well as the requirements of the natural environment are reflected in community development plans and their implementation. A spirit of pluralism is therefore in play, allowing for wide diversity among communities. Reflection and deliberation are valued intrinsically and for the benefits of knowledge, trust, reciprocity and other forms of social capital that they help to generate. Enfranchised communities are valued for their ability to generate social knowledge that would otherwise be unavailable, and to make deliberative decisions of generally higher benefit to the community than they would otherwise be (without for a moment implying that any civic process will ever break completely free of "groupthink" and collective blunders). Because this study is rooted in an understanding of the relationship of individual cognitive, emotional and spiritual development, and the efficacy of community development processes, individual development, respect and autonomy, and a freedom from ideological ridigity, are additional underlying values. Sustainable communities, in the sense we are exploring here, are living social organisms with myriad flaws and with the continuous creative involvement of citizens and leaders in overcoming those flaws. To borrow a phrase now circulating among social entrepreneurs, they are "living economies" characterized by dynamism and self-awareness.

This study takes the form of an in-depth, naturalistic investigation of three contemporary local economic initiatives, each characterized as sustainable development by their initiators, achieving significant results in terms of their stated goals, and now facing new

levels of challenge in sustaining participation in order to empower the surrounding communities rather than fostering dependency. Because the unit of analysis here is a complex institution within a community, the human systems under scrutiny are not straightforward to define and map out; subsystems are overlapping; causal relations are multiple and ambiguous. Methodologically, this implies a need to cast a wide net for themes that cannot be preconceived, thus suggesting a reliance on more open-ended forms of questioning as a central part of the field research process.

In the course of the study, attention was drawn to the sensitive quality of interview studies of this kind, well beyond initial expectations. The potential of one informant's reflection to have an adverse effect on his or her reputation, or that of another -- in a context of overall political sensitivity -- created an unanticipated barrier to the level of frank reflection and interactive dialogue that was the premise of the initial research approach. It became clear that the necessary degree of trust – rather than building up in a few interviews – could only be built up over seasons of interaction, as illustrated by the slow cultivation of confidence, achieved over years by reporters covering several of the cases. In light of the consistency of testimonies, with each other and the public record, for the most part, this does not imply any limitation in the veracity or validity of narratives collected here, but points to their inevitable incompleteness and subjectivity. The limits of qualitative comparability, and the limits of disclosure, are explored in this context.

The Watershed Agricultural Council and Catskill Mountain Foundation are first explored as nontraditional development agencies. The first is governmental, the second is private, but their similarities outweigh these differences. Both have created business models, financial incentives, and strategic investments in the capacity of the communities they wish to influence, in the first case dairy farmers and in the second case mountaintop merchants and customers. Out of these changed economic relationships, they are placing their bets that trust and new possibilities will emerge. In both cases, this has been true, but only after enormous investment of funds, time, and human resources.

In each case, we see signs of a transition from "social engineering" to "social movement" not in the original institutional structures formed on the basis of an initial hypothesis, but in a second-stage innovation -- WAC's economic development initiatives, and CMF's networking and collaborative leadership to build mountaintop economic and social capacity.

From the standpoint of social equity and environmental sustainability, the Catskill Mountain Foundation's impacts have been significant and complex. Tourism, an economic mainstay in rural New York, is all about mobility and about interactions between people who would not otherwise need to deal with each other. An economy based on tourism must grapple with social stratification, between people with disposable income and people working at or near minimum wage to support their more affluent neighbors' recreation. The Foundation has consistently made programs and benefits available to local residents, including free classical and popular concerts, free tickets to festivals for town residents, low-cost commuter passes to Elderhostel programs, and availability of the farm for school and public tours. At the same time, its programming targets cultural tourists with disposable income, and it is doubtful that the Festivals would be financially viable or attractive to exhibitors otherwise. On the positive side, the Foundation's outreach to a relatively educated public may be connected with one social benefit for the town: voters in Hunter recently approved new taxes to support the public schools, soon after voters in neighboring Windham (a socioeconomically similar community) had rejected a similar measure.

It is clear that WAC's viability rests foremost on the negotiated balance of power and sense of equity between the upstate and downstate partners, by adhering to three principles demanded by the farmers that the program be voluntary, fully funded by New York City, and

locally controlled. The city's acceptance of these demands illustrates the potency of the partnership and the distastefulness of alternatives. In this way, the necessity of finding an alternative approach to an economically viable environmental protection – an alternative to both the city's investment in water filtration and the proposed agricultural regulations – has compelled the region to achieve levels of inventiveness and cooperation that were hardly thinkable a generation ago.

In Marbletown, primary success factors include:

- Elected & committee leadership – skill, cultivation, style
- Citizen volunteer skills & commitment
- Bipartisan structure of major initiatives
- Data-based initiatives (survey, visioning)
- "Dynamic incrementalism"
- Nontraditional use of committees
- Proactive
- Interface citizens/ government
- Interwoven social fabric ("network-y town")
- Lack of extreme crises

In each case, institutions have been created that are substantially more than the original visions of founders and early participants. That is, their emergent properties as systems cannot be predicted from examination of their component units. These projects may also have achieved some of their results by virtue of the staying power reflected in repeated cycles of activity, allowing for early participants to spread awareness of benefits by word of mouth and giving more hesitant members of the public time to build up motivation. In every one of the cases explored here, a nontraditional structure and approach have been key elements for success. Selected for their visibility and measurable impacts, and for the diversity of their approaches and resource bases, these cases could all have fallen within conventional community development paradigms.

The cases generally bear out the four-stage model, as well as literature review themes on social capital and communities of practice. Structures make a difference, over and above the good will of individual actors. Effective internal and external communication, including conflict management mechanisms, are essential, complex and delicate. No single approach to teambuilding and institutional leadership is obviously superior. Whatever their structures, viable communities are characterized by leaders who draw on external support and work collaboratively to solve common problems. The hard work that goes into building trust, reciprocity, and shared norms is evident throughout the cases. So is the destabilizing effect of even moderate amounts of confusion, mistrust, or missteps in coordination. The value of bridging and bonding social capital is evident, as is the enormous difficulty of creating suitable bridges across disputes of both interest and ideology (WAC), or even bridging between the cosmopolitan cultural standards of the Catskill Mountain Foundation and a village accustomed to an economy built on more ordinary tourist fare.

These models demonstrate the diversity of ways to create economic networks that are decentralized yet synergetic, diversified and coordinated. They illustrate practical applications of the economics of Max-Neef as they satisfy local needs and involve local communities. The contrast here is subtle and somewhat subjective. In contrast to the models of natural resource based industries and cultural tourism in the study communities, increasingly aggressive resort and gaming industries also point to "needs" – though of a different quality. As rural communities debate the relative risks and contributions of these two visions, they are struggling to open up a discourse about sustainable livelihoods and quality of life that is rarely achieved without difficulty but that ultimately allows for more conscious choices. These cases, above all, should provide encouragement to keep that prize in sight.

Samenvatting

De VS, als een natie met 's werelds grootste ecologische voetafdruk per inwoner (Venetoulis 2004), toenemende sociale ongelijkheid en politieke polarisatie, wordt geconfronteerd met het feit dat zij haar economie opnieuw zal moeten bepalen. Duurzame economische ontwikkeling op lokaal niveau, zou een algemene basis kunnen zijn voor inwoners met diverse ideologieën, en een arena voor de integratie van hun binding aan een gemeenschap. Meer dan alleen het bouwen van modellen en het streven naar politieke legitimiteit, moet het plaatselijk leiderschap voor duurzaamheid de benadering veranderen van "sociale constructie" naar "sociale beweging".Dat is een stap die van het primaire vertrouwen op de inspanningen van enkelingen in een formele leiderschapspositie overgaat naar een meer omvattende, algemene samenwerking tussen *stakeholders.* Daardoor wordt duurzame ontwikkeling zelfbestendig, democratisch en politiek zichtbaar. Er is al veel onderzoek is verricht naar de pogingen tot veranderingen door *grassroots* gemeenschappen. Daarom kijkt deze studie naar de mogelijkheden tot veranderen door gevestigde instellingen, op basis van een bewuste strategie, om macht met *stakeholders* te delen.

Twee aangrenzende regio's in het oosten van de staat New York, the Catskill Mountains en Mid-Hudson Valley, zijn het onderwerp van de studie. Gelegen nabij New York City en steeds groter wordende steden langs de Hudson River, is deze regio het thuis voor een groeiende bevolking die zoekt naar zekerheid, levenskwaliteit en milieubescherming, en naar een basis voor inwoners, die leefregels en economische zakelijkheid waarderen. Lokale overheden en regionale organisaties moeten de grenzen verkennen van mogelijke oplossingen, die zowel de integratie bevorderen bij het scheppen van een toekomst waar objectieve duurzame criteria en de goedkeuring van een diverse bevolking samenkomen.

Structuur van de studie: drie inleidende hoofdstukken oriënteren de lezers op het thema, en de sociaal-economische situatie van de bestudeerde regio. Vervolgens geeft een tweede deel van het proefschrift uitleg over de sociaal-wetenschappelijke literatuur met betrekking tot het inzicht in het bijeenbrengen van sociale bewegingen en de institutionalisering van verandering. Een hoofdstuk over onderzoeksmethoden geeft een analyse van de resultaten en soorten van kwalitatief bruikbare gegevens, die helpen opties af te wegen bij het vaststellen van de aanpak van het veldwerk. Twee tegengestelde soorten van instellingen zijn onderzocht: ten eerste, drie niet-traditionele non-profit instellingen, die zich in het bijzonder richten op sociale en milieubehoeften middels maatschappelijke ontwikkeling en technische hulp: *The Catskill Mountain Foundation (CMF)*, *Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC)*, en *Ulster County Development Corporation (UCDC)*. De drie organisaties worden besproken als grote, on-orthodoxe ontwikkelingsinstellingen, die uitsluitend kunnen slagen als zij de betrokkenheid creëren van in eerste instantie niet betrokken groepen (in het eerste geval melkboeren en boswachters, in het tweede geval de inwoners van een hoofdstraat op een bergtop, en in het derde geval de politieke basis voor een provincie, die eens economisch afhankelijk was van een grote IBM vestiging en nu een meer gediversificeerde economie moet scheppen en zeer verdeeld is over de manier waarop dit te doen). Deze pogingen illustreren een noodzakelijk beheersmodel. De gemeente Marbletown wordt afzonderlijk besproken omdat zij zich heeft ontwikkeld als een lokale overheid die gedurende meer dan tien jaar nauwgezet bezig is geweest om de grote, diverse inbreng en betrokkenheid van de burgers te verenigen. Hoewel nog vele uitdagingen – milieukundig, sociaal-eonomisch en politiek - worden ervaren, heeft Marbletown geleerd van de vele ronden van onderhandeling met stakeholders in en buiten de gemeente, en heeft daardoor een steviger fundament gelegd van vertrouwen, gedeelde normen, gelijke behandeling en samenwerking.

De sociaal-wetenschappelijk literatuur geeft een overzicht van diverse psychologische en sociologische literatuur, inclusief de dynamiek van kleine groepen, teams en partnerschappen, en de sociologie van institutionele en organisatorische verandering, inclusief

lerende organisaties, “communities of practice” en kennisnetwerken. Dit overzicht is de basis voor de theorie dat de opkomst van “sociale bewegingen” van zelfbestendige verandering zich zou kunnen ontwikkelen in drie-fasen model (waarin de fases elkaar overlappen en vervlechten):

1. Vrijmaking door verpersoonlijking
2. Doelmatigheid door verbondenheid
3. Institutionele aanvaarding

Om onverwachte inzichten van ervaren praktijkmensen die de sleutelfiguren zijn, mee te nemen is de veldstudie kwalitatief van aard. Interviews met informanten als interne sleutel actoren en externe partners, gecombineerd met selectieve participerende observatie in openbare bijeenkomsten en een inzicht in archieven, leverde de basis voor het conceptualiseren van de systemen en constructies in de vorm van een sociale geschiedenis met een focus op de onderzoeksvraag. De studie kent een systeembenadering, die de formele en informele structuren alsmede de interne en externe omgeving van de betrokken organisaties door een holistische benadering onderzoekt. Het geeft Michael Kinsley’s opvatting weer dat “Cultuur en capaciteit cruciale complexe factoren zijn”.

Het uitgangspunt is hier dat sociaal onderzoek niet waarde-neutraal is. De onderliggende waarden van deze studie houden in: een visie van burgerlijk en economisch leven, waarin een goed ingelichte lokale bevolking, verbonden met de regionale en mondiale economie, zich concentreert op lokale instellingen en relaties, werkt in partnerschappen met gekozen overheidsorganisaties en de private sector, om de ontwikkeling van economische instellingen te plannen en te implementeren, zodat de waarden van de hele gemeenschap alsmede de vereisten voor de natuurlijke omgeving worden weerspiegeld in algemene ontwikkelingsplannen en de implementatie ervan. Overweging en bedachtzaamheid worden intrinsiek gewaardeerd zowel voor de kennisbehoefte, het vertrouwen en de gelijke behandeling als voor andere vormen van sociaal kapitaal die zij helpen voort te brengen. Vrijgemaakte gemeenschappen worden gewaardeerd om hun vermogen sociale kennis te genereren die anders niet beschikbaar zou zijn, en het maken van weloverwogen beslissingen van een groter nut voor de gemeenschap dan anders (zonder te ontkennen dat enig burgerlijk proces ooit volledig vrij zal zijn van *groupthink* en gezamenlijk falen).
Persoonlijke ontwikkeling, respect en autonomie, en een vrijheid van ideologische onbuigzaamheid, zijn toegevoegde onderliggende waarden. Duurzame gemeenschappen, zoals die hier worden verkend, zijn levende organismen met ontelbare zwakke plekken en met de voortdurende creatieve betrokkenheid van burgers en leiders om deze zwakke plekken te overwinnen. Om nu een uitdrukking te gebruiken, die circuleert onder sociale ondernemers, zijn zij ‘levende economieën’ die gekenmerkt worden door dynamiek en zelfbewustzijn. In de loop van het onderzoek werd de aandacht getrokken voor de gevoeligheid van de kwaliteit van dit soort interview onderzoek. De grenzen van kwalitatieve vergelijkbaarheid, en de grenzen van openbaring, zijn in deze context verkend.

In elk van de niet-traditionele instellingen, zien we bescheiden tekenen van een overgang van ‘sociale constructie’ naar ‘sociale beweging’ -- niet in de originele institutionele structuren, gevormd op basis van een eerste hypothese, maar in een tweede-fase innovatie – economische ontwikkelingsinitiatieven, netwerken en gezamenlijk leiderschap om ‘’top’’ economische en sociale capaciteit te bouwen, bij behoud van institutioneel mandaat. In Marbletown, waar de decentralisatie van het gezag en de betrokkenheid van deelnemers zichtbaar is gesystematiseerd, houden de eerste succesfactoren in:

- Gekozen en gecommitteerd leiderschap – vaardigheid, cultuur, stijl
- Burger-vrijwilliger vaardigheid en betrokkenheid
- Twee partijen structuur bij belangrijke initiatieven
- Initiatieven gebaseerd op een gegevensbestand (onderzoek, vooruitzien)
- “Dynamisch incrementalisme”
- Niet-traditioneel gebruik van bestuur
- Pro-actieve oriëntatie

- Raakvlak burgers / overheid
- Verweven sociale structuur (''netwerk stad'')
- Afwezigheid van extreme crises

Deze projecten kunnen hun resultaten deels door middel van uithoudings-vermogen bereikt hebben, zoals weergegeven in herhaalde activiteitencycli, die de eerste deelnemers toestaan om hun bewustzijn van voordelen in woord en geschrift te verspreiden alsmede het geven van tijd aan aarzelende leden van de gemeenschap om motivatie op te bouwen. In elk van de hier behandelde cases is een niet-traditionele structuur en benaderingswijze het sleutelelement voor succes geweest.

De cases bevestigen het drie-fasen model alsmede het literaire overzicht van de thema's als sociaal kapitaal en "communities of practice". Structuren maken meer verschil dan de goede wil van individuele actoren. Effectieve communicatie, inclusief conflictmanagement, is essentieel, complex en moeilijk. Geen enkele benadering van teambuilding en institutioneel leiderschap is duidelijk superieur. Marbletown als een zich aanpassende gemeenschap wordt gekenmerkt door leiders die zich baseren op externe en interne steun en die gezamenlijk werken aan het oplossen van algemene problemen. Dit moeilijke werk om vertrouwen op te bouwen alsmede gelijke behandeling en gedeelde normen te realiseren wordt zichtbaar in de cases. Hetzelfde geldt voor het destabiliserende effect van zelfs een bescheiden verwarring, wantrouwen, of een misstap in coördinatie. Deze modellen laten de diversiteit aan manieren zien om economische netwerken te creëren, die zowel gedecentraliseerd als synergetisch zijn. Wanneer plattelands gemeenschappen de relatieve risico's en bijdragen van alternatieve ontwikkelingsmodellen bediscussiëren, zouden deze cases ten minste de aanmoediging moeten geven om die prijs in het vizier te houden.

Endnote

Most of this research was done between 2001 and 2003. The author is continuing in exploration of community sustainable development efforts, and welcomes correspondence:

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