

**‘Social Capital, Community, and the Dialectics of Globalization’**

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© Gene Barrett, Ph.D.  
Professor of Sociology,  
Saint Mary’s University,  
Halifax, N.S.  
B3H 3C3

[gbarrett@stmarys.ca](mailto:gbarrett@stmarys.ca)

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## ABSTRACT

This paper develops a framework for understanding the impact of globalization on community-based social capital. Focussing on the impact of differentiated commodity chains, I argue that global processes are diffuse and present communities with a dialectic which can be at the same time both constraining and empowering. Communities themselves are not homogeneous. They incorporate solidaristic and exclusionary dynamics which exist side-by-side, in a delicate balance. This complexity is both a source of resilience and the bane of their existence. The 'social capital' literature largely underestimates both the dynamics of resilience and the deep-seated nature of exclusion in communities. When we are discussing rural revitalization we need to stress the transformative potential of social capital.

## **Introduction**

A popular view of community development embraces the idea that if people come together they can move mountains. Sociologically speaking, interaction builds trust, trust is the basis of solidarity, solidarity is the engine of collective agency, collective agency can transform oppressive social structures. Such collective action is referred to as social capital. This is a very optimistic view indeed, particularly if the structures that need moving are global in scale, or the communities themselves are internally divided. It is good for communities to be optimistic, but they also need to be realistic about the pitfalls and dangers that they face. In the discussion that follows I wish to consider the complex nature of social capital within the context of community, and what this means for communities attempting to achieve some measure of sustainable development under conditions of economic globalization. I will argue that modernity in its many and diffuse guises presents communities with a dialectic which is at the same time both constraining and empowering. But, communities are not simply passive receptacles: 'it takes two to tango'. Communities themselves need to be in a certain place to seize upon the opportunities presented, otherwise things can actually become worse. There is no escaping the risks that modernity introduces to the development equation.

## **Social Capital**

Social capital has become a very popular term of late (see, Fine,1999; Flora,1998; Schulman and Anderson,1999; Wall, etal,1998). It is used to capture that intangible collective benefit people experience by acting in concert for mutual benefit. It is commonly referred to as that extra dividend which accrues through solidaristic action. But, the circumstances under which social capital is generated, and who accumulates the dividend varies enormously.

One perspective on social capital argues that community-wide norms and values generate a level of trust and solidarity which have tangible benefits for communities in the form of social capital (see, Bridger and Luloff,1999; Flora,1998; Wilkinson,1991). Attachment to community is seen to generate a commonality of purpose which transcends the disruptive and fragmenting effects of social cleavages such as class, gender, race and ethnicity (see, Wilkinson, 1991). Interaction that may be based on enlightened self-interest enhances the 'public good' (See,

Besser, 1998; Bhattacharyya, 1995; Piliavin and Charng, 1990; Widegren, 1997). Social capital is said to facilitate two types of tangible benefits: one reduces costs, the other increases rewards and opportunities. Gherardi and Masiero (1990) and Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) argue that solidarity is the basis for a comparative economic advantage enjoyed by tightly knit communities. Lower transaction costs are realized through improved trust, fairer and more effective resource allocation, and improved conflict resolution (Coleman, 1988; Gherardi and Masiero, 1990; Ostrom, 1990). Solidarity has been found to be closely correlated with community development (Besser, 1998; Flora, 1998), either directly, or mediated through civil society (Putnam, 1993).

The 'dark side' (Schulman and Anderson, 1999) of social capital is acknowledged to stem from endemic fracture lines in communities that reflect group interests. Social capital can have negative outcomes for individuals and groups, notably through exclusion. Flora (1999) differentiates two forms of social capital: horizontal social capital, which is associated with the kinds of reciprocal relations and networks among individuals with similar positions described above, and hierarchical social capital, involving networks and solidarity amongst individuals with different interests. Hierarchical social capital can be based on patronage and paternalistic leadership in community settings, yielding outcomes which disproportionately benefit elites, marginally reward other groups, or exclude some completely (see also, Duncan, 1999; Schulman and Anderson, 1999).<sup>i</sup> Where does this leave us? It is Flora's (1998) contention that communities with moderate levels of economic inequality differ from those with high levels of inequality, where "...the elite separates itself socially and politically from the rest of the community and does things "on behalf" of others...."(501). Social capital in communities of moderate inequality can benefit from elite leadership tempered by norms of trust and solidarity (see also, Allen and

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<sup>i</sup> **ENDNOTES**

1. If an oppressive reality is masked by the rhetoric of solidarity, while the illusion is taken as legitimate and real, then the conditions underscoring hierarchical social capital seem to fit what Bourdieu (1994) terms "symbolic violence". Following Barth (1981), Ensminger and Knight (1997) argue that asymmetries in power and resources structure individual choice such that the powerless are more likely to comply with norms and defer to others definitions of reality, while the powerful are more likely to get away with deviations from established norms or the ability to define new patterns of acceptability (4-5). A critical approach to understanding norms, culture, and values as 'diagonistics' of power and resistance has emerged around the work of Bourdieu (1977) and Scott (1985) (see, Abu-Lughod, 1990; Healey, 1999). This approach examines the hegemonic nature of values and symbols in reproducing the entrenched position of power-holders, inequality and oppression.

Dillman, 1994; Apostle et.al, 1998; Besser, 1998).

I would argue that both characterizations of social capital, are too simplistic. The horizontal and the hierarchical are not distinct types but poles on a continuum. An argument which I have developed elsewhere in more detail (see, Barrett, 2000), is that communities incorporate solidaristic and exclusionary dynamics which exist side-by-side, in a delicate balance. This complexity is both a source of resilience for communities, and the bane of their existence. The 'social capital' literature underestimates the embedded nature of exclusion. My argument is as follows: first, the impact of economic globalization often accelerates an exclusionary dynamic in some cases eroding social capital, in other cases, co-opting it; second, in circumstances where relations of solidarity are strong, social capital can act as a lens through which globalization is mediated, allowing communities to actually seize upon various opportunities that are presented; third, social capital can also have a transformative effect, reversing relations of exclusion and giving communities a resilience to crisis. An irony about the social capital literature is that it is largely about structures, networks, boundaries, norms. But this is not all that there is to community. "People make the world go round". Structures are poor predictors about how people behave or go about changing their communities. My argument implies that we need to add an element of agency to the equation, so that the 'transformative' potential of social capital becomes clear. VanderPlaat (1998) refers to this side of social capital as 'communicative spaces'. Finally, I argue that the dialectic of globalization stems from its interaction with social capital in these 'communicative spaces'. They offer disenfranchised groups the kind of 'discursive categories' Healey (1999) thinks are needed for system-transforming action to flower. (see also, Josephides, 1999).

### **The Dialectics of Globalization**

Globalization is a hot topic these days. It is a term which has become part of everyday parlance, it is a term that invokes passion and emotion, it is a term that both explains and justifies, in other words it is a term, like 'community', or 'sustainable development' which any self-respecting social scientist employs at his or her peril. Call me naive, but I think the term is still useful as long as we are careful about what we mean. As with the term 'community' I think we have to approach it dialectically in order to identify both dominant and counter-veiling trends. For me

globalization involves three distinct but interconnected structures: one economic, one political, and one cultural. Given the limitations of space in this paper, I would like to focus on a number of dominant and counter-veiling trends associated with economic globalization.

Corporate capital has a long and regrettable history when it comes to rural communities. Resource control, mergers, restructuring and downsizing, shutdowns are experiences which are all too common. Externalized decision-making, transfer and captive intrafirm pricing, and the threat of closure and relocation are all factored into an unequal exchange between capital and the countryside based on surplus drain, inappropriate technology, community dependence. of capital for over 100 years. We do not need to rehearse this perspective here.

Recent scholarship on commodity chains (see, Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, 1994) offers a perspective on the complexities of global capitalism which can affect community development in quite different ways. Commodity chain analysis focuses on the life cycle of any commodity. The stages it, or its components, goes through that are separated by time, production function -- raw material inputs, processing, distribution, consumption, and space -- global divisions of labour. Each segment in the chain is subject to the law of equalization: what Marx called the tendency for the rate of profit to equalize. This is the 'engine of growth' in the system, or as Schnaiberg and Gould (1994) prefer to call it "the treadmill of production". When one is talking about capitalism, the fundamental goal has to do with competitive profitability. At any given location on the commodity chain, capital has at its disposal fundamentally just two ways of responding to the competitive growth dynamic: revenue-seeking strategies and the cost-driven strategies. We tend to see monopolistic relations in segments of the commodity chain where capital is in a position to reduce costs or gain a significant control over the market. We tend to see competitive relations in some or all segments of a commodity chain where such control strategies cannot be garnered, or where the risks of doing so make divestment strategies more cost effective.

What do these structures impact rural communities? We can pretty much eliminate revenue-seeking strategies as a dominant factor behind capital's location in the countryside. Rural communities however remain central to capital's global expansion in terms of a variety of cost-driven factors such as raw material inputs, waste disposal, labour costs, and tax minimization. I would like to focus on resources (inputs and waste) and labour in order to explore both the impact and the contradictions associated with economic globalization, and

where social capital fits in the process.

### Resource Sector

Two hundred years after the industrial revolution, nature continues to provide humanity with resources of such diversity and quality that human efforts to mimic them pale in comparison. Abundance and cheapness are probably the most important factors here. Hydro power, boreal forests, the wild fishery, alluvial soils, mineral deposits, hydrocarbons, aquifers are all examples of natural resources which are the backbone of modern society. Nature continues to provide human society with a tremendous advantage when it comes to complex organically based processes that require long maturation cycles involving species interaction. Resiliency and dynamic adaptation are particularly important functions here that humans have not been able to replicate. As Schnaiberg and Gould (1994) observe, ecosystems have a built in "shock absorption" capacity. A further benefit that nature provides is habitat regeneration. Ecosystems rely on systemic processes that recycle a significant volume of material back into the local environment protecting its long-term ability to be productive.

Capital seeks a competitive advantage when it comes to the benefits nature provides. Competitive cost strategies compel it to try to do so on an exclusive basis. If capital is receiving a 'gift' from nature, then that gift allows it to earn an extra surplus, or a surplus profit. Following classical economists of the day, Marx (1967) termed this surplus profit a form of rent. Rent accrues to the firm that is in a naturally advantageous position to reap the economic advantages that nature has provided it vis-a-vis its competitors elsewhere, the current state of technological development, market demand for particular commodities, the comparative cost of substitutable commodities, and the comparative cost of supplies of the same resource in other locations. We see rent where access to resources is easily restricted by high entry costs or through property enclosure. For instance in the mineral and mining industry, in forestry, and in certain capital intensive segments of the agricultural and fishing industries.

Some fairly fundamental aspects of nature and the environment represent obstacles to 'nature control' strategies by capital. For example there is a distinct mismatch between the way nature goes about doing things -- in long-term cycles, with wide interconnections and scope, characterized by chaos and indeterminate outcomes -- and capital's need for predictability and

control, in particular, its need for throughput efficiencies, in the short-term. A number of obstacles can be identified, with varying degrees of importance, in resource industries such as agriculture, forestry or fishing. I wish to examine two major factors resource access and production cost.

Capital seeks access to resources which can give it a cost-driven competitive advantage, but if these resources are too remote, or difficult to access, nature represents a barrier to capital accumulation. Marchak (1995) in her definitive study of the global forest industry observes,

Though land may be classed as "exploitable", industry cannot count on all the wood. Some timber is theoretically exploitable but inaccessible, too distant from markets, or not within reasonable distance from good transportation routes; some is decadent or immature and not economic to log (32; see also 1991).

Overtime as resources with ease of access are exhausted, technological development has been put into making the exploration and extraction of more inaccessible resources cost effective. Undersea mineral exploration is a good example of this tendency.

However, heavy technology can be counterproductive in the drive to access resources. As abundance of the best quality resources diminishes and prices go up matching scarcity in supply, more sensitive, versatile and selective harvesting technology may be required to cope with more inaccessible terrain or low species compositions. This is an interesting current tendency in forestry and fishing (See, Apostle and Barrett, 1992). The relative ability of different types of capital to adjust technological applications is an important competitive issue and one that has dramatic implications for the kinds of transformation communities mired in unsustainable practices are making...but that is getting ahead of the story.

The second issue of access is the competitive threat that excessive ease of access represents to capital. If everyone has access to a resource of value, its value in terms of competitive edge it can offer is diminished. Put another way, why invest in the costs of exploration and extraction, if there is no guarantee of a stream of income from this investment in the future. What if someone else can gain access to the resource in the future and cut into that stream of income without investing in its development? Here we encounter the thorny social

issue of property relations: who 'owns' the resources and what entitlements such rights give them.

Communal resources are generally subject to husbandry rules that govern access and use in order to protect long-term sustainability for communities. Chief among these are restrictive conservation practices. Selective harvesting and seasonal use norms, resource utilization governed by principles of need and sharing are however anathema to the strategies and goals of resource capitalism. This type of property right is an obstacle to capital (see, Bromley, 1991). Capital's need for privatized access coupled with the right to buy and sell that right on an open market is the crux of the resource tenure problem. The first significant impact of economic globalization on social capital. Capital needs to dismantle communal ownership and management of property. This is done to allow unfettered decision-making vis-a-vis competitive revenue and cost imperatives, and private appropriation of resource rents.

Production costs are the most commonly referred to obstacle in the literature on resource capitalism, particularly agriculture (see, Blanc, 1994; Mann and Dickenson, 1978) Capital is said to face some inherent cost inefficiencies in the resource sector related to the differences between labour time -- the time in which labour is productively employed -- and production time -- the time it takes to produce the item in question. The greater the differential, the more physical capital lays idle and unproductive. The differential is great in agriculture and even greater in forestry as a consequence of maturation time. To cope, capital can adopt essentially three methods, each of which has distinct effects on rural communities. The first is to attempt to control or replace nature through specialized production processes. The second is to use locational mobility to appropriate only optimal quality resources. The third, which will be discussed in the following section on labour, is to allow rural communities to absorb the costs associated with production time and risks.

To reduce product maturation time and increase yields capital manipulates nature. The 'green revolution' in agriculture was essentially about plant breeding and the development of hybrid seeds in agriculture for this purpose. Hog and beef feed lots, plantation agriculture and forestry, and aquaculture in the fishery are illustrations of capital's attempts to bring the quality variability and natural production cost issues under control. In so doing of course capital undermines two of nature's strengths (See, Rissler and Mellon, 1993). First, monoculture eliminates biodiversity, a central factor in natural resilience. Second, resource specialization is

based on exporting nutrients out of the ecosystem within which they are grown thus preventing the natural recycling of organic material. The whole premise of cash crop agriculture for instance, is channeling higher portion of available light energy, soil nutrients and water into fewer crops, which are exported around the globe. The fundamental ecological problem associated with land in both forestry and agriculture is therefore making up for net nutrient losses in the system artificially.

Over the long-term the use of chemicals in monoculture which are designed to reduce short-term production costs, create a negative feedback in the form of unwanted environmental effects which increase rather than reduce risks in the long-term. The development of chemical dependent hybrid seeds in modern agriculture may increase short-term surpluses, but monoculture emasculates nature's defenses against disease. The application of increasing amounts of chemicals to the environment brings added long-term risks as pests and diseases mutate and adapt, threatening crops on a larger scale than ever before.

The free mobility of capital not only makes competition possible, but it subjects any given community resource to the same requisite revenue and cost standards that dominate elsewhere. Firstly, the prospects of higher profit rates in other sectors will often underlie disinvestment strategies by corporations. They are only interested in the resource for the time that it can compete with other investment opportunities. Secondly, the mobility of capital facilitates a cavalier attitude towards local resource use since the costs associated with local futures are measured against the immediate benefits of resource exploitation in some other location. Capital mobility therefore is a 'given' in the growth-driven system, and one that has dramatic effects on communities. But to explore the significance of this 'given' we need first to appreciate the 'future orientation' principle that underlies social capital.

Future orientation refers to the centrality of long-term considerations in decision-making. Given the bounded nature of social capital, rural people are more likely to consider the indirect or unforeseen future consequences of their actions and internalize these costs rather than put them off for future generations to worry about. The high degree of interpersonal and intergenerational attachment to place makes for a low propensity to discount the future.

Individuals have a shared past and expect to share a future. It is important for individuals to maintain their reputations as reliable members of the community.

These individuals live side by side and farm the same plots year after year. They expect their children and grandchildren to inherit their land. In other words their discount rates are low. If costly investments in provision are made at one point in time, the proprietors - or their families - are likely to reap the benefits (Ostrom, 1990: 88).

Observers have often noted specific features of resource utilization which incorporate the future orientation principle. For example, crop dispersion incorporates water and soil conservation practices, utilizing tree breaks, stone lines and hedge rows, ground cover, hoe rather than deep till planting techniques, all act to reduce the risk of topsoil erosion in the long-term. Seasonal resource flexibility -- 'switching off' -- functions to reduce pressure on any given resource, particularly at vulnerable points in time, and ensures its renewability in the long-term. Crop rotation, fallowing, organic manuring all incorporate the same principle: maintaining a balance between human needs and the long-term ability of the resource to renew itself.

The contrast between these kinds of sustainable practices that essentially mimic natural systems, and that used by capital to overcome nature's obstacles could not be more stark. 'High grading' is one of capital's answers to natural variability. Harvesting is targeted toward a select range of resource that are the most valuable at that moment in time. If rent is high in one location, high grading practices will be pursued there. If it is declining in one location relative to another, capital will shift its efforts to the new venture. Locational mobility is behind the widespread tendency toward global sourcing of raw materials, and the inevitable restructuring decisions that precipitate plant shutdowns. It would be safe to say that if capital was not able to be as globally mobile in the pursuit of rent, and it would expend greater investment in gaining competitive advantage through innovation rather than exploitation of virgin resources. But locational mobility is part of a wider problem for rural communities that of a commercial bias to short-term investment strategies. This bias has a number of manifestations: First, a future discounting bias in operational decision-making. Future discounting refers to choices which favor current and intermediate goals over long-term ones, particularly where long-term goals would mean foregoing benefits in the short and intermediate term. Ostensibly future discounting is based on two assumptions: that too many things about the future are unpredictable and

uncertain compared to the present, to a risk-averse capital<sup>ii</sup> it is foolhardy to forego real current benefits; second, through human ingenuity and technological substitution, the future will take care of itself so why postpone current consumption of resources (Bromley, 1991; Toman, 1994). Discounting the future is often based on a privileging of commercial values over community 'existence' or heritage values. If everything has to be reduced to its commercial exchange value for purposes of comparison in benefit-cost assessments, those items with high commercial exchange values, and those to which large current streams of income are attached, have precedence.(See, Bromley, 1991; Burningham and O'Brien, 1994). This rationale underscores harvesting and planting practices which have detrimental effects on ecosystem habitat. Since wetlands, wildlife or hardwood trees have lower commercial value than land, they are discounted; since long-term environmental effects of intensive land-use practices have no immediate costs they are discounted.

If one has the attitude the future is someone else's problem then, overexploitation of commercially valued resources become the rational thing to do. In fact it becomes irrational to leave it for the future, since there is now a clear 'opportunity cost' (current benefits foregone) in doing so. This short-term bias has insidious effects on the rural communities. It acts like a spider's web drawing people in and trapping them into certain forms of decision-making and actions which are unsustainable. The future orientation principle underlying social capital is eroded by short-term commercialization. We will return to this effect below.

The impact on communities of capital's waste cost reduction strategies is a special case of resource use that ties in with our discussion of future discounting. Since waste and pollution represents a tremendous cost to capital, where third parties, either now or in the future, can be made to bear these costs, competitive advantage is gained.<sup>iii</sup> The commons -- atmosphere, rivers,

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<sup>ii</sup>2.Risk is a basic obstacle capital faces in the resource sector. Some resources are subject to high risk associated with climate such as drought, perturbations such as forest fire, or storms, pests and disease. In some cases, risk is multiplied by time as investments have to be tied up in resource development for long periods, during which the likelihood of any of the aforementioned factors increases. Risk is also a function of how much capital has tied up in something. Not only does this relate to the 'normal' issue of short-term capital cost, but, as environmentalists have pointed out, it relates to the new risks that technology itself introduces into the equation. (See, Perrow, 1984).

<sup>iii</sup>3.Economists refer to the externalization of costs as the tendency to make third parties bare the burden of negative outcomes and consequences of business decisions.(See Bromley, 1991) Put another way, it refers to capital's ability to make communities bear the burden of the costs of its operations. Korten (1995) argues that cost externalization is a predictable response to competitive pressures:

Market forces create substantial pressure on business to decrease costs and increase

lakes and oceans, wetlands -- remain the easiest place to dump wastes, particularly where it remains unseen or can be dispersed by natural circulation.

We see relocation of physical plant to jurisdictions with lax or nonexistent laws governing waste disposal or places where land values are low and local populations are facing marginalized economic situations. Not infrequently these locations are minority ethnic communities (see, Bullard, 1990). In other words the externalization of environmental costs is differentially borne by vulnerable populations. Unlike urban dwellers, rural populations around the world rely heavily on the commons for their livelihood. As we have seen, the management of communal property, and the collective security that results, is a central aspect traditional social capital. Environmental degradation of common resources is something making that rural communities around the world have been exceedingly vulnerable to. The erosion of collective security leads to economic distress, out-migration, and community marginalization. Social capital is effectively dissipated.

### Labour

The conflict over labour in rural communities is the primordial issue that capital faced in its earliest days which Marx identified as the "primitive accumulation" problem: how to compel independent producers to work for wages. There are at least two separate aspects to this problem for capital. First, how to strip away the options producers have available to them in rural communities such as self-provisioning, independent access to a means of subsistence or market, self-employment and control of time and effort, a tradition of independent problem-solving and an innovative spirit, individual ownership and control of the instruments of labour and so on. More to the point, how to strip producers from their communities, from access to social capital. Mutual support and communality are hallmarks of community-based social capital.

Second, coupled with these options goes a cultural norm some have identified as an "anti-

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profits by increasing efficiency. The corporate rationalists fail to mention that one way firms increase their 'efficiency' is to externalize more of their costs. The more powerful the firm, the greater its ability to take this course (77).

The environmental costs that communities endure stem from pollution and waste, primary resource depletion, habitat degradation, and loss of biodiversity. The negative consequences of waste disposal are not borne by capital but by communities and people, in fact, usually future generations, which makes it even easier for capital since the actual environmental costs of resource depletion or habitat destruction become hard to document.

market" mentality, and others have called the "moral economy" principle.(see, Popkin, 1979; Scott, 1976) The work ethic is embedded in a wider communality norm that governs how hard people work and to what end. Collective security takes precedence over individual gain, meaning people may have higher loyalties in the choice of what they decide to do and when than punching a time clock. This may mean in practice working for a wider kin or community group, placing a premium on socializing, visiting, or it may involve placing spiritual and religious priorities above economic ones. Butz (1996) observes in fact that the wider cultural framework represented by ritual, myth, belief and religious practice presents a vital mechanism communities utilize to resolve potential conflict and preserve cohesion.

Two strategies have been pursued by capital to cope with these obstacles: economic and political. Roughly speaking each has incorporated both incentives -- a 'carrot' -- and coercion -- a 'stick'. Economically capital attempts to make independent producers dependent in some way so as to gain leverage over production choices and the disposition of labour. Historically this has been accomplished through control over various segments of the commodity chain in question such as input or output prices. The 'carrot' associated with access to exotic or scarce products draws rural producers into a cash economy. Once money or technology is borrowed and debts are incurred, rural producers find themselves in a 'cost-price' squeeze which gives capital coercive power over production decisions, productivity rates and so on.(See, Buttel and Newby, 1980; Winson, 1988; 1990) Not only does this economic control create dependence, but it leads rural producers to start approaching the resource in the same way that capital does : privileging commercial values, discounting the future, acting individualistically -- a '**commanding heights**' effect. Some producers gain, others lose as inequalities become more apparent. The cohesion and trust on which social capital is so fragilely based is replaced by factionalization, jealousy, and conflict.

When large capital restructures and actively attempts to take advantage of the innovative and dynamic side of social capital, a number of things get in the way. Interfirm ties and absentee ownership affects the ability of locally placed managers to exercise flexibility in day-to-day decisions. Other rigidities associated with product choices, technology and the throughput efficiencies dictate not only the place of the operations in a larger production structure, but labour systems within the operation.(See, Apostle, etal, 1998; Barnes and Hayter, 1992; Preston, etal, 1997) To capitalize on social capital therefore, corporate capital is pretty much limited to

labour rent strategies. The normative basis of social capital allows capital to cash in on real labour cost advantages<sup>iv</sup>. For instance, norms of conflict avoidance, vertical loyalties and traditions of patronage and clientism all lend themselves to this purpose (See, Alavi, 1973; Long, 1975). Taking advantage of gender or racial inequalities are particularly infamous features of so-called 'modern' capital capitalizing on 'backward' conditions (see, Mies, 1982). Collective traditions of mutual support can also act as a bonus to capital in two ways: either directly in the form of access to reciprocal labour during seasonal periods of high demand (see, Mandami, 1992), or indirectly, as a fallback mechanism that supports labour during layoff periods. The shock absorption capacity of social capital as a mechanism to cope with seasonality and risk can easily respond to the new risks associated with wage labour dependence and seasonal layoffs. Kinship related entitlements, for example, can be a significant lifeline for people facing marginality (see, Indra and Buchignani, 1997)

The externalization of costs discussed above has a social dimension which does not dissipate social capital but co-opts it. The litany of social costs that communities endure under capitalism range from exploitation, to health and safety risks, and loss of social worth. There are also the social costs that a community experiences as a consequence of layoffs or downsizing: in the short-term, the problems that result from a cut in family income; in the long-term, the added social costs that stem from depression, alcoholism, abuse.

Moreover, the shock absorption capacity of social capital is not just applicable to labour costs. It is also relevant to the high risks and costs that capital faces in the resource sector discussed above. The thrust of the neo-Marxist analysis of social differentiation in agriculture has to do with the ability of the family farm to absorb the 'unproductive' costs associated with crop and animal maturation time ( See, Blanc, 1994; Mann and Dickenson, 1978). The same logic can be applied to any resource sector where access is relatively open to rural producers and their families. Rural families can be made to assume the burden of climatic risk, harvest

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<sup>iv</sup>4. The most oft mentioned reason that labour costs are lower in rural communities stems from lower unionization rates. Labour economists point out that industrialization levels are lower and traditions of labour militancy and union organization are not so well established. Banaji (1997) reports on the location of a capital intensive food processing factory by the multinational giant Unilever in a rural area of India recently as typical of "...a new wave of foreign investments...into remote rural areas which lack both industrial experience and of course any sort of union tradition" (197). The supply of labour vis-a-vis labour demand is greater, and options are fewer, putting labour at a relative disadvantage in negotiating higher pay levels.

uncertainty, variable quality, perishability and so on. The greater these risk factors, the greater the likelihood that such social differentiation patterns will prevail. In certain branches of agriculture, for example, contract farming is preferred to vertical integration (See, Goodman and Watts, 1994; Winson, 1988). One encounters a plethora of capitals in high risk, competitive, or unenclosable aspects of the industry, while corporate capital concentrates on down- or up-stream segments of the commodity chain that are subject to high entry costs, or have predictable cost structures and calculable risks. We encounter such situations in the food industry in particular. Corporate capital tends to concentrate in the input sectors -- seeds, chemicals, machinery -- in processing, and in the marketing -- wholesale and retail -- branches of the industry. (see, Kim and Curry, 1993; Murphy, 1990; Winson, 1988; 1990)

In summation, I would say that economic globalization cannot be avoided. The only choice communities face is on what terms they participate, not if they can or not. The picture I have painted thus far is not a pretty one. I would argue that the impact of resource capitalism on traditional social capital has been mixed. In many cases it has been one of erosion and dissipation under a variety of circumstances such as the privatization of communal property, the environmental degradation of the commons, the privileging of commercial values, future discounting, and short-term bias in decision-making. Where social capital still functions as a coping mechanism it is co-opted and becomes the basis for super-exploitation of labour. The final insult comes when communities adopt a dependent malaise. Freudenburg (1992) writes about the "addictive economy": the dependency syndrome rural communities find themselves in once they become caught in a resource dependent treadmill. High incomes trickle down to labour until the resource runs out or market collapses and the company introduces cost cutting measures. The risk of becoming a ghost town is the economic cost that is paid for single industry dependence. Addiction high incomes that the temporary resource boom offered leads labour and the community into a defensive posture designed to regain the life style at any cost. This approach is short-term at best and usually only gives the people more of the same. But, as we have seen, the monopolistic sector of the global economy is only part of the story. What does the competitive side of global commodity chains mean for community-based social capital? I would argue that here we encounter the positive, dynamic side to social capital under globalization. Two illustrations are instructive in this regard: co-operativism and small business networks.

Social capital plays a vital role in each case.

### Co-operativism

Co-operativism has played a key role in community economic development around the world for over 100 years. In North America, co-operativism gained momentum amongst farmers and fishers as part of a populist movement of resistance. The problems that rural people faced in the capitalist frontier related to meeting their basic needs, securing a modest measure of security for their families during periodic downturns in the economy, and improving health and educational standards in their communities. Rural producers and their families had a significant measure of autonomy and independence in their life and work. The meaning and identity associated with place and a way of life continually reproduced itself once settlers established a homestead and community, particularly after the first generation. This independence acted like a gravitational core for these communities: the more the fish merchants or grain companies, or railroads, or banks squeezed them, the more ardently they banded together to gain or reassert their independence and autonomy. However, modernization has taken a heavy toll on the co-operative movement in the past 50 years. Co-operatives became more protectionist, fragmented, and business oriented. Little or no commitments were made by the average membership, as the business side of co-operatives was increasingly the preserve of hired, full-time professionals. 'Business-oriented' co-operatives easily fall victim to a tendency to discount long-term benefits in favor of short-term rewards. (See, Brown, 1997)

A number of examples stand out however as exceptions to this fragmentation trend, notably the Basque Mondragon model which has been reproduced in various locations around the world. In these cases social capital has been instrumental in helping communities resist the functional fragmentation of their organizations. While there is a clear level of functional specialization in terms of the orientation and focus of individual co-operatives -- for example, manufacturing, retail, insurance, banking, education, and so on -- the overall control of the co-operatives is community-centred and integrated through a wider community-run development council. This is accomplished through interdependent boards of directors and through inter-organizational financing ties. The co-operative network places central importance on community education -- both philosophical and technical -- and research and development. In Mondragon, for example, the organization began as the "League for Education and Culture" promoting adult

literacy and the Basque culture through 2,000 study clubs in the 1940s (Meek and Woodworth, 1990). By the 1980s there were 36 schools, nurseries, day cares and a polytechnic. In Mondragon, a research and development institute was established as a joint venture with annual donations from the network of member coops. It has been instrumental in the expansion into high-tech manufacturing associated with consumer durables, engineering and thermodynamics and information systems (Meek and Woodworth, 1990). Gherardi and Masiero (1990), in their study of co-operative networks in the Emilia-Romagna district of Italy, argue that the success of this model stems from the mobilization of community-based social capital: community fund-raising and investment of local savings, free labour, startup orders from other businesses, financial guarantees, absorption of surplus workers to protect jobs and reduce the impact of technological change or management errors, sharing expertise, shop-floor innovation and so on.

### Small Business Networks

Small business networks – so-called flexible specialization systems – also reflect cases where strong levels of solidarity offer communities a way to benefit from economic globalization. The key again here is that small business networks do not destroy, or passively exploit social capital<sup>v</sup>, but in fact both benefit from it and actively reproduce it. The key to this ability reflects the embedded nature of small business in community networks. As operations are usually single plant in nature, owners usually live and work in the same community where they have their business. Such geographical proximity of person and business, subjects owners to embedded norms of rural communities in ways that absentee managers are not. Decision-making, while economically based and related to comparative profit levels in the sector, is heavily constrained by embedded norms. Providing employment based on employee needs, being flexible and accommodating, providing goodwill to the community and so on (See, Apostle, etal,

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<sup>v</sup>5. The flexible specialization model is usually criticized for a tendency to non-union subcontracting and over-reliance on part-time work at low wages with no fringe benefits or job security. Small business managers are criticized as patrons in small communities who utilize hierarchical social capital to their benefit. While there are certainly examples of 'sweat shops', the reciprocal nature of the labour relationship is often under-appreciated by these observers. The work environment is often congenial and relaxed, the variations in routine stimulating and rewarding, the flexibility in hours accommodating to personal and family schedules. Shop floor innovation is a primary illustration of the reciprocal nature of the exchange: managers gain access to intimate knowledge and a broad range of problem-solving skills and innovative ideas; while works gain a sense of usefulness and worth, exercise their initiative, and work in varied setting in cooperation with colleagues (see, Apostle, etal, 1998).

1998). Such accountability is traded off against a better ability to take advantage of social capital. The one begets the other.

Globalization and neo-liberal de-regulation are thought to provide communities with greater opportunity to not only regain lost autonomy, but expand into new areas and take advantage of niche opportunities. While the emphasis in the literature has been on private entrepreneurial dynamism, community-based businesses of all types whether they are small family-owned, new sole proprietorships, co-operatives, or community corporations are dynamic sources of economic growth innovation, risk-taking and reward in rural communities (See, Barrett, 1993; Brown, 1997). The resilience that the communities and regions enjoy in return stems from stable and longstanding networks which facilitate diversification, innovation, and flexibility. Day (1998) argues that such ties represent an alignment of the economic interest and the cultural integrity of the community within which they thrive: "working with the grain" rather than against it. Using Emilia-Romagna as an example he points out that:

Although the links between the various parts of the network are economic, they are also more than this; the small Italian firms exist within a shared social universe of strong family attachments, craft tradition, common religious and political affiliation. Economic links are simply part of the wider 'community' within which a local population is bound together....In other words, cultural bonds of shared commitments, identity, and belief can help to unify a region, and act to regulate relationships of competition and co-operation within it (96).

He goes on to argue that the great failing of market-led 'enterprise' approaches to rural economic development has been an individualistic approach that either fails to appreciate the strengths of local culture or that sees local cultural traditions as an obstacle to modernization.

### **Discussion: the Resilient and Emancipatory Capacity of Social Capital**

Social capital is too often viewed only in structural terms as bounded, normative-based networks which build mutual benefit through solidarity and trust. Certainly from the point of view of co-operativism and flexible specialisation networks, this approach is sufficient to capture the dynamic involved. But is this sufficient? I would argue that it is a static view of social capital and fails to really capture an important interactional dynamic associated with both social capital and community. This deficiency has two implications: first it underestimates the resilience of

communities to crisis, second, it fails to appreciate the emancipatory potential of social capital.

The Chinese have a ideographic character for the word 'crisis' that carries a dual meaning. It refers to upset and out of the ordinary, but it also means opportunity and advantage.

Communities are faced with both economically-driven and state-driven crises in the modern age.

What allows them to be resilient? I would argue, for example, that the regulatory crisis of the state is creating opportunities or 'spaces' where it is possible for well-organized, focused communities to re-establish control and power (see, Kearns and Joseph,1997; Read, 2000) .

Under decentralization we see bottom-up initiatives in the realm of education, health care, resource management, and policing. But what facilitates this resilient capacity of social capital? Following VanderPlaat (1989), I will argue that it is an intangible 'communicative' capacity that facilitates this resilience. Furthermore, elements of modernity can be seen as a vital ingredient in the process.

Public participation and civil society has a springboard effect which I feel is greatly underestimated in the social capital literature. Participatory action develops a communicative literacy -- leadership skills, debating skills, risk-taking skills, active listening skills, interpersonal skills – the meta-cognitive assets underlying collective agency. To reverse some of the most insidious aspects of ostracism, and the risks of factionalization, discussed above, communities need to develop conflict resolution capacities. Flora (1998) in fact proposes that the very ability of community institutions to tackle contentious issues is a good indicator of the health of civil society. An ability to come to grips with past mistakes and injustices is another important element in this system. Old cleavages will harbour deeply rooted resentments and grudges. Once trust and common ground has been established a capacity for reconciliation can help repair old wounds (see, Pinkerton,1999).

In his discussion of reversals of racism, Wilton (1998) argues that it is through prolonged proximity to “others” that the self is forced to recognize that its interests are not threatened and the oppositional basis for identity withers. Greater levels of integration are a politically incorrect prescription in an era of difference and heterogeneity. It is not so much a forced homogenization which is needed, as more effort in consciously building a transcendent identity built on inter-community networks. An overarching commonality within which diversity is securely nested. Following Granovetter (1985), Flora (1998) argues that such networks derive their advantage from the “strength of weak ties”. Inclusiveness and diversity provide such networks with

adaptive resilience is a fashion analogous to the role of bio-diversity in healthy ecosystems.

The transformative potential associated with 'communicative spaces' can be realized where interests become realigned such that groups in positions of privilege and power are either convinced of greater common interests with the subordinate group, or the subordinate group gains a greater measure of power through an increased autonomy or share of resources (see, Nagel, 1999; Veltmeyer, 1997). Each scenario can be seen to apply to gender and class cleavages. For example, Hale (1988) explores the idealized and real nature of *purdah* as a dominant ideology associated with women's domestic seclusion in Northern India. The relationship between an rhetoric of seclusion and the realities of everyday life for the poor need to be carefully examined. Often times the sexist rhetoric is quite different from the realities of men and women working together in common familial or community settings where the interest of household security transcends normatively prescribed exclusionary ideals about how people are supposed to act. (See also, Sokefeld, 1999).

The major concern in re-embedding a sense of community identity also involves reasserting the transcendent character of collective identities. Reinvigorating place values helps to keep divisive interests in check. And yet it is vital to broaden rural people's sense of identity to overcome xenophobia, and traditional prejudices. The process for identity formation need to be inclusive, participatory, and based on inter-community co-operation (see, Flora, 1998).

Fitzduff (1993) reports on a participant observation study of rural development in an Irish coastal community. A well-organized and effective community development council with full-time staff traces its beginnings to an empowerment process that began in the late 1970s with a recreational woodworking class. This experiment led to a local history club; craft nights "... where the old crafts were revitalized in a situation where people could demonstrate the importance of their skills. And there were music nights that were celebrations in song, dance and poetry"(42); courses in art, food, health and exercise; welfare right's and women's issues; creative writing and book reading. Community opposition to a proposed open-cast mine galvanized them into a fully-fledged development and conservation council. Any yet Fitzduff (1993) argues that the crucial feature that enabled this level of organization was the social learning that was facilitated by the diverse but interconnected groups that had foreshadowed it.

The initial resistance to speaking, and then the realization that it was possible to talk to a group, were important experiences which gave people confidence and the opportunity to share

their stories with the community. There was an obvious power generated from hearing the expression of shared experiences and knowledge acquired over a lifetime. Publicans, farmers, women with no previous public acknowledgement of their real value in the community discovered themselves to be anthropologists, sociologists and environmentalists .... [I]n this setting they had lived their lives as intelligent, interesting people and had now become a resource to their community (42).

Aronoff (1993) describes the manner in which festivals can be co-operative, identity-building events that allow communities to supercede internal divisions, or break down barriers that isolate them in a wider regional context. She observes that the 'no-risk', innocuous purpose associated with the event subverts prejudices, vested economic interests, narrowly framed identities that would normally keep participants suspicious and uncooperative. The festival allowed locals and newcomers to come together and celebrate not only the importance of the traditional farming identity, but broader dimensions of a place defined 'rural way of life' that both farmers and non-farmers appreciated.

At issue in efforts to re-embed interest are reconnecting individual interests with those of the broader collective, and realigning individual decision-making with community goals. It is imperative to activate and instill a new organizational ethos of collective action that broadens experience and social learning, and diffuses leadership and communication skills in order to spearhead development and stewardship and empower the community in ways that reduce vulnerability to external changes and internal fissions at the same time.

VanderPlaat (1998) argues that the collective empowerment process involves a principle of 'mutuality'. Differing interests have to come to grips with their own biases in the context of appreciating those of others and establishing mutual ground in order to take action based on shared understandings and identities. Resource management coalitions -- bioregionalism, watershed stewardship coalitions, co-management systems -- bring together interests with divergent discourses about the environment. The process, and not just the outcome, is empowering. M'Gonicle (1989) argues that empowerment inheres in the very struggle to co-exist, negotiate, and reconcile conflicting interests. Multi-stakeholder organizations that have jurisdictional entitlement are therefore a vital institutional forum for overcoming incipient exclusionary pressures. Overlapping and shared membership, intersecting interests and mandates, hierarchical structures with formal inter-group representation are all factors that weave

a robust and resilient community-based structure. The system incorporates many checks and balances against the assertion of individual or factional interests at the expense of the overall community.

Where does this discussion leave us? Both postmodernist, feminist and social constructionist theories offer us usual frameworks for exploring the reflexive side of modernity's impact on rural communities. Communicative spaces offer rural communities ways to forge new identities that overcome some of the problems of the past while building on strengths. Cynthia Miller (1998) writes about the positive impact of television 'novella' watching in her study of a rural community in the Yucatan. In the Mayan village of Yalcoba she reports that the very popular 'novellas' have a contradictory effect in a variety of respects. On the one hand, she observes that access to 'inside' urban, middle class lifestyles and norms socializes the rural poor providing access to scarce 'cultural capital' associated with wealth and status -- "the symbols of First World"(309) -- associated with manners, etiquette, fashion and so on. But on the other hand, television watching increased solidarity amongst women. Women have always relied on matrifocal groups in the community to exchange information and provide support for each other. The 'novellas' have infused these networks with a new purpose. The cultural distance between the urban middle class life portrayed on television and that experienced by people in their community leads to increased interaction.

Making sense of mass media texts is primarily a collective activity among popular audiences, carried out with groups of friends, family, and neighbours. Often the images and messages are taken only as a point of departure from which to elaborate on the store of collective memories of the community, and while "reading", the group gives their own "rhythm" to the text (308).

More importantly, the exposure to modern women's lifestyles and liberated way of thinking and acting has led women to challenge traditional gender roles. "The ability to carve out time for television has come to signify not only resistance to and appropriation of domestic authority, but an expanded role as enactors and facilitators of modernity(314)" Whether this turns out to be an example of factionalization or reinvigourization will depend on how the men in the community respond. If they can overcome traditional stereotypes then modernity will have had an empowering effect; if they entrench, then relations of exclusion will increase and community cohesion will suffer. Rural communities often need to overcome xenophobia, racism, sexism or

bigotry and recognize the opportunities that modernity can provide to transform such relations of exclusion into relations of solidarity.



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