

7

THE TAMAQUA PARADOX

How History Shapes Social Capital and Local Economic Development Efforts¹

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Introduction

Over the past several decades, the concept of social capital has become an important component of strategies for building community and fostering economic development. Our purpose in this chapter is to assess the extent to which social capital theory functions to explain economic development activeness, using as a case study the community of Tamaqua, Pennsylvania. We begin with a brief overview of social capital theory, followed by a summary of a 2005 study designed to assess the relationship between social capital and economic development activeness in six rural Pennsylvania communities using a mixed-methods approach which included surveys, key informant interviews, and in-depth community histories. Our primary focus is the historical component, which illustrates how early decisions and actions influence contemporary events relating to economic and community development. This information provides the basis for critical analysis of the applicability of social capital to community and economic development. We argue that social capital theory may be an ineffective framework for development policy in some settings because it does not attend to the historical context that gives rise to alternative forms of rationality, power relations, and subsequent patterns of fractionalization and stratification. We suggest that a narrative approach helps to better understand these processes and their relationship to contemporary decision making. The chapter concludes with a discussion of implications for community development theory and practice.

Social Capital

Although the term 'social capital' appears to have first been coined in the early twentieth century, its recent popularity can be tied to the influential writings of Robert Putnam (1993; 1995; 1996; 2000). Putnam (2000, p. 19) stresses that the term

... 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.

The norms of generalized reciprocity and trustworthiness are the key components of this definition. Generalized reciprocity is characterized by a mutual expectation that a favor or benefit performed now will be repaid in the future. This norm is embodied in the following convention: “I’ll do this for you now, without expecting anything immediately in return and perhaps without even knowing you, confident that down the road you or someone else will return the favor” (Putnam, 2000, p. 134). This combination of short-term altruism and long-term self-interest reconciles selfishness and social solidarity because all participants know they will benefit over time. Here, Putnam relies heavily on Coleman’s (1990, p. 99) conceptualization of trust: “A rational actor will place trust ... if the ratio of the chance of gain to the chance of loss is greater than the ratio of the amount of potential loss to the amount of potential gain.” Bridger and Luloff (2001, p. 467) note that this framework is predicated upon a rational actor model in which people are purposive agents who make deliberate choices to maximize their utility. Their behavior may be constrained by norms and social contexts, but, as Alexander (1992, p. 96) points out, people are ultimately still “discrete, separated, and independent individuals.”

When the norm of generalized reciprocity is followed, opportunism can be more easily restrained and the potential for collective action enhanced. In communities where reciprocity is widely practiced, social and economic life are less fractious. And, as Putnam (2000, p. 135) argues, these communities have an economic advantage over less trustful places: “A society that relies on generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society, for the same reason that money is more efficient than barter. Honesty and trust lubricate the inevitable frictions of social life.”

When people are committed to the norm of generalized reciprocity, a valuable form of trust emerges. This is what Putnam (2000) calls social trust, which he defines as a willingness to give people the benefit of the doubt. Or, to put it in slightly different terms, social trust is captured by an overall belief that people are basically good and can be expected to do the right thing. According to Putnam (2000, pp. 136–137) communities with high levels of social trust produce citizens that are more active and more likely to take an interest in civic affairs:

Other things being equal, people who trust their fellow citizens volunteer more often, contribute more to charity, participate more often in politics and community organizations, serve more readily on juries, give blood more frequently, comply more fully with their tax obligations, are more tolerant of minority views, and display many other forms of civic virtue. ... In short,

people who trust others, are all-round good citizens, and those more engaged in community life are both more trusting and more trustworthy.

In his most recent iteration of the concept, Putnam (2000) has introduced a distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital is a 'sociological superglue' found in very dense, close-knit social networks. Bonding social capital tends to strengthen group solidarity and promotes specific forms of reciprocity. The employment niches that emerge when a particular ethnic group controls a sector of the local labor market are a good example of bonding social capital. Such solidarity might provide substantial benefits to one segment of the population, but it does not necessarily promote the interests of the broader community. In fact, as Putnam and Feldstein (2003) readily acknowledge, a community or society that has only bonding social capital is likely to be fragmented and unable to act collectively.

Bridging social capital, on the other hand, is similar to Granovetter's (1973) concept of weak ties. Instead of creating intimate bonds of solidarity, it builds linkages across social and economic distances. In doing so, bridging social capital provides people and organizations with access to information and resources that would otherwise not be available. And, perhaps most importantly, by creating relationships across class, ethnic, racial, and religious lines, bridging social capital fosters the social trust and norms of generalized reciprocity necessary for effective community action. For this reason, bridging social capital is arguably a more important factor in community and economic development. In its absence, development efforts are uncoordinated and focused on specific groups or neighborhoods (Putnam and Feldstein, 2003).

Study Overview

Putnam's (2000) elaboration and subsequent applications of social capital have become increasingly popular as a strategy for community and economic development. Despite this growing popularity, there is a lack of persuasive evidence documenting how and to what extent it contributes to specific outcomes (DeFilippis, 2001). A key question for community and economic development concerns the conditions that give rise to the norms of social trust and generalized reciprocity, and the implications of this context for development. This was a central focus of our 2005 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Research Initiative study, in which we considered the role played by such factors as power, stratification, economic and labor history in the relationship between social capital and the level of economic development activeness² in selected rural Pennsylvania communities. We also consider the role of narrative interpretations of local and regional histories in influencing contemporary decision-making processes.

In order to facilitate a nuanced analysis of our case-study communities, we employed a mixed-methods approach. One set of data was derived from a survey instrument modeled after common national and international question sets

(Bullen and Onyx, 1998; Davis et al., 2008; Edwards, 2004; Green and Fletcher, 2003; Grootaert et al., 2004; Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2002; Howard et al., 2005; Narayan, 1998; Narayan and Cassidy, 2001; Pew Research Center, 1997; Saguaro Seminar, 2000). Composite measures were developed to assess the following indicators of social capital: individual well-being, individual efficacy, collective efficacy, norms of generalized and specific reciprocity, norms of tolerance and exclusion, norms of participation, generalized social trust, trust in specific known groups, trust in institutions, strength and density of informal networks, strength and density of formal networks, formal network structures, sources of information, and community satisfaction and attachment. Survey results were interpreted and contextualized through a series of key informant interviews and in-depth community histories.

The project focused on six communities in three counties: Schuylkill, Elk, and Tioga. Each reflects conditions that are common across rural Pennsylvania. Schuylkill County, in which Tamaqua is located, forms part of the anthracite region, which was historically dominated almost solely by coal and railroad companies. The development of Elk County, which contains part of the Allegheny National Forest, was linked to timber and related industries. Tioga County, located along the north-central border with New York, boasts a more diverse portfolio of natural resources, including timber, bituminous coal, iron ore, sandstone, and fire clay. Each county transitioned or attempted to transition to a manufacturing-based economy during the twentieth century, and several communities in each are in the process of translating both natural resources and local industrial and social heritage into the basis for a tourism industry. Each has suffered to some degree as the result of the current economic downturn and the outmigration of youth.

From each of these counties, we selected two communities that were similar with respect to structural characteristics (i.e. industrial mix, population, population change, and proximity to urban centers) but dissimilar with respect to levels of economic development activeness. As noted above, social capital theory suggests that surveys should have produced significantly different results between the paired communities; communities where respondents indicated strong norms of generalized reciprocity and high levels of social trust should have been more economically active than their counterparts with low levels of generalized reciprocity and social trust. Instead, differences between the paired communities in each county were statistically significant for only a small number of the composite measures listed above. However, all but one of the composite measures were statistically significant when analysis was widened to analyze differences across all six communities. This finding indicates that other characteristics at the county and regional level, including the social and economic histories and narratives, play an important role in shaping the development of different levels of social capital in rural communities.

In the following sections we will focus on one of these communities, Tamaqua, to illustrate the conceptual shortcomings inherent to social capital theory. Tamaqua is a particularly useful case because it was the only community in which there was

a strong divergence between household survey data and the information provided in key informant interviews. In comparison with the other communities included in the study, survey respondents reported the highest overall social division score. This score measured perceptions of social divisions with regard to social class, level of education, race/ethnicity, religious views, political affiliation, and age. Tamaqua reported the highest scores for all categories with the exception of race/ethnicity, for which it came in second. In several instances, Tamaqua was highest by a wide margin. A combined total of 72.5 percent of respondents reported that social class divides people to a moderate or large extent, compared to 58.1 percent in the second-ranking community. A combined total of 73.1 percent of respondents reported that level of education divides people to a moderate or large extent, compared to 56.4 percent in the second-ranking community. The only social category for which less than half of respondents reported moderate or large social division was religion. Similarly, Tamaqua scored relatively low on indicators designed to measure norms of trust. By a small fraction, Tamaqua had the lowest level of average local trust, a measure which included trust in people in the community, trust in neighbors, trust in coworkers, and trust in church members. Tamaqua also ranked low with respect to the perceived impact of local institutions and organizations, trust for these groups of people or organizations, and participation in voluntary organizations. On average, respondents indicated that they participate in approximately two or three voluntary organizations. Finally, Tamaqua scored relatively low with regard to indicators designed to measure the level of diversity within local volunteer organizations and the level of cooperation between diverse groups.

These survey data conflict with information collected through key informant interviews with a variety of local leaders, which focused specifically on recent efforts to foster economic development. Key informants indicated that Tamaqua was characterized by high levels of social trust, norms of generalized reciprocity, participation and cooperation within and across diverse groups. Informants presented evidence that local leaders had opened up their planning and diversification of economic options early, and more than once, in a purposeful and vigorous fashion to volunteers across all strata in order to successfully achieve goals. By virtue of these characteristics and its strong planning mechanisms, they suggested, Tamaqua was in place to take advantage of opportunities to obtain outside funding and training when they became available.

In the remainder of this chapter, we argue that the concept of social capital does not account for the divergence between the high level of development activeness evidenced in statements of key informants and the low levels of both bonding and bridging social capital evidenced in the community survey. This is because it does not attend to the historical trends which may inhibit the development or the function of norms of trust and reciprocity. Nor does it provide a framework for analyzing the power structures that are established, reinforced, or challenged through these historical processes. In order to understand the divergence between key informant and survey data, it is helpful to consider at length the information gathered as part of the community history.

Historical Analysis

Introduction

Data used to construct the community history were drawn from secondary sources such as local and regional histories, newspaper articles, and academic work. In compiling the history, we were concerned not only with 'objective' historical decisions and patterns of social interaction themselves, but also with the trends in interpretation and meaning that emerged from these patterns. We employ the concept of narrative(s) and narrative construction to better analyze residents' understandings of the contemporary community social structure and development possibilities in our discussion.

Early Development

Schuylkill County

Due to a law which prevented the combination of any transportation system with either coal rights or mining operations in the county, early development in Schuylkill county was distinct from other counties in the region, characterized by what Wardell and Johnston (1987, p. 784) call a "more wide-open, individualistic, enterprise system." The authors note that mines were run by small independent operators or tenants who leased the coal rights, less than half of which survived one full year (p. 786).

This system of independent ownership caused high population turnover, particularly during the depressions in the anthracite market. In the depressed year of 1850, an estimated half of the mineworkers left the county (Berthoff, 1965, p. 264). This instability prevented the development of informal social networks that could support formal organization against the incorporation of coal companies. However, it also kept capital in the local economy, which provided for a measure of diversification. Pottsville, the county seat, functioned as the center of banking and financial services for the entire southern rim of the coal region. Local banks provided support for small-scale entrepreneurs such as David G. Yuengling, who established the United States' first family-owned brewery. Insurance and utilities providers were also locally owned.

The volatile mining structure ultimately allowed incorporated coal companies, financed and directed by investors in Philadelphia, New York City, and New England, to consolidate property in the county. In the late 1860s, Philadelphia and Reading Railroad President Franklin Gowen began a campaign for the vertical integration of the entire Schuylkill anthracite coal supply chain. Two major companies, the Philadelphia & Reading Coal & Iron Company (P&RC&I) and the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company (LC&N), acquired virtually all the land in Schuylkill County. By 1890, leaders in Pottsville had lost control of all but 19 percent of the 48 companies they had controlled prior to 1870 (Davies, 1985, p. 119).

The consolidation of the Schuylkill mines and railroads under the ownership of extra-local investors allowed for a greater efficiency and increased output. However, it also had significant and lasting negative implications for the class structure of the anthracite region: the uppermost social class did not live in the region and thus had little investment in its overall welfare.

Because resident elites lacked the resources to provide adequate services and social support programs, the resulting "headless society" (Berthoff, 1965, p. 276) forced out-of-work and injured miners to seek help from the ethnic churches and benevolent societies, reinforcing stratification and insularity along ethnic and religious lines. The absentee status of coal operators also made it difficult for workers to challenge policies regarding working conditions or wages. This labor structure impeded early union efforts. According to Yearley (1961, p. 183) mineworkers were "prone to blame the operators directly for their hardships and, as a consequence, to expect immediate redress from them" whereas union leaders, though sharing mineworkers' concerns, "were inclined to look beyond the region to the instability of the anthracite market as the real source of their troubles." These different understandings, in combination with regional differences, made unions vulnerable to internal conflicts as well as external assaults.

Tamaqua

In contrast to county and regional trends, local leaders in Tamaqua continued to control aspects of the economy through the period of consolidation. This can be attributed in part to its location in the Panther Valley, which includes parts of Schuylkill and Carbon counties. According to Dublin and Licht (2005), although the LC&N dominated area economics and politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, communities in the Panther Valley could not be characterized as company towns. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Tamaqua developed several manufacturing operations to support the anthracite industry. During the mid-1800s, Tamaqua's five iron and steel firms had the second-highest output among towns in the county (Davies, 1985, p. 118). The two largest were Tamaqua Manufacturing Company and Tamaqua Iron Works, both of which survived well into the twentieth century. In particular, the Tamaqua Manufacturing Company was purchased by the Atlas Powder Company in 1919 and functioned as a military supplier during both world wars. Employment peaked at 1617 in 1947 and declined alongside anthracite (Miller, 1955, p. 346).

By the period of consolidation, manufacturing interests were in fact diversifying. In 1875, local business leaders established the Tamaqua Shoe Factory. Other efforts included the Greenwood Rolling Mill, the Tamaqua Hosiery Company, James Fitzpatrick's shirt factory, and the Potts Powder Company, later purchased by Atlas Powder (Tamaqua S.O.S., Inc, 2008). In addition, passenger trains provided the market for a significant commercial district. Tamaqua became a regional destination for entertainment and social facilities including an opera house, theaters, and a bowling alley.

Ethnic Fractionalization and Labor Organization

Schuylkill County

It is difficult to overstate the role of coal in establishing and maintaining local economic and social structures in the anthracite region. High demand for coal resulted in explosive population growth which began in the mid-1800s and peaked in the mid-1920s. In this monopsonistic labor market, industry leaders were able to construct towns as a composite of fractional interests that would suppress the emergence of coherent community identities. To this end, they pursued recruitment and wage policies that fostered religious and racial diversity to drive down labor prices and prevent organization. This framework for competitive racial interaction has remained largely unchanged as the present-day low cost of living as compared to cities such as Reading and Philadelphia draws new ethnic groups to these towns.

The mining industry attracted immigrant populations in several waves. Miners from the anthracite fields in Wales began to arrive in the 1820s. Immigrants from England, Scotland, and Ireland followed shortly after, along with Germans in the 1840s. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, companies began to seek out immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. By 1910 Poles, Lithuanians, Slovaks, Russians, other Slavic groups, and Italians made up a significant percentage of the workforce. To attract new immigrant groups, companies often offered free or low-cost housing for the employees and their families.

However, mining jobs were not equally available across ethnic lines. Each group of immigrants occupied distinct locations in the hierarchies of the coal mine. For most of the nineteenth century, English served as mine owners and bosses, Welsh as skilled miners, and German and Irish as unskilled laborers. This structure created conflict among miners and represented one of the most significant hurdles to organization. Skilled miners were paid piecemeal by the weight of coal produced or, particularly in the Southern field, by their rate of advance into the coal seam, a system which caused conflict between the miners and bosses who evaluated each miner's haul. These miners, in turn, contracted mine laborers and supervised their work. Complaints regarding workplace conditions and wages were most often directed to a specific actor within this structure rather than to companies. In this way, "the industry pitted worker against worker" (Miller and Sharpless, 1998, p. 244).

In the late nineteenth century, companies increasingly recruited Italian and Slavic populations in response to labor organization efforts. These groups were considered to be "cheap men. . . . They were willing to work longer hours than the English-speaking miners, do heavier and more dangerous work, and put up with conditions that the English-speaking miners no longer tolerated" (Frank Julian Warne, quoted in Miller and Sharpless, 1998, p. 173). As a result, "[t]hey were often viewed as 'Pauper labor' by established miners" (Davies, 1999, p. 350). 'Native' miners resented Eastern European immigrants not only because they depressed wages, but also because they "posed a status threat to the occupation of the coal miner.

A large presence of these ethnic groups would cause coal mining to become regarded as 'foreigner work,' opening all of its members to derision" (Aurand, 2003, p. 76).

Reflecting these biases, established labor organizations had a complicated relationship with these new immigrants. Many supported initiatives such as miner's certification to protect their trade. In 1889, the state began mandating miner certification for the purpose of accident prevention. Eight years later, it passed an amendment that made English proficiency a part of the certification process. This amendment served to safeguard higher-ranking mine positions for natives. However, weak enforcement rendered certification "unable to retain a mining cast [sic] system based upon ethnic background" (Aurand, 2003, p. 76). Next, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) pushed for a tax on mine operators for each adult alien employed. Coal companies responded by paying for this tax out of immigrants' wages. It was eventually turned over as unconstitutional.

Ethnic groups remained insular, forming their own neighborhoods, schools, churches, fraternal and auxiliary organizations, social halls, and even fire companies. Leonard (2005, p. 25) writes: "Schuylkill County was highly diverse ethnically ... [and] densely populated, yet with a significant degree of separation." Ethnically based mutual societies functioned to provide social services the company and local government did not. For example, the state miners' hospitals, founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, refused to admit men with incurable diseases, such as black lung (Dublin and Licht, 2005, p. 50).

Although the presence of these ethnic support systems might suggest bonding social capital, ethnic groups, and nationalities did not function as cohesive units. Immigrants brought with them many of the regional, class, and religious prejudices that had existed in the homeland. Identities were often most strongly tied to particular villages; national identities were constructed in the years following immigration to the United States. For example, Kenny (1998, pp. 69–70) notes that Irish immigrants from the Castlecomer region of Kilkenny, one of the few places in Ireland to contain workable deposits of coal, allied with the Welsh in labor disputes: "There were many different sorts of Irish immigrant workers in the anthracite region, and skilled miners from the anglicized southeast evidently had little in common with unskilled laborers from the remote northwest." Berthoff (1965, pp. 266–267) suggests that the most common cause for violence in the area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was actually intra-ethnic dispute, in part because ethnic leaders were responsible for policing their countrymen.

Nevertheless, the narratively significant acts of violence in regional history are often depicted as (national) ethnic and class conflicts. The most significant example is that of the Molly Maguires, a group "more storied, more researched and more intriguing" than almost any other aspect of local history, which remains a subject of heated debate (Serfass, 1995, p. 49). In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, Irish immigrants in particular encountered "a social dynamic that smacked of the same abuse and discrimination they had known back in Ireland" (Kline and Kline, 2005, p. 22). It was in this social climate that Irish-Catholic laborers organized under the

auspices of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), a national fraternal society which had been founded in New York City in 1836. The AOH was identified by local officials as the foundation for the Molly Maguires, a secret society whose members were found guilty for two major crime waves occurring during the years of 1862 through 1868 and 1874 through 1875 in which sixteen men were assassinated, most of them mine officials. Because few primary sources exist from the Molly Maguires, save their testimonies in a series of trials, the writings of men like Bannan initially played an important role in structuring the dominant narrative understanding of these events.

Despite these conflicts, to a certain extent the danger of coal mining, combined with the monopolistic structure of the coal and railroad companies, encouraged workers to cooperate across boundaries and allowed them to begin to articulate an overarching working-class identity. UMWA President John Mitchell famously told miners: "The coal you dig is not Slavic coal, or Polish coal, or Irish coal. It is coal." Not only did working conditions such as cave-ins, explosions, and black lung, foster cooperation, they also contributed to what Leonard (2005, p. 19) identifies as a sense of "resignation and fatalism" endemic to the entire region.

Changes in voting patterns also provide evidence for the emergence of a shared outlook. According to Kolbe (1975, p. 242), "voting behavior becomes less ethnically identifiable as a more universal value system motivates the bulk of the population." In the 1890s, Schuylkill was a Democratic county as the result of an alliance between German Protestant and Irish Catholic leaders. By 1920, it had become a majority Republican county. In part, this was due to the Reading Company, which used its economic might to influence local politics. Kolbe suggests that the Republican Party also appealed to the "highly generalized, ill defined, but often intensely held local values of individualism and patriotism" which existed across the ethnic and religious spectrum (p. 265).

While the history of accidents and disease, economic decline, and outmigration may have fostered a degree of regional solidarity, this does not signify that ethnic and religious identities were completely eclipsed. For example, Gudelunas (1984, p. 174) provides an alternative interpretation of voting patterns, arguing instead that "the county's legendary ethno-religious voting patterns prevailed despite these dramatic changes." For example, a close look at the township and borough records for the 1960 presidential election provides evidence for polarization between the Irish-Catholic and German-Protestant communities. Gudelunas notes that Catholic candidate John F. Kennedy dominated primarily Irish areas, particularly 'patches' located outside of boroughs, and experienced defeats of more than three to one in heavily German precincts (p. 176). He theorizes that because the county is economically depressed "[u]rbanization pressures are minimal, and therefore, so are pressures to break up and homogenize old ethnic and religious, social and religious ties" (p. 184).

A number of residents and observers in the region have drawn parallels between the historical reception of Eastern and Southern European immigrant groups and contemporary ethnic/racial conflicts. In the past decade, the low cost of living has

drawn Latino immigrants from Puerto Rico, Central America, and Mexico to towns such as Shenandoah, which was catapulted into the national spotlight in 2008 with the murder of an illegal immigrant from Mexico at the hands of six high-school football players. Shenandoah Valley High School bus driver Joe Sobinsky, of Italian and Polish descent, summarized the social construction of race in the region when he told a Latino student who accused him of racism: "Before you got here I was the brownest" (quoted in Montgomery, 2008, C01). Some people, however, do identify a difference between historical and contemporary ethnic and race relations. According to Tamaqua resident Bob Evans, "Past generations did better with welcoming newcomers than we seem to be doing now with Hispanics. ... banks in this town always had an Irish or Lithuanian teller to attract minority groups, token folks" (quoted in Kline and Kline, 2005, p. 27).

Tamaqua

Social relations in Tamaqua have also been characterized by ethnic tensions. For example, it was the setting of some of the most high-profile Molly Maguire murders, including that of police officer Benjamin Yost. Kline and Kline (2005) report that forms of ethnic discrimination continued throughout the twentieth century. Residents report that as late as the 1970s, the derogatory term 'Hunkie' was used to describe people of Eastern European descent (p. 12). However, at points in time ethnic tensions were overshadowed by cooperation around common economic interests, particularly in strikes and other union efforts.

As was the case with other major mining companies, the LC&N saw fluctuations in the early 1920s as the result of frequent strikes and a significant downturn in market conditions toward the end of the decade. The company's collieries were operating at less than half capacity even before the depths of the Great Depression. The Lehigh Navigation Coal Company (LNC) was created in 1930 to operate the LC&N coal division (Dublin and Licht, 2005, p. 61). LNC officials favored closing the less cost-efficient underground mines and shifting production to strip mining. Tamaqua and other Panther Valley towns had worked together as a subdistrict of the United Mine Workers Association of America (UMWA), District 7. In part through this longstanding formal organization, the communities came to realize a set of shared interests. Panther Valley mineworkers were able to successfully campaign for equalization of work across existing mines, which was the fair distribution of working hours across all the company's holdings, despite opposition from both the LNC and the UMWA.

This campaign was notable because the Panther Valley Equalization Committee marshaled the broad support of not only employed and unemployed mineworkers, but also middle-class merchants and professionals indirectly dependent upon miners' income, including President of the Tamaqua Merchants Association Herman Fenstermacher, who expressed support for the cause in an August 1933 letter to President Roosevelt (Dublin and Licht, 2005, pp. 65–66). Ethnic and religious organizations such as the Lithuanian Catholic Action Convention also appealed to

Roosevelt on behalf of the miners. Dublin and Licht (2005, p. 68) emphasize that the success of the movement owed to the fact that it became "as much a community issue as a union or class issue."

Miller and Sharpless (1998, p. 320) suggest that social activism at the community level during the twentieth century was predicated in particular upon "the existence of militant groups that predated the depression or had a tradition of struggle." In the Panther Valley, labor agitation was most common to Tamaqua. Accordingly, the push for equalization was most enduring in Tamaqua. After the anthracite market bottomed in the winter of 1948–49, LNC officials closed its mines at the end of April 1954 and opened negotiations with the UMWA and local unions. Although five of the six local Panther Valley unions accepted the outcome of negotiations, mineworkers in the Tamaqua Local 1571 picketed collieries across the valley and continued the call for equalization. However, it soon became evident that the coal crisis impacting the region could not be addressed through equalization programs alone. Demand for anthracite was in permanent decline, and, by the 1960s, anthracite mining was all but finished in the community.

Economic Downturn

National Trends

In 1920 anthracite supplied more than 95 percent of the home-heating needs of the Northeastern United States. In contrast, by the early 1950s alternative fuels supplied 66 percent and anthracite only 32 percent of the same market (Miller, 1989, p. 168). Cost differentials do not provide a satisfying explanation for the change; consumers were also alienated by the protracted series of labor conflicts that both impacted coal supply and increasingly exposed the exploitation of workers. In particular, the UMWA strike of 1902 garnered national attention with the outbreak of violence in the region. Due to concern that the coal shortage would lead to more widespread fuel riots, President Theodore Roosevelt came under pressure from politicians across the spectrum to seize the mines under the law of eminent domain. He called a conference between himself, the mine operators, and UMWA President John Mitchell. P&RC&I President George F. Baer famously expressed the position of operators in a letter: "The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected and cared for -- not by the labor agitators, but by the Christian men of property to whom God has given control of the property rights of the country, and upon the successful management of which so much depends." He and the other operators maintained this stance during the conference: they would not commit themselves to abide by an investigative commission's findings, agree to arbitration, or recognize the union.

Negotiations remained at a standstill until the White House leaked the news that the president was considering government takeover of the mines. Pressured by J.P. Morgan, the operators agreed to a commission, with the stipulation that it did not contain any representatives of organized labor. Although the commission did not

grant official recognition to the union, it created the Anthracite Board of Conciliation to adjudicate grievances. For this reason, Aurand (2003, p. 85) divides the anthracite industry's pay program into two eras: prior to 1902, a period of unilateral decisions by the operators, and after 1902, the age of collective bargaining.

However, the age of collective bargaining did not allow for greater personal or community agency. As with the earlier consolidation of the coal industry, union leadership increasingly shifted to urban centers outside the region. During the strike of 1902, Mitchell had traveled widely across the anthracite region, and the demands he articulated grew out of his conversations with community leaders and miners. For this reason, mine workers "gave him their personal loyalty, a loyalty stronger than their allegiance to the union he led" (Miller and Sharpless, 1998, p. 286). Even as the strike began to take a toll on unemployed workers, Mitchell received a hero's welcome when he rode into town. Leighton (1939, p. 36) describes a typical reaction: "This pale-faced man belonged to them; they worked for a living at the mines, and this being descended from heaven, this man so close they could touch him, had been a miner also; he was theirs! The cheers, they say, were hysterical."

In contrast, John L. Lewis, who served as UMWA president from 1920 until 1960, ushered in an era in which labor conflict shifted "from the shop floor and the streets to institutional settings (normally, hotel rooms where corporate and union bureaucrats with government mediators negotiated contracts)" (Dublin and Licht, 2005, p. 59). According to Karsh and London (1954, p. 415), this change was typical across industrial labor movements: "as the union succeeds in giving to its members a greater measure of control over their condition of employment, it tends to develop through time an institutionalized bureaucratic structure in which the membership tends to have less control over decision-making process." They argue that Lewis encouraged miners to view the union as a service agency which necessitated centralized control in order to secure benefits for members.

Schuylkill County

The downturn of the coal industry forced the P&RC&I into bankruptcy proceedings from 1937 through 1944. During this period, management remained intact. However, faced with continually declining sales, the company was taken over by outside speculators in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1956, the new directors rebranded the company the Philadelphia and Reading Corporation (PRC) and liquidated its coal operations, which were placed under a subsidiary called Reading Anthracite. In its place, the PRC purchased clothing, shoe, optical, toy, and chemical manufacturing firms, none of which were located in the region. Dublin and Licht (2005, p. 99) write: "The collieries of the Pennsylvania anthracite region represented tax shelters for [outside investors] and assets for the taking and selling, not productive facilities." In 1947 manufacturing employment, primarily concentrated in the textile and apparel industries, surpassed mining (Miller, 1955, p. 339).

However, the apparel industry was unable to support the numbers of unemployed miners and mining families in the post-World War II period. Local governments

and county-level organizations, such as the Schuylkill Economic Development Corporation (SEDCO), provided incentives for new industry, but the limited employment such redevelopment efforts brought to the region was low-wage and non-unionized. Small-scale manufacturing operations in the food, fabricated metals, and electric and electronic equipment industries provided the primary means for employment (Miller, 1989, p. 171). Beginning in the 1960s, tertiary industries such as transportation and other public utilities, wholesale and retail trade, finance, insurance and real estate, and services saw the greatest growth. The contemporary economy is supported primarily by manufacturing and the service sector. According to the 2000 Census, 26 percent of the Schuylkill County population aged 16 years or over is employed in manufacturing, 19.5 percent in education, health, and social services, and 12.3 percent in retail trade (McCormick Taylor, 2006, p. 49). Despite the growth of new sectors, unemployment in the anthracite region has never fallen below 10 percent and it has one of the lowest per capita incomes in the entire Northeastern United States (Miller and Sharpless, 1998, p. 323).

As mining jobs disappeared, the region saw significant outmigration, although the decline in population occurred less rapidly than the decline in employment opportunities. The population of towns in the anthracite region as a whole dropped 20 percent between 1930 and 1950, and another 20 percent during the 1950s (Marsh, 1987, p. 345). Ethnic and religious composition remained relatively unaffected by this population shift; however, it had a measurable impact upon other social categories, particularly education level and age. In a study of six anthracite-region high schools between 1946 and 1960, Dublin and Licht (2005, p. 96) found college education to be the strongest predictor of outmigration: "A college degree was a ticket to good employment elsewhere. Parents encouraged their children's education knowing full well that traditional family bonds were endangered."

Those who stayed began to commute to mill and factory positions up to 150 miles away in suburban areas such as Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania, and Linden, Manville, or Elizabeth, New Jersey (Dublin and Licht, 2005, p. 89). Kolbe (1975, p. 242) calls commuting in the anthracite region "prodigious." Marsh (1987, p. 350) writes: "Commuting is a central fact of life in the anthracite region. Some commute away from wife and family for four and a half days a week to work in a city and some who have moved away commute back most weekends to visit friends and relatives." In this regard, the anthracite region is emblematic of broader trends which show an increase in the number of residents of rural areas who fulfill basic needs outside of their communities.

Although employment in the coal industry is virtually nonexistent today, coal continues to carry important symbolic weight, as evidenced by a recent debate regarding heating public facilities. In 2006, Schuylkill County considered a proposal from Honeywell International Inc. to replace coal-fired boilers at the county courthouse and prison with natural gas. The proposal met with controversy among both citizens and lawmakers. Urbina (2008) reports: "For decades, local officials have tried to block natural gas pipelines from crossing Pennsylvania and passed ordinances requiring public buildings to use anthracite, but the recent debate has raised a thorny

question about how much is too much to pay to protect local industry and history." Honeywell projected that the new system would save the county \$3.2 million over 15 years (Wolfgang, 2008a). In response, Reading Anthracite submitted a counter-proposal. The Pennsylvania Anthracite Council projected that remaining with coal would save Schuylkill \$5.5 million over 25 years (Wolfgang, 2008a).

In September 2008 the council reached a compromise after Honeywell International withdrew its proposal, accepting instead a proposal from PPL subsidiary McClure Co. to install new flex boilers that can burn either coal or gas for heat. The county expects to save about \$1 million over 15 years by using gas heat during mild months and coal heat during the winter (Wolfgang, 2009). Anthracite interests continue to argue that coal is poised to make a comeback, particularly as gas and oil prices rise. Steinberg (1996) reports: "After slipping for six decades, the production of Pennsylvania anthracite rose to more than 8 million tons last year [1995]." There is a niche market for small anthracite-burning stoves to supplement home heating. In 2008, coal stove manufacturers such as Keystoker Inc., located in Schuylkill Haven, saw record-breaking sales, which some believe indicate "the second coming of the anthracite boom" (Wolfgang, 2008b). The motivation for continued support of the anthracite industry is not only economic benefit, as reflected in Urbina's (2008) above assessment of the heating debate. Urbina quotes a Republican state senator from Schuylkill County, James J. Rhoades: "Heritage should count for something." Residents continue to seek such a second coming, according to Marsh (1987, p. 347), because the historical dominance of coal "has constrained people's repertoire of responses to the world."

This strong attachment to local and regional histories is also manifested in efforts to develop and sustain a tourism economy. As part of these efforts, conflicts for control over meaning are clearly exposed. Joseph Wayne, with the support of the Pennsylvania Labor History Society, campaigned for a posthumous pardon on behalf of his great-grandfather John Kehoe. The pardon was issued by Governor Milton J. Shapp in 1979. However, as Miller and Sharpless (1998, p. 137) argue, "whether the anthracite Irishmen were class heroes or cutthroat vigilantes ... still depends, in the region at least, on which side your ancestors took." In 1998, the Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau drew censure from some in when it staged a reenactment of the hangings of six accused Molly Maguires during the annual Molly Maguire weekend. John Bugbee, the great-great-great grandson of Frank Langdon, a mine official whose murder in 1862 was attributed to the Molly Maguires, worried that "the romanticization of this era could get out of hand" (quoted in Bulik, 1998). Despite such criticism, the Historical Society displays portions of the ropes used to hang the men, trial transcripts, and a revolver used by an adversary of the Mollies.

Tamaqua

Tamaqua has also drawn heavily upon the historical legacy of the coal boom to redevelop the downtown area as a tourist destination. Beginning in 1991, a citizen

organization called Tamaqua Save Our Station (S.O.S.) partnered with the Tamaqua Historical Society, Downtown Tamaqua, the Tamaqua Chamber of Commerce, and State Representative Dave Argell's office for the purpose of restoring the station and its environs. Rededicated in 2004, the station is central to the Tamaqua Historic District, which encompasses more than 900 properties stretching over 50 blocks (Tamaqua S.O.S., 2008). It is also a functional stop along the Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad line, organized from former Conrail tracks (part of which originally belonged to Philadelphia and Reading) in 1990. Kline and Kline (2005, p. 49) describe the contemporary scene: "Abandoned, then slated for demolition after a fire, the Tamaqua train station now offers art shows, locally made chocolates, a bridal and home furnishing stores, and an outstanding new restaurant reminiscent of the borough's heyday."

In addition, some former anthracite communities such as Tamaqua are seeking alternative uses for former mines and related infrastructure. As a means for generating income, many have used abandoned strip and underground mines as landfills for out-of-town and out-of-state waste. In 2004, the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) approved the practice of filling abandoned mines with a mixture of coal ash and muck dredged from river bottoms as a means of preventing accidents and stopping the discharge of acidic water (Avril, 2004). The LC&N, which had a permit to dump coal ash into the Springdale Pit in Tamaqua, applied to begin this new practice and reached an agreement with the Tamaqua Borough Council to pay the borough \$800,000 annually, pending individual approval from the DEP (Dublin and Licht, 2005, p. 174). Avril (2005) writes: "The concept is hailed not only as an environmental two-for-one, but as a tool for economic development."

Although the borough council initially approved the agreement, subsequent election cycles saw the replacement of several members of the council. In 2006, the council became the fifth local government in the country to abolish the rights of corporations and establish the rights of ecosystems. The local government worked in tandem with community groups, including the one-thousand-member Schuylkill County citizen organization Army for a Clean Environment and the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, to draft the ordinance (Price, 2006).

Discussion

Like many other communities in the anthracite region, Tamaqua is characterized by two broad countervailing trends with regard to the impact of coal on the development of community. The first is the fractionalization promoted by coal companies through hiring practices and the division of labor in the mines. The second is the solidarity demonstrated by coal miners at two levels: (1) within ethnic and religious groups through fraternal societies and churches, and (2) at the community level through formal labor organizations and a common work culture. In Tamaqua, especially, this solidarity was enhanced by the early growth of a local business class and the emergence of strong connections between the networks of collieries in the surrounding area, as seen in the equalization movement, for example.

Thus, fractionalization and solidarity coexisted. On one hand, fractionalization prevented the establishment of norms of social trust and generalized reciprocity, which form the basis of social capital. On the other hand, collaboration around economic and other shared interests sometimes did override these tensions. These two distinct yet intertwined patterns of interaction help to explain the divergent results of our survey and key informant interviews. These findings are not well explained by social capital theory, which would suggest that – in the absence of social trust and norms of generalized reciprocity – collaboration and collective action would be highly unlikely.

Narrative analysis provides a more useful framework for explaining this paradox. Over time, the trends described above gave rise to two competing narrative understandings of community history that persist into the present day and have implications for decision-making processes. Community narratives can best be described as selective representations of the past that feed into and are partially driven by contemporary circumstances (Bridger, 1996). Survey results reflect a narrative of decline that emphasizes the negative legacy of coal through continuing class and ethnic tensions, disaffection, and a strongly felt lack of collective efficacy in addressing economic issues. More optimistic key informant interviews, on the other hand, reflect a revitalization narrative, which draws upon the early and recurring collaboration across social groups for the purpose of forwarding shared economic interests as an important foundation for contemporary development efforts.

It is important to note here that these different narrative understandings are both equally legitimate representations of Tamaqua's past. Although residents share a common history and vocabulary, they emphasize and emplot the same set of events in different ways. Indeed, as White (1980, pp. 17–18) argues, there can be no objective narrative because plot “endows events, whether real or imaginary, with a significance that they do not possess as a mere sequence.” The use of narrative fuses form and interpretation together. Events are envisioned as part of a linear or horizontal process that leads to or culminates in some end: “Common opinion has it that the plot of a narrative imposes a meaning on the events that comprise its story level by revealing at the end a structure that was immanent in the events *all along* [emphasis original]” (p. 23). The explanatory power of narrative makes it a critical resource for establishing and maintaining social power. In most communities, narratives are contested; there is rarely only one community history to draw upon in arguing for courses of action in the present. Bridger (1996, p. 370) suggests that narrative creation is “... a dynamic process in which differentially empowered interest groups selectively reinterpret the past and project desired futures in light of changing local conditions and events.”

Because narrative understandings provide context and direction for contemporary decisions, they have important implications for courses of action and, more broadly, trajectories for communities. For instance, conflicts over narrative control are evident not only in discourse, but in development and redevelopment efforts themselves. As Molotch et al. (2000) argue, there is a dialectical relationship between social (including narrative) and physical structures. To some degree, physical

structures representing 'memory trace material' allow for continuity in social structures even with the movement of populations. Contemporary development, such as the restored train station, celebrates the period of consolidation during which the town saw its greatest social and economic growth. However, it is notable that the period considered to be Tamaqua's 'heyday' was also the period in which local business leaders were largely replaced by absentee corporate operators. It was also the period marked by some of the most violent labor conflict in the anthracite region's history, including the Molly Maguire murders. Local reaction to another physical artifact of the anthracite industry, the significant environmental damage which plagues the region, illustrates a backlash against the continuation of this power structure. In the opposition to dumping coal ash into the Springdale Pit, for instance, the community was mobilized against a potential development project that reflected the historical domination by outside entities.

These actions relating to the representation of the coal industry underscore the important role that non-economic forms of rationality play in community development efforts. The various debates and their narrative underpinnings highlight values, such as pride in local history, that have strong emotional resonance and can influence decisions. This appeal to values has important implications for the application of social capital to community development policy, because, as we pointed out above, the concept relies so heavily on a very narrow view of rationality. Miller (1992, p. 29) summarizes this position when aggregated to the community level: 'community is composed of strategically rational individuals who participate in collective action because they wish to avoid sanctions or receive incentives from the community ... bringing community, culture, and social norms in through the back door.'

Miller (1992) argues that other forms of rationality, particularly Habermas's (1984) 'communicative rationality,' better account for the role of cultural traditions, social integration, and normative structures such as values and institutions. Fischer (2000, p. 132) similarly describes a 'cultural rationality' which 'is geared to – or at least gives equal weight to – personal and familiar experiences rather than depersonalized technical calculations.' Fischer (2009, p. 192) argues that citizens and politicians alike interpret arguments and make decisions through the lens of various narrative structures about "how the society works, how it should work, and what sorts of measures are needed to make it work that way." In other words, people are not simply rational actors who develop norms of trust and reciprocity on the basis of some sort of technical calculation about the benefits or sanctions associated with particular forms of behavior. As Christoforou (2011, p. 693) points out, norms and networks are always located in a broader social and political context that impacts their relationship with decision-making processes, "where the principles of expected utility, individual preference and market exchange become one of many that determine human behavior." To the extent that this is an accurate representation of collective action, an emphasis on building social capital is an ineffective strategy for development in some communities.

In the context of Tamaqua, although economic rationality may have dominated historical organizing efforts, particularly in the form of the labor union, contemporary

organizing suggests greater emphasis on alternative forms of rationality, such as communicative and cultural. This explains why some development projects, such as the restoration of the Tamaqua Station and Depot Square Park, are successful and others, such as the dumping of coal ash into the Springdale Pit, have been subject to backlash. From an economic point of view, the rational decision may have been to dump ash into the Springdale Pit. However, as suggested above, more than economic rationality was at work.

Conclusion

In Tamaqua, social divisions reflect a set of historical processes which have depressed participation of some socioeconomic and ethnic groups in development initiatives. The powerful role that coal monopolies played in structuring community life, particularly in promoting ethnic and class fractionalization, inhibited the development of bridging and bonding social capital. Even though both forms of social capital were lacking, a shared interest in place provided the basis for collaboration around issues of community and economic development. A narrative lens can be a useful tool for revealing these sorts of tensions and understanding how contemporary decision making and actions actually occur. This is because such an approach takes into account competing understandings of local history and visions for the future, and provides for a more complex view of rationality and motivation. We have found that a mixed-methods approach is particularly useful for elucidating these narratives. Taken alone, each dataset used in the study paints a partial picture. The household social capital survey captures historically embedded ethnic and social tensions. Key informant interviews highlight collaboration and action around economic issues, and, more broadly, a particular perception of community identity. The historical data provides a basis for exploring and explaining this Tamaqua paradox.

From a practical perspective, our findings suggest that community and economic development professionals must take into account the historical processes which would make the development of norms of social trust and generalized reciprocity particularly untenable. Because the creation of social capital is time and labor intensive, it is necessary for residents, local leaders, policy-makers, extension educators, and other community development specialists to have an understanding of the conditions under which it is most likely to facilitate development. Places that are marked by power imbalances and historical relations of domination are not good candidates for a social capital approach. It may be a more appropriate strategy in places where there is a foundation for building social trust and norms of generalized reciprocity. In short, context matters. For this reason, we argue that a more historical, synthetic, and holistic understanding of community history and change is an important part of the process of theorizing and practicing community development.

Notes

- 1 This research was supported by the USDA's National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program.

- 2 It is important to stress that we focused on the relationship between social capital and economic development activeness rather than the relationship between social capital and successful economic development as measured by job and income growth. Wilkinson (1991, p. 94) summarizes the logic behind this decision when he argues: "To require success would be to ignore the complex forces other than purpose that contribute to community change." Building local capacity to address important issues depends on residents taking action, whether those actions achieve specific goals or not.

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