

Social Capital and Rural Development: The case of Huntingdon, Quebec

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A Thesis

in

The Department of

Geography, Planning and Environment

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For Master of the Arts in Public Policy and Public Administration
(Geography Option) at Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

April 2008

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-40832-2
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-40832-2

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ABSTRACT

Social Capital and Rural Development: The case of Huntingdon, Quebec

Geneviève Aboud

This thesis examines the efforts at rural economic restructuring in Huntingdon, a town recently devastated by closure of two major textile mills. More specifically, by analyzing this case through the lens of ABCD and social capital theory, it evaluates the extent to which current initiatives on the part of the municipal govt. and non-governmental organizations integrate local assets and contribute to the development of positive forms of social capital. The research draws on semi-structured interviews with members of the government, members of non-governmental organisations and community members and finds that there are three main challenges impeding the prospects for sustainable rural economic initiatives: the misuse of power by the Mayor, the underdevelopment of bridging networks between government and community groups and the linguistic divide within the community. The thesis concludes with some reflections on the lessons of the Huntingdon case for economic development theory and policy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks must be first extended to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Norma Rantisi, whose tireless efforts to keep me “on track” kept her busy for at least a year. Also to my family, thank you for always having faith in me and supporting me those times when I am, to most accounts, insupportable. To my friends, thank you for not deserting me, and, particularly for knowing the added perspective that a pint gives to any situation. I would like to dedicate this endeavour to my sisters, for always being there to remind me of the important things in life. Finally, I would like to thank the staff of Tim Horton’s, for always being there when I needed them most.

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INTRODUCTION

American poet Anne Bradstreet once mused that "If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome." (July 22, 2007) Since the closures of the textile mills in Huntingdon, Quebec, the community has tasted bitter adversity in the form of an unemployment crisis that has put over 700 employees of two textile mills out of work. The struggles of the community have been not only financial, but emotional, as they try to cope not only with the loss of employment, but also with the loss of the sense of security that employment brought to their day to day lives. The loss of the textile industry has affected the town as a whole, with effects including job loss, reduced spending in local businesses, and a plummeting housing market.

Stepping up to the plate, the municipal government, and non-governmental community organisations have made significant efforts to re-vitalize the town's economy. The town's efforts for development exemplify the broader struggle of single industry towns trying to cope in an era of globalisation and heightened competition from abroad; and lead to questions about how local government and community organisations can join together to confront such challenges. This study explores the development in Huntingdon through the lens of social capital theory and with an appreciation of the importance of asset based community development methods for a sustainable rural economy.

Throughout the course of the study it became apparent to me that the complex nature of social interactions both within the municipal governmental organisation and

between the municipal government and other organisations was going to determine, to a great extent, the direction of the study. At its conception, this study was to be an analysis primarily of the social capital of the municipal government, including the other groups and organisations involved in the development of the rural economy of Huntingdon Quebec since the closure of the mills. Following from the difficulties in accessing the members of the municipal government, particularly the Mayor, this study became re-directed. In the course of the first couple of interviews with members of economic development organisations in the Huntingdon area, it became apparent that the groups devoted to the development of the area did not, as previously supposed, work in the most part in conjunction with the municipality, but often worked quite independently of municipal support, or partnership. This is not to say that the municipal government has removed itself from economic development. Indeed, they have been exuberant in their efforts for development, particularly in garnering media attention; however, it is to say that the group presumed to be the cornerstone of the foundation for development in Huntingdon is in fact sharing that role with multiple community organisations, not always in perfect harmony. Thus, this case can present a window through which we can examine the opportunities and challenges faced by rural communities in adapting to global pressures.

This study contextualizes the case of Huntingdon within the current literature surrounding rural economic development in Canada and abroad. It draws from the ideas of social capital and of asset based development, and compares current theory with practical initiatives for economic development put forward by the municipal government, as well as by non-governmental organisations within Huntingdon. The literature on

social capital is diverse, and copious. Yet, underlying most definitions is the assumption that the development of social networks facilitates economic interactions (Putnam, 2000a, p. 263; Bourdieu, 1985, p. 249; Coleman, 1990, p. 302; and Woolcock, 2001, p. 6) The principle of asset based community development promotes the use of local assets, and the involvement of the community in order to achieve sustainable economic development (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1996, p.4). These concepts are complimentary, overlapping in both mandate and in method to a certain extent, encouraging open participation with the goal of developing a sustainable economy.

Drawing from the actions and reactions of the municipal government, community groups and individuals in developing economic development initiatives in response to the closure of the textile mills, certain themes become readily apparent. These common threads that weave their way through the story of the efforts for economic development of the municipality of Huntingdon yield to the development of policy suggestions for the increased generation of productive social capital and for facilitation of asset based community development. A key objective here is to provide a better understanding of the situation in Huntingdon that may inform future analyses of the role of social capital in rural economic development.

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature is structured to provide an overview of some salient research on aspects of globalisation, economic theory, the urban/rural divide, the new rural economy, asset-based community development, social capital and rural restructuring. It is divided into two themes, the sources of economic disparities, and the ways to mitigate the inequalities.

The first theme is constructed around the reality of the economic change associated with the globalizing economy, and then narrows in scope to consider more specifically the economic disadvantages associated with the rural situation in this era. Challenges to rural vitality are identified, and the consequences of these are explained.

The second theme delves more deeply into ways to overcome these disadvantages. It examines the principle underpinning asset-based community development, and the importance of social capital in sustainable economic development. The values of both the unique characteristics of rural areas and of the social networks that facilitate interactions in all sectors of the economy are emphasized, reflecting their prominence within the current literature.

2.1 Globalisation and the New Rural Economy

2.1.1 Globalisation and Liberalisation of the Markets

Quoting Apedaile et al (2003): “globalisation happens” (p. 2). Globalisation is defined as “the reduction in costs of making transactions with the rest of the world”

(Apedaile et al., 2003, p. 2). It is facilitated by liberalisation; the ease of “access to markets across national borders” (Apedaile et al., 2003, p. 2). These two factors conjointly concentrate wealth. Obviously, they also increase competition for businesses.

Reimer (2005), in “Rural and Urban: Differences and common ground” recalls Canada’s colonial roots; reminiscing about the foundation of this country’s enduring ties to the global economy and to the changing whims of foreign economic policy trends (p. 83). More recently we have been exposed to a greater extent to these major global influences. Positively, with increased globalisation comes better access to global markets; yet, it also creates the imperative to compete at a global scale in order to be profitable (Apedaile et al., 2003, p. 6). According to scholars such as Castells (1999), to compete in the global markets, businesses have to be more innovative. This suggests the need to create new products and processes at a faster rate; in turn, giving primacy to ideas and/or knowledge as the key basis for competitive advantage. Yet, still the overwhelming majority of labour and economic activities are not global at all, but local and regional. Realistically, it is only those local businesses that, as they move into the global economy, are open to change and sensitive to the constraints and potentials of the global markets, that may have the possibility of flourishing and of revitalizing the economy (Castells, 1999, p. 13; Apedaile et al. 2003, p. 22).

Coe (2001) and Apedaile (2003) consider the negative consequences of globalisation and liberalisation by highlighting uneven development and economic instability as less anticipated outcomes of these forces (Apedaile p. 4; Coe pp. 4, 5). Particularly interesting in reference to the topic of this study is the example Coe (2001) uses of the decline of the textile industry in Australia, exemplifying the way mature

industries, traditionally resistant to change, even while supported by a well-intentioned liberalisation policy, can struggle in the global economy (p. 5). This suggests that in order to understand the direction of industry in Canada, it is important to first understand the repercussions of the re-organisation of the economy caused by globalisation.

2.1.2 Classical Economic Theory

While the global economy is a major force today, the imperatives of such an economy were not features integrated into classical approaches to economic development. According to Copus (2001), traditional economic theory generated the classical paradigm for economic development where each location is treated as if it was the same and the factors of location (distance costs) and agglomeration are used to assess economic potential. *Distance costs* can be described as the "apparently systemic changes in land value and economic activity with increasing distance from pre-existing economic centers"(Copus, 2001 p. 2), and *agglomeration* as the increase in efficiency of transactions through geographic proximity (Storper, 1999, p. 5). These agglomerative efficiencies can include both "hard" transactional efficiencies such as the facilitation of inter-firm buying and selling, and also "soft" externalities like knowledge spillovers and the generation of trust (Storper, 1999, p. 5).

This classical approach makes economic analysis relatively simple; and, the effect of both the factors of location and agglomeration on the economy is undisputed; however, Copus (2001) describes the evolution away from classical economic theory, and the more recent understanding of how other factors are now taking part in shaping both economic development theory and practice (p. 2). Supported by Castells (1999), he emphasizes the

importance of integrating the effects of factors including communication technology, the level of human capital (or quality of labour) and the level of social capital; because of the important role they play in knowledge creation and circulation, which are increasingly central to economic development in the knowledge economy (Copus, 2001, p. 2).

2.1.3 The Urban/Rural Divide and the New Rural Economy

Within both the classical and the newer growth theories recognition of the urban/rural divide has always existed. Gertler (2001) asserts that the privileges urban areas have as a result of the advantages of the density and of the diversity of actors, as well as the benefits of their spatial clustering, are important to innovation and to economic development. These characteristics facilitate the interactions needed for economic learning and allow economic actors to reconstitute their networks as needed to adapt to the vagaries of the global market. This author stresses that with rural areas' inherent peripherality and the increased use of information technologies (also a feature concentrated in urban areas), that rural areas are suffering more than ever from the traditional problem of the "tyranny of distance" (Gertler, 2001, p. 14). Gertler (2001) emphasizes the need for rural areas to be open to change -reflecting the previous discussion on how to succeed in a globalizing economy- through being receptive to "flows of new people, new ideas and new ways of doing things, as well as access to new opportunities for advancement" in order to overcome rural peripheral disadvantages (p. 24).

Recent studies have sought to further analyze disadvantages associated with peripherality in this new economic context. Reimer's study (2004) "Exploring Diversity

in Rural Canada” centers on understanding the causes behind the devitalisation of rural economies and social conditions. Reimer (2004) states that in order to develop solutions to these problems the root of the problem must be addressed, and focuses on identifying the processes and conditions surrounding devitalisation, rather than the outcomes alone (p.1).

Four major challenges to rural vitality are identified. The first challenge is the changing organisation of trade, leading to the shedding of labour in many local industries in rural Canada (pp. 1, 2). The second process identified is the economic fluctuation and instability that is becoming characteristic of the new rural economy; this is particularly typical of small centers with specialized economies (p. 2). Thirdly, the urban influence on politics, culture and on the labour force is a major cause of increasing devitalisation; “[t]his includes migration, changing commuting patterns, homogeneity of mass culture, and growing urban political representation” (p. 2). The last factor is the re-organisation of state services. This is evident mainly in the withdrawal of state services, and the undermining of traditional institutional bases (p. 2). Four variables reflect these four challenges to rural vitality: inclusion in the global economy, local economic fluctuations, proximity to urban centers and level of institutional capacity. Reimer sees these four general conditions as governing the economies and social conditions of rural areas in Canada and as defining the *new rural economy*, but also emphasizes that it is important to take into account local situation in order to respond with the development of appropriate policy measures (p. 2).

2.2 Toward Sustainable Rural Development

2.2.1 Asset Based Community Development and the Empowerment of Individuals and Communities

Within the new rural economy there are many areas that are lagging. One approach to mitigating these disparities is through asset based community development. Kretzmann and McKnight's study, "Mapping Community Capacity" (1996) focuses on how to create solutions for the economic development difficulties of low income areas. The authors discount traditional needs-oriented solutions, focused on resolving existing problems, as being self-perpetuating. They describe needs-oriented solutions as negatively affecting low income neighborhoods' perceptions of themselves, and their capability to be productive through creating a belief that their well-being depends on the services provided by outsiders. Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) propose capacity-focused policies as an alternative, i.e.: those that focus on the development of local skills and assets.

Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) flesh out the importance of local effort, local involvement and the development of local assets for significant community development (p. 4). The focus of their development model is forward looking and involves the conception of a map of community capacity and assets. The primary building blocks of this model are considered to be the individuals of the community and their skills, as well as the community's associational and organizational capacities. The secondary building blocks are assets located within the community, but falling outside of community control. These can include private and non-profit organisations, public institutions and services and physical resources such as vacant land, industrial structures or housing. Thirdly there

are the potential building blocks. These can be services or major public assets that can be diverted to use by the community. These assets, once identified, are used as the basis for local development initiatives.

Wilson (1996), in “Empowerment: Community economic development from the inside out” supports the assertion that individual change, considered to be part of the primary building blocks of Kretzmann and McKnight’s asset based community development (ABCD) model, is necessary for community and societal change (p.2). This author defines the synthesis of individual and community change as *empowerment*, and regards it as it an imperative for community economic development (1996, p.2) and thus, empowerment can be considered part of the fundamental basis for successful asset based community development initiatives.

Kerka (2003) describes this process of asset based community development in both the Canadian and American spheres, as a primarily bottom-up (with community members initiating and/or playing key roles in the development process) alternative to traditionally top-down needs based assessments. In contrast, Lehto (2006) explains how in Finland and other EU countries, asset based community development often starts as a top-down endeavour; with leading regional actors recruiting, empowering and training community members, and then the roles reversing and becoming locally driven only after the preparatory stage has been completed; phasing out the original project manager(s). Irrespective of the differences in application, the goal of asset based community development in both cases is the development of local capital, and particularly *social capital*, as a step toward a sustainable economy.

2.2.2 Social Capital

There are several significant bodies of work on the development of social capital. It is defined by all as integral to economic development, but to different degrees. These studies include, but are not exclusive to, the works of Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, Robert Putnam and Michael Woolcock.

Bourdieu (1985) defines social capital through its function. He asserts that social capital is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (p. 249). Bourdieu (1985) posits that social capital is convertible to economic capital; supposing that economic capital can be counted in those less easily measurable units of indebtedness, such as time (p. 249). Emphasizing that social capital is in constant flux; Bourdieu (1985) asserts that, though immeasurable, its profitability increases proportionately to the amount of capital. Thus, the benefit of having a high level of social capital is considered the potential derived economic capital. The potential negative aspects of social capital are also addressed. Specifically, when a group’s members are weak in social capital, and the leadership is strong, there is an increased potential for a misuse of power. This could arrive through embezzlement or misappropriation of the group’s collective capital.

Coleman (1990) also defines social capital through its function, stating that it is “not a single entity, but a variety of entities having two characteristics in common”, i.e.: that they are all comprised of an aspect of social structure and that they smooth the progress of certain actors within the structure (p. 302). Coleman (1990) states that social capital is an intangible resource that facilitates productive interactions, and is embodied

in relations among people. He asserts that it is not possible to simply convert social capital to economic capital, but also maintains that it has a definite economic value in that social interactions underpin economic activities (p. 302).

Putnam, (2000b) one of the most popularized researchers studying social capital, defines as a central tenet of social capital “that networks and associated norms of reciprocity have value” (p. 1). He claims that the benefits of social capital include, but are far more extensive than, its positive impact on material standards of living and increased potential for economic gain, beyond this it also appears to increase levels of happiness (2000a, p. 263). He asserts that social capital can be developed in both formal groups, and informal groups; and he emphasizes that social capital, like every type of capital, can be used for either positive or negative ends; but, emphasizes the rewards associated with social capital accumulation rather than its potential negative aspects (2000a).

Woolcock (2001) discusses the social aspect of economic development through highlighting the role of social capital. He defines this concept as the norms and networks that facilitate collective action (p. 6). Focussing mainly on the function of social capital both he and Narayan¹ break the concept down into three discreet types: *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking* social capital. These distinct forms of social capital entail the creation of three different types of networks, reaching out to individuals with different relations to each other.

According to Woolcock (2001), *bonding* social capital refers specifically to those “relations between family members, close friends and neighbors” (pp. 7, 8). Narayan

¹ Narayan has contributed a great deal to the literature surrounding social capital and poverty relief used by the World Bank

(1999) describes it as those “ties that bring people and resources together” (p. 1). Both authors agree that bonding social capital can be described as an “inward looking” network (Narayan, 1999; Woolcock, 2001; Putnam, 2000a, p.22). Examples of this type of network can include knitting circles, church groups and fraternal organisations. This type of social capital generally encompasses the most cohesive networks, characterized by strong ties. Such ties can have the advantage of providing support, and developing cooperation and trust; but, they also run the risk of creating closed groups that exclude and become sectarian, ethnocentric or corrupt (Putnam, 2000a, p. 22).

Bridging social capital refers to the relations that exist between “people who share broadly similar demographic characteristics” (Woolcock, 2001, p. 8). An example of bridging social capital could be a network that exists between two groups in a community. If the Women’s Institute and the Volunteer Firemen collaborate on a fund-raising brunch, bonds of trust and reciprocity can form between the members of these groups. These “bridges”, sometimes formed through overlapping memberships, between members would not necessarily exist without this event; but once they do exist they can be leveraged to facilitate other social and economic interactions. Bridges can also include those interactions between community members, community development organisations and the municipal government. They can be essential for maintaining good relations between governmental institutions and non-governmental organisations, and according to Narayan (1999), are necessary to “move toward economic and social well-being” as well as being fundamental for poverty reduction (p. 1).

In contrast to bonding and bridging social capital, which both Narayan and Woolcock view as horizontal networks, i.e. networks that exist between and within

groups of similar status or position, the concept of *linking* social capital is described as “the capacity to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the community” or in other words, networks that can be hierarchal or horizontal² (cited in Woolcock, 2001, p.8). Examples of linking social capital can include the leveraging of financial support resources from federal or provincial governments, or of knowledge and aid from outside development organisations.

It is the development of bridging and linking social capital that Woolcock emphasizes as important in helping the underprivileged to “get ahead” (cited in Woolcock, 2001, p. 8). The poor often have large stocks of bonding social capital, less bridging and almost no linking capital. This makes reaching out to institutions beyond their immediate networks difficult, and makes a key goal of development initiatives the creation of these bridges and links (Woolcock, 2001, p. 8). When these bridges and links are absent, the poor may be subject to exclusion.

The concept of social exclusion is admittedly in the early stages of general use, and a unified conceptual framework has yet to be brought into common usage; however, similarly to social capital, Narayan (1999) highlights that the importance of this concept lies in the “social structures, [and] social and political processes and how these impact access to power, resources and the lives of different social groups” (p. 4). Accordingly, as Narayan (1999) suggests we can look at the possible exclusion of individuals and groups through the lens of social capital and examine where, when and why this exclusion is taking place; as well as what impact this will have on the amount and type of social capital available (p. 4).

² linking social capital can be hierarchal when leveraging resources from different levels of an institution i.e.: between municipal or provincial and national –or- it can also be the leveraging of resources from organisations outside of the normal scope of activities, far removed spatially or organizationally.

Studies on the relevance of social capital for community members and groups have been paralleled by recent studies on its relevance in the public sector. Despite the differences in social capital theory there are recognised benefits to having elevated levels of social capital in the public sector, these include “effective bureaucracy” as well as the promotion of “government accountability and legitimacy” and “good governance” (World Bank, October 6, 2006a, p.1, 2). According to the World Bank (2006a) social capital increases productivity, and in the public sector is vital to community economic development; however, despite the positive benefits it is important not to be seduced by the view that the effects of increased levels of social capital are always favourable. (pp.1, 2) Social capital, like any other form of capital, may have negative impacts; threatening the “effectiveness and legitimacy of the state by breeding corruption”, and encouraging sectarianism and ethnocentrism (World Bank, October 6, 2006a, pp.1, 2; Putnam 2000a: pp. 21, 22). Therefore social capital in the public sector, like any other form of capital, may be leveraged to the benefit or the detriment of the community as a whole.

Integrating the views of the theorists discussed above a number of cross-cutting themes emerge. Social capital has a definite value. It can be used to create bonds within groups, bridges between groups and to create links with groups outside the community in order to leverage resources. It can be used in both positive ways, to build strong networks of trust and reciprocity, and negatively, to exclude groups and individuals through the misappropriation of power. The development of social capital is considered integral to sustainable economic development of a community; however, it is also consistently in flux, and often too difficult to measure, suggesting the potential barriers to sustaining positive forms. Moreover, Woolcock (2001) cautions, social capital is not a

cure-all for social ills, but emphasizes that the way that we interact with each other, and the terms on which we do so has a great impact on our well-being. He argues that “getting the relations right” is an integral factor to both the means and the ends of development (p.18).

2.2.3 Rural Restructuring: case studies

Rural restructuring is a challenge. Yet, it has been proven to be not only possible, but successful, when identification and exploitation of local assets, adjustment to the new economic context of globalisation and development of social capital are emphasized in the development process. Case studies of a diversity of ruralities from both Europe and Canada which have undergone restructuring illustrate the recent trend in economic development of fostering the local and more unique assets of communities, and of emphasizing the value of social capital in economic development.

The following examples of rural restructuring adhering to this trend include case studies from research done in Canada by the New Rural Economy (NRE) group, as well as examples from Finland and Ireland. These case studies offer insights into the role played by social capital, and the utilization of already existing assets within sustainable rural economic development strategies.

The Metsanvaki Project

In his analysis of the Metsanvaki project in Northern Finland, Lehto (2006) provides an instructive instance of a successful local development project. The project is

located in a poor, northern, rural municipality. The developers of the project idea were locals who decided that they could capitalize on the natural resources of forest and wilderness in developing 'nature tourism' (p. 3). The developers of the idea then tested their ideas by inviting journalists and tourism experts to participate and give input in the project development (Lehto, 2006, p. 3). According to Lehto (2006), the increased visibility gained through this promotion lent legitimacy to the project, and encouraged outside partners to get involved through financial aid and ideas; allowing for the implementation (p. 3). The successful creation of the Metsanvaki nature tourism project was the end result of this endeavour. Both the use of local resources and the development of social capital have been emphasized as being integral to the success of the project, and the creation of this new enterprise has had several benefits, both tangible and intangible. It created employment, opened dialogue, created links with neighbouring municipalities and increased co-operation among local entrepreneurs with common interests (Lehto, 2006, p. 4). Thus, according to Lehto (2006), "As a result of the project the level of social... capital in the region is higher than before" (p. 4).

The NRE

The NRE group has 32 study sites across Canada, one of which is the community of Blissfield, New Brunswick. Blissfield is approximately a one hour drive from Fredericton, and two from Moncton. According to the NRE (2006) it was traditionally a fishing and logging town but experienced a devastating commercial fishery collapse caused by dramatically diminished numbers of fish in the Miramichi River. After the commercial fishery collapsed the importance of tourism in the town increased, and "[t]he

Miramichi River is now a worldwide attraction to recreational fishermen while canoeing, kayaking, hunting, and snowmobiling are becoming increasingly popular. Year-round outfitters in Blissfield and Doaktown provide a myriad of services for the outdoor adventurer.” (NRE, October 2006). What should be highlighted as important in this case are both the development of tourism around the asset of the Miramichi River, and the use of the previously existing fishing and outdoors skills of the population.

RESTRIM

Several development initiatives were cultivated in municipalities that were the subject of a series of RESTRIM (RESTRucturing In Marginal rural areas) studies. The RESTRIM studies examine the role of social capital in successful rural development initiatives in municipalities of 6 EU countries. The objective of the research was to look at reasons for the success of economic development and diversification of certain rural areas over others, and to examine the meaning and role of social capital in rural development (Oksa and Lehto, 2006, p. 1). A framework for comparisons was created, looking at “local mechanism(s) of development” the “scope of resources” and the “evolution of the network interactions” and an emphasis was put on the importance of connecting to local interests and values (Oksa and Lehto, 2006, p. 1).

The study of the RESTRIM cases highlights both the successes and limits to cultivating social capital in the development of local rural economies. The rural municipality of Ballinrobe, in the Lake District in Ireland, is, for example, a case of an unsuccessful attempt at sustainable local development. The limits to this case can be attributed to the development of Lake District Marketing Corporation. Lake District

Marketing was not established based on a previously existing regional identity, but it was believed that the formation of networks between family, school and cultural groups that resided within the region would naturally follow (Oksa and Lehto, 2006, p. 7).

According to Oksa and Lehto (2006) there was some positive visibility for the local businesses that was attained through the development of the marketing corporation, and some external financial support, however; “the support was not strong enough and long enough to establish a permanent institutional structure” (p. 7). Despite the best efforts of the Lake District Marketing Corporation, the attempt at local development failed on a long term basis. This has been attributed to over-dependence on a single project manager, the lack of networking between community groups and businesses and financial difficulties. There would have been more funding available, save for the lack of local involvement. Thus, as Oksa and Lehto (2006) assert, the lack of social capital, in the form of cohesive local networks, was a crucial hurdle that was not overcome (p. 7).

Prospects for Development: the case of Huntingdon

The existing literature on development prospects for rural economies that have become increasingly marginalized in a global context that privileges flexibility and innovation is extensive. It draws our attention to both the potentials and challenges for long-term or institutionalized efforts. Based on a review of this literature two factors that emerge as central to sustainable rural development are consideration of the local context (particularly potential capabilities and assets) and the levels and forms of social capital.

In this study, a central objective is to explore the extent to which local efforts toward economic development in the town of Huntingdon have integrated and prioritized

local assets, and have succeeded in developing and extending the stocks of local social capital. More specifically, to address this issue, the analysis focuses on the efforts of public and non-governmental organizations with an explicit focus on economic development and interactions among such organisations. A focus on the prospects for sustainable initiatives in Huntingdon is significant for both studies and policies of rural economic development for several reasons.

On the one hand, the population is experiencing extreme dislocation in such a short time period and this is aggravated by the fact that most of the skill base was tied to these particular industries. The destabilization affects not only the economic well-being of the local residents, but the social well-being as well, make any attempts to coordinate efforts all the more daunting. As discussed below, in this particular context, it has translated into the concentration of power into the hands of the leadership.

Moreover, this case is a recent one, where issues are still being worked through. It can provide insight into ongoing practice and tensions through first hand accounts, and not post-facto written testimonies or dated memories. Watching the situation unfold provides insight into nuances that might be overlooked in written accounts.

Despite the challenges associated with the closures, Huntingdon is in a rural region that possesses a number of assets; many of which have been cited in the cases above. These assets include: scenery, agriculture, recreational possibilities and a historic value in a Canadian context.

Potential is there, the outstanding question is whether it can be realized. Thus, the focus of this study is on assessing the extent to which the capacity for realizing it exists.

Chapter 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to study the role that social capital plays in community economic development. The focus of this research is on those links of trust and reciprocity that exist between groups and individuals, working on the premiss that these networks are integral to economic development. It is contextualized in the region of Huntingdon, within the time frame of the two years following the closure of the town's textile mills.

3.1 Epistemological and Ontological Considerations

This examination of the interactions of community group members, members of the municipal government and community members is approached epistemologically from an interpretivist perspective. Drawing from the phenomenological ideas espoused by Schutz, the importance of the recognition of the meaningful nature of human actions is emphasized; and peoples' relationships to their social reality are understood to be motivating behavioural factors. Following from this we understand that it is important to try to look at people's "actions and their social world from their (own) point of view." (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, p. 11)

The interpretivist point of view emphasizes the importance of personal interpretation in the understanding of social phenomena. This study is also informed by what Bryman and Teevan (2005) term a constructionist ontology, implying that individuals' social realities are a product of their environment, or their social interactions (p. 13). Applying this position, we also appreciate that these social organisations are continually in flux. We also recognize that the creation of a social reality is "in a

constant state of negotiation and revision.” (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, p. 13) Thus, framing the study of social capital in Huntingdon from an interpretivist constructionist position means that it is important to approach the study of social capital in the community with the understanding that everyone will have a unique and fluctuating perception of the nature of their relations with any other individual or group.

As clearly as the subjects of study have individual perceptions of the world- so do I in my examination of the situation. In looking at the social networks of the groups working to support the economy of Huntingdon it is important to remember that even though I have never been a part of the community of Huntingdon itself, I have had a close relationship with many of the people in the community, and spent my childhood in the neighbouring municipality of Hemmingford. Choosing to study the social aspect of economic development is reflective of my education as a human geographer; and particularly of my education in Finland where the examination of the role of social capital in economic development was strongly emphasized.

3.2 Research Design

With these considerations in mind, the case study design for my study allows for a context-specific and in-depth analysis of a potentially insightful empirical case. The town of Huntingdon, just such a case, reflects the trend of the de-industrialisation of the countryside. What makes this case particularly interesting is that the re-development of the town is happening concurrent to this study. Insights into those social interactions that make up social capital are not tinted by the rose-coloured glasses of time, but are still fresh in peoples’ minds. Within this design most of the data were collected through a

review of recent news articles, government reports and semi-structured interviews with key actors in the municipal government and local community organisations.

3.3 Interviews

The interview format was developed using the World Bank's Social Capital Assessment Tool (SOCAT) and Measuring Social Capital: An integrated questionnaire by Grootaert et al. as inspiration from which to draw questions from. (see Appendix A for sample interview guide)

According to the World Bank's (2006) article on the measurement of social capital, the SOCAT is designed to gather information on social capital at the household, community and organisational levels. The SOCAT includes an interview guide specifically designed for the measurement of social capital in organisations. In order to measure social capital, the profile produced by the World Bank assesses the origins and development of organisations, quality of membership, institutional capacity, and institutional linkages (Putnam, 2000b; World Bank, Oct. 12, 2006). Questions proposed in the SOCAT are integrated into the interview guide for this study, and are used to examine social capital within the context of the groups working toward economic development of the town of Huntingdon.

The SOCAT emphasizes the necessity of interviewing leaders within the organisations, as well as the members and non-members of the community. Based on these recommendations I have tried to obtain interviews with participants from each of these groups. Limited by time, cost and willingness to participate (on the part of the

interviewees) I obtained 16 interviews with leaders and members of community groups, members of government and community members.

The original interviewees were chosen because of their active participation in community organisations, or in the municipal government. From these first few interviews snowballed recommendations for other potential candidates to interview followed.

Originally, face to face interviews were planned; however, resulting from scheduling and distance difficulties telephone interviews were considered the most reliable and efficient way of getting in touch with participants.

Interviews were conducted in the language of preference of the interviewee, and lasted between 15 minutes and one hour. Interviewees were made aware that they could end the interviews at any time, and that if at any point they did not wish to answer a question that it could be skipped. If they so wished, their identities were to remain confidential. The interviews were conducted over the phone, and some were recorded with the interviewees consent. (See Appendix B for Consent to Participate Form)

Interviews were semi-structured because this format of interview allows participants to go off tangentially, emphasizing what is important to them, personally while still maintaining a certain structure, having a fairly specific list of questions and topics to cover. (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, p. 183) The semi-structured interview allows for more in-depth understandings of the interviewees' concerns than a strictly formal interview. (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, p. 183) According to Bryman and Teevan (2005) it permits the examination of "how interviewees frame and understand issues and events" (p. 184). This format of interview has allowed for a more in-depth understanding

of the social networks in the community, through allowing interviews to flow in a more conversation-like manner - putting interviewees more at ease and allowing for the latitude to ask additional questions.

A structured balance between my role as researcher and my position within the context of the community were maintained. At all times interviewees were aware of my role and of my research goals. (see Appendix C for letter of introduction)

Chapter 4. HUNTINGDON: THE PEOPLE, PLACE AND ECONOMY

4.1 Geography of Huntingdon, Quebec

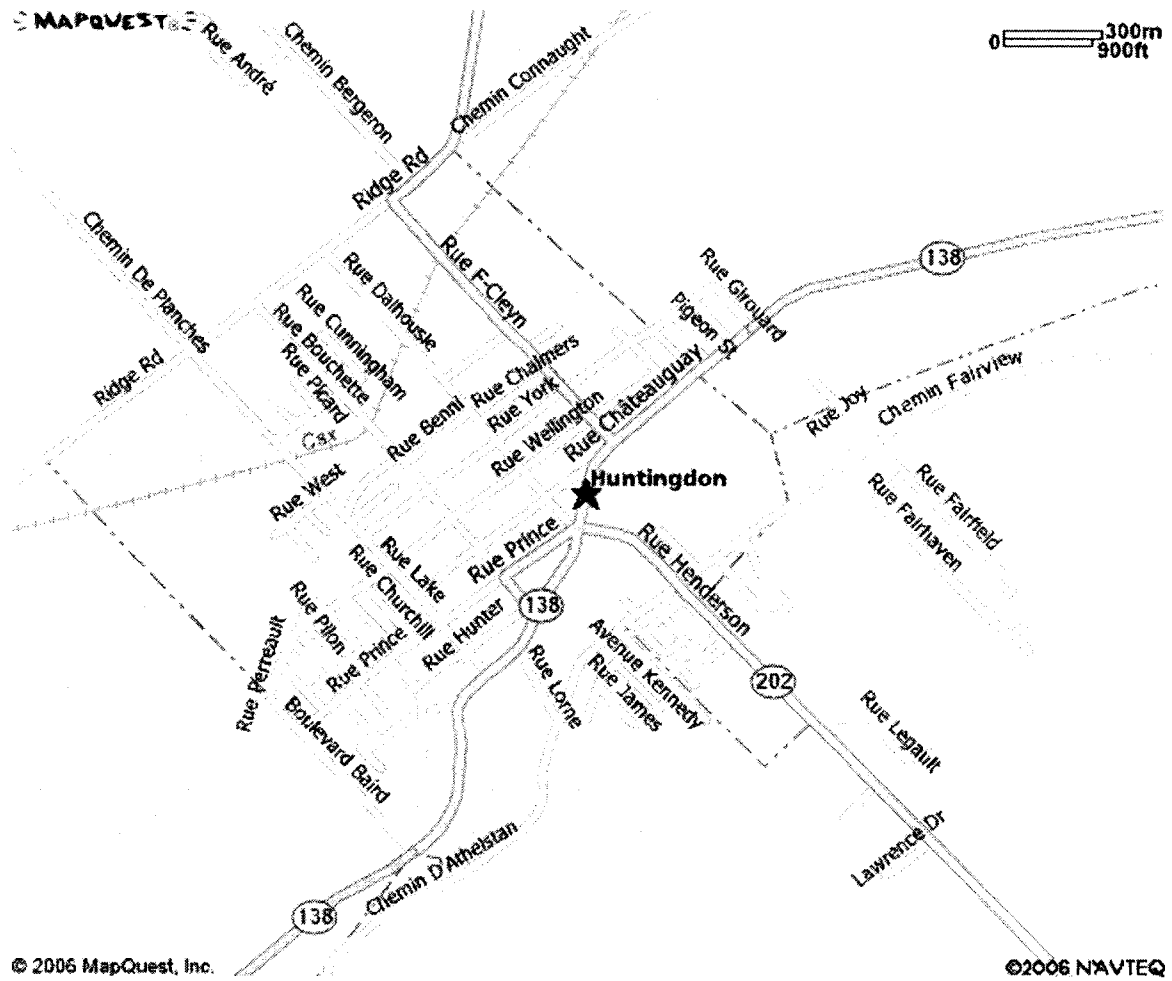
The municipality of Huntingdon is located in the administrative region of the Montérégie in south western Québec. Approximately 75 kilometers south west of Montréal on the banks of the Chateaugay River, the county of Huntingdon originally covered most of the south-west of the province, west of the Richelieu River.

Figure 1: Location of Huntingdon within Quebec



source: CBC News: Map of Huntingdon, July 15, 2006.

Figure 2: Downtown Huntingdon



4.2 Socio-Economic Profile: Huntingdon, Quebec.

The community of Huntingdon had a population of 2,587 according to the 2006 census, down three percent from the previous census in 2001. According to the 2006 census the median age of the population is 3.4 percentage points higher than the provincial average of 41.0, which is potentially reflective of the rural problem of youth out-migration. According to the 2001 census (previous to the closures of the mills) the employment of the members of the community was heavily concentrated in the

manufacturing and construction industries, with 445 of 1, 065 workers being in those sectors. This is illustrative of the industrial nature of the town, and the community's reliance on the textile industries as the major employer. The percentage of young people (age 20-34) with less than a high school graduation certificate was discouraging full 10% higher than the provincial average according to the 2001 census, and the average yearly earnings for the area were correspondingly lower as well, at only \$22,818 to the provincial average of \$29,385. The low rate of education makes finding new employment challenging now that the nature of the major employers in Huntingdon is in flux.³

³ Statistics Canada: Community Profile, Huntingdon, QC.

Figure 3. Chart of Socio-Economic Indicators: Comparing Huntingdon with the Quebec average

Socio-Economic Indicator	Huntingdon	Province of Quebec
2001 – 2006 population change	- 3.0%	4.3%
Median age of the population (2006)	44.4	41.0
% of the population aged 20-34 with less than a high school graduation certificate (2001)	27.7	16
Average earnings (2001)	\$22,818	\$29,385
Percent of experienced labour force employed in manufacturing and construction industries (2001)	41.8	22.2

The situation of Huntingdon has been altered tremendously with the failure of the textile industry in the town. The statistics describing labour force distribution can be considered reflective of the importance of the textile industry to the town of Huntingdon

previous to the lay-offs at the mills in 2004-2005; but, by no means can they be considered accurate for the period following the closures.

4.3 Contextualizing the Textile Industry in Huntingdon County: a history

The immigration that initiated the growth of the Huntingdon area commenced in the early part of the 19th century. The county originally encompassed not only the area within contemporary municipal boundaries, but reached far up the Chateaugay river to Beauharnois and some other lesser St-Lawrence seigneuries (Hill, 2004, p. 33). The original settlers were primarily farmers, largely of British descent; and the economy of the area was based on agriculture and the town's sawmill (Hill, 2004, p. 34). The mixed employment faded into primarily agriculture as the land was cleared; resulting in the region being hit hard by the ending of the Reciprocity Treaty in 1866 that concluded the era of free trade with the US (Hill 2004, p. 37). The people of Huntingdon, forced to adapt, changed the agricultural focus of the region from grain toward livestock and dairy, and were still able to make a profit with these products across the border; new duties notwithstanding (Hill 2004, p. 37).

The textile industry came to Huntingdon as the rest of the country was trying to rebound from the stock market crash of 1929 (Fawcett-Blake, 2001, p. 37). The English textile manufacturers were hard hit by the depression, and were looking to expand to new, more profitable markets. Huntingdon was the ideal location, with rail transport to both the United States and Montreal, and a willing and able workforce; so the decision was made and the mill was set up (Fawcett-Blake, 2001,p. 37). Unfortunately, suffering from money problems resulting from its deliberate mismanagement, the mill changed

hands soon after its conception and a new manager, Alexander Fawcett took over.

Fawcett forwent more lucrative offers for employment elsewhere, committing himself to the workers and investors of Leach Textiles; and the investors from Huntingdon and the mill employees agreed to take a lower rate of return on their bonds and pay cuts in order to keep the business afloat (Fawcett-Blake, 2001, pp. 39-42). By 1932 the mill was finally making money (Fawcett-Blake, 2001, p. 42). By 1936 the mill employees numbered sixty; and it was Fawcett's firm belief that "the company would not have survived without their [the employees'] complete loyalty and devotion" (Fawcett-Blake, 2001, p. 42).

In 1939 the Roskies family formed the company Huntingdon Mills (Rogers, 1975, pp. 26, 29). One of the first companies to produce knit fabrics; the mills profited from large orders during the war (Rogers, 1975, p. 29). A second and third mill were started in 1939 and 1940, Huntingdon Mills and Fawcett and Grant (Fawcett-Blake, 2001, p. 43). Francois Cleyn's spinning business was attracted to the town by the presence of the two textile mills, and after Maughan's (the owner of Leach Textiles) death in 1944, Cleyn and a group of investors purchased Leach's Textiles (Fawcett-Blake, 2001; Rogers 28). Completing the cluster of industries two dyeing companies were started; one specializing in the dyeing of woven textiles in 1948 and the other in the dyeing of yarns in 1949 (Fawcett-Blake, 2001, p.45). The acquisition of five of the textile mills and associated companies by Mr. Cleyn and associates was the beginning of the Cleyn and Tinker Co. The two companies, Huntingdon Mills and Cleyn and Tinker remained major employers of the town until the plant closures in 2004-2005 (Rogers, 1975, p. 28; Fawcett-Blake, 2001, p.46; Beattie, December 22, 2004; Rennie, December 22, 2004).

4.4 Textiles and Trade

To appreciate the recent evolution of the textile industry in Huntingdon, an understanding of the nature of the industry, as well as of recent fluctuations of the global markets is useful.

The textile industry is a capital intensive and fairly inflexible industry; these characteristics, combined with global trends toward trade liberalisation have made it possible for poorer countries to increase textile exports, concurrent to a decrease in Canada's local production. (Nordas, 2004, p. 7) Liberalisation programs reduce barriers to trade across borders. Examples of liberalisation policies that have been implemented in Canada, with a potential effect on the textile industry, include the implementation of the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement (FTA), and the phasing out of the World Trade Organisation's Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) through the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) (World Trade Organization "Textiles Agreement").

The Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement came into effect on the first of January, 1989. It was implemented as a reaction to the recession of the 1980s, over time eliminating and reducing tariffs and quotas on trade between the two countries, and imposing quotas on offshore fabric imports (Morici, 1992). The ATC was a 10 year plan used to phase out the MFA and eliminate quotas on apparel and some textile imports (World Trade Organization, July 15th 2006). From January 1, 1995 to December 31, 2004 tariffs for imported textiles were reduced by 6.5 % (World Trade Organisation, July 15th 2006). Preparation for the eventual elimination of the MFA was devastatingly minimal for the first ten years of the agreement, and coupled with the FTA, the resultant increase in competition for the local producers was too great (World Trade Organisation,

July 15th 2006). The employees of the mills were, for the most part, unaware of the changing economic circumstances that governed the success or failure of the textile industry that employed them; however, by December of 2004 the community of Huntingdon awakened to the beginning of the end.

4.5 Closing Time

At Christmastime, 2004, the employees of Huntingdon Mills were laid off, and by the spring the almost 800 employees of the two mills were out of work (Brown, 2005c).

The local paper was filled with news of the mills' closures.

On December 13, 2004 notice was given of the proposed closing of Cleyn & Tinker by May of 2005 and the eventual insolvency of Huntingdon Mills.

(Beattie, 2004)

For the months following this crisis it was apparent that it was on the mind of many. Not only those who had lost their jobs were affected, but, in a domino-like effect, other businesses in the area suffered secondary effects of the mill closures through loss of revenue.

The town is already expecting a \$600,000 fiscal loss from its 2005 budget while about \$25 million in mass salaries will disappear from its' residents' pockets by June 2005 when both textile companies are completely closed, cites a resolution at last Thursday's special council meeting...

...Huntingdon is facing the worst financial crisis of its 180-year-old history with the closure of the town's two textile industries.

(Brown, 2005c)

As reflected in the quote above, the employees of the mills, and the members of the community of Huntingdon more generally, were dramatically affected by the loss of

this industry. This loss prompted the need to search for solutions, and both governmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as individual community members have been actively participating in the battle to get the town back on its feet.

Chapter 5. ANALYSIS

Using the lens of social capital and coupling it with an appreciation of the theoretical sustainability of asset based community development initiatives, we examine the efforts for development in the town of Huntingdon and the dynamic networks fostered between community organisations since the devastating closure of the textile mills in 2004-2005.

Following the closures of the textile mills in Huntingdon in 2004-2005, a large part of the population of the municipality of Huntingdon was out of work and was looking to the community organisations and the municipal government to carry them through the crisis. The roles that the municipal government, community groups and members of the community all played make an interesting case study. Particularly interesting is the role of the mayor of Huntingdon and his relationships with the members of his council, other community organisations and the general public. This analysis focuses on the role and development of social capital within the framework of the municipal governmental and non-governmental organisations that have been working toward the re-development of the economy of Huntingdon since the closure of the mills. It also spotlights the importance of local assets for sustainable local development.

For the sake of clarity, below is a list of some of the organisations that will be referenced throughout the text, and where necessary, brief descriptions of their roles in community development in Huntingdon.

Figure 4. List of some Community Organisations in Huntingdon

ORGANIZATION	ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY
Actions Haut St-Laurent	A coalition table formed since the mills' closures- a place for concerned actors to get together to discuss the needs of the community.
Centre Local de Development du Haut St-Laurent (CLD)	Local Development Centre : a regional association that aims to augment economic development of the Regional County Municipality (MRC).
Commission Scolaires New Frontiers	New Frontiers School Board
Community Economic Development and Employability Commission (CEDEC)	A volunteer coordinated association that aims to work as facilitator, mentor and broker to help develop community capacity. The CEDEC exists under the broader umbrella of the Community Table.
Community Table	A federally funded partnership between community and federal government developing community capacity building and community economic development (CED).
Hope Center	A support centre for out of work mill employees run collaboratively by the Huntingdon churches.
Municipalite Regional du Compte (MRC)	Regional County Municipality – a territorial division and supra-municipal structure that exists in Quebec.
Societe d'Aide au Development des Collectives du Suroit (SADC)	Known outside of Quebec as the Community Futures Program, it has a 'shared vision... to help create diverse, sustainable communities by supporting local, community-based economic development.'
Unions	Cleyn and Tinker and Huntingdon Mills
Ville de Huntingdon	The municipal government of Huntingdon, the Mayor Stephane Gendron, and four councilors.

5.1 The Municipal Government

5.1.1 Actions

Looking at the actions of the municipal government and specifically at those of the Mayor, the strong leadership role that the Mayor has played since the closures of the mills becomes apparent. This role has been alternately beneficial and detrimental in the

creation of those networks of trust and reciprocity that form the basis of social capital in a community.

Huntingdon Mills closed their doors for the last time just before Christmas, 2004, and it became publicly known that Cleyn and Tinker was to follow suit. It took until January of 2005 for the municipal government to respond to these closures with the buying of an advertisement in the Montreal Gazette asking for financial support and investment in the municipality.

The one month period of inaction between the closure of the mills and the buying of the Gazette advertisement was punctuated repeatedly by attempts by members of community groups to communicate with the Mayor of Huntingdon, with no success. Specifically, a group of former mill employees and union members were looking to the municipal government for support for a mill re-launching committee; however, according to a former union representative the Mayor's self-imposed communication barrier limited re-development possibilities, and was a serious hurdle that was not overcome in this failed attempt (personal interview, February 8, 2007). This frustrating reality is illustrated through the disappointment and dissatisfaction of one former Union representative.

we never could get in touch with the Mayor of Huntingdon-
he would never answer our phone calls...

(personal interview with former Union representative for
Huntingdon Mills, February, 2007)

This unwillingness to communicate did not create any goodwill between the Mayor and the former mill employees. In fact, it became characteristic, as shown later

through further examples, of the municipal government's dealings with many of the community organisations in Huntingdon. This is illustrative of the underdevelopment of bridging social capital between groups in the municipality and the municipal government, a recurring dynamic throughout this study.

The strong arm of the Mayor was also evident in his dealings with some of his own council. For example, the aforementioned buying of the advertisement appealing for financial aid for the community in the Montreal Gazette became a serious point of contention between the Mayor and two of the councilmen, as Mayor Gendron only consulted two of the four council members before spending over \$5000.00 of the town's money placing the advertisement (Brown, 2005f). Excluded from this decision, the other councilmen questioned the Mayor's respect for their opinions, asking "If he doesn't respect the team, how can we respect him?" (Brown, 2005c).

Yet, notwithstanding the ruptures that were made apparent through the Mayor's dictatorial attitude, the economic benefits of this action were indisputable. A January editorial in the local paper spotlighted the resultant financial aid.

One advertisement in one newspaper asking for financial support and prayers for the Huntingdon community has quickly snowballed, in a matter of days, into more than \$11,000 for the town's trust fund for unemployed textile workers; Sun Youth, a 50-year old organization dedicated to providing programs and services for low-income people, sent 18,000 pounds of food (meat, milk, and other groceries) to the workers before Christmas; and a business web site has offered free classified ads for the next six months for textile employees looking for new jobs.
(Brown, 2005f)

By February of 2005 the municipal government was taking a much more proactive stance, not only including advertising for support, but in an attempt at involving

community members and members of community groups in a discussion on economic development following the closure of the mills, the Council called an economic summit. Community groups and members were invited to discuss strategies for community revitalization.

At the summit the municipal government's initiatives in responses to the effects of the mills' closures were emphasized. These initiatives commenced after December 2004:

- Fund Raising
- Cheques made to employees of Huntingdon Mills
- Petition
- Canvassing of businesses
- Public Tribunes
- Media Marketing of town
- Federal Subsidy- Development Commissary
- Purchasing the Industrial Park
- Subsidy Demand of One Million through the infrastructure program
- Obtaining a civil servant from regional Quebec Ministry (the industrial commissioner)

(Principal Document, 2005)

Following this review the municipality's strengths and weaknesses were discussed among community members, bringing up such positive characteristics as bilingualism, tourism potential, geographic proximity to markets, primary production potential, social services, natural gas network, industrial development potential, and the presence of a willing and available labour force. The countering weaknesses reviewed include lack of schooling/labour training, high rates of poverty and illiteracy, an ageing population, underdevelopment of transportation infrastructure, lack of industrial infrastructures, little incentive toward conserving local heritage, lack of social housing, brain drain, underdevelopment of water resources and an obsolete electrical distribution

system (Principal Document, 2005). Members of several groups participated, including members from the Community Table, CEDEC, CLSC and Workers Unions (Rennie, February 16, 2005).

One positive aspect of the economic summit was the municipal government's attempt to involve multiple community groups and the community at large in the development process. Kretzmann and McKnight (1996), in their study "Mapping Community Capacity", emphasize the benefits of local effort and local involvement in this process. They also discuss the need to work from existing assets to develop sustainably (p. 4). As if adhering to this mantra, the summit's focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the area elicited discussion on the marketability of the town's local resources and the potential growth in the already existing areas of tourism, industry and agriculture. Also discussed was the development of a more diverse economy, less vulnerable to the vagaries of changing economic circumstances (Rennie, 2005b).

On a more negative note, problems existed in the implementation of the economic summit; including the use of overly specific/technical language, mounting frustrations concerning the job crisis, and, according to some, the intimidation of the French language barrier.

Groups could speak, but most of what they said was over the heads of the people they were speaking to because the language used was hard to understand. Another problem was timing. People want jobs, now!

(personal interview with Director of a Community Development Organization, January 2007)

The reaction of the former Presbyterian minister when asked why she did not participate in the economic forum specifically underscores the recurring and significant role that the French/English language divide plays in local politics and in community interactions.

“no- [I did not participate] and the reason is- and I am ashamed to admit it- is that I am not bilingual, and I knew that those meetings would be in French.”

(personal interview with a Minister: co-organizer of the Hope Center, March 2007)

The immediate reactions of community members to the economic summit were generally positive; even if a healthy dose of scepticism was left revolving around the fact that “all anyone has been told revolves around speculation and open-ended promises...” (Rennie, 2005b). Yet, this skepticism was not unwarranted. According to the coordinator of a community group, the end results of the economic summit were never distributed to them, and according to Rennie:

Unfortunately, what followed was a series of unmet promises and gross expenditures in a drive to bring industry back to the community that excluded to a great extent the involvement of local social organizations, community groups and residents in general. (2006, p. 105)

The economic summit was an opportunity for the municipal government to build networks of bridging and linking social capital that could facilitate social interactions between them and other community organisations and community members.

Understanding that the underprivileged often have fewer stocks of bridging and linking social capital - that which helps groups “get ahead” (cited in Woolcock, 2001, p.8) – and that the community of Huntingdon, in regard to its socio- economic indicators, may be considered underprivileged, this initiative could have been an important step toward

building these networks. Yet, as will be discussed later, although the initial attempt at consultation was made, many community groups and members felt excluded from any decision making processes after the summit.

Notwithstanding the bad reputation the municipal government suffered after the slow first response to the economic crisis, in the following months they showed a concerted attempt at regaining some control over the future of Huntingdon's economic fortunes. In February of 2005, directly following the economic summit, the town bought the Cleyn and Tinker lot (Rennie, 2005a). This ambitious purchase was supported by the Corporation de Developpement Economique (CDE) of Huntingdon. The goal of this acquisition was to favour the development of local enterprises by offering aid to those looking to start a business in the area (Rennie, 2005a). Yet, this major expenditure was questioned by many, and this concern was voiced in the local paper, questioning the Mayor's assurances that the 1.7 million dollars of the town's money was wisely spent, particularly given that the tax revenue was about to diminish significantly. In an attempt to make this move manageable, Mayor Gendron applied to the federal government, and was approved, for infrastructure funding for the town's purchase (Brown, 2005b). The Mayor then billed to the town a trip to Europe, in search of investors to occupy the new industrial park (Brown, 2005b). No serious investor was found through this tour.

In the hopes that the cleaning up of the town centre would make the town more attractive to potential investors an urban renewal project was implemented in late July of 2005. The project, started by the Mayor Gendron, was not passed before the council, nor were they aware of it before its commencement. Mayor Gendron, along with the Fire Chief and some provincial police officers set about with its implementation when they

“marched into three addresses on Chateauguay street” (Brown, 2005d). These buildings had received warnings for their numerous fire code violations, and violations of various zoning laws. Mayor Gendron applied for provincial financial aid for the town’s proposed facelift (Brown, 2005d).

5.1.2 Reactions

Some results of the strong role the Mayor has taken for himself have benefited the community; including the far reaching attempts to leverage funding for the community through federal and provincial governmental sources for the urban renewal project, as well as for the transformation of what might have been empty lots into the town’s industrial parks. Indeed, the gusto with which the Mayor has attacked the problem of the town’s economic misfortune has put him in the good books of some business owners. Mr. Roskies, the former owner of Huntingdon Mills, was quoted by the local paper as saying:

...I’m so impressed with the Mayor. No other Mayor would have done what he does. Other people would have just let it go. But he is a get up and go guy and I think he is going to get the town back on its feet...

(Arthur Roskies, cited in Brown, 2005e)

One government official applauds the Mayor and council’s efforts for being able to “market” the town, and draw attention and support to such a remote corner of Quebec; but, questions his bold expenditures of the town’s money.

...c’est un tour de force d’être capable d’attirer de l’attention à un petit village au sud du Québec...

...La capacité d'acheter les édifices industriels- est-ce que c'est bon ou non? Il y a beaucoup de gens qui trouvent que c'est une excellente idée- mais peut-être il aurait pu arriver au même résultat sans avoir à emprunter 3-4 millions pour acheter les usines; on repaye ça dans les taxes....

(from personal interview with a government official,
February 2007)

As reflected in the careful question posed by this member of government, not all reactions to the municipal governmental initiatives have been viewed as positive. Within the municipal government there has been dissent, particularly regarding the Mayor's seeming disregard for the opinions of the town councilors. According to a member of the town council, the Mayor regularly calls meetings with less than twenty-four hours notice; and, at times goes ahead with initiatives without informing or asking the council at all (Brown, 2005c). Supporting this councilor in his dissent, the local paper quotes another member of the municipal government in reference to neglecting to consult two of the town councilors on the spending of over \$5000 of the town's money on an advertisement for support in the Montreal Gazette:

I can't understand how he could not have advised the council of this initiative. It is clear that we need to talk to each other before making a bill like this one.

(cited In Brown, "Huntingdon's advertising for support endures opposition")

The examination of these interactions within the municipal government spotlights the fractioned (and resultantly fractious) nature of the council. The recurring theme of undemocratic and exclusive political games hints at the possibility of the misuse of municipal power; but, in addition, it also brings to the fore the difficulties associated with

decision making at the municipal governmental level. The lure of the short term gains of immediate and generally popular (if insufficient)⁴ financial aid may be counterbalanced by the negative impacts of the type of sectarian politics played.

When exploring the Mayor's interactions outside of the municipal governmental organisation, similar negative opinions are raised in reference to the Mayor's motives and means. One of the former textile workers union representatives expressed his opinion that the Mayor was not working for the benefit of the town, but for personal gain.

So he was not there for the population; he was there to get his name in the paper, and uh, actually kick started his career...

(personal interview with former union representative, February 8, 2007)

In reference to the Mayor's tendency to grab the reins without asking some of the council or the community's opinions, the director of a community development organisation protests what she terms the Mayor's "savior type mentality" (personal interview, January 2007). She describes the sense of exclusion felt by local development organisations, and the Mayor's failure to cooperate or collaborate with some existing groups, dubbing him a "one man show" (ibid.).

Calling attention to the extraordinary circumstances that surround the community's interactions with the Mayor, according to the coordinator of one community development organisation, members of the community have become much more careful about criticizing the Mayor. This is particularly the case after the Mayor sued a vocal

⁴ the amount of money that mills employees each received resulting from the advertisement in the Montreal Gazette amounted to approximately \$50. from personal interview with member of the community, May, 2007.

member of the community for doing just that (personal interview with director of a community development organisation, February 8 2007). According to this same source:

if anyone dares criticize some particular person they end up getting sued.... I know of a case- but I won't mention names because they are being sued! That makes it very stressful- it is not a comfortable climate to work in...

Moreover, despite some of the successes the Mayor has had in leveraging financial support it is commonly known that the Mayor's interactions with other levels of government are also not always on congenial terms, and that he in turn is being sued by the provincial Member of the National Assembly (MNA) (ibid.).

It became obvious through the course of interviewing community members and members of community organisations that when discussing the municipal government the Mayor always maintained the position of being a strong, key player. Yet, when attempting to contact him for the sake of this research project the Mayor failed to show up without previously canceling once, cancelled at the last minute the second time and has since been unresponsive to any attempt at communication on my part. This is characteristic of his behaviour towards various groups and individuals throughout this unemployment crisis, as well as of his tendency to dictate with whom and on what terms he is willing to cooperate.

Summarizing some of the actions of the municipal government since the closure of the mills, the Mayor and council have placed an advertisement for financial aid, held an economic summit, created an industrial park from the old textile mill lot, gone on an industry hunting expedition to Europe, and commenced an urban renewal project. Yet, the development or use of networks of communication and trust between the municipal

government and some community groups have been, to a great extent, lacking in the efforts for economic development by the municipal government of Huntingdon. The municipal government has refused to participate in all but two of the non-governmental organisations' initiatives or discussions. The negative consequence of this isolation is illustrated through the feelings of exclusion and hostility expressed by some members of the former textile workers' unions, community development organisations, churches and the community at large. Positively, the Mayor's ability to leverage financial capital from the federal and provincial governments, as well as through the advertisement for support has resulted in some much needed funds being diverted into the community. These outside resources clearly are a benefit to the community; however, referencing the literature on economic development, specifically Lehto (2006), Oksa and Lehto (2006) and Kretzmann and McKnight (1996), it becomes clear that in order to sustain economic development the development of the town's own resources is necessary, and is facilitated through the development of bridging social capital, the building of networks between broadly similar organisations. It is with this in mind that we turn to look at the non-governmental organisations working toward economic development in Huntingdon. The following section examines their mandates, initiatives and their social capital networks in their efforts for economic development of the municipality of Huntingdon.

5.2 Non-Governmental Organisations

Non-governmental organisations have played a considerable role in the economic development of Huntingdon since the closure of the textile mills. The numerous organisations represent different segments of the community, (please refer to the chart on

page 36) and several recurring themes come to the fore when looking at their mandates, the networks that exist between groups and the initiatives put in place. The role of the municipal government's interactions with the non-governmental organisations is highlighted, and is important in trying to understand the role and development of social capital within the community. The mandates, networks and initiatives of these groups are subsequently related back to the theory surrounding ABCD, social capital, and rural development.

The discussion on non-governmental organisations is divided into two sections, those groups whose efforts are supported by the government and those groups with whom the municipal government does not collaborate. Common characteristics that typify these groupings are identified, and the subsequent discussion flushes out these characteristics in detail.

5.2.1 Organisations the Municipal Government Collaborates with

According to a government official, the municipal government gives financial support to both the SADC and the CLD in the Huntingdon area (personal interview, February 15 2007). Interestingly, these organisations have two very similar characteristics. They encourage chiefly entrepreneurial activities, and have primarily (although certainly not exclusively) francophone boards of directors (Reseau des SADC du Quebec Website; CLD Haut St-Laurent Website).

The SADC

The SADC, known outside of Quebec as the Community Futures Program, has a ‘shared vision... to help create diverse, sustainable communities by supporting local, community-based economic development’ (personal interview with a member of the government, February, 2007). It tries to achieve this goal in Huntingdon through developing programs supporting local entrepreneurship, including the investment fund, the youth strategic program and a mentorship program. The investment fund and the youth program both share the characteristics of being primarily business start-up loan programs, and their business mentorship program fulfills the emphasis they have put on their role as advisors, not only as providers of financial aid (ibid.).

The SADC has worked on creating networks of bridging social capital through reaching out to other governmental and non-governmental organisations in the region. They participate in the Actions Haut St-Laurent committee, and, according to a former member of the town council, are in regular contact with the municipal government (personal interview, April 2007). They are also affiliated with several federal government departments and agencies including the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), Canada Economic Development and Industry Canada. These affiliations are facilitated through belonging to both a provincial network of SADCs, and a national network of SADC and Community Future groups (Réseau des SADC website). According to one director of a community development organisation, the municipal government works with the SADC and the CLD, but with no other groups. According to her, the industrial commissioner, appointed by the municipal government in late 2005, also works exclusively with the SADC (personal interview, January 6 2007).

Focusing on the SADC's attempts to promote the importance of networking in business, it is interesting to look at one of this group's networking initiatives. The organisation of a forum of members called *La Relance* (translated roughly as *the re-launching*) brought together over 30 regional entrepreneurs for a discussion forum (Réseau des SADC website). This forum was held June 16, 2006, over one year after Huntingdon's economic summit. The SADC is a regional organisation, and therefore the economic forum had a broader focus than the Huntingdon municipal council's economic forum. Its major goal was to provide a forum for network building between the public and private sectors (Réseau des SADC website). It included 95 regional actors from over 64 organisations in the region, with participants mainly from the agro-alimentary, manufacturing, recreotourism and transport sectors (Principal Document, 2005, p. 4). The forum's goal was to build networks between organisations, building up the stocks of bridging social capital in the region, and through this, furthering economic development. Interestingly, the municipal Government of Huntingdon did not participate, nor was the general public invited to do so (personal interview a member of government, February 15 2007). Participating members from Huntingdon included the representatives from the school board, the local CLD and the MRC.

The CLD

The CLD in the Huntingdon area is a regional association that aims to augment economic development of the 13 counties of the MRC, under the broader framework of

sustainable development. They offer technical and financial aid for business start ups, similar to the SADC. Some of the CLD's programs include the Local Investment Fund (LIF) a fund for the start-up or advancement of private businesses, the Support Measure for Self-Employment (SMSE), a business development mentoring plan to promote employment autonomy, and FIER, a loans program (CLD Haut St-Laurent website). Although the CLD is a primarily francophone organisation, that designation does not limit the groups with whom they collaborate. Groups that work in partnership with the CLD include the SADC, the MRC and the CEDEC (CLD Haut St-Laurent website).

Like the SADC, the CLD has developed programs that focus primarily on promoting entrepreneurship, and welfare-to-work type measures. Both organisations also integrate networking initiatives into their undertakings. According to Bloom and Michalopolous's study (2001) on the effect of welfare-to-work policies on employment and income, the CLD and SADC are following the path of most successful welfare-to-work strategies, those that combine short-term education and job-search activities (p.9).

The secondary focus of mentorship and networking espoused by these economic development organisations opens the door to the increase of social capital that is considered so important in sustainable economic development; the SADC, through its business mentorship program, and the CLD, through the SMSE. Mentorship programs have the potential to create new bridging capital between individual participants, as well as between businesses in the area through forging new networks.

The results of these programs are tangible, and almost immediately so. The appeal to the population of these types of programs is in their concrete results. The

popular appeal and immediate results of such programs can explain the support of these organisations on the part of the municipal government.

5.2.2 Organisations the Municipal Government does not Collaborate with

Actions Haut St-Laurent

The Actions Haut St-Laurent was set up in response to the closure of the mills. It is a group that exists for the purpose of providing a forum for groups in the Chateauguay Valley to discuss the social and economic impacts and projected needs of the communities affected by the closure of the mills in Huntingdon (Actions Haut St-Laurent, 2005, p. 1). At its inception, in 2005, there were representatives from over 50 community groups participating in the discussion forum including members of the CLD du Haut St-Laurent, the unions, Cleyn and Tinker, Huntingdon Mills, Commission Scholaire New Frontieres, RHDCC, Securite de Revenu Haut St Laurent, CSSS du Haut St- Laurent, Health and Social Service Centres, Emploi Quebec Haut St-Laurent, Ville de Huntingdon, CDC, SADC, the municipality of Elgin and the local CEDEC (ibid.).

Yet, in 2007 in the context of an interview with the coordinator of Actions Haut St-Laurent a much smaller list of active participating members was presented (personal interview March 9 2007). It is not a surprise that participation diminished to some extent after the first excitement and stress of the unemployment situation were over; but, it is important to note that the municipal government of Huntingdon is no longer on the list.

Quoting Ms. Richard:

“...they are definitely not at our table. They do receive a newsletter that I write- but there is a lot of méfiance”
(mistrust).

(From personal communication with the coordinator of
Actions-Haut St-Laurent, March 9, 2007)

The Actions Haut St-Laurent group can be considered an integral part of community development in the Huntingdon area. They have created links between groups that otherwise would not have had the opportunity to work together so closely, and invited key players from within as well as outside of the community to participate in the discussions on development in Huntingdon and the surrounding areas. According to the director of one community development group:

The interesting thing about Actions Haut St-Laurent... is that they are really a focal point where (groups) that impact on community development can meet and plan together.

(from personal communication with the director of a
community development organisation, February 8, 2007)

Successful use of the networking developed through this group includes the support of Emploi-Quebec by the school boards when faced with the need to re-train former mill employees who were looking to develop new skills. According to one active member, the existence of this group has made possible the development of concerted efforts of multiple groups working toward similar goals (personal interview February 8 2007).

The director of the community development group Community Table also emphasizes the importance of the role of the Actions Haut St-Laurent in the Huntingdon area:

... bringing together of different players allows people to look at the overall delivery and accessibility of development – so that it is not just one aspect, but there is a place to have a broader scope- so that we can see what your doing fits in with what I'm doing- so that we can see where the holes are, where we might together develop something that meets the needs of the community better.

(from personal communication with the director of Community Table, February 8 2007)

These networks of organisations that Actions Haut St-Laurent has built through the Huntingdon area have become a focal point for development, reducing the communication barriers that exist between groups. The municipal government's participation in this group is conspicuous in its absence, and the director of the Community Table, a member organisation, candidly describes the Mayor's major weakness as "not building a network in the community as much as he should be" (personal interview, February 8 2007).

The Community Table

An active member of the Actions-Haut St-Laurent committee, the Community Table organisation is a federally funded community development organisation. It deals with community capacity building and community economic development, specifically for the English linguistic minority in Quebec (personal interview, February 8, 2007). It is one part of the two part National Committee (NC), that along with its counterpart, Government Table discusses the current human resources development and economic

development problems facing Quebec's English speaking minority, and has links with the CEDECs (Community Table, July 12 2007).

The director of the Community Table discusses the importance of respecting the nature of the town in development efforts, as if building on the principles of asset based community development introduced by Kretzmann and McKnight. She has proposed ideas including building on the agricultural heritage of the area through developing agro tourism and looking at secondary activities surrounding agriculture, maintaining that it is important to take advantage of the already existing strengths of the area. The director also emphasizes the importance of situating the development of the area within the context of a global vision (personal interview February 8 2007).

The Community Table has links with the federal level of government, through the National Committee, as well as to the local CEDECs, by being the umbrella group under which the CEDECs are grouped. It works with English speaking communities all over Quebec, developing Community Capacity Building (CCB), Community Economic Development (CED), finance and communications (personal interview, February 8, 2007).

Although the Community Table does not collaborate exclusively with unilingual English groups, in having a mandate of working primarily for the English speaking community, the French/English divide in the area is emphasized. An important point to note when looking at the Community Table's focus is that, as stated above, the Community Table organisation is open and willing to cross the language barriers and collaborate with groups that do not share the same language restrictions as their own more specific mandate. This is interesting because although it defines the population that

they work for, it does not limit the groups with which they build networks.

Understanding the implications of the open networks maintained by the Community Table in terms of building social capital, means that the bridging and linking social capital, as well as a more open, and positive form of bonding social capital are being fostered by this organisation through their interactions with multiple community organisations and members, as well as through positive interactions within the membership of the organisation.

CEDEC

The CEDEC, the local counterpart to the Community Table group, is an organisation that, run by volunteers, aims to help develop community capacity by acting as facilitators, mentors and brokers (personal interview with director of a community development organisation, January, 2007). Working under the umbrella of the Community Table, the local CEDEC also works for the same target group, the English speaking community in South Western Quebec. The CEDEC aims to educate the community and encourage community engagement (Community Table, July 12, 2007).

Specific goals of this organisation include developing within the community an understanding of the importance of CED and community capacity, coordinating and facilitating various groups specifically local action groups (LAGs), accessing federal decision makers to help influence policy and developing partnerships that facilitate community economic development (ibid.). Initiatives brought to the community through this group include involvement in developing a community vitality index, participation in the founding of Actions Haut St-Laurent, the acquisition of a new building for the “Little

Green Library”, the creation of a textiles museum and the development of a youth entrepreneurship day camp (Community Table, July 12, 2007; and personal interview with the director of the local CEDEC).

The Community Vitality Initiative (CVI) was fostered locally between the groups Actions Haut St-Laurent and the local CEDEC, and facilitated by the group Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership (CIEL), an independent non-profit that provides tools and training that helps communities develop from the bottom up (CIEL, July 15th, 2007). At the outset, community members were invited to complete a survey, in either official language, giving their input on community needs and assets. In June 2006, results of these surveys were presented to the community at large. The scope of the project included the whole of the MRC, but the level of concern of the out-of-work population of Huntingdon led to the majority of participants coming from that area (Richard, 2006).

Results of this survey indicate that community members feel that the main strengths of the area include proximity to Montreal and Ottawa, bilingualism, biculturalism, the natural beauty of the area, the agricultural economy and more generally, the region’s potential (CVI Phase 1 report, Haut St-Laurent region, July 17th, 2007). When replying to the question of how to improve the community, answers focused around employment: economic development, more jobs, more industry and businesses, diversify the economy, jobs and activities for youth (CVI Phase 1 report, Haut St-Laurent region, July 17th, 2007). The results from the CIEL surveys have not yet been applied in the development of any tangible initiative.

The CEDEC's initiatives to acquire a new building for the community library and the creation of the textile mill museum have been gently criticized by one former community member who has worked with several groups including the education sector, the Community Table and the local CEDEC. He suggests that more concrete initiatives will benefit those people who are actually marginalized.

...we are maybe not in touch with the marginal people of society. The people that are maybe already on welfare- or the ones out on the back roads- we don't really know what is going on. There might be some suffering that we are not quite aware of. There is where the CEDEC should be right on top of it – maybe instead of doing some of these other projects that others could be doing they could be looking for some of these people in the margins; watching out for them rather than starting a new library, or doing a new museum. These projects are for the English community but are sort of like extras. Whereas the basic needs [...] in the needs assessment were people who were unilingual English- low income- who were not really literate in the sense that they don't have computers and were not really aware of how the system works as far as getting jobs getting financing... I think there is the basic need of the English minority community, who are marginalized not only by language but also by income. If a group like the Community Table is supposed to help Anglophones because they are a minority group then there is a good place to start.

(personal interview with former member of the Community Table, the local CEDEC, the education sector and active community member, March 2007)

The local CEDEC, although aiming specifically to help the English speaking community in the area, collaborates openly with other community organisations that do not share the same linguistic target group. They focus on the importance of developing networks, to facilitate the leveraging of resources and knowledge from federal agencies and departments, as well as from individuals and other local organisations. They, like the

Community Table, their parent organisation, and the Actions Haut St-Laurent follow the line of thought that emphasizes the importance of the building up of social capital stocks through networking. They also have developed some concrete initiatives; however, from the softly implied criticisms of the lack of socially oriented initiatives by some members of this group, it may be inferred that even in this group, which emphasizes the importance of public engagement in their mandate, those individuals who are most in need do not have a say in the type of development initiatives put in place. Thus, it can be inferred that the opportunity for individual change is being – to a certain extent- passed by. Following from this, according to Wilson (1996), it also can be concluded that opportunities for empowerment and community development – which are developed hand in hand – are also left uncultivated.

5.3 Assessing the Potentials and Challenges for Asset Based Community Development and Social Capital Formation in Huntingdon

While the discussion above provides an overview of the various recent initiatives of the organisations involved in economic development, and of the relations between these groups an understanding of the implications of these trends for economic development requires a comparison of the situation at hand and the current theory surrounding it.

5.4 On the Application of Asset Based Community Development Theory in Huntingdon

The concept of the development of local assets for sustainable economic development is the main idea behind the ABCD theory. Its success is reflected in the

RESTRIM and NRE studies, and the lack of focus on local assets has been noted as a major problem in unsuccessful attempts at development (Oksa and Lehto, 2006, p. 7).

The municipal government's initiatives for economic development in the town of Huntingdon reflect lack of focus on local assets. Although the municipal government does collaborate with groups that identify the development of local assets as part of their mandates; the focus of their own initiatives is on more "quick fix" type solutions as opposed to long-term ones. Typical of the municipal government's initiatives are applications for funding from diverse sources, advertising for support through the media and a major focus on tangible results through buying an industrial park, developing the urban renewal project and attempting to bring back a major industry to the town. Reaching out to the community the municipal government held an economic summit, inviting community members and members of community organisations to participate and give input; and the community responded with ideas revolving around developing already existing assets, including the agricultural nature of the area and making the most of its natural beauty through tourist development. Yet, it is important to note that the problems with implementation and follow-through, as well as the resultant lack of trust have diminished the potential positive outcomes of the summit.

More positively, from personal interviews with organizers and active members of these organisations it is seen that several of the community organisations in the Huntingdon area have been focusing on the development of local assets. Quoting the director of the Community Table organisation:

I think that we have to look at the nature of the community that Huntingdon is – and the nature of the surrounding community. I think that we have to respect that nature.

(from personal interview with the director of the
Community Table, February 8, 2007)

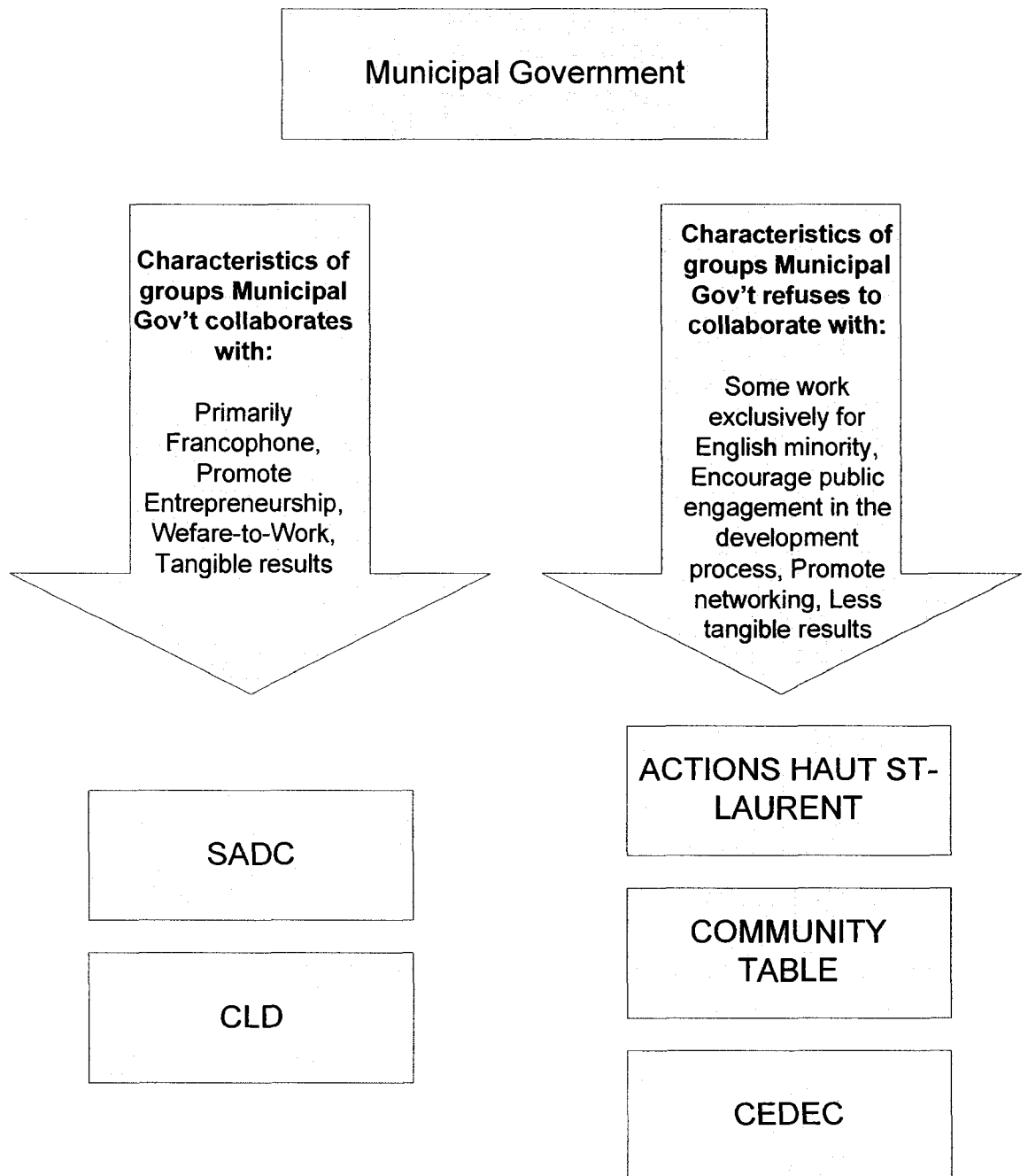
Some initiatives, like the CIEL project and the development of the Actions Haut St-Laurent discussion forum have involved the community in developing a generalized capacity-focused assessment of development potential. According to Kretzmann and McKnight's ABCD model this bottom-up approach to developing local capital builds networks of trust between those organisations and individuals participating. It also creates those extremely valuable stocks of bridging and linking social capital that, according to Woolcock (2001), are rarer within poorer communities like Huntingdon, and, as has been repeated often through the course of this study, are immeasurably beneficial in economic development (p. 8).

5.5 On the use and misuse of Social Capital in Huntingdon

While the orientation of several of the community groups' efforts coincide with the recommendations of the ABCD literature the translation of these efforts into concrete policies is hampered by a number of challenges relating to the nature and extent of social capital, particularly with respect to the networks between individuals and community organisations, and the present municipal government.

To begin an analysis of these challenges it is helpful to revisit the divide between those the municipal government collaborates with, and those the municipal government refuses to collaborate with. The chart on the following page synthesizes those distinguishing characteristics.

Figure 5. The Municipal Government: Trends in Collaboration with Community Organisations



This divide, between organisations the municipal government collaborates with, as opposed to those they refuse to collaborate with, typifies one element of the recurring

theme of the **underdevelopment of bridging social capital** on the part of the municipal government that is apparent throughout this analysis. The trend in the types of organisations that the municipal government chooses to support reflects the mandate of the municipal government, or has been suggested through this study, the mandate of the Mayor. The exclusion of the poor from the decision making process is a further aspect of the underdevelopment of bridging social capital.

The lack of communication and of collaboration between the municipal government and some community groups, including the Actions Haut St-Laurent organisation is illustrative of the underdevelopment of bridging social capital by the municipal government. This lack of bridging social capital has created friction and even outright animosity in some cases. Notwithstanding the municipal government's lack of participation, the non-governmental organisation Action Haut St-Laurent's success in developing and maintaining networks between other community groups for the purpose of facilitating economic development has been a success that has been stressed repeatedly by various individuals. This organisation exists solely as a forum to give community organisations, individuals and members of the government a venue for discussing goals and initiatives for the economic and social well being of the community; developing bridging social capital through this grass-roots initiative. Kretzmann and McKnight (1996), in their study on asset-based community development, encourage this type of bottom-up initiative, asserting that the primary building blocks of local economies are community members and their skills. (p. 4) Marrying this concept with Putnam's claim that "networks and their associated norms of reciprocity have value", we can look upon the development efforts of Actions Haut St-Laurent as positive, greasing the wheels of

community development. Yet, the development of their potential for facilitating community development is hampered through the non-participation of the municipal government.

The sense of exclusion has been expressed by the members of certain community groups and individuals in Huntingdon raises the question of why these groups and individuals are being (or feeling) excluded from the decision making processes at this time. This situation is reflective of the underdevelopment of linking social capital on the part of the municipal government. The exclusion of the community groups, particularly those prioritizing social as well as economic mandates from the decision making process by the municipal government, has created tensions and aggravated frustrations. In the case of the CEDEC the question has also been raised of whether the concerns of the most marginalized are represented.

Noted by a former member of the Community Table group, included in the group of the excluded are those most marginalized within Huntingdon (personal interview March 2007). According to Narayan (1999) the exclusion of the most poor is typical of most decision making processes, explaining that frequently, unequal participation opportunities and the often resultant unequal distribution of resources occur as a result of non-overlapping social networks, or a lack of bridging social capital (p. 5). Yet, as appears to be the case in Huntingdon, exclusion does not always result only from the non-participation in the right “circles” or social networks, but may also be involuntary or forced, based on exclusion factors such as age, gender, language or social status (Narayan, 1999, p. 5). Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) give a rationale for the development of an actual or perceived sense of exclusion; resulting from low-income

communities being brought needs-oriented solutions from the “outside”. The regrettable associated side-effect lies in the possibility that individuals’ perceptions of themselves and of their possibilities for productivity may be negatively affected; perpetuating the cycle of poverty, through undermining their belief in the possibility of self-determination, and reinforcing the belief in the need for outside assistance (p. 4).

In either case, whether the exclusion of the poor from the decision making process in the community was purposeful or not, it reflects a need for the involvement of the marginalized community in Huntingdon and the development of bridging social capital between these groups, that does not yet exist.

Despite the under-development of bridging social capital, encouragingly, the Mayor has shown remarkable aptitude for leveraging grants and donations from groups outside of the community. The positive results of these actions show the benefit of his ability to create networks between different hierarchies, and use linking social capital. Other community groups also have links with the federal government, including the Community Table; or have reached out to other groups outside of their usual scope, including Actions Haut St-Laurent and the local CEDEC in enlisting the aid of CIEL to develop the Community Vitality Initiative. Although it is less present than bridging or bonding social capital, linking social capital has been cultivated to a certain extent. One question that remains, however, is how long the support that the Mayor’s development opportunities- focused on the development of linking social capital- can persist, given his short-term vision and his dictatorial style.

The dictatorial nature of the Mayor brings up another of the recurring themes of this analysis. The question of the **misuse of power by the municipal government** rears

its head repeatedly throughout this study. This question is elicited as a reaction to the creation of factions within the municipal government, as well as from the municipal government's lack of collaboration with certain community groups and the intimidation felt by the community when the Mayor sued a vocal community member for criticizing him.

The partial treatment of some council members over others has created strong bonding capital between some members and very weak bonding capital between others as well as sparking feelings of hostility within the municipal governmental organisation. This problem is exemplified by the aforementioned example of the less than democratic stance taken by the Mayor when neglecting to confer with some of the town councilors before buying an advertisement for financial support in the Montreal Gazette. This partiality created ruptures within the framework of the municipal government, weakening or diminishing possible bonding social capital with some of the councilors within the organisation while building strong bonds with those consulted. Understanding what this means theoretically, we may refer to a synthesis of ideas espoused by Putnam (2000a), Woolcock (2001) and the World Bank (2006a) on the topic of the misuse of social capital. The authors concur that the creation of select factions within groups for personal gain, in this case through conferring with only select councilors before making decisions, creates a negative type of bonding social capital, and may be considered a misuse of power. Woolcock (2001), further stresses that it is not only the quantity of social capital that is important, but emphasizes the importance of building up the *right* relationships, or as he calls it "getting the relations right" (p. 18). Neither significant quantity nor quality of social capital appears to have been developed in this particular situation.

The theme of the misuse of power is also manifested through the previously discussed reluctance of the Mayor to collaborate with some community organisations, leading to the problem of the underdevelopment of social capital. Dictating on what terms and with whom he will confer and cooperate, the Mayor has sued a vocal community member who criticized him, discouraging unguarded discussion on the management of the town and its resources.

The **French/English language divide** is also a persistent theme, illustrated through the apparent necessity for groups to exist to support the voice of the Anglophone minority, the Mayor's non-collaboration with primarily Anglophone groups, and of individuals' hesitancy to participate in public forums because of the language barrier.

In the case of the Community Table, the development of bonding social capital, cultivated through a strong internal network is important for the cohesiveness of the group and also facilitates the discussion of "human resources development and economic challenges" (Community Table website, July 12 2007) that face their target group of Quebec's English speaking community. Closed memberships, like the membership of the Community Table -exclusively open to the Anglophone population- may cause sectarianism to develop; however, this risk may be mitigated by the open nature of the bridging and linking social capital that this group generates. Positively, the networks that the Community Table forms outside of the organisation are **not** with exclusively Anglophone groups, and according to Woolcock (2001) and Narayan (1999) the formation of these open bridging and linking networks is fundamental for effective development.

This theme of the language divide is also supported through the candid admission of one of the organizers of a community support centre that her unwillingness to engage in some opportunities for public participation is based on the fact that municipal events primarily happen in French, and she does not feel comfortable participating in that language (personal interview, March 2007).

The following chart has been created as a visual aid in order to clearly illustrate the recurring nature of these questions or themes.

Figure 6. Recurring Themes

RECURRING THEME	EXAMPLES
Underdevelopment of bridging social capital	Mayor refuses to collaborate with some community organisations
	Exclusion of the poor from the decision making processes
Questions of misuse of power by the municipal government	Creation of factions within the council, those consulted versus those not consulted
	Mayor dictates on what terms, and whom he speaks and collaborates with
	Mayor suing a member of the community for criticising him
French / English Divide	Mayor collaborates with groups that have primarily francophone boards of directors, does not collaborate with primarily anglophone groups
	Community groups exist to specifically ensure a voice for the English language minority
	Some unwillingness to participate in public discussion forums because of language barrier

These recurring themes help to illustrate the raw nature of the tensions that have arisen since the significant loss of employment after the closure of the textile mills. Yet, the discussion also brings to the fore the overwhelming efforts for economic development that have been made by various actors throughout the community for the re-development of the town in this period of upheaval.

Chapter 6. CONCLUSION

It is with the understanding that we are in a post-industrial economy that the trends in economic development theory have been encouraging a move toward asset-based community development, and the development of social capital. The traditional ideas for economic development that emerged from classical economic theory no longer apply in this new rural economy. The economy is being shaped by different forces, the forces of globalisation and of trade liberalisation; and the schism between the urban and the rural is made only larger with the use of communication technologies. Understanding these trends and their impacts leads to the asking of some very telling questions: How can we minimize the rural/urban divide? What impact will globalisation have on our rural economy? What can be done to develop our rural areas sustainably in the new rural economy? It is this last question that has been focused on throughout this study. With a theoretical focus on asset-based community development and the development of social capital, interviews with members of the community of Huntingdon, of community organisations and members of the government were conducted in order to try and make clear the nature of the initiatives for economic development that have been instituted since the closure of the mills.

This study places Huntingdon, Quebec with many other municipalities that are “victims of a globalizing economy”. Yet, as the story of the efforts for re-development of Huntingdon unfolds it is apparent that it presents quite a unique case study of a rural Quebec municipality, and that significant barriers to effective economic development exist. These current barriers to development can be attributed to a number of factors,

many of which are inter-related. The current case corroborates some of the points in the social capital literature; specifically, that it is not only the quantity of organisations and of participation that matters, but the quality as well. After all, in Huntingdon there are an impressive number and range of organisations; however, presently the municipal government is supportive of organisations with an entrepreneurial focus, rather than those that have an economic and social mandate, including a forum for public participation.

This case also reveals that in poorer rural areas such as Huntingdon, it is not just the *bridging* and *linking* social capital that matter in trying to develop the economy, but that the forms of *bonding* social capital both within the municipal government and community groups have proven to be significant. Examples of the detrimental role that negative bonding social capital has played are in the creation of factions within the municipal government. The divisiveness of the French/English language rift within and between groups has also proven to be a significant factor inhibiting public participation, and the development of new and potentially constructive networks. The social and economic repercussions of not supporting all forms of social capital simultaneously make apparent the need for greater accountability on the part of all groups. Policy recommendations to improve accountability include:

- a. a requirement for the council to decide on issues together, which can be verified through recorded or open meetings
- b. a requirement for more regularized and institutionalized summits, such as the first economic summit, to allow for follow-up and increased possibilities for public participation
- c. a requirement for bilingualism in all organizations, not just in theory but also in terms of practice and implementation.

The key to accountability is to develop mechanisms whereby bonding, bridging and linking social capital assume positive forms.

This study also offers insights into the challenges of researching rural restructuring. Firstly, my efforts were frustrated by the lack of willingness on the part of the Mayor to participate, a hurdle that forced a re-direction of this study; although, as became clear throughout its course, the Mayor's reticence to collaborate – what I perceived as a hurdle - was actually a key finding, in that it was characteristic of his dealings with many individuals and groups. A second major challenge that I had to confront was getting individuals to speak openly about their feelings and experiences with the municipal government and with other groups and individuals. The close knit nature of the community does not preclude – but certainly inhibits – open criticisms; making the heated comments by some individuals about the non-collaborative nature of the municipal government all the more significant. Time and distance constraints also played a role in determining the number and the scope of interviews, as well as in limiting an understanding of the effects of the initiatives to projections based on short-term observations.

In conclusion, the results gleaned from a study of this vignette of Huntingdon's economic situation portray the struggles of a rural municipality coping with economic downfall in a post-industrial economy. While an understanding of the long-term effects of the initiatives for re-development in Huntingdon requires further research, the findings presented here may provide a platform for such an agenda.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

1. What is your name?
2. Do you live in Huntingdon? If yes... how long have you lived here for?
3. What organisation do you work for, and for how long have you been there? What is your position? What is the mandate of your organisation?
4. In your opinion how has the closure of the mills affected the town? How has it affected you personally?
5. Have you worked with any organisation that has participated in community development initiatives?
If yes... What was your role?
6. What type of economic development initiatives has your organisation initiated or participated in? Examples.
7. Do you know of any other organisations that have launched economic development initiatives? Or... organisations that more generally launched initiatives that contributed to economic development even if that was not their intended goal?
8. What role do you see the municipal government as having played in the efforts for economic development since the closure of the mills?
9. What specific initiatives do you know of that the municipal government has taken?
10. Do you think they were effective?- why? Why not?
11. What is your view about how the municipal government deals with other organizations that work in the village/neighborhood?
12. Has the municipal government been involved in helping out any groups that are working toward the economic development of Huntingdon? Have they been involved with your organisation's efforts? How... Financial support? Contacts? Promotion? Management experience/expertise?
13. How far do you think the municipal government complements or competes with other community organizations?
14. What, in your opinion, are the primary goals of the economic development initiatives taken by the municipal government?
15. Do you feel as if the municipal government has adequately involved the community in the decision making process surrounding its economic development initiatives? explain

16. Do you know of any instances when the municipal government has invited the community members to give input/opinions on development? examples

17. Have you personally participated in any forum on economic development that was initiated by the municipal government? If yes... Tell me about the strengths and limits of trying to integrate stakeholders/community members in your opinion.

18. Do you feel that the (major) initiatives taken by the municipal government are supportive of/ take into account the community's interests/values/concerns? Explain

19. Do you feel that the municipality's initiatives for economic development are appropriate for a small town like Huntingdon? Explain

20. Are you familiar with the concept of **sustainable development**? Can you explain to me in your own words what this term means to you when you think of community development?

21. What would you consider an effective long-term municipal initiative to promote growth and investment in the community?

APPENDIX B

Consent to Participate in the Interview Concerning Efforts for Economic Development of the Town of Huntingdon

* By signing the following consent form, you agree to participate in this research.

Purpose: The purpose of this interview is to find out what actions toward economic development have been taken by the municipal government of the town of Huntingdon, and the motivations behind these actions.

This research is being conducted as part of a Master's Thesis. The research is strictly for academic purposes and not for commercial gain.

Procedure: Participants will be asked to respond to questions pertaining to the survey's purpose through a semi-structured interview. This interview will last approximately one hour and will be recorded to increase opportunities for active dialogue.

Risks: Participation in this research does not involve any known risks to participants.

Conditions of Participation:

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that I am not obligated to answer any questions that may seem intrusive, offensive or inappropriate in any way.
- I understand that my participation in this study is non-confidential and that I am granting permission to be quoted.
- I understand that the data collected from this questionnaire may be published in summary form (i.e. tables and figures) or using a detailed transcription of responses, as part of a master's thesis or in academic journals.

I am consenting to participate in this interview voluntarily. I agree and understand all of the terms stated above.

 I wish to participate in a confidential manner only and therefore my identity will not be revealed.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Should you at any time have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Norma Rantisi, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Planning, and environment, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424 extension 2018 or by e-mail at nrantisi@alcor.concordia.ca

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam,

September 2006

I am conducting research for a master's thesis entitled, "Sustainable Development: actualized or abandoned in the efforts for rural economic development?". My research will attempt to document the economic development initiatives taken by the municipal government of Huntingdon, Quebec, and to compare these initiatives with the recent research on sustainable community economic development.

The questions I will be using will be part of a larger research objective aiming to better understand the transfer of information on sustainable community economic development from the academic arena to local political arenas. Hopefully, this will serve the broader interests of lagging rural communities. As indicated, this research is being conducted as part of a master's thesis. The research is strictly for academic purposes and not for commercial gain.

In pursuing my research goals, participants will be asked to participate in an interview. This interview will last approximately one hour and will be recorded with your permission to increase opportunities for active dialogue. (see Appendix A) It should be noted that participation in this research does not involve any known risks to participants and they may end the interview at any time.

Your participation is greatly appreciated and would contribute to a better understanding of the effects of economic development in Huntingdon. As a result, the findings will serve to better guide future policy and planning initiatives with universal benefits for district residents. These benefits would not only apply to Huntingdon, but in rural areas which share its characteristics.

Sincerely,

Genevieve Aboud
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Department of Geography, Planning and Environment
Concordia University
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Should you at any time have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Norma Rantisi, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Planning, and environment, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424 extension 2018 or by e-mail at nrantisi@alcor.concordia.ca