

The Intersection of Social Capital and Power: An application to Rural Communities Jenny Onyx, Melissa Edwards and Paul Bullen

The central aim of the article is to examine the relationship between power and social capital within the cultural, historical and spatial contingencies of three rural communities in Australia. These communities are West Wyallong NSW, Broken Hill NSW and Maleny Queensland. Each has variously experienced the threats of deindustrialisation, revitalisation, and commercial development pressures (Beaver and Cohen, 2004). To understand the ways in which these communities have addressed their circumstances we examine each in turn within the overriding analytical frame of social capital. Social Capital is a concept that is much critiqued but nonetheless growing in importance and relevance to rural communities. For some, social capital is seen as a magic bullet that can ensure social and economic sustainability of small isolated rural towns, despite drought, loss of population, and the vagaries of global commodity prices. For others, social capital is at best a con, at worst a serious misrepresentation of structural imperatives over which communities have little control. In particular, the political economy of social capital has rarely been addressed. In this sense we seek to understand the ways in which various forms of social capital intersect with a multiplicity of power relations that are also contextualised by the particular culture(s), history(s) and spatial location of these settlements. This article is prefaced by an exploration of the core theoretical concepts, followed by a brief analysis of each of the three cases, and concludes with a general discussion that highlights potential areas for future investigation.

The Social Capital Framework.

Social capital was defined by Putnam as “ those features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam et al, 1993). Since the concept was made popular by Putnam’s work there have been many discussions and various definitions, often reflecting the use of the concept within different disciplines. While there is much agreement about some of the constituent elements of social capital, there is considerable disagreement about which of these is essential, or core to the concept and which are associated or peripheral phenomena. Two of the most frequently used definitions of social capital reflect a difference in theoretical emphasis. Bourdieu

(1985:248) defined the concept as “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”. For Bourdieu, social capital was a core strategy in preserving and transmitting the cultural capital of the elite. Because all forms of capital can be converted into other (primarily economic) capital, social capital was simply one way of preserving class advantage. However other theorists including Coleman and Putnam, see social capital as a resource (often the primary resource) that is open to all groups and communities. They see social capital as located within the social structures, the space between people, and not within the individual. Social capital is capable of producing a variety of positive outcomes, beyond economic advantage, such as improved health and well-being. Nevertheless, the consensus is growing in the literature that social capital stands for the ability of actors (both group and individual) to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures (Portes 1998).

One point of discussion concerns the centrality of trust. For some it is critical, (Fukuyama 1995; Misztal 1996; Putnam 1993) for others simply a fortunate side effect (Portes 1998; Woolcock 2001). Other scholars have emphasized the importance of reciprocity (Putnam 1993) in maintaining stocks of social capital over time. That is, favours must be returned, not immediately, not necessarily directly to those who gave it, but returned nonetheless to the larger community over the long term. Everyone must contribute according to their means.

A related issue of considerable current debate is the relationship between social capital and structural bases of power. It is important to recognize from the outset that social capital should not be presented as a kind of “spray on” solution to economic, environmental or social problems. A political economy must be included in any analysis (Fine, 2001). Indeed, as Schuurman (2003) argues, social capital has the potential to help understand the link between the social and the political:

Explicit attention should be awarded to the extent that power differentials within the social as well as between the social domain and the political domain are related to the absence of social capital and trust. (Schuurman, 2003, p1008).

If we are to understand the connections between social capital and sustainable development at the local level, we must therefore understand power and conflict and how these are played out in the sub-politics of the local (Beck, 1992). We go beyond the “warm and fuzzies” of social capital to identify the factionalism of vested interests and the implications of these for community capacity development. However, any such analysis must be contextualized within the historical specificity and the unique dynamics of a particular setting. We know for instance that social capital is most likely to work effectively among equals; inequality, exploitation, and power tactics are highly destructive of working social capital. We also know that social capital can and is used to establish and maintain a competitive advantage over other groups, as Bourdieu demonstrated (Dale and Onyx, 2005). At a more sinister level, social capital can and is used in the discourse of consensus which supports the status quo (Bryson and Mowbray, 2005).

However we reject the structural determinism of such authors as Harriss (2001) who portray the ordinary citizen as victim and who see the only possibility of social change residing in the mobilization of political action along traditional (class) interests. Social capital is the one resource that is widely available to all communities, regardless of levels of wealth. DeFilippis (2001) highlights the significance of Bourdieu’s (1985) notion of the power relations embedded in social capital in which networks of the elite are used to maintain privilege and exclude wider access to knowledge and resources. However, the same kind of network formation can be used to empower the wider community. Social capital can be seen as both a private and a public good, depending on the context of its use

It can therefore also be seen as a resource for the social activist, and is well explicated in such social movements as the Social Forum. Here the focus shifts to positive collective action by the community. This highlights another core component of social capital, which is social agency (Field, 2005; Leonard and Onyx, 2004). Agency refers to the capacity to take the initiative, to be proactive. Social capital can be used to oppress, but equally, it is a very powerful tool of the oppressed. The question then becomes: if given the opportunity, what can be achieved at the local level through people’s combined and co-operative actions?

Exploring the Power dimensions.

Implied in this canvass of the social capital literature is the notion of power. Firstly we examine some fundamental conceptions of power then seek to connect these with different forms of social capital.

Power is a multifaceted concept. In relation to social capital, it can be enabling or coercive, liberating or repressive and viewed as both a positive and negative force. A fundamental dichotomy is drawn between ‘power-over’ and ‘power-to’. The former is often associated with a Marxist view in that ‘power is possessed by dominant groups and institutions and used to oppress and control lower status groups’ (Hampshire et.al, 2005:341). This theme is reflected in Bourdieu’s conception of social capital retained by power elites for the maintenance of status quo or to control the production of cultural capital. Such conceptions embed power relationships within class structures. Lukes (1974) elaborates power as a three-dimensional concept, in which this power-over is closely coupled with knowledge or information. Power over can be enforced directly using knowledge as a resource. Secondly, it can occur indirectly through control of the agenda, such that some interests and information is excluded in the production of knowledge. Finally and most seriously, it can occur outside of observation, through control of the consciousness of the ‘powerless’ and the ‘powerful’ creation of ideologies and knowledge (Lukes, 1974; Tompson & McHugh, 1990; Hampshire et.al, 2005). Within a post-structuralist approach, power is located within the web of relationships, and is inextricably linked with knowledge (Foucault, 1980). Power is far more fluid than previously recognised, and more widely accessible.

The concept of “power-to” is related to the concept of “empowerment”, as both used and critiqued within feminist theory (Denmark, 1993; Yoder and Kahn, 1992; Gore, 1993). Power-to focuses on the productive aspects of power, and suggests that this productive aspect can be mobilized at all levels. No one is entirely powerful or powerless. The outcome is negotiated, complex and diffuse. The empowerment of one party does not necessarily equate with the disempowerment of another party (Hampshire et.al, 2005).

However, as Davis (1992) has argued, power cannot be so easily fractured. She identifies five dimensions of power:

1. Power is integral to social interaction at all levels, from the broadest social structural level to the minutiae of everyday interaction. It is entailed in both the production of meaning and the constitution of the normative (moral) order.
2. Power is intrinsic to human agency, and in fact presupposes both the active intentional nature of the actor who initiates, as well as the choice of compliance or resistance on the part of the other.
3. Power is relational, involving relations of dependence and autonomy. It is always partially reciprocal and entails a dialectic of control.
4. Power is both enabling and (simultaneously) constraining.
5. Power is a process and not a thing, part of “the perpetual flux of situated practices of social actors...actors routinely construct, maintain, but also change and transform their relations of power” (Davis, 1992, p74)

According to this formulation, power is located neither within the individual leader, nor within the social structure of the organisation, but is expressed in the dialectic of human action and interaction. This formulation resonates with Foucault’s explication of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1980) and with Clegg’s circuits of power (Clegg, 1989). Davis suggests that this more fluid conception of power is useful for feminist analysis as it enables us to think of power beyond dominance and subordination, and so explore the potential for active restructuring of power relations.

Power and forms of Social Capital.

Recent discussions of social capital distinguish between “bonding”, “bridging” and “linking” social capital (Woolcock and Narayan, 2001; Putnam, 2000). All three forms of social capital provide necessary sources of power, but with different risks. Bonding social capital is usually characterised as having dense, multi-functional ties and strong but localised trust. Bonding social capital is essential for a sense of personal identity and belonging. From our personal networks of strong ties we receive emotional and social support, and we turn to these same bonding ties when we need help (Leonard and Onyx, 2003). The power within bonding social capital is closely related to the notion of empowerment within horizontal networks of equals. However,

to the extent that it creates narrow, intolerant communities, it can be oppressive even to those who otherwise benefit.

Bridging is more complex. Bridging, as the name implies, is about reaching beyond these immediate networks of family and friends. Bridging is important for personal and community development (Woolcott and Narayan, 2001). In this sense it is often assumed that bridging social capital is characterised by weak ties and thin, impersonal trust of strangers. However, as Leonard and Onyx (2003) demonstrated, people mostly use a series of close ties to bridge across social divides. Bridging can be used in at least three different ways; to cross demographic divides, to bridge structural holes between networks, and to access information and resources outside the community in question. Bridging too can be empowering as it serves to expand the networks of skills and resources not otherwise accessible. On the other hand, control over the structural holes can be a powerful tool of oppression.

“Linking” social capital is a third type of social capital referring to networks that are even looser than bridging. Linking networks usually entail vertical connections to sources of money and power outside the group, such as that entailed in connections to government funding sources. Such links invariably entail relations of unequal power. Linking social capital has been largely understudied; it is this form of social capital that is most clearly connected with a structuralist approach to power.

In general Bonding has received a lot of bad press while Bridging is ‘good’. Bonding, it is claimed, leads to narrow, exclusive, intolerant communities that are resistant to change, while bridging leads to more open and tolerant communities. However this over simplified analysis is at best misleading. We argue that both are important, bonding is often used to bridge, and in any case sometimes progressive communities under threat depend on their bonding networks to resist the threat of economic rationalist forces. Whether or not bonding is “the dark side of social capital” depends entirely on the context (Edwards and Onyx, 2007).

Intersecting theory with the Rural Communities.

Firstly we examine a quantitative scale of social capital that provides a snapshot of the relative levels of social capital across eight dimensions within four rural and three urban Australian communities. We then examine three of these rural communities in depth to provide an illustration of the intersection of social capital and power. We apply Bourdieu's notion of the field (Bourdieu, 1998, as cited in Emirbayer & Williams, 2005) to provide an epistemic notion of community bounded within each of the three localities of the case studies. Our focus is particularly limited to the study of the cultural and social capital within each of these fields and an analysis of the power relations. Basically we argue that the productive effects of social capital depends on the context of the networks and social ties within the local communities studied. This in turn is based upon the history, and location of each study. According to Edwards & Foley, 'the value of a particular form of social capital for facilitating group or individual social action varies according to social, spatial, historical and geographic location' (1998). We draw upon three case studies locating them within such bounds, yet specifically examining the way in which different power relations have impacted upon the development of social capital.

An Empirical Measure of Social Capital

The Onyx and Bullen scale of social capital was developed to test the concept empirically (1997, 2000). Since that original scale was published, it has subsequently been adopted in a range of settings, both to measure social capital at the community level and to measure different demographic groups such as volunteers, or family support clients. Data is now available for some 6,000 respondents across nine communities.

The final questionnaire of the original scale developed in 1997 included several items to tap each of the dimensions identified. The five communities chosen for the initial sample included two in rural areas of NSW, two in outer metropolitan areas of Sydney Australia, and one inner city area. The scale was subsequently used in a variety of other communities, both rural and urban. Actual data collection methods varied slightly in each area, but in all cases a variety of approaches were used to maximize the diversity of respondents.

Factor analysis and inter-item reliability analysis were used to identify the component factors of social capital as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Social Capital Descriptors.

Factor	Title	Description
Factor A	“Participation in the Local Community”	Participation in formal community structures (e.g “ are you an active member of a local organisation or club?”).
Factor B:	“Social Agency, or Proactivity in a Social Context”	A sense of personal and collective efficacy, or personal agency within a social context. Agency refers to the capacity of the individual to plan and initiate action (e.g “if you need information to make a life decision, do you know where to find that information?”).
Factor C	“Feelings of Trust and Safety”	Defined by items such as “do you agree that most people can be trusted”.
Factor D	“Neighbourhood Connections”	Concerns the more informal interaction within the local area (e.g “have you visited a neighbour in the past week?”).
Factor E	“Family & Friends Connections”	Defined by items such as “in the past week how many phone conversations have you had with friends?”
Factor F	“Tolerance of Diversity”	Defined by items such as “do you think that multiculturalism makes life in your area better?”
Factor G	“Value of Life”	defined by items such as “ do you feel valued by society?”
Factor H	“Work connections”	(for people in paid employment) is defined by items such as “are your workmates also your friends?”

The Hierarchical Factor Analysis produced only one clear General (second order) factor. The Cronbach alpha for these 36 items was .84.

The factor structure is extremely robust. This allows comparison between communities.

Table 2 illustrates the variation in each factor over different communities. This variation occurs not only on the overall social capital scores, but also on the primary factors. It is apparent that each community measured has a distinct profile, so that a

community will be strong on one factor but much weaker on some other factor that is a second community's strength.

Table 2: Social Capital Scores across seven Communities.

Location Factor	Pyrmont	Narellan	Green-acre	Deniliquin	West Wyalong	Broken Hill	<i>Melany</i>
A. Community Connections	11.7	12.6	11.0	14.3	15.5	15.9	19.0
B. Proactivity/Social Agency	15.8	15.8	14.9	14.3	15.0	15.2	15.8
C. Trust and Safety	12.2	13.0	10.6	13.0	16.1	13.7	16.1
D. Neighbourhood Connections	11.8	14.1	13.6	15.0	15.2	14.4	15.2
D. Family/Friends	9.7	9.4	9.0	9.4	9.1	9.0	9.2
F. Tolerance of Diversity	6.4	5.4	5.3	5.8	4.8	5.7	6.8
G. Value of	5.5	5.5	5.3	5.8	6.2	5.9	5.8
General SC	79.7	82.6	76.7	84.0	88.2	80.0	94.7
No of respondents	247	233	256	266	209	635	137

A few examples will illustrate the different patterns obtained. The four rural samples are those shaded on the right. In general, the rural samples demonstrated higher levels of social capital than did the urban samples, with the exception of Broken Hill. By far the highest social capital is evidenced in Maleny, a small rural town in the hinterland of coastal Queensland. This community is remarkable not only for its strong community connections, but also for its strong tolerance of diversity, a quality not normally found in rural samples. Broken Hill, a mining town in outback NSW has high levels of community participation but relatively low levels of trust and neighbourhood connections. However the lowest level of trust and safety was experienced in Greenacre, a largely poor, public housing area of outer Sydney. This

area also demonstrates lowest overall social capital, and lowest levels of community participation.

A Closer Look at Three Rural Communities

Drawing on several qualitative studies (of West Wyallong NSW, Broken Hill NSW and Maleny Queensland) we explore how community networks are mobilized to address significant community issues. We explore the arenas in which these mobilizations occur, the role of key stakeholders both inside and outside the community, and any contestation that occurs. We identify both the productive aspects of social capital and how networks are activated or destroyed to block a course of action. Table three provides an overview of the main findings revealed in these cases. The methodology for each case study varies slightly, but in all cases incorporate qualitative interviews of key informants, observation by the researchers, and the use of secondary information sources.

Broken Hill is a mining town in outback NSW, an important regional centre, and has a (declining) population of about 23,000. As evidenced from the Onyx and Bullen social capital scale, it has high levels of community participation but relatively low levels of trust and neighbourhood connections. For an outback town, the overall levels of social capital scores are surprisingly low. In particular, it has low levels of trust. People keep their doors locked, and seldom talk to strangers. This confirms the findings of the qualitative study of Broken Hill during the two year field study. Broken Hill could be identified as a factionalised community. While there have been and are strong structures surrounding the mines, unions, government and church organisations, there are no organisations or formal networks that serve to link these organisations. Further, the factions are a product of the historical roots of the town and are still dominated by “the old guard”. More recently as the power of these old factions have waned, a new set of leaders and organisations have emerged, “the new guard” who have not to date shown an awareness or capacity to form an effective community field structure.

The old guard still bases its strength on their membership of the union or ALP party. They see themselves as fighters, advocates and risk takers. For fifty years the unions held power in a negotiated arrangement with the mining owners. After the closing of successive mines the power of both the mining companies and the unions decreased dramatically. As a result, power was seen to shift formally (for the first time) to the local city council and to the state politicians:

"The traditional power in [the town] was the BIC [an amalgamation of all the unions in the city]. Power finished there and deliberately so in my time - BIC to the Council [meaning City Council] –right. So, you can thankfully say that J- was the last in the great traditional BIC Presidents. You know with the fangs and everything -right? Power transferred to the Council. (male, old guard leader)

Over the past 15 years, there has been a shift of the influence away from mining and towards organisations focused on tourism and business, including art. An increased number of younger men who are managers of small to medium organisations, is associated with this trend. With the growing numbers of people on unemployment, disability and aged pensions, government took a greater role in the economy of the town. In the eyes of many in the community, “government” took over the paternalistic role of the union:

"The community historically has lived on the mining. It has had a very strong mining industry, which I know put a lot of money back into local community and created a handout mentality, which unfortunately still exists and people have got an expectation that when the mining companies stopped handing out, that the government should hand out and this absolutely idiotic rationale that the NSWs Government took so much money from the mining companies in the early years, there should be a pay back, which I mean, you know, is just a childish, infantile view of how things work and you know, until you destroy that sort of mentality, I don't think you can move to the next level. I see that as a huge challenge.” (male informant)

A very powerful set of overarching values still dominate the mindset of those born and bred in the town, though not necessarily the new arrivals. It is a culture of solidarity and battle, of paternalism and survival. While these values served to unite the town, particularly in a crisis, they also serve as a kind of social anaesthetic preventing coherent citizen initiative and continuously reinforcing the informal power of “the old guard”. Principles borne of labour and worker struggle in a highly

sex segregated community are historically embedded in masculine attitudes organized around the hard labour of mining. From this worker solidarity came a fundamental valuing of humans, social justice, appreciation of the community and of the wealth of the earth and its appropriate use for the good of the country.

A positive outcome of these values was a willingness to contribute to the community in a practical, physical way.

"Because Y, once he goes and he makes up his mind he just goes there and he does it and the bloody thing's done straight away. And he will get more done in ten minutes than bloody fifty blokes'll get done in a month.And he embarrasses every bugger. I mean, he'll go round, he goes out there and he'll decide then and do something about." (male informant)

One of the negative consequences of this set of values was an entrenched paternalism.

"One of the cultural things in Broken Hill is that big money's gonna look after us. But it means that 'She'll be right mate', this view of life, means that somebody else is going to look after you." (male informant)

Historically, women were expected to remain in the domestic sphere, and to provide (often considerable) volunteer labour to maintain the many clubs, charities and other organisations in town. The same is still true despite the increased participation of women in politics, small business and the welfare sector. Indeed the image painted of an extreme masculine hegemony in rural towns in New Zealand and Australia is certainly reflected in this outback mining town (Campbell and Phillips, 1995; Alston, 1995). To be a man is to be tough, crude, and to show contempt for women. Violence is commonplace. For instance the rate per 100,000 of domestic apprehended violence orders in 2000 was 776 compared with the average for NSW of 241. Assaults increased from 313 in 1998 to 477 in 2002, despite the drop in population. Rape is common; for young women in particular this makes even walking in their own street unsafe. In a recent survey of youth in the town, girls rated sexual harassment as one of the greatest issues (Onyx et al, 2005). Nonetheless women demonstrate a silent strength and resilience in women's networks and organisations such as the Housewives Association.

These values held the old town together. They still dominate the mindset of many, but they no longer hold the town together. New fractures have emerged between the old and the new guard. Challenges to the old guard are emerging among those “from away”, the young, the indigenous, educated women. They do not accept the old values nor their continued exclusion from the arenas of negotiation. Those “from away” are now often the most active members of the community. Many of the young have been disenfranchised by the loss of employment and the opportunities that these bring. Women were never part of the old guard, and many now actively campaign for a more women friendly set of values.

Nonetheless while many people are now seeking a wider field of influence, they are not trusted or accepted by the old guard. The new guard has not yet established a real presence in the old arenas of negotiation, nor have they yet established a viable alternative community field organization. Old hostilities and distrust may continue to dismantle every new attempt to establish a broad community vision.

Bonding, Bridging and Linking in Broken Hill

While there is no formal community field organisational structure which spans the whole community, a great deal occurs outside any formal structure. Underlying all the formal organizational structures are other less definable bonds created by extended families with a history of 5 generations in the town. Bonds between family members and work teams remain strong. Bonds within the union are also still very strong. Bonding social capital can be found in the sporting organizations, clubs and adult community education classes. The extent and strength of the bonding social capital is essential for Broken Hill.

Bridging social capital is also allusive, but nonetheless occurs through the spaces provided by the arenas of negotiation. Pubs and clubs in particular continue to play a central role in developing bridging social capital within the negotiation of power. Even a small organisation can have a voice within these arenas. Thus, those who are required to vote in another forum, have been effectively lobbied and can represent their 'constituency'. As a result the well-networked organisation 'has the numbers'.

The town operates, with well networked representatives who quietly lobby in covert places. While there are several such places, the most important is the pub/club.

Linking social capital is enabled through structured organizations like the Labour Party, Local Government Council, boards and committees of large organizations and the Executive Officers group. As in the past the unions, churches and government organizations constitute the places where linking social capital may occur. It is these formal and highly visible centres where resources and power from the outside world are lobbied, negotiated and translated into power and influence within the town.

West Wyalong is a small town on the Western slopes of NSW. It was also formed as a mining town following the gold rush of the 1890's. However it subsequently became an important regional centre for wheat and sheep farming. In the early days, transport was difficult; nevertheless the community spirit developed the infrastructure of a thriving town, which today forms an important transportation node on the highways north to Queensland, and west to South Australia. It has a slightly declining population of 3,400. It demonstrates very high levels of social capital for most factors except for tolerance of diversity and social agency. It has the highest recorded levels of "value of life" that is a strong belief that life is indeed worth living. There is also a very strong sense of trust within the town; doors are left open, and strangers readily greeted. While the town, like others of its kind, are suffering from the effects of the drought, there is nonetheless a sense of economic stability and support from the local Shire Council. Community participation is high with very high levels of volunteering, as indicated by the Bland shire Council Community Services Directory. For 1999 there were listed 112 community based organisations for West Wyalong alone, with double that number for the other small towns that are included in the Shire. Strong connections exist between organisations as individuals belong to several organisations simultaneously.

This pattern was confirmed in 2001 in a follow up qualitative study of social networks involving interviews of key informants within the town (Leonard and Onyx, 2003). The networks of people interviewed in the country town of West Wyalong were all contained within the narrow confines of the geographic area. These networks did not extend to other towns, or even to the rural area surrounding the town. Nonetheless

they crossed most demographic divides within the town. Thus, one set involved a drug education program for children, children's sport, and a disability group. Another included a cancer support group, a bowling club, and hospital auxiliary. This confirmed the density of cross-cutting networks within the town, as revealed continuously within the interviews:

Respondent: See, well I guess I've been involved in Domestic Violence Committee as well, so, you know, I've had lots of dealings with the police and, there is a connection with the others somewhere along the line outside of their organisations as well, generally speaking.

Interviewer: So those groups, most of them, you would have had contact with.

Respondent: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Because of those other things that you're involved with as well. And do you think that helps?

Respondent: Oh yeah. I think you have a broader idea of where that person is coming from. Like M. a Masonic Lodge person and... he is also a councillor. R. also happens to be our town Friar and the radiologist at the hospital. You know what I mean....?

The town manages much of its affairs through this dense network of voluntary and Professional Associations. The various organisations tend to support each other in fund raising efforts as illustrated in the fund raising for a cancer support group, in which the local Masons organise a car rally and the Porcelain and Doll Group have a Display Day with proceeds going to the Cancer Support group.

Bonding Bridging and Linking within West Wyalong.

Bonding is strong. Factionalism was not apparent; people in the town pull together. As expected, it is the strong and not the loose ties that provide a sense of emotional support, of belonging, and personal identity. These strong ties demonstrate a thick trust built up over a long history of interaction. This is perhaps best illustrated by Joel:

....Yes a strong tie I think has to be built up over a period of time, over numerous experiences, that means that you get to a point where no matter what happens the tie can't be dissolved. (male, aged 50)

The extent of personal involvement and trust appeared to be the same for men and women. A strong connection required at least 20 years:

Respondent: I would have known B. for um, forty years. G., probably fifteen. Oh, J., twenty five. J., all my life really, yep, fifty. D. probably twenty. B. and J., over thirty years. ...N. not so long, maybe ten years at least and J.

about the same.... Well, it takes time doesn't it? It takes time to build a relationship. (female, aged 50)

In West Wyalong, this length of association becomes a problem for newcomers. While people readily accept and talk to strangers and newcomers, Those newcomers are not really accepted as insiders or strong ties for a long long time:

There is a saying, you have to live here 50 years before they will call you a local (young woman who married into an established family).

Bridging links do, however, exist. Many organisations were federated to a larger state-wide or national organisation. In this case there was some periodic contact with the central unit or with other sister organisations. This kind of federated link becomes quite important in the rural area, as noted in the following exchange:

Interviewer: So that was N as the regional coordinator of basketball. So she took it upon herself to be pro-active and go out to these small towns and get things happening?

Respondent: Yeah she did. She was wonderful, she was full of beans and actually, I think ... Cobar have only just built a stadium within the last couple of years and they would come all the way down here, 6 hours drive I think, and she would go up there and conduct clinics with them.

While West Wyalong may be characterized as politically conservative, stable, maintaining the status quo, this should not be taken as reflecting a passivity. When the citizens perceive a need, they are quite capable of acting. The following quote illustrates a form of social agency to address a perceived community issue:

Concerned Residents was formed about, four years ago, I guess, when our [last] doctor decided to leave town. There was myself and three others. We got together, had a meeting [to discuss] what the problem was. Why the doctors were leaving town. Because the doctors had spoken to me and just said that you people need to do something about the situation. So we surveyed all the doctors that had been here in the last ten years and asked them why they left and what was good about the place. And then we went to a council meeting and I addressed council on the matter and we challenged them to do something about the situation... We've disbanded, because we have three, four doctors in town now. (female informant)

In this example, bonding, bridging and linking is evident. Social capital was used to bring the town together, to bridge with several medical professional networks, and to galvanize local Shire Council to act. Similar bridging/ Linking mobilization is used to expand economic opportunities for the town.

Maleny is a different town again. It is a small town, population of approximately 5,000 in the hinterland of Southeast Queensland. Maleny grew out of a struggling dairy farming area, which was revitalized by an influx of new residents in the 1970's who held a commitment to an environmentally sustainable lifestyle, and developed a number of Co-operative organisations to serve the community. Survey data revealed that Maleny recorded the highest social capital factor across nine different communities. We find that the respondents in Maleny have the highest overall score for general social capital (94.7). This is well above the other surveyed communities. Maleny scores high across all the social capital factors. In particular, Maleny records the highest score across the other communities for Community Connections. It has levels of Trust and Neighbourhood Connections that were equal to the scores of West Wyalong. It also has among the highest score for Tolerance of Diversity and for Social Agency. This is an outstanding result for a rural community as it is generally the urban centres which record higher scores for these factors.

For a small population Maleny has a large number of community organisations spanning diverse functions. According to the database created through the local Maleny Working Together (MWT) project involving a survey of 411 households as part of a community audit, there are 136 community groups within the Maleny local area (MWT, 2003: 14). A significantly large core of cooperatives operates within the town providing an important form of social and product exchange. Many people (40%) volunteer their time in some capacity and there are strong interconnections between community organisations as over 90% of local community groups dialogue with others locally (MWT, 2003: 14) indicating a tightly interwoven collection of community organisations. These interconnections are partly due to individuals belonging to many different organisations simultaneously. Informally this provides a flow of information between different organisations and sharing of resources. There are several important occasions when these community organisations cooperate for the organisation of large community wide events. This demonstrates interconnections at both the organisational and individual level. 87.5% of the sample strongly agreed or agreed that it was easy to be involved in the community (Jordan, 2003:33). These results are mirrored in the interview transcripts, as the openness of the local community was one of the major themes identified that makes this town special. According to one interviewee:

“It’s an energy thing you just seem to tune in to. It’s vibrant, it’s interesting, it’s very diverse and to a large extent it’s the people. It is very accepting. It doesn’t matter what your background is, age, sexual preference whatever, it makes no difference” (female informant).

When speaking about what it is that makes Maleny special in the interview data two themes are outstanding; the people and the environment. One of the most outstanding examples of this social and environmental commitment was demonstrated when the Maleny community received an award for Environmental Citizen of the Year. This is significant as it pays tribute to the connectivity between all members of the community who were involved in the Obi Obi campaign and illustrates how these community connections can be used successfully to preserve the environment. Additionally, the central significance of Barung Landcare as a community organisation for the Maleny citizens highlights this environmental and social connection. Barung Landcare was the most frequently mentioned as a key community organization by people from all parts of the community. The central purpose of the Landcare movement is the preservation and restoration of the natural environment. Socially, the organisation provides an opportunity for the development of social capital across demographic divides.

The ObiObi campaign signalled a general community resistance to the development of a shopping centre by a large national retail chain. The resistance involved most groups in town, including the cooperative movement and local business owners, as well as environmental and social groups. Their interests are to create as near as possible self-sufficient communities based upon local cooperation and place bound networks.

Bonding, Bridging and Linking in Maleny. Bonds provide the platform of solidarity for building the progressive sustainable community development vision. Cultural reproduction within these bonds helps to enforce this alternate vision within a dominant culture which continues to promote ‘unsustainable’ development. There are also the necessary bridges between sections of the community to other local progressive communities. However it is the bonding ties at the local level which helps preserve the unique nature of this individual community.

Discussion

In each of the three case communities, there is a different pattern of social capital, and a different structure of power relations. Here, power goes beyond traditional structural power, although that is also entailed. What we are looking at is the way in which power is reflected within the collective culture of the community. Social networks construct and enforce patterns of cultural capital which then carry through into all parts of life in that community

Our case study of Broken Hill demonstrates and supports the findings of other studies which have concluded that 'paternalistic' power structures can have a negative impact upon the development of horizontal capital which empowers local communities (Schulman & Anderson, 1999). These authors in fact conclude that the workers in their study:

may be 'bowling alone' not because they lack the community ties and civility, but because historical and institutional processes anchored in the local form of paternalist social capital prevented alternative forms of social capital from emerging (Schulman & Anderson, 1999: 369).

In the case of Broken Hill, there is significant bonding social capital within the factions, but the locus of power remains largely within the "old guard" and this is sufficient to block alternative emerging forms of collective action that cross these divides. The old 'leadership' and tradition of these power structures has been carried through in the culture of the wider community, producing generally high levels of conflict and low trust.

In West Wyalong there is little conflict and little factionalism evident. Cultural capital is embodied in the old established families The Shire Council appears to be not a site for contestation, but an arena for collective mobilisation. Bonds across the community are strong, with multiple cross cutting ties that bridge across organisations and serve to bond the wider community. There are high levels of consensus, trust and personal support. While there are some bridging links to organisations outside the community, in general the community is inward looking and conservative. It is politically, socially and economically reasonably stable.

Maleny demonstrates strong bonding social capital throughout the community and the community has developed an alternative view of progress based on a dynamic concept

of localised development, co-operation and environmental sustainability. This powerful integrating set of collective values has produced cultural capital, which is then mobilised as a political force to resist externally imposed structures. .

Conflict and struggle for power is evident in both Broken Hill and Maleny, though the form it takes is very different in each town. Broken Hill is torn by internal factions, each effectively dismantling the others initiatives. The Local Council itself is an arena for such factional battles. In Maleny, social capital is used to bond citizens together to fight externally imposed regimes of domination. Local Council is not local, but is located on the coastal strip and is seen to represent external (economic) interests and not the community interests or desires.

In all three communities, there are plenty of examples of the productive power of social capital, to engage the community to create new forms of organisation, and to mobilize action to meet a need... such as bringing new doctors into West Wyalong. Such social capital is also used to mobilize against a perceived common enemy, as evident in the union struggles of the past in Broken Hill, and the current struggle against a multi-national retail giant in Maleny.

The point is that social capital is a source of power that can equally be positive (enabling) and negative (oppressive), often both at the same time. It is clear that social capital has huge potential as a positive source of power to act. Indeed social capital may be redefined as social based power. It can make things happen, and not simply in economic terms, at least under the right conditions. It is this potential as a power resource that makes social capital so attractive. For those who can mobilize social capital, it is also a major power resource of resistance. 'People power' has always been an effective base for resistance and the overthrow of corrupt regimes. In this context, 'people power' can be seen as the successful mobilization of social capital on a large scale.

Social values are a common ingredient in many analyses of both power and social capital. While the positive enactment of social capital, or empowerment is based on shared values and their derivative norms, power may also be constructed around the dominance of one set of values over another. Power is exercised when dominant

groups or individuals devote energy to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to those in dominance (Bachrach, & Baratz, 1977). Values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain groups at the expense of others are seen to be strategies of the exercise of power.

The activation, or deactivation of social capital is one consequence of the locus of control relating to the power relationships within the specific cultural context in which it arises. One way in which these different power relationships can be explored is through a separation of the different forms of social capital. Bonding social capital strengthens the locus of control within the group in question but may set boundary conditions that disempower those who wish to negotiate across the boundaries. Bridging usually empowers those who bridge and who are bridged, except where control over structural holes is used to disempower. However, bridging is always relative. The multiple, cross cutting ties between people, organisations and social categories, all serve to “bond” the wider community. And while people generally prefer to maintain close ties with those most similar to themselves, most people are located at the intersection of multiple social categories. Thus close ties may be formed between people of the same church but different socio-economic backgrounds, or between people of the same age and geographic location, but of different ethnicities. Such multiple, overlapping social identities also serve to bond the wider community in which they occur. It is only when there is a lack of such overlapping connections, that isolated and factionalized sub-communities occur.

Linking social capital involves relationships that are inherently unequal. While it is possible that such relationships may benefit the subordinate, as in the successful application for funding, there are usually strings attached to such a relationship which ultimately reinforces the power of the dominant party.

The locus of power can have a relative impact upon whether the form of social capital is seen as good or bad. If there is a sense in the community of power-over located within the community bonds, then this could be quite destructive to the overall

collective formation of social capital (as in the case of Broken hill), thus creating a vicious circle to the point where people will not feel empowered, but rather imprisoned by their social networks. If the power relations are evenly distributed within the bonding networks, then it is more likely that people will feel empowered and this will have a virtuous effect for the local community (as in Maleny). In general we argue that communities with higher levels of all forms of social capital are more able to mobilize in the face of adversity or to block a course of action. However, the case studies highlight how external stakeholders and internal factions can undermine or destroy the social capital networks.

The implications for rural communities are clear. Where the community has low levels of social capital and in particular low levels of bridging social capital, it is unlikely to thrive. Where the community has high levels of factionalism and internal contestation, it will continue to struggle for survival. Where the community has relatively high levels of all forms of social capital and low levels of internal contestation, it will remain a dynamic community despite adverse conditions. We conclude that the devil is in the detail. Whether or not social capital is used to empower or disempower will depend on the particular intersection of social capital and power relations within specific rural networks.

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	Broken Hill History of structures supporting power over	West Wyalong History of role in the wider community - regional centre and linking of geography	Maleny History of the community in the local place
Bonding	Factionalised bonding	Interlinked cross-connected bonding	Interlinked cross-connected bonding Some factionalism
Bridging	Bridges to constituents for 'representation'	Bridges to the places outside for good of community	Bridges to the places outside for good of the local geographic community
Linking	Factionalised connections to the outside world	Minimal Linking	Linking with cooperative movement Linking with national media
Trust	Low trust	High trust	High trust and tolerance
Community organisations	Lack of community field organisational structure Community organisations with vested interests	Many small community organisations cross linked	Many small community organisations cross linked Barung Landcare serves as link organisation
Power relations			