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The New Rural Economy: From Challenge to Action

Social capital in Rural Communities: The Intangible Factor in Local Development

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INTRODUCTION

- **Rural development researchers and policy makers are facing this dilemma: some rural communities are winning and some others are losing... seeming trapped in the vicious circle of rural devitalization.**
- **Traditional and classical factors of development as natural resources availability and localisation do not explain completely the development of local communities.**
- **So we need to study the role of intangible factors of development as various “ capacities ” to develop generate by the community itself, like social capital, an asset but also an output or a immaterial social production.**



Old fashion way of doing local development: the weight of structural factors

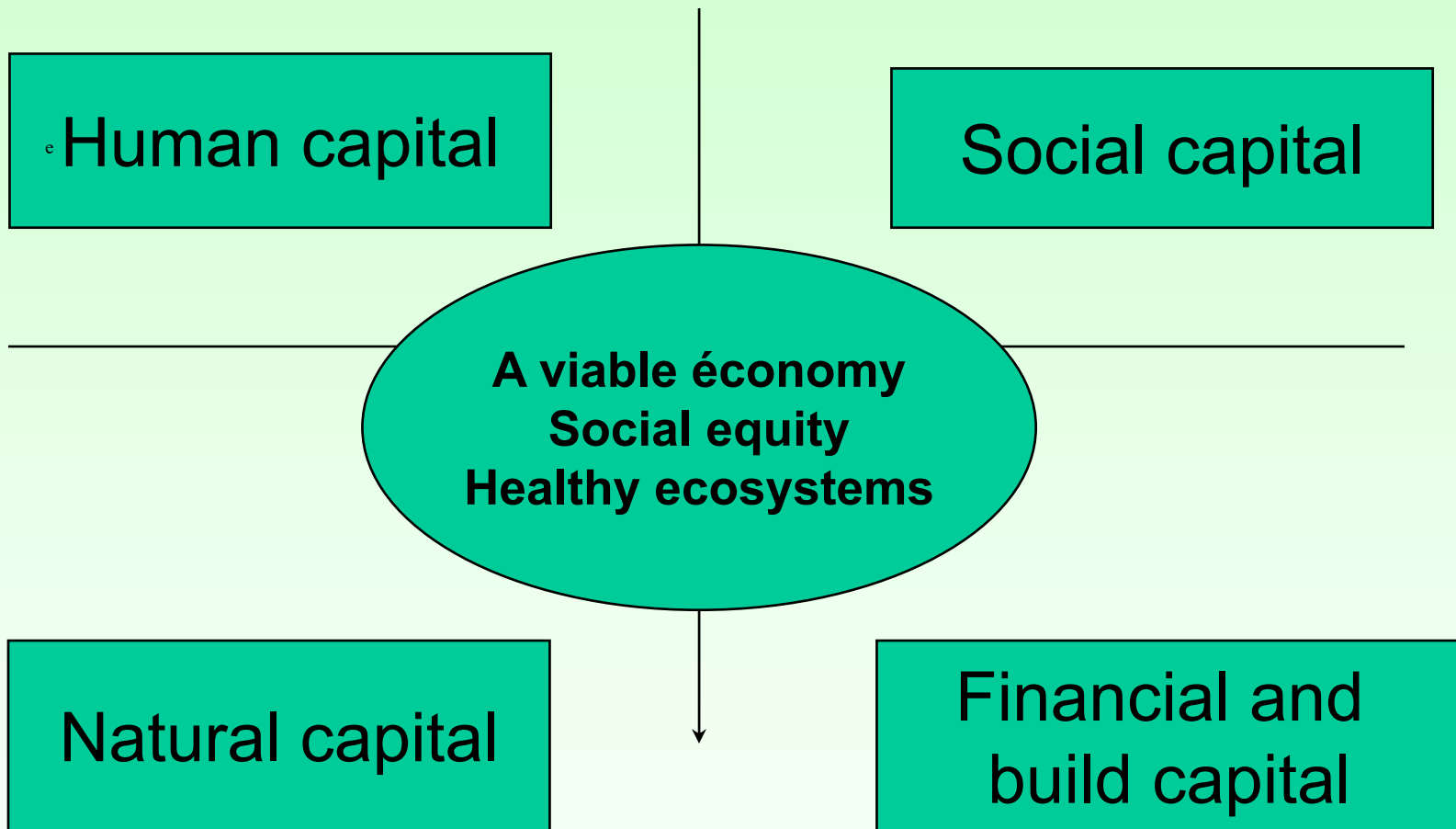
- **Availability of natural resources**
- **favorable location**
- **major investment (coming from outside)**
- **role of local agents of développement: attract thoses bigs enterprises coming from outside**



The new way to do local development: the strength of intangible factors

- **social capital**
- **innovative milieu**
- **entrepreneurship**
- **partnership (private-public-third sector)**
- **new local governance**
- **building the «capacities » to sustain development by ourselves**
- **social learning**

The forms of social capital in a community (Flora & Flora)





Social Capital: a factor of rural communities development and sustainability

Social capital refer to various “capacities” related to the social vitality and the economic viability of any rural community.

- **the degree of openness of the community to different opinions and behaviors ,**
- **the capacity to mobilize resources for activities in the community,**
- **the capacity to work together, and**
- **the capacity to establish networks and efficient ties with outside groups as governments in order to obtain various advantages.**




Social capital: improving capacity of initiative of the community, capacity of doing and adapting

- **How?**
- **In building a shared vision (of local identity and of the directions of local development plan)**
- **In building development first on our own resources**
- **In searching alternatives ways to deal with constant changes**
- **In removing the victim mentality**

Basic dimensions of “social capital ” (Flora & Flora)

NRE Survey (Formal and informal leaders, Summer 2000 in 20 communities) (N=200)

	Very good	Good	Total
•Openness to various opinions from different people	11%	46%	57%
•Ability to mobilize resources	40%	43%	83%
•Willingness to work together	27%	48%	75%
•Capacity to get advantages or help from governments	9%	38%	49%



Basic dimensions of “ social capital ” measured according lagging/leading communities (NRE, 2000)

Opinions expressed (very good and good) :

	Leading	Lagging
• Open to opinion of « different » people	70%	49%
• Ability to mobilize resources	92%	77%
• Willingness to work together	93%	62%
• Ability to capture help for governments	55%	45%


Basic dimensions of “ social capital ” measured according (lagging/leading) (NRE, 2001)

	leading	lagging
• Open mind to various opinions	45%	36%
• Open to newcomers	87%	75%
• Open to others races or ethnics groups	67%	62%
• Our community offers opportunity for youngs –35	69%	46%
• Our community offers opportunity for women	79%	67%
• Ability to contribute with time and money	89%	69%
• Ability to work together for benefit of community	87%	62%
• Waiting for advantages for outside	48%	55%
• High capacity to get help from provincial gov’nt	42%	36%
• High capacity to get help from federal government	30%	31%



Leadership in rural communities: ageing, but socially recognized

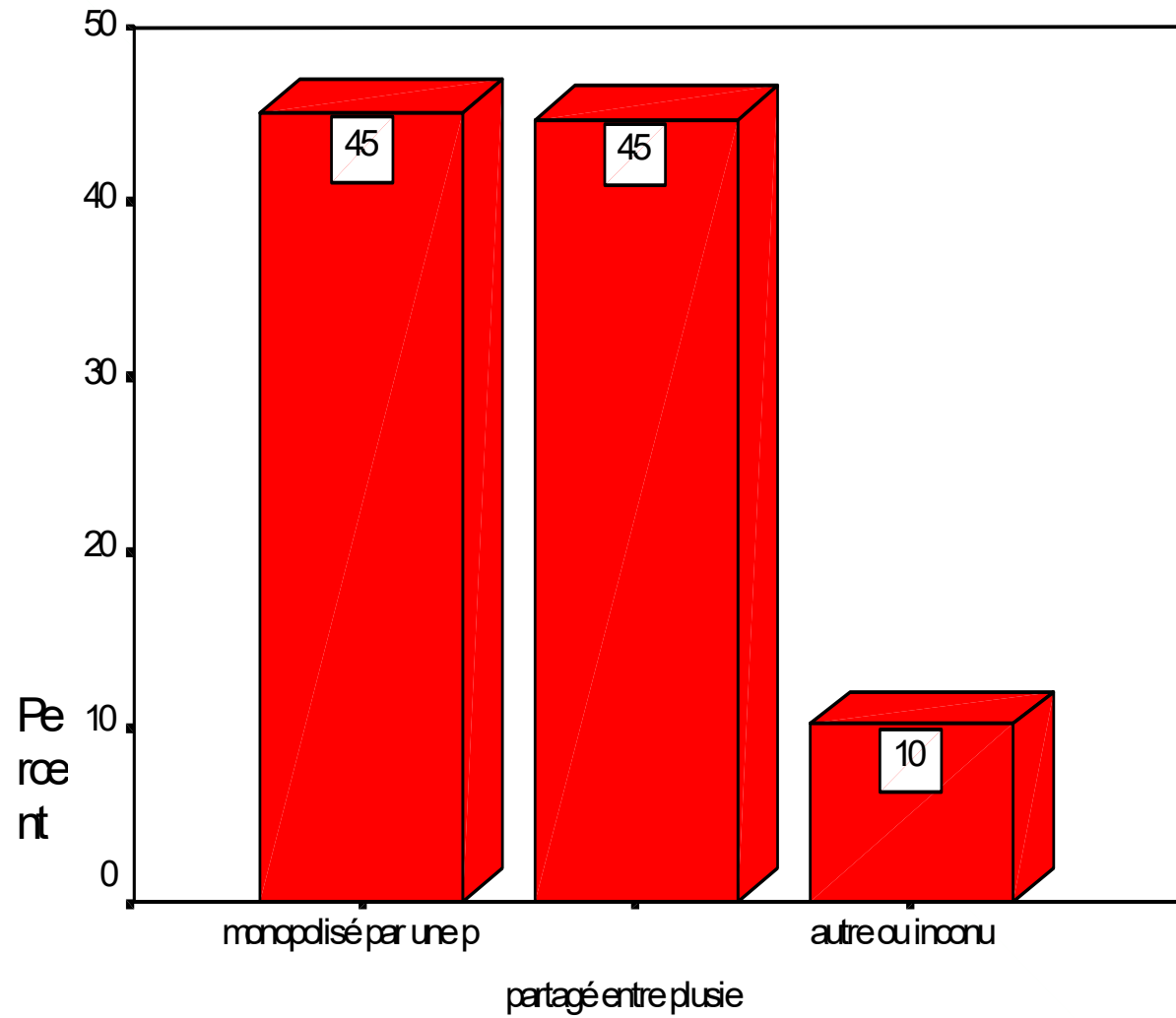
- **Formal (elected) and informal leaders come from older age groups. 75% are over the age of 45 and only 25% are below this age**
- **The majority (60%) of these local leaders are people who were born and raised in the same community.**
- **Even more surprising is that 75% of persons holding positions in formal or informal organizations are also employed in the locality in which they also reside.**



Local leadership : social rewarding may vary according type of community

- These leaders have told us (95%) that their work in the community is “appreciated” or “greatly appreciated”.
- 31% of the *informal leaders* think that the local population “greatly appreciates” their volunteer work and this proportion attains only 9% in the case of the *formal leaders*.
- The recognition of the work of formal or informal leaders varies significantly depending on the type of rural collectivity in question. Where only 11% of the leaders of *leading* communities say that their work is not really appreciated, this proportion reaches more than 35% in the case of the *lagging* localities.

Style of local leadership



Style de leadership

Style de leadership * leading lagging status

Crosstab

% within leading lagging status

		leading lagging status		Total
		leading	lagging	
Style de leadership	monopolisé par une personne ou un petit groupe	36,9%	51,7%	45,1%
	partagé entre plusieurs personnes ou groupes	53,7%	37,5%	44,8%
	autre ou inconnu	9,4%	10,8%	10,2%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Discussions on the findings

- **Social capital vary according type of communities (leading or lagging)**
- **A rich social capital, more favorable to economic development seems to be quite present in “leading” rural communities, and in the lagging communities, the level of social capital is significantly lower.**
- **This research seems to confirm the hypothesis of the structuring and determining effect of the social capital in the development of rural communities with a retro-action process in which it became an input or a factor of development itself.**

Discussion on the findings


- Instead of seeing a linear relation as: **SOCIAL CAPITAL=> SOCIAL CAPACITIES => SOCIAL COHESION**, we must see social cohesion as, at the same time, a social production, a result or an output and as an input, as a factor from what local development is the consequence.
- We need to test if capital social is linked to new forms of local governance: more the capital social is high more we will experience a shift from a functional to a more citizen-based governance.
- Data from the NRE household survey show that rural people express an ambivalent representation where social cohesion is viewed as a strength but also as a weakness (the dark side of the force)



From Challenge to Action

Building basic «capacities» of a community

- A sense of the community (sense of local identity and a sense of belonging)
- A local participation to social and cultural events as well economics activities (initiative, cooperation and partnership)
- A convenient level of education and training (allowing people ability to identify and take advantage of local opportunities)
- A spirit of enterprise (self confident, independance, ability to risk taking)
- An appropriate institutionnal organization.



The ideal-type of a community having developed its capacities

- ❑ **An active community taking various initiatives to resolve itself the problems it face.**
- ❑ **An prosperous community using local knowledge and resources and able to take in account various expectations of its citizens.**
- ❑ **An strong community feed by spirit of enterprise but also by volunteerism and cooperation**
- ❑ **A community with appropriate structures of governance (synergy between private, public and communitarian sector).**



What we have learned? Local development is feasible

- ❑ **Every local community can run with success a process of development**
- ❑ **local development rest more upon a «collective will» than some comparatives advantages**
- ❑ **the community must learn how to develop its own « capacities to develop »**
- ❑ **but the local people must do not skip the first step: building a consciousness about the local situation (make the diagnostic and planning an appropriate strategy for a shared development)**



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