

ORGANIZING COMMUNITIES TO SUSTAIN RURAL LANDSCAPES: LESSONS FROM NEW YORK

By Mildred E. Warner, C. Clare Hinrichs,
Judith Schneyer, and Lucy Joyce

ABSTRACT

Growing social diversity in rural communities and increasing integration with urban areas contribute to the need for community organizing strategies that build coalitions to sustain rural landscapes. Drawing on the notion of social capital formation and based on analysis of Extension strategies in Orange and Dutchess Counties in New York state, we examine the process and outcomes of community organizing that integrate production and consumption interests in rural landscapes on the urban fringe. This analysis suggests that effective community organizing to sustain the rural landscape involves the intentional creation of "forums for interaction," where social capital can be generated and social, political, economic, and environmental interests can intersect. The development of "bridging ties" between single issue groups and networks is emphasized over attempts to form actual multi-issue coalitions. We demonstrate how identifying and building capacity at the local level forms the basis for effective regional policy change.

INTRODUCTION

Farmland protection approaches have traditionally focused on ensuring the structural, regulatory, and fiscal capacity for continued agricultural production in particular settings. They have led to a "toolbox" of policies and techniques that focus on land preservation itself, but do not focus enough on the community process—dialogue and debate—that ensures its ultimate effectiveness. The reality of both production and consumption interests in many rural landscapes suggests the need for a focus on community process. In this paper, we provide

Mildred E. Warner is Assistant Professor, Department of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University; C. Clare Hinrichs is Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Iowa State University; Judith Schneyer is Community Development Program Leader, Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County; and Lucy Joyce is former Agricultural Program Leader, Cornell Cooperative Extension Orange County. An earlier version of this paper was developed for the June 1995 workshop on "Sustaining Rural Landscapes in Urbanizing Environments," organized by the Cornell Community and Rural Development Institute, Ithaca, NY. That "forum for interaction" greatly broadened our own thinking on this topic. We also have benefited from the comments of Lois Levitan, John Oakley, and several anonymous reviewers.

an analysis of community organizing strategies which give explicit attention to building features of social organization that enable dialogue and debate about landscape protection from both a production and a consumption perspective.

Community organizing strategies are analyzed as they sustain and protect the rural landscape in Orange and Dutchess Counties in the Hudson River Valley north of New York City. In both counties, organizing strategies to protect open space explicitly focus on the need to strengthen interactions linking social, economic, and environmental interests within a community of place. The strategies in Orange and Dutchess Counties illustrate the importance of social capital formation to facilitate landscape protection. Specifically, Extension agents in the two counties seek to create intentional forums for interaction among different stakeholder groups, and to foster ties among them within a geographically defined community of place. These strategies help broaden all participants' vision and sense of possible action, making clearer how the economic viability of agriculture contributes to the goal of open space preservation. With the development of local community identity and action on these issues, these coalitions also help to influence policy changes for rural landscape protection at the regional level. Addressing the range of production and consumption interests in the landscape and building social capital among a broad constellation of interest groups help to develop community solutions to farmland preservation which ultimately impact both local and regional levels.

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO FARMLAND PROTECTION

In many parts of the U.S., more intensified farm operations have found a niche in the urban fringe (Heimlich, 1989). But the best urban agricultural land is also sought for development purposes because, in addition to its location, it has characteristics which make it desirable for development (Bills, 1989; Heimlich, 1989). Joyce (1996, p. 26) describes this process in New York state:

Long Island, the Hudson Valley and areas surrounding major upstate cities all have experienced tremendous development pressure. In these areas, land has been converted for industrial, commercial, residential and recreational uses. Since good upland crop land contains well drained soil, developers can build on-site waste water disposal systems, avoid wetlands and costly mitigating factors involved with less desirable real estate.

Traditional approaches to farmland protection seek to stem such pressures of urban growth by reserving land for agricultural production. A fundamental strategy is designating agricultural districts, which might receive lower tax assessments. Passing its agricultural districts law in 1971, by 1991 New York state had approximately 2.2 million acres in agricultural districts (Bills, 1991).

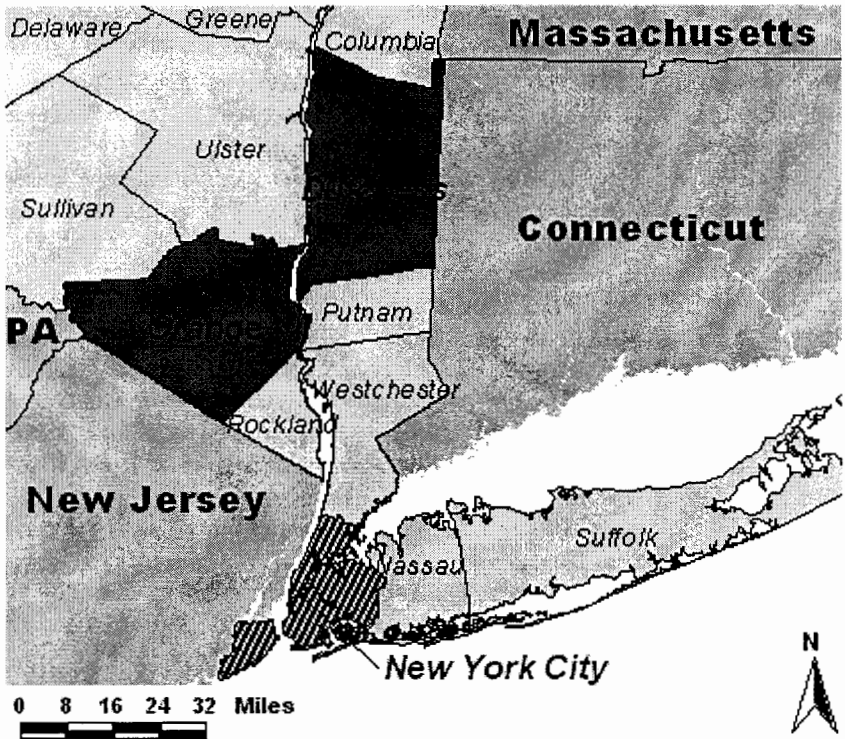


Figure 1. Location of Orange and Dutchess Counties in the Metropolitan New York Region

In practice, however, agricultural districts (which include farms and non-farm land) did not reduce development pressures on farmland, nor did they empower or encourage other forms of locally initiated farmland protection planning (Boisvert and Bills, 1986). In New York state, for example, the most rapidly urbanizing counties immediately outside New York City (i.e., Westchester, Putnam, and Rockland) did not participate (see Figure 1).

Other states have implemented state growth management programs, conservation easements, right to farm legislation, and tax relief circuit breakers which attempt to protect agricultural land by reducing taxes and nuisance complaints associated with farming in suburbanizing areas (Bourke, Jacob, & Luloff, 1996). At the local level, farmland protection tools rely primarily on comprehensive planning and zoning, although some localities have pursued local right to farm legislation and local purchase or transfer of development rights (American Farmland Trust, 1998; Paulson, 1997). At both levels, these measures challenge the "urban growth machine" which drives much suburban growth (Logan and Molotch, 1987). Logan and Molotch (1987) argue that the land market is the most important source of wealth and power in the urban system.

The political and economic power of landowners is enhanced by their ability to realize land's speculative value and promote economic growth. The decentralized nature of local land use planning facilitates its capture by growth-promoting local elites, who are supported by the media, utilities, and other businesses that benefit from local growth (Pfeffer & Lapping, 1994).

Traditional farmland protection approaches and the 'urban growth machine' implicitly challenged by them reflect a singular focus on production as the primary force governing land development. However, rural landscapes are increasingly locuses of consumption, as well as production (Hinrichs, 1993; Marsden, 1992). Many people prefer to live in rural areas near large cities, rather than in cities themselves (Fuguitt & Brown, 1990). These "suburban-rural" residents place high value on "quality of life," fresh local produce, scenic vistas, and wildlife habitat (Heimlich, 1989; Lockeretz, 1987). Such amenities may not be directly related to the "working landscapes" of production agriculture (Lapping & Leutwiler, 1987; Lisansky & Clark, 1987). The consumption interest of some groups in the amenity values of open space often appears at odds with farmers' needs to maintain profitable production conditions. However, farms in the urban shadow also can take advantage of growing consumption-oriented populations by developing high-value specialty and direct markets, including tourism and consumer-producer "relationship" concepts in their product line (Pfeffer and Lapping, 1995).

This reconfiguration of the rural landscape from a place primarily for production to a place also for consumption is reflected in the popularity of purchase of development rights programs (PDRs). These locally funded programs pay farmers for the speculative value of their land, if they promise to keep the land in agricultural uses (Daniels, 1991). PDRs help ensure continued agricultural production, but may also impose certain constraints. For example, some New York state farmers participating in PDRs have been restricted in building needed new agricultural buildings because the "industrial" look of such buildings would detract from the consumption value of the landscape. While both farmers and suburban residents support PDRs, they often do so for different reasons (Bourke et al., 1996; Pfeffer & Lapping, 1995). Although they do preserve open space for suburban aesthetic interests, PDRs are expensive and thus far have rarely achieved sufficient scale to stem cropland loss effectively.

BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL TO SUSTAIN THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

Understanding that rural landscape protection must take account of both production and consumption interests suggests new strategies for organizing communities to protect farmland in the urban fringe. Recent interest in social capital provides an effective way to think about the importance of features of

social organization in creating the conditions for more integrative and innovative efforts by local actors. Earlier work on community as a social system (Bates & Bacon, 1972), and community fields (Wilkinson, 1991) lays the foundation for social capital's particular emphasis on norms, networks, and trust among diverse stakeholders to promote collective action (Putnam, 1993). Social capital involves building connection and reciprocity between diverse groups while retaining room for difference and dissent (Flora, 1998). Recent work has explored social capital at the community level, giving special emphasis to organizational networks and the role of government intervention (Flora, 1998; Putnam, 1993; Warner 1999). Strong community-level social capital provides the civic infrastructure which supports formal and informal processes of decision-making and public involvement (Flora, 1995; Potapchuck et al., 1997).

We argue that social capital should not be seen as a static reservoir of trust, understanding, and reciprocity, but as a feature of social organization which can be developed by Extension agents to promote specific goals, such as landscape sustainability. While most research attention has focused on factors leading to the erosion of social capital, particularly in urban environments (Portes & Landolt, 1996; Wacquant, 1998); this paper draws on the work of Flora (1998), Warner (1999), and Evans (1996) and looks specifically at organizing strategies that can be employed by Extension agents at the local level to build social capital.

We argue that social capital can be intentionally created so that environmental, economic, and community concerns can be jointly addressed. In Dutchess and Orange Counties, government-supported Extension programs pay particular attention to social capital to bring together disparate stakeholder groups and build coalitions for rural landscape. Two features of Extension program design give explicit attention to the formation of social capital: 1) development and promotion of new *forums for interaction*, and 2) encouragement of *bridging ties* between diverse groups.

Forums for interaction are venues intentionally created to promote dialogue, vision sharing, mutual goal articulation, and a context for action. They can include physical meeting places, such as farmers markets or farm stands which facilitate new social interaction between agricultural and suburban consumer interests. These forums can be events such as farm tours and media coverage promoting awareness and dialogue. Specific organizational contexts such as marketing associations or community strategic visioning groups (Walzer, 1996) also can provide forums for interaction. Well-defined yet flexible social forums help promote receptivity and trust among stakeholder groups with prior histories of mutual uncertainty or even antagonism. This, in turn, creates more fertile ground for innovation and collaboration in local projects or policies.

Bridging ties are links—not necessarily close—between different stakeholder groups and different communities. They enable exchange of information, ideas, and vision across networks. Based on recognition of the “strength” in “weak ties” (Granovetter, 1973), the key mechanism is the “bridge.”

the actual linking across stakeholder groups and geographically defined communities of place. Such bridging ties make it possible to organize more widely and address broader regional policy concerns. Based on relationships and interactions, bridging ties address two central problems in community organizing at the landscape level. First, sustaining rural landscapes requires attention to multiple issues and interests, but multiple issue groups are hard to sustain. Bridging ties across single issue groups can form the foundation for a broader vision, without diluting the strength which single interest groups derive from a focused agenda and constituency. Second, bridging ties also provide a means for linking community efforts to achieve regional level impacts. If it is a challenge to organize across interests within present-day rural communities, it is even more challenging to organize across communities for regional policy change. Bridging ties help create a dense web of social networks linking stakeholder groups within and across rural communities. As a result, local ideas and models become accessible to others for replication or retooling. Organizing efforts which build identity and capacity for action at the local level also may create the foundation for more effective regional action and policy change.

TWO COUNTIES ON THE URBANIZING FRINGE OF NEW YORK CITY

As rural counties on the urban fringe of New York City, Dutchess and Orange Counties both face intense development pressures. Both counties are to some degree "bedroom communities," with approximately one-third of employed residents commuting out of the county to work. In addition, part-time (i.e., second home) residents are not unusual. Although more than half of the population in both Orange and Dutchess Counties is urban and urban growth is considerable, especially in Orange County, both counties retain a suburban-rural character. Agriculture is visually prominent in the rural landscape. Agriculture is also economically important in Orange and Dutchess Counties, with a combined total of 1,195 farms covering 212,425 acres and producing more than \$107,735,000 in sales (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992).

As Table 1 shows, Orange and Dutchess Counties are densely populated suburban counties. Growth pressure is high in both counties but highest in Orange County which experienced a 19 percent increase in housing units between 1980 and 1990 and a 23 percent increase in urban population. Housing units in Dutchess County increased by 12 percent during the same period and population increased 5 percent. Juxtaposed to these indicators of population growth and development is evidence that county farmlands are disappearing. In both counties, the actual land in farms declined by about 11 percent between 1987 and 1992.

Although agriculture is viewed as a key element of the rural landscape in both counties, the total revenue from agriculture is twice as high in Orange

Table 1. Selected Demographic and Land Use Characteristics, Dutchess and Orange Counties, New York

	<i>Dutchess County</i>	<i>Orange County</i>
County population, 1990	259,462	307,647
Average population density/square mile, 1990	323.6	376.8
Percentage change total housing units, 1980-1990	+ 12.4%	+ 18.8 %
Percentage change urban population, 1980-1990	+ 5.3 %	+ 23.1 %
Percentage change rural population, 1980-1990	+ 6.6 %	+ 12.5 %
Percentage of total county land in farms, 1992	21.8 %	19.7 %
Total number of farms, 1992	554	641
Average size farm, 1992	198	170
Average value of farm acre, 1992	\$4,539	\$3,959
Total value all agricultural products sold, 1992	\$33,091,000	\$74,644,000
Total value direct marketed agricultural products, 1992	\$18,597,226	\$18,714,636
Percentage change land in farms (acres), 1987-1992	- 11.8 %	- 10.6 %
Acres land in agricultural districts, 1998	158,317	160,087
Acres under purchase of development rights, 1998	2,000	342

Sources: 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing; 1987 and 1992 U.S. Census of Agriculture, Cornell Cooperative Extension—Dutchess County and Orange County.

County (about \$75 million in 1992) as in Dutchess County (about \$33 million in 1992). Orange County is oriented heavily toward commercial production for wholesale markets. Dutchess County, by contrast, has a more diversified agricultural base, heavily oriented toward the local consumer base. Direct marketing accounts for more than half of total agricultural sales in Dutchess County, while in Orange County, it accounts for only one-quarter. The growing prominence of direct marketing reflects strong interest in community agricultural development—i.e., locally based agriculture closely linked to consumer and environmental interests in the local landscape (Lyson, Geisler, & Schlough, 1998).

In Orange and Dutchess Counties, issues such as taxation, farmer-neighbor relations, labor costs, and value-added marketing are key to the preservation of agricultural open space. Studies of the cost of community services in Dutchess County, where farmland taxes are among the highest in the state, demonstrate

that taxes on farmland subsidize residential development (Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County and American Farmland Trust, 1989). As residences surround farms, new residents often take exception to the noise, dust, odors, and slow-moving vehicles inherent in farming (Joyce, 1996). The attraction, wages, and availability of urban-based jobs make it hard for farmers to retain farm employees. Growers focused on traditional wholesale markets find returns no longer are sufficiently attractive to keep them in farming.

Orange and Dutchess Counties have both pursued various traditional farmland protection approaches, including agricultural districts, zoning, and PDRs. As the second tier of suburban counties outside New York City (see Figure 1), Orange and Dutchess Counties were the closest counties to New York City to adopt agricultural districts. Each county has roughly 160,000 acres of land within agricultural districts. By the late 1980s, agricultural and open space proponents realized agricultural districts were not sufficient to deter exiting farmers from selling their land to developers. Although there was no state-funded program for the purchase of development rights until 1997, counties are free to implement such programs themselves (Bills, 1991). Voluntary programs are most evident in Dutchess County, where a history of large estates (enjoyed primarily for their consumption value) created significant support for the purchase of development rights. Voluntary PDR programs are less extensive in Orange County (342 acres in Orange versus 2,000 acres in Dutchess), but the acreage is not large enough in either county to have a major impact.

EXTENSION AS ORGANIZER IN DUTCHESS AND ORANGE COUNTIES

Building social capital networks among different stakeholder groups requires a leader or set of leaders who can facilitate interaction and development of a broad, shared vision. In Dutchess and Orange Counties, where preserving the economic viability of agriculture as open space is key, the logical lead institution is Cooperative Extension. Since Extension's mission is broad, including agriculture, family and consumer issues, community and youth development, and the environment, it has earned the loyalty and trust of many local stakeholders.

Both Dutchess and Orange Counties are home to a diverse array of environmental and agricultural groups. Most are focused on a single issue (e.g., land trusts, agricultural commodity groups) or on technical assistance (e.g., Natural Resource Conservation Service). Extension is unique for its broad mission. Traditionally, Extension has followed an educator/facilitator role with respect to agriculture, family, and community development concerns. In this role, Extension often forms partnerships with other groups to facilitate change. In Orange County, Extension has a strong agricultural profile and was selected

as the official representative of agriculture on Leadership Orange—a countywide leadership development group. In Dutchess County, many people see Extension providing broader environmental leadership. The county Environmental Management Council is housed within Extension, and this proximity enables agricultural and environmental strategies to be linked more closely.

The organizing efforts described below are presented from the point of view of mainstream Extension efforts. In general, Extension seeks to promote shared visions and collaborative problem solving. In New York state, agriculture is well represented on County Cooperative Extension boards, which receive a significant portion of their funding from county governments. The mainstream position of Extension may even enhance its effectiveness as a facilitator, by lessening the threat to agricultural interests as a wider array of interests are brought into the agriculture and land use debate.

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL: FORUMS FOR INTERACTION AND BRIDGING TIES

In both Orange and Dutchess Counties, Extension agents sought to sustain the rural landscape by preserving and strengthening local agriculture. Agriculture needed to remain economically viable for a wide range of farmers and landowners. Extension agents in the two counties approached this goal somewhat differently, although each made use of forums of interaction and bridging ties. In Orange County, Extension focused first on developing more productive interactions within the agricultural community, which was divided along commodity lines. In Dutchess County, Extension was able to combine agricultural issues with broader environmental and community development concerns from the beginning.

Forums for Interaction

In both Dutchess and Orange Counties, community organizing has centered on the intentional creation of forums to bring together single interest groups to address concerns about agriculture, open space, and local economic development. Historically, farmers and non-farmers have weighed these concerns differently and have had few opportunities to explore potentially common interests. Through forums for interaction, different stakeholder groups come together and learn of others' concerns and visions, thereby broadening their own.

Orange County is home to high-value equine and vegetable production industries, as well as strong dairy and ornamental horticulture sectors. Wholesale marketing was historically important, especially for "black dirt" (muck soil) onion growers. As a result, communication across agricultural sectors has been weak, and linkages between agricultural and non-agricultural interests even

weaker. To counteract this, Extension agents sought to promote communication among farmers and to increase public recognition and support for local agriculture. They framed the problem as one requiring leadership within the agricultural sector, including better communication within farm commodity groups and among farm interests, as well as with the broader non-farm population. Extension believed that farmers first needed the opportunity to forge common agendas and broaden visions of “possible futures” among themselves, before they could take their ideas to other community leaders.

In Orange County, Extension helped to create specific forums which produced distinct improvements for targeted agricultural sectors. The Orange County Horse Council, for example, strengthened working ties across the highly fragmented equine industry, where thoroughbred and standard breeders and riding stables historically have had little contact with or knowledge of each other. A Vegetable Initiative helped black dirt farmers expand from their once exclusive focus on production to more aggressive market research and advertising. Through educational efforts (e.g., tours to ethnic markets in New York City), promotional events (e.g., a taste testing program with regional supermarket chains), and market development (e.g., the creation of an Orange County onion logo), the Initiative helped growers realize joint interests in strengthening a local onion identity in the regional market. The strategy underlying such forums has been to promote cohesion—through dialogue—within broad commodity groups so that farmers can work together.

Extension also sought to build social capital across commodity groups through forums like the Agricultural Leadership series which brought different commodity leaders together for leadership training and broadened their knowledge of current challenges and opportunities in the food and agriculture system. By strengthening communication and collaboration across commodity lines, Extension hoped to create a base from which the agricultural sector, more fully aware of its own varied concerns, could engage with broader community interests on the question of rural landscape sustainability.

In Dutchess County, by contrast, Extension organizers have focused more on enhancing farm/non-farm relations through forums where farmers and non-farmers could meet to discuss common concerns about the preservation of open space and community revitalization. Efforts to build social capital focused on broadening visions, but brought together a more diverse set of players. Many farmers in Dutchess County felt doomed by encroaching suburbanization, as reflected in an area newspaper headline, “Another Dairy Farm Bites The Dust.” Bringing non-farm interests into discussions about agriculture showed farmers that others were concerned about their plight. Extension initiated a roundtable of environmental, economic development, governmental, and agricultural groups to discuss the open space question and consider possible actions.

Another forum for interaction was a three-day tour of Connecticut and Massachusetts, organized in the fall of 1988. The tour looked at various innovative programs with complementary or overlapping emphases: open space

and farmland preservation, affordable housing, main street revitalization efforts, and solid waste and water projects. Because it was framed broadly, creatively juxtaposing and linking commonly perceived problems, the tour attracted environmentalists, farmers, the media, county and local officials, and State Senate and Assembly staff. Through these interactions, a sense of private helplessness over the seemingly inevitable loss of rural landscape was replaced by enthusiastic dialogue about possible innovative approaches for preserving it. Afterward, the group identified an immediate need for an ongoing coalition to address the agricultural crisis. In early 1989, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County, the Dutchess County Farm Bureau, and the Dutchess Land Conservancy joined to create Information and Dialogue Exchange on Agriculture (IDEA) to bring together individuals representing divergent interests in an informal coalition to address common concerns about the scope, role, and future of agriculture.

What then was the impact of such forums for interaction in Orange and Dutchess Counties? In keeping with its goal of agricultural promotion, Orange County Extension focused its coalition-building efforts on agricultural issues. With a clearer vision across agricultural groups, it became possible to communicate to non-farming stakeholder groups in the county. In 1988, a video about local agriculture was developed to educate consumers about farmers' views and concerns. Farmers' markets were developed to expand direct agricultural market outlets and local visibility of farmers—linking them to new suburban consumers. By 1995, farmer demand for the Agricultural Leadership Series resulted in a forum for interaction across the agricultural sectors, linking leaders from the vegetable, horse, and dairy and horticultural sectors. These efforts were narrowly oriented toward farmers' concerns and perspectives—a reflection of the initial focus on building social capital networks within the agricultural sector itself—but they made a distinct agricultural voice more resonant, clearly audible now in broader community affairs. As a result, broader community forums for interaction, such as the Orange County Chamber of Commerce, Department of Tourism, and Orange County Partnership, invited agricultural representatives to the table.

In Dutchess County, where the agricultural sector is more fragmented and less economically and politically powerful, the basis for interaction has been broader by necessity. This broader initial involvement, however, contributed to wider impact. As a forum for interaction, IDEA brought together environmental, economic development, and agricultural interests from the start. In this setting, farmers convinced the broader community to recognize and address agricultural concerns. With IDEA's input and assistance, Cooperative Extension developed a video, farm produce map, multi-panel display, children's coloring book, and flyers to improve public awareness of agriculture's role in preserving open space and supporting the local economy. Because of the broad participation in IDEA, these projects highlighted the value and contribution of local agriculture, but also presented the perspectives of consumers, tourists, and non-farm residents.

IDEA also moved beyond education to action, forming subcommittees on farm neighbor relations and marketing and taxation. This ensured that agriculture was addressed comprehensively, taking into account land use, environmental, economic, and social issues. Results have included development of a model "right to farm" ordinance, which has influenced state law, and various efforts to reduce tax burdens, including the notion of a "circuit breaker" to provide property tax relief for farmers, which was finally passed by New York state in 1996.

IDEA and its participants have prompted major changes in the perceptions and interests of both farmers and the broader community in Dutchess County. As in Orange County, a range of local institutions have now put the future of agriculture on their agendas. The Planning Department, Tourism Promotion Agency, Economic Development Corporation, Industrial Development Authority, and Culinary Institute of America are among the organizations now working with Extension in Dutchess County to promote local agriculture and its open spaces. Local business associations are involved in starting farmers markets in downtown parks. Several communities are developing food-processing facilities which utilize local farm products. The tourism and economic development agencies are working with Cooperative Extension and the Farm Bureau to launch a "Hudson Valley Harvest: Dutchess County" product promotion campaign which directly links consumption with the local landscape. These initiatives build social and economic support for agriculture and enhance urban-rural interaction. The involvement of a broader set of community interests from the beginning, with careful facilitation by Extension, created a context for open, creative, and even risk-taking discussion. Alternative perspectives were critically deliberated and evaluated, ultimately yielding innovative, integrated approaches to protecting the rural landscape that also address community and economic concerns. Because the question of rural landscape sustainability in the urbanizing fringe is so multifaceted and complex, effective forums for interaction must build social capital across diverse stakeholder groups.

Bridging Ties

Bridging ties can be seen as a particular feature of forums for interaction. As informal links between different interest groups and even different communities, bridging ties help to address the complexity of landscape sustainability and serve as a vehicle for promoting regional policy change. On a pragmatic level, interest groups initially coalesce around single issues. As groups identify their individual interests and goals, an outside organizer can sometimes see possible commonalities of interests. Forums for interaction, such as those described above, permit the discussion of interests and goals across groups with initially antagonistic or competing perspectives. As new networks solidify and bridging ties form, different groups identify common ground and

find they can take ownership of the action under discussion. However, these forums for interaction must themselves develop a single focus or they will dissipate energy. Truly multiple-issue coalitions rarely survive long without facilitation by a professional organization with a broad mission, such as Cooperative Extension. The forums in both Dutchess and Orange County were multiple issue in membership, but single issue in terms of focus for action. Their effectiveness has rested on the strength which springs from identification of a common goal, and the synergy of expertise and ability of each of the associated single-issue member groups to act.

Innovative local experiments which emanate from collaboration between farm and non-farm stakeholders can provide the foundation for broader regional policy change. Coherent local-level actions can provide insights for organizing in other places and, through bridging ties, also can stimulate higher-level policy changes to protect the environment and enhance community. Orange County farmers historically have played a lead role in getting state government to address farmland protection concerns. The Agricultural Districts Program which emerged in the early 1970s was built in large part on the efforts of Orange County farmers. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Dutchess County's IDEA was one of the only forums in the state for discussing and testing agricultural preservation models that integrated multiple community voices. State legislative representatives (including the Chairs of the Senate and Assembly Agriculture Committees, respectively) used the IDEA forum to help them formulate the New York State Family Farm Act of 1993. "Right to farm" and "farm neighbor relations" bills emerged from this dialogue, as did legislative support for a study of tax "circuit breakers."

IDEA also influenced wider open space and farmland protection debates. The Heritage 2000 Bond Act, designed to preserve open space, originally included no monies for agricultural lands. IDEA helped change that, since some of the participants in IDEA were positioned to press these ideas in policy circles. An expanded view of who should be involved in farmland protection, demonstrated by IDEA, also became state policy in the 1992 Agriculture Protection Act. The county-level Agricultural Districts Advisory Committees, previously consisting of production interests (farmers and agribusiness representatives), were recast as Agricultural and Farmland Protection Boards to include consumer concerns as well (land trusts, county legislators, and county planners). The legislation effectively authorized these boards to serve as forums, engaging a broader set of interests and linking agriculture, open space, and economic development concerns.

Bridging ties also serve to push change from local to more regional levels by broadening the perspective of regional organizations. For example, through links to and nudges from IDEA, the Dutchess County Farm Bureau has become one of the most progressive in the state and has challenged the more conservative State Farm Bureau to expand its narrow focus on lower taxes to broader initiatives

designed to engage consumer interests in preserving open space. In fact, Dutchess County succeeded in getting its agricultural preservation resolutions on the State Farm Bureau's agenda where they were approved by the membership. Similarly, the Hudson Valley Greenway Council (1989) focused on community revitalization and open space protection in communities along the Hudson River, but had not emphasized the role of production agriculture in achieving those ends. IDEA succeeded in getting Council members to come to several of its monthly meetings, in effect bringing in different viewpoints but also crafting bridging ties. As a result of the ensuing dialogue, the Council added a section on agriculture.

A key challenge in linking social organization to a regional landscape perspective is the difficulty of maintaining broad multiple-interest coalitions at the regional level. Although various regional-level groups exist in the Hudson Valley, they tend to focus either on economic development or environmental issues. Few groups pay equal attention to both. Regional groups such as Scenic Hudson, Clearwater, Regional Plan Association, Mohonk Consultation, and Mid Hudson Pattern for Progress have been most successful in developing regional studies and planning localized projects. Implementation at the regional level has posed a greater challenge. Organizing multiple-interest coalitions at the regional level is difficult in part because the regional 'community of place' is hard to identify. Political and social identity is reinforced at the village, town, and county levels through multiple entities (e.g., local government agencies, chambers of commerce, civic clubs, schools, etc.). At the regional level, there is no corresponding political jurisdiction. And to the extent that regional demarcations are made by state agencies, they are not coterminous (e.g., environmental and economic development districts crosscut one another). In this sense, regional boundaries based on the watershed or ecosystem can serve both to unite and divide (Barham, 1995). For example, in the Hudson Valley, the river provides a focus for regional environmental protection activity, yet remains an important barrier to comprehensive regional collaboration. As a county Extension agent in the region quipped, "Rivers are wider than you think."

While citizen-volunteers often drive local groups, regional coalitions are organized primarily by paid professionals. Although Extension's strong county base provides a laboratory for testing innovative local solutions, it may not be the best professional group for building regional ties. Cooperative Extension attempts to remain apolitical, but many of the most important efforts to achieve landscape preservation require policy change. Moreover, such regional policy change may be best achieved through single-interest regional groups which can dedicate themselves to a particular issue. However, to be effective in the political arena, single-interest groups need the support of a broader coalition. For example, the recently legislated Farm Property Tax Relief program (1996), which allows farmers to deduct the cost of local property taxes from their New York state taxable income, achieved legislative success in New York. The success came

not just because the Farm Bureau pushed it, which it did, but because a broader coalition of environmental groups joined in support. By acknowledging the social value of agricultural land as open space, they helped broaden public support for farmer tax relief, thereby spreading the cost of public support for agricultural land preservation beyond the locality. Bridging ties between different stakeholder groups and across communities contributed to widespread public support of this measure.

CONCLUSION

In Dutchess and Orange Counties, competing economic, environmental, and agricultural interests found common ground in the notion that a viable agricultural sector was an effective way to preserve open space in the rapidly developing urban fringe. Extension's explicit focus on social capital-building processes in these counties complemented the more technical production-oriented approaches to farmland protection used elsewhere. Extension agents saw the need for increased networks, trust, and reciprocity within and across groups concerned with rural landscape issues as the foundation for sustainable landscape protection policy.

Two organizing strategies were crucial in building social capital for farmland preservation. The first was a focus on creating new forums for interaction where diverse stakeholders could meet and share ideas. Historically, traditional communities of place where individuals lived, worked, and played created a major overlap of social, political, and economic values and activity. But many rural communities today now have ties and networks extending beyond traditional community of place boundaries. This both challenges a community's sense of itself, and provides important links to outside visions and resources (Fuller, 1997). To take full advantage of these external networks, new forums for interaction within the rural community itself must be created to facilitate dialogue and exchange among a diverse range of perspectives.

The second strategy focused on building bridging ties across different single-interest groups. Given the complexity of rural landscape issues, mechanisms which tap the expertise and focus of single issue groups without dissipating energy are important. Through emphasis on bridging ties, Extension agents were able to build community social networks which promoted information sharing without requiring formation of multi-issue coalitions which are hard to sustain. Effective use of bridging ties also facilitated regional- and state-level policy change based on local innovation.

Context matters. In Orange County, social capital had to be built first within the agricultural sector itself before it could be built across broader stakeholder groups. In Dutchess County, developing broad-based forums for interaction among environmental, economic development, and agricultural groups was possible from the outset. This encouraged dialogue, which gradually fostered

mutual respect, trust, and the possibility of negotiating a common vision. In both counties, bridging ties represented the links, loosely joining ostensibly different interests and making possible the regional-level impacts that are critical for landscape sustainability.

Extension agents in Orange and Dutchess Counties saw creative possibilities in the tension between production- and consumption-oriented views of the rural landscape. Their local efforts helped shift local thinking, including that of local growth machine actors, toward recognizing the diverse functions of agriculture in the rural landscape and its role in the protection of open space. Innovations in Dutchess and Orange Counties served as examples which were ultimately reflected in new state policy.

While it is difficult to measure the exact impact of social capital on farmland preservation, the social capital approach to community organizing followed in Orange and Dutchess Counties created a climate of engagement with a broader set of rural landscape issues. The creation of forums where broader economic, social, and policy issues affecting the viability of agriculture could be addressed is critical to the long-term sustainability of the rural landscape. Farmers markets are recognized as important social venues, not just for their economic value. Likewise, area realtors now caution prospective homeowners about the production aspects of living in an agricultural district, not just the consumption value of a rural homestead. These communities now recognize both the consumption and production values of the agricultural landscape and actively seek to address both aspects.

This analysis of community organizing to sustain and protect the rural landscape also raises several additional questions which should be addressed in future research. Multiple stakeholder community processes are important in working toward rural landscape sustainability. However, mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion bear closer scrutiny. Who exactly participates in forums for interaction, and to what extent and with what consequences? In addition, the organizational characteristics and outcomes of effective forums for interaction need to be studied. How do process and impact differ between more ad hoc, short-term associations—mobilized to work for specific goals and disbanded when they are achieved—and long-term, more formalized organizations with ongoing agendas? Answers to questions such as these will enhance community-based work on sustaining rural landscapes.

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