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Trust-Led Social Capital Formation In Rural Livelihood Transformation: Evidence From A Post-Extractive Community in Indonesia

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Abstract

Rural communities undergoing post-extractive transitions often face socio-economic disruption due to the loss of extractive livelihoods, limited adaptive capacity, and institutional uncertainty. Although alternative livelihood sectors are widely promoted to support sustainable development, the social processes underlying successful transitions remain poorly understood. This study examines how social capital is constructed during rural transformation, emphasizing trust as the foundation of collective adaptation. Using an interpretive qualitative case study in a post-extractive community in Indonesia, the research explores trust-building through sustained interactions between local actors and external facilitators. The findings reveal that social capital was not a pre-existing community asset but gradually emerged through trust-building processes that generated bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. These relational dynamics strengthened collective action, institutional collaboration, and livelihood diversification. The study reconceptualizes trust as the enabling mechanism through which social capital is formed rather than merely one of its components. By proposing the concept of trust-led social capital formation, this study offers a process-oriented framework for understanding rural transformation and informing socially grounded interventions that support sustainable livelihood transitions.

Keywords: Rural Transformation; Social Capital; Trust; Livelihood Transition; Post-Extractive Communities

INTRODUCTION

Across the Global South, rural communities are increasingly undergoing post-extractive transitions driven by environmental regulations, resource depletion, and growing sustainability commitments. Although these transitions are widely regarded as essential for achieving sustainable development, they frequently expose rural communities to profound socio-economic challenges, particularly where livelihood diversification remains limited and adaptive capacity is weak. As a result, communities that have long depended on extractive activities often struggle to secure viable and sustainable alternatives.

In this context, transitioning from extractive industries to alternative livelihood sectors extends beyond economic restructuring. It represents a broader process of rural transformation that reshapes social relations, institutional arrangements, community values, and patterns of collective action. Consequently, the success of livelihood transformation depends not only on economic opportunities but also on the ability of communities to reorganize their social and institutional capacities in response to change.

Recent studies increasingly recognize that rural livelihood transformation is shaped by complex social and relational processes rather than by economic adjustment alone. Community adaptation relies on continuous social learning, collective action, and institutional trust, particularly in contexts characterized by uncertainty and disruption (Auliah et al., 2022; Suputra et al., 2024). Likewise, emerging evidence suggests that transitions away from extractive livelihoods require communities to reconstruct social relationships and strengthen local governance systems to support long-term resilience (Zhao et al., 2025).

This perspective is further reinforced by livelihood research, which argues that rural transformation involves the reconfiguration of access to resources, power relations, and institutional arrangements rather than merely changing income-generating activities (Ribot &

Peluso, 2003; de Haan & Zoomers, 2005). Because these transitions are inherently uneven and often contested, communities that have historically relied on resource extraction frequently encounter significant social and institutional barriers while adapting to new livelihood opportunities.

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on Sambi Village, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where the government-imposed ban on stone mining triggered a sudden and profound livelihood disruption. For decades, stone mining served as the community's primary source of income despite its adverse environmental impacts and limited contribution to long-term socio-economic development. The mining prohibition not only eliminated a major livelihood source but also generated uncertainty, resistance, and widespread distrust toward government policies and externally initiated development programs.

In response to this disruption, tourism emerged as a promising alternative for livelihood diversification. However, transitioning from mining to tourism required substantially more than replacing one economic activity with another. The process demanded collective adaptation, institutional reorganization, and the reconstruction of social relationships under conditions of uncertainty. These challenges highlight the importance of social capital as a critical resource that enables communities to coordinate collective action and strengthen their capacity to adapt to socio-economic change (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Previous studies have consistently shown that strong social capital enhances community resilience, supports collaborative governance, and contributes to sustainable livelihood outcomes (Pretty & Ward, 2001).

Despite this growing body of evidence, much of the existing literature treats social capital as an asset that already exists within communities and can simply be mobilized during periods of change. Such an assumption becomes problematic in post-extractive settings, where livelihood disruption is frequently accompanied by declining trust, fragmented social relationships, and weakened institutional legitimacy. Under these circumstances, the existence of social capital cannot be taken for granted; instead, understanding how it is created becomes a central analytical concern.

Although trust is widely recognized as one of the core dimensions of social capital, its role in initiating the formation of social capital has received comparatively limited scholarly attention (Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 1995). Most studies emphasize the outcomes of trust once social capital has been established, while paying considerably less attention to the processes through which trust itself is cultivated in communities experiencing disruption and institutional uncertainty. This gap limits our understanding of how rural communities rebuild collective capacity during periods of transformative change.

To address this gap, this study asks: How is social capital constructed under conditions of distrust, and how does its formation support livelihood transformation in a post-extractive rural community? By positioning trust as the point of departure, this study advances a process-oriented perspective that explains how trust-building facilitates the emergence of social capital and enables rural communities to navigate complex livelihood transitions.

Recent empirical research underscores the critical role of social relationships and institutional collaboration in advancing rural transformation. Auliah et al. (2022) demonstrated that social capital strengthens collective resilience and adaptive capacity in Indonesian tourism villages during socio-economic disruptions. Suputra et al. (2024) reported that the integration of social capital with institutional learning and financial literacy significantly enhances the sustainability of community-based tourism initiatives. Zhao et al. (2025) further contended that community participation and social capital together improve environmental sustainability and promote long-term rural development.

Although research on the role of social relationships and trust in building social capital recognizes both as being crucial to creating social capital, they tend to view social capital as something that has already been created (i.e. a community resource) and do not address how it is formed from scratch when there are no pre-existing levels of trust or when institutions have lost their credibility.

Building from this void, the current study conceptualizes trust as the mechanism enabling the development of social capital prior to and shaping its emergence. Trust is conceptualized here as being more than just one aspect of social capital. It is argued in this study that trust creates the relational base upon which the emergence of collective action, institutional collaboration, and an adaptive capacity occur. The perspective taken in this study changes how we view social capital. Instead of considering social capital as a fixed resource of communities, the perspective taken views social capital as a social process which evolves over time through ongoing interactions and shared experiences.

To summarize, this research provides a model for understanding how trust-building processes contribute to the creation of social capital as rural areas transition from an extractive economy to one of sustainable livelihood options. The model demonstrates how trust is developed over time and subsequently converted into different forms of social capital (i.e., bonding, bridging, and linking), providing a process-oriented approach to social capital development that builds upon prior research and adds to current discussions regarding rural transformation and sustainable livelihoods. In addition to contributing theoretically, the results of the study offer policy makers and development practitioners with a basis for developing socially based interventions to build community resilience while promoting inclusion within rural communities.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design and Paradigm

Following an interpretive qualitative approach within a constructivist paradigm, this study investigates how actors rural construct meaning and pursue livelihood transformation in the aftermath of extractive activities cessation. Constructivism, as defined by Creswell and Poth (2018), assumes that people construct subjective meanings of their experiences based on social and historical contexts experienced with others. As a result, knowledge is collectively created between researchers and participants, without treating it as an independent objective fact of reality to be interpreted by humans. In a similar manner, Crotty (1998) suggests that meaning is not found; it is constructed as individuals experience the social world.

Consistent with these perspectives, this study examines how former mining communities make sense of, negotiate, and reshape their social relationships as they shift toward tourism-based livelihoods. Instead of attempting to establish broadly generalizable causal relationships, the study focuses on how community members collectively develop new meanings, practices, trust, and social ties within their particular socio-economic setting.

Research Location

The research was conducted in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, specifically in Sambi Village, Prambanan District, Sleman Regency. This location was selected due to its experience of a significant livelihood transition following the government's prohibition of stone mining activities, which had previously served as the main economic foundation of the community.

The transition toward tourism-based livelihoods provides a relevant empirical setting to explore how rural communities reconstruct social relations and develop adaptive strategies under conditions of economic disruption.

Key Informant Determination Technique

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their direct involvement in and experience of livelihood transformation processes. Participants included former miners, individuals engaged in tourism activities, community leaders, and residents affected by the shift in local economic structure.

Key informants were identified based on three main criteria: (1) having direct experience of livelihood change, (2) possessing substantial knowledge of local socio-economic conditions, and (3) willingness to provide in-depth and reliable information regarding community transformation processes.

This approach ensured that the data reflected diverse perspectives on how livelihoodtransitionand social adaptation occurred at the community level.

Data collection technique

Data were collected through triangulated qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and documentation analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected informants using an interview guide to explore experiences, perceptions, and strategies related to livelihood transformation and trust-building processes. These interviews allowed for flexibility in probing emerging themes while maintaining consistency across participants.

In addition, non-participant (passive) observation was carried out to capture everyday social interactions, community activities, and livelihood practices without direct researcher involvement. This method enabled the researcher to obtain a more naturalistic understanding of social behavior and community dynamics.

Secondary data were obtained from relevant documents, reports, and academic literature to complement primary data and strengthen analytical depth.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection using an interactive qualitative analysis approach. The process involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, following iterative cycles of interpretation.

To ensure validity, the study employed triangulation techniques, comparing findings across multiple data sources, including interviews, observations, and documentary evidence. This approach strengthened the credibility of interpretations by identifying convergence and divergence across different perspectives.

Furthermore, continuous refinement was conducted through iterative field engagement, allowing emerging patterns, contradictions, and contextual meanings to be re-examined and clarified throughout the research process.

Data Validity

The study ensured research rigor through methodological triangulation, particularly source triangulation. Data obtained from interviews and observations were cross-checked against secondary data and relevant theoretical frameworks to ensure consistency and reliability.

This process enhanced the trustworthiness of findings, particularly in capturing the complex and dynamic nature of trust formation and social capital development in post-extractive rural context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Livelihood Shock, Distrust, and the Absence of Social Capital

The ban on stone mining in Sambi Village caused an immediate and significant livelihood shock. For many years, mining had been more than just the community's main source of income;

it had also shaped everyday routines and social relationships. Its sudden prohibition therefore created not only economic hardship but also uncertainty about how residents would support themselves in the future. Rather than leading to a smooth and immediate transition, the policy initially deepened social divisions and weakened the community's sense of cohesion.
During the early stage of this transformation, many community members responded with resistance, emotional distress, and distrust toward government authorities and external facilitators. These reactions reflected both the loss of a familiar livelihood and concerns about interventions introduced by outsiders. The community's distrust eventually took the form of collective action, demonstrating its reluctance to accept external involvement during the initial transition period.

One prominent event where it clearly manifested was when several groups of former miners come and attend every community meetings as a demonstration to protest the events; a clear sense of conflict and uncertainty was thus produced. Both kinds of activities demonstrate that in the beginning, the community was socially disconnected with lack of mutual trust among community members needed to adapt with the livelihood changes when mining close-down process began.

The prohibition of stone mining in Sambi Village generated an immediate and profound livelihood shock, as mining had long functioned as the community's primary source of income. Beyond its economic implications, this policy intervention also disrupted established social relations and triggered widespread uncertainty regarding future livelihood options. Rather than facilitating an immediate transition, the policy change initially intensified social fragmentation and weakened collective cohesion.

In the early phase of transformation, community responses were characterized by resistance, emotional tension, and distrust toward both government authorities and external facilitators. This distrust was not merely symbolic but manifested in collective actions that signaled rejection of external intervention. Such dynamics illustrate that livelihood transitions in post-extractive contexts are not linear processes of adaptation, but are instead shaped by contestation, uncertainty, and social disruption.

One illustrative event was the presence of groups of former miners who gathered during community meetings as a form of protest, creating an atmosphere of tension and instability. These reactions highlight the depth of social resistance during the early transition phase and indicate that, at this stage, the community lacked the relational infrastructure necessary to support collective adaptation.

This empirical condition is analytically significant because it challenges the conventional assumption in social capital theory that communities inherently possess baseline levels of trust and cooperation (Putnam, 2000). In contrast, the findings from Sambi Village suggest that in post-extractive settings, social capital may initially be absent or severely weakened, particularly when abrupt livelihood shocks disrupt established economic and social arrangements.

Rather than emerging automatically, social cohesion must therefore be actively reconstructed through sustained relational processes. This finding aligns with critical perspectives in rural development literature that emphasize the uneven, contested, and socially embedded nature of livelihood transitions (de Haan & Zoomers, 2005; Ribot & Peluso, 2003).

Trust-Building as an Enabling Entry Point

To address this problematic social conditions, The transition processes began via conscious building-process where it has been initiated by the external Facilitator group. The new development Actor had tried to dialogue continuously, participated and sustained interactions activities with local community as opposed to introduce any kind of development agenda or project program beforehand. Eventually, as result of regular interactions and communication betweenlocal andexternalactor, the community perception had moved form resistance.

These incremental engagements slowly shifted community attitudes from opposition to wariness. Trust grew over time through incremental exposure and routine encounters and conversations between local communities and outside facilitators.

An influential tipping point for the project was the local appointment of a respected former-miner to the new tourism management body. As a trusted local influential, his participation contributed to growing community acceptance of the tourism undertaking and to further participation in the process.

The Emergence of Social Capital Through Trust

Over time, as trust grew the members of the community also became more collaborative in their interaction. Many of those that had previously been involved in former mining sectors and often characterized by social separation and anxiety began to collaborate in a range of activities seeking livelihood opportunities in tourism.

Bonding social capital of the communities included growing solidarity and inter-reliance, through increased cooperation and assistance in day to day activities which involved exchange of resources and knowledge, as most of the residents of mining area couldn't achieve sufficient means on their own so, they engaged into co-operative process to secure the means of survival.

Meanwhile, communication networks within the community expanded along with interaction between them and facilitative roles played by external development agency or facilitated by them, in new skills building, introducing different narratives on former mining areas as an attraction and bringing new awareness to seize economic opportunities by involving tourism in the communities, were all responsible for raising sense of participation and inclination to tourism related activities.

Linking Social Capital and Institutional Embedding

The informal relationship turned increasingly into an informal relationship as the development took place. For example, public institutions such as government agencies, village council and other developmental agencies also played increasingly active supporting role towards the development of the tourism sector and rural tourism based communities with provided them with training and skills, assistance in developing tourism based infrastructure, and institutional capacity support.

The formation of formal organisation such as village-owned business, for instance, marked as one important institutional innovation that assisted in organizing the planning, management and coordination of tourism development among the communities and linking village organisations with more formal public bodies.

Discussion

Livelihood Transformation as a Socially Embedded Process

As these findings suggest, rural transformations in post-extractivists are not linear and cannot happen soon. As the empirical reality shows, in the beginning community's reaction to ban was one of distrust and resentment; suspicion, confusion of stone miners community. This is of a particular analytic value, for it departs from a standard, commonly taken, social capital approach that communities generally have some basic levels of trust and cooperation already available to communities, regardless of any sudden impacts they might undergo (Putnam, 2000). Rather, the case of Sambi Village suggests that social capital may be virtually inexistent, or be terribly destroyed, in situation when such disruptions abruptly attack the social life and the existing economic order.

Social cohesion is not spontaneously created; rather it is reactively produced by ongoing relational processes. This finding aligns with critical perspectives in rural development literature that emphasize the uneven, contested, and socially embedded nature of livelihood transitions (de Haan & Zoomers, 2005; Ribot & Peluso, 2003).Clearly, economic change can not be divorced from the social relationships within and between households which individuals actively need to reassemble in order to adapt new relationships and roles to altered livelihood situations.

This provides a justification to support the argument that livelihood transformations be framed as social processes not strictly economic processes (Long 2001; Scoones, 2015). In Sambi Village this change in livelihood strategies was coupled with reshaping of social relationship, collective work practices and institutional participation.

Trust as an Enabling Mechanism

Additional results show that trust is a key factor that contributed to the transformation process. Given fragmented social conditions, external facilitators initiated ongoing dialog and interaction with locals, and continuously involved them into the process. Trust emerged gradually from interactions between actors, and not through formal institutional engagement. This means that trust acts as a 'relation bridge' and helps lowering the social distance and enhances communication between local actors and external facilitators.

Crucially, when a respected former member of the old mining community was brought into leadership positions for the new tourism project, development began. 'This demonstrates that the social actors considered worthy of trust are those who possess social status so that they can negotiate on behalf of incompatible parties, and so ensure development projects were accepted by the community' (Wood and Vellema 2003: 12).

On a theoretical account, it adds a dimension to the analysis of trust as a means of collective action (Coleman, 1988). Research conducted in Sambi Village appears to lend itself to a notion that this is dynamic and trust must not be 'given in' with other factors of social capital for collective action, but rather trust must develop prior to collective action.

The Formation of Bonding, Bridging, and Linking Social Capital

After the gradual development of trust, a gradual process occurred in the community from scattered social relations to more organized collective actions. Trust became an prerequisite of recreating social relations and building social capital.

As trust and rapport grew within the community of former miners, the bonding and Bridging social capital grew through expanding solidarity and helping behaviours and informal co- operation. This building solidarity is essentially an informal reconstruction of community from the ‘ground up’. It was in this sense not simply there before as an innate stock, but was constructed on the job.

Besides bridging within groups, bridging social capital developed as an interaction between the community and external agents. Facilitators provided external knowledge, redefined the community's view on areas of abandoned mine sites, and opened community members’ eyes to the possibilities for alternative livelihoods. This points to bridging social capital also developing an aspect of knowledge transfer.

Social capital that was thus formed through relations between community and formal institution (local agencies and development projects) then linked together (linking social capital). It was more than only linkage with the institution, but the institution arrangements, which built and sustained legitimate access, coherence and information flows between them. These were also revealed with findings that without the institution arrangements, transformation could not be facilitated and maintained without the social relationships based on trust.

Reframing Rural Transformation: From Distrust to Trust-Led Social Capital Formation

Together, the results show that rural transformation following post-extractive contexts is not exclusively propelled through economic incentives or interventions by public institutions. It takes place through a slow, evolutionary process of rebuilding social relations through trusting interactions that act like a stimulant. Thus, evidence from Sambi Village demonstrates that people does not necessarily start from a state of social cohesion; on the contrary they may begin this transformation from a state of fragmentation, mistrust and disconnection from the public sector following an enormous shock to livelihoods.

Therefore social capital should not be seen here simply as an existing community resource, but as the relational output arising through ongoing negotiation and interaction among local actors and facilitating outsider facilitators. The analysis implies the process begins sequentially, with the establishment of trust allowing the formation of bridging with local ties and then the establishment of connections with local institutions.

More than this however our study highlights that external facilitation is essential to get this process started. The purpose of engagement of outside agents is not, as might be implied by development program thinking, to promote or deliver specific development programs; rather it is to encourage relationships, to lower the resistance, to promote ways in which communication and a coming together of different knowledges might occur. This highlights relational understandings of rural development which suggests social relations between locals and outsiders are co-produced through process and, on that basis alone, transformatively empowering of a society (Cleaver 2012; Scoones, 2015).

Theoretical Contribution and Practical Implications

Utilising the findings of these empirical studies, this research enhances the notion of trust-led social capital formation in which trust is conceived not simply as one dimension of social capital, but rather as a causal mechanism preceding and enabling social capital formation. By explicitly setting out the sequential manner in which trust fosters the creation of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital, this research contributes a more processual view of the formation of social capital in post-extractive rural communities.

Practically, this highlights the importance of trust-building as an antecedent to livelihood diversification interventions. When social cleavages and relationship breakdowns exist, any attempts to integrate and introduce an alternative income-generating activity are likely to face constraints on social acceptance and participation. Resources for active participation, on-going facilitation and local leadership promotion would thus need to be seen as important foundations for rural change.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that livelihood change in post-extractives rural areas is a socially embedded process and not just a structural adjustment where the social relations need to be reformed incrementally. In Sambi Village, livelihood shocks including lack of trust and social fragmentation was exacerbated, which resulted in where there was initially little or no social capital. Social capital in the community emerged as Trust-building gradually.

With strengthened trust,bonding social capital fostered local solidarities within community of ex-miners while bonding and bridging social capital supported the transfer of information to,and collaboration with,other development actors through shared knowledge exchange.

Linking social capital enables access of post-miners to both public support from public and external support for livelihood change. Accordingly,trust should be conceptualized as an enabling factor before the development of social capital rather than a contributing factor for it. This study is useful in the theoretical field through empirically documenting that social capital is a dynamic and relational social asset. On the policy front,building social capital must have been integrated within,and given priority in any post-extractive livelihood improvement plans,together with community empowerment programmes and external and continuous facilitation. Further empirical works should investigate validity in diverse social and Cultural environment and in a variety of local economic transition processes.

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