

REVISITING GASLAND: FRACKING THE EARTH, FRACKING COMMUNITIES

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Introduction

This chapter examines the mechanisms developed by companies to erode local social cohesion and “get their way across” a local community. Doing so, it responds to an empirical and a theoretical puzzle. The empirical puzzle concerns the situation depicted in the 2010 Hollywood nominated documentary *Gasland* in which Josh Fox documented the social, political, public health and environmental issues related to shale gas exploitation in several counties in the US. Among the most problematic areas depicted in this documentary were the

counties of Northern Pennsylvania. Industry promoters responded to this documentary with *Truthland*, a video available on the internet. The theoretical puzzle concerns different forms of company-community engagement. The theoretical puzzle focuses directly on company-community relations.

Over the last decade research interest related to forms of engagement between companies and communities has increased (Muthuri et al 2008; Baba 2012; Raufflet et al. 2013) around the notion of social license to operate and the construction of a reciprocal “win-win” and sustainable relations between companies and communities, viewed as cohesive entities (Bowen et al. 2010, Zandvliet, & Anderson 2009). However, less attention has been brought to problematic situations in which companies establish their power over communities through strategies of corporate engagement, which may lead to the erosion of local social cohesion.

The chapter connects this research on the company-community to the literature on social cohesion through the identification of the strategies used by the gas companies to rule over a community. The remainder of this chapter is organized in three sections. We first briefly introduce the analytical framework on social cohesion. The second section presents the data and identifies the strategies mobilized by companies. The last section identifies the contributions of this chapter.

Corporate-community relations and local social cohesion

The dominant approach to CSR assumes that the relations between businesses and communities are crucial for businesses because *they allow companies to establish their legitimacy* (Baba, 2012: 16, free translation). Suchman (1995: 574, quoted by Baba, 2012: 16) defines legitimacy as *a generalized perception or an assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable and appropriate within a system of norms, values and beliefs socially constructed* (free translation). Legitimacy enables organizations to gain access to resources, whether physical, human or other and to operate (Suchman, 1995). In all, research on company-community relations has focused on forms, stages, and win-win conditions. Among these conditions is social cohesion, which is defined by Maxwell (1996) as:

Social cohesion involves building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community. (Maxwell, 1996: 13)

Very little scientific literature addresses how to assess this situation. Jensen (1998) stresses that there is a very large gap in data and analytical frameworks about civil society. According to Jensen (1998), social cohesion amongst a community disappears:

When economic and political, as well as social, conditions are not met or when these processes are not functioning, citizens, groups and governments begin to sense that "things are falling apart" and "it's just not working." (Jensen, 1998: 3).

Peace, Spoonley, Butcher and O'Neill (2005) and Spoonley and Peace (2005) identified five indicators of the social cohesion of a given society, namely (1) belongingness, (2) participation, (3) inclusion, (4) recognition and (5) legitimacy. These five indicators are presented in Table 1 below.

	Indicator	Definition
1	Belonging	Feeling of being part of one big family
2	Participation	Commitment to politic, religious, volunteer or other type of activity
3	Inclusion	Equity regarding opportunities and outcomes of labour market, education, health and housing
4	Recognition	Diversity of opinions and values between different cultures or groups are accepted and respected
5	Legitimacy	Confidence of the population when it comes to public institutions in their role in protecting the rights and interests of community members

Tab. 1. Five indicators of social cohesion

This research contributes to addressing two limitations of research on social cohesion. The main limitation of the functionalist literature on community relations comes from the description of the concept of community. Indeed, it is presented in a “romantic vision” (Agrawal and Gibson 1999: 632), that is to say, as a whole that is coherent, uniform and smooth. To address this limitation in the literature, this article provides a non-functionalist description of the community. A second limitation of literature on social cohesion is the almost total lack of discussion about the role of business in creating, breaking or maintaining social cohesion within a community. Indeed, if there are indicators of social cohesion, such as those presented by Thirion (2010), Peace *et al.* 2005 and Spoonley and Peace (2005), there are no articles defining the role played by these companies in the maintenance, improvement or erosion of this very social cohesion. This article aims to contribute to the literature on social cohesion by better documenting how a community has been *fracked* by gas companies

This question will be addressed by examining, from the perspective of community relationships, how gas companies in northern Pennsylvania contributed to the erosion of social cohesion within the community. More specifically, the chapter examines the effects related to the behaviour of gas companies in a community defined as “tight-knit.”

Revisiting *Gasland*

The counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna, located in northern Pennsylvania¹⁴, are part of the Endless Mountain Region, an agricultural region built on a plateau of hills and mountains. Before the inception of the shale gas industry, this part of Pennsylvania was predominantly a farming region with small farms. The decline of the coal industry since the 1970s, strong competition from the Canadian timber industry and modest incomes from agriculture created a struggling local economy for the past forty years. Before 2007, these predominantly rural counties were among the poorest in Pennsylvania.

14 PM (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on November 27, 2012.

Methodology

Case selection

The case of northern Pennsylvania, and specifically the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna, was selected because these counties are among the most publicized cases of shale gas. The case of Susquehanna County, and more specifically that of the town of Dimock, is regularly raised due to the collective lawsuit against the gas industry for water contamination. It appears, among others, in the documentary *Gasland* by Josh Fox (2010), which sparked a lot of debate on the subject.

Field research

The fieldwork took place locally between October 14 and October 22, 2012 and continued in Montreal until December 2012. It has been done through interviews. The criterion for the selection of the interviewees was to interview at least one person from each of the 12 categories: industry members, employee of a gas company responsible for community relationships, entrepreneur in the studied counties, pro-gas citizen, anti-gas citizen, anti-gas citizen whose basement is under contract with a gas company, citizen whose water was contaminated, citizen who experienced health problems associated with the activities of the gas industry, doctor, hydro geologist, water consultant, a member of a club or group with benefits from the social responsibility practices or philanthropy of a gas company and a member of an NGO against the gas operations. In total, 27 interviews were conducted, lasting from one to four hours. Confidentiality clauses were signed to prevent people who have chosen to confide during the interviews from being recognized. The interview data and the analysis of public documents amount to several hundreds of pages.

In all, the local social fabric before the arrival of the shale gas industry was often described as “tightly knit,” that is to say, composed of families living in a climate of solidarity for several generations. Before the arrival of the gas industry, a family could still be considered as “foreign,” even if they lived in the area for three generations. Living in the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna was frequently described as a situation in which *everyone knows everyone and lived in a peaceful climate*¹⁵.

As of 2012–2013, six years after the beginning of shale gas exploitation, the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna have become a tin-

15 PM (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on November 27, 2012.

derbox of social relations. The polarization of point of views about the implementation of the gas companies has led to the degradation of the local social relations. Table 2 summarizes this situation and Table 3 maps the polarization of locals between *pro* and *anti*-shale gas operations.

Tab. 2. Evolution of local social cohesion indicators

Social cohesion indicators	Before 2007	2012
Belonging	Strong sense of belonging in the community; a condition of being part of it for a long time	Division of the community into two distinct clans
Participation	Participation in the county's activities	Participation, depending on the clan, whether into promotion activities or denunciation activities
Inclusion	Strangers mostly included but sometimes excluded even when part of the counties for a couple of generations	New incomers that come to the region for work are not included because they either exclude themselves or because they are rejected by the community
Recognition	Possible discrimination towards new incomings but no harassment; feeling of security in the counties	Citizen's protection against harassment and discrimination is not encouraged; feeling of security in the counties
Legitimacy	Trust in government and local authorities	Trust disappeared regarding the government and the local authorities

Anti-gas vision	Pro-gas vision
<p>“There are loads of conflicts since they (gas companies) entered the community, it is a divided community, there are those that are pro-, there are those who are anti-, there are those who are in the middle. We have a lot of conflicts, a lot of tensions, they don’t want us to speak, they want us to go away, they call us liars, they besmirch us and they say that we cannot be believed. I continue to be a witness because there are those who do believe us.” [PD (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 30, 2012]</p> <p>“[Speaking about the gas] All the Christians believe the earth is ours to rape. They probably call it different but they seem to think that any kind of extraction from the earth is a gift. I believe that air is a gift, that water is a gift. Things that are given to us are gifts. If you gotta go get it, if you gotta destroy something to get it, it’s not a gift, that’s stealing, that’s rape.” [PV (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 18, 2012]</p>	<p>“We, landowners, are donating our land. We are making a sacrifice for the common good.” [PX (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 20, 2012]</p> <p>“I struggle with the fact that everybody seems to want gas companies to solve all their problems. I don’t think that is right either, gas companies certainly are wealthy companies but I don’t think it is their responsibility to solve everyone’s problems for them.” [PC (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012]</p>

Tab. 3. Polarization between two groups

In other words, the arrival and operations of the gas industry in the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna has deeply and abruptly affected the local social dynamics. This section aims to identify what strategies of engagement companies have promoted to affect local social cohesion.

Description of the different groups in northern Pennsylvania’s communities

We identified the following local groups:

Tab. 4. Groups in the Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna counties

Group	Description
Pro-gas	Residents in favour of the gas industry for economic reasons and for energy independence
Anti-gas	Residents against the gas industry mostly for social and environmental reasons
Local authorities	Elected municipal councillors (being an elected municipal councillor and a gas industry representative is permitted by-law)
Residents that have signed agreements with gas companies	Both parties have agreed on a price and royalties; residents can either be pro- or anti-ga
Residents that have not signed agreements with gas companies	Residents who (1) did not give permission to a gas company to lease their land or (2) have not been offered contracts for their land; residents can either be pro- or anti-gas

The “dash to gas”

In the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna, the “dash to gas” began in 2007. At that time, the approach of companies and their subcontractors to obtain the agreement of the owners to rent their subsoil was already controversial: they incited citizens to sign, making them believe that the industry would most probably not be operating in the region¹⁶. Thus, for *pro-gas* or for activists, the impression remains the same: the gas industry hid its true intentions.

¹⁶ Mentioned during interviews by respondents PC, PD, PG, PL, PM, PN, PO, PP, PQ, PS, PT, PU, PV, PW, PX, PY and PZ.

Shale gas and local authorities: first citizens' groupings and collusion

During the fall of 2008, a few months after the arrival of companies that met individually with local landowners, the community decided to get together to discuss the situation. Then, the local government and gas companies decided to organize jointly public information sessions.

In Bradford and Sullivan counties, the first information meetings were held in the fall of 2008. Elected officials and a record number of citizens were present. According to witnesses interviewed¹⁷, discussions about shale gas and hydraulic fracturing took place quietly in both counties¹⁸. Meetings were more explosive in Susquehanna County¹⁹. Indeed, as of 2012, many respondents describe the 2008 meeting as a presentation orchestrated by industry representatives²⁰ together with municipal officials. Others describe it as *a circus where angry activists troubled the meeting*²¹. In all cases, verbal confrontations began to widen the gap between *pro-gas* and *anti-gas* people²².

Some residents²³ mentioned that one of the strategies adopted by gas companies to achieve their goals when they arrived in the area was to co-opt local politicians and influential farmers, offering them a bonus for signing any contract in order to encourage the rest of the community to engage. At the same time, the terms of such agreements had to remain secret²⁴:

*You get a few people like politicians or one or two prominent land owners or business men and you give them these VIP leases and with enormous signing bonuses. That's supposed to inspire everyone else to sign along*²⁵.

17 PM (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on November 27, 2012.

18 PU (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

19 PQ (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 30, 2012.

20 PP (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 17, 2012.

21 PZ (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 20, 2012.

22 PP (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 17, 2012.

23 Mentioned during interviews by respondents PM, PT, PU and PW.

24 Mentioned during interviews by respondents PM, PT, PU and PW.

25 PT (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

Furthermore, since the arrival of gas companies in the northern counties of Pennsylvania, some residents have felt some collusion between politicians and representatives or subcontractors companies:

If [...] a citizen gets in the way of the gas industry, [...] the township's supervisor will stand behind the gas company and do all they can to make sure that the citizen of the township stop²⁶.

Thus, from the beginning, the gas companies were joining forces with local authorities in order to enjoy a better breakthrough.

Economic benefits

As of 2008, gas operations increased drastically in the region and more than 2500 wells have been perforated between 2008 and 2013. The main companies engaged in hydraulic fracturing in the counties were Chesapeake, Chief Oil and Gas, Cabot Oil and Gas and Talisman²⁷. From an economic standpoint, gas operations has led to a dramatic rise in living standards, which reversed the historical negative trend: within a few years, the poorest counties in Pennsylvania became the richest per capita²⁸, the economic vitality of the region was enhanced thanks to the many business partnerships with subcontractors of gas companies, and some citizens even benefitted enough from this economic prosperity to start new businesses.

Strategies of engagement

Collusion around access to information on water quality

The operations of the gas industry in Pennsylvania have reduced the

26 PM (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on November 27, 2012.

27 Amico, C., DeBelius, B., Detrow, S., & Stiles, M. (2013). Natural Gas Drilling in Pennsylvania [online], *Stateimpact*. <http://stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/drilling/>.

28 Wilber, T. (2012). *Under the surface; Fracking, fortunes, and the fate of the Marcellus shale*. New York: Cornell University Press.

level of trust between residents, whether *pro* or *anti*-gas. It also reduced the level of trust regarding governments (municipal, state or federal)²⁹. Following its interventions in favour of the industry rather than to the residents, the government, at any level, previously seen as the defender of the rights of residents, has been perceived as deceptive by the community³⁰. According to residents of the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna, the government had been promoting shale gas to the detriment of citizens' concerns and issues³¹, including water contamination.

A conference organized by the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC), in 2009 at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, illustrates this perception of citizens being ignored. In this conference, an *anti*-gas resident, concerned by the government's inaction against the potential consequences of gas operations on water quality, wished to discuss the decision of the DRBC not to legislate on the subject. After the meeting, she asked the President of the DRBC:

You're telling me that Governor Rendell and water commissioner John Hines decided to use the poorest watershed of the Susquehanna Watershed to be guinea pigs to the drilling industry?" To what the President of the DRBC would have answered: "Yes, that's exactly what I'm telling you"³².

That answer shocked the dwellers of the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna. However, the feeling of being a guinea pig³³ for the industry diminished by 2010, after the government commissioned a study on the health and environmental impacts of shale gas operations³⁴ in order to reassure citizens³⁵.

29 McGraw, S. (2011). *The End of Country; Dispatches from the fracking zone*. USA: Random House Trade Paperback Edition.

30 Mentioned during interviews by respondents PD, PM, PO, PP, PQ, PR, PT, PU, PV, PW, PX, PY and PZ.

31 Mentioned during interviews by respondents PD, PM, PO, PP, PQ, PR, PT, PU, PV, PW, PX, PY and PZ.

32 PO (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 18, 2012.

33 Mentioned during interviews by respondents PD, PI, PK, PO, PP, PQ, PT, PU and PV.

34 EPA's *study of Hydraulic Fracturing and its potential impact on drinking water resources* (2013) [online], <http://www.epa.gov/hfstudy/>.

35 Doggett, T. (2010). EPA begins study on shale gas drilling [online], *Reuters*. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/03/18/us-energy-natgas-fracking-idUSTRE62H-2KP20100318>.

Under this pressure, both the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and State Government agreed to test the contaminated water wells³⁶, in particular those of the fifteen affected families from Dimock. One respondent (interviewed in 2012) who is part of a national action movement against fracking claims that the EPA showed a distinct lack of professionalism in the management of the issue³⁷. The resident claimed the EPA sent test results showing that the wells had indeed been contaminated and later asked the resident to return its first tests, claiming there had been a mistake from the state with the first postal communication. A few weeks later, the resident was given a second analysis of water, this time in a Word format, without any expert signature, attesting that the water was not contaminated. The EPA made its final verdict on March 15, 2012, and announced that the water of the residents of Dimock had not been impacted by gas activities and was safe for consumption³⁸.

However, shortly after the announcement that water was safe for consumption, a senior EPA representative came knocking at the door of a resident who is a member of the citizen group against *fracking*.

A few days later he [EPA representative] showed up here, right in the driveway, he was scoring a face and he goes: "Off the record, just so you know, your water's contaminated, don't use it."³⁹

A university researcher from Bradford County working on community relations for a few years, said:

The way that Pennsylvania has treated its citizens with this issue, particularly the citizens who are most impacted in rural areas is criminal, it really is, it's criminal.⁴⁰

36 Doggett, T. (2010). EPA begins study on shale gas drilling » [online], *Reuters*. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/03/18/us-energy-natgas-fracking-idUSTRE62H-2KP20100318>.

37 PP (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 17, 2012.

38 Phillips, Susan (2012). EPA's test results show safe drinking water in Dimock [online], *Stateimpact*. <http://stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/2012/03/15/epas-test-results-show-safe-drinking-water-in-dimock/>.

39 PP (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 17, 2012.

40 PM (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on November 27, 2012.

Energy as a national priority vs. civil rights of local citizens

Social relations are affected by the problem of polarization of residents' point of views of the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna. This polarization can be observed between *anti-gas* residents and the government, particularly because of the danger these residents could represent to the US as a whole. Energy independence⁴¹ is a national US priority. Shale gas production, as a contributor to the achievement of this priority⁴² has become more significant than the respect of the civil rights of some residents and activists opposed to shale gas operations. This is illustrated by the screening of the documentary *Gasland*, which led to unexpected discoveries.

In October 2010, residents of the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna who tried to organize a screening of the documentary *Gasland*⁴³ in the region were threatened by the local police and FBI agents. They were told that if they pursued their goal, they would be listed and considered as terrorists⁴⁴. Several activists, who did not give up their intention, confessed to local police, medias and pairs that they had been followed and felt spied on⁴⁵. An *anti-gas* resident from Sullivan County mentioned that a technician who fixed his computer had told him that his computer had government software remotely controlling his files⁴⁶. Another citizen reported that between 2008 and 2010, his telephone line emitted significant sounds when he had discussions or attempted to make a call⁴⁷.

These fears of being spied on⁴⁸ were deemed ridiculous or frightening but were confirmed by an *anti-gas* resident.

41 Agence France Presse (2012). États-Unis: Indépendance énergétique en vue [online], *Le Point*. http://www.lepoint.fr/auto-addict/actualites/les-etats-unis-en-route-vers-l-independance-energetique-aie-12-11-2012-1528027_683.php.

42 Garric, A. (2012). Gaz de schiste: Un engouement mondial, mais beaucoup de doutes [online], *Le Monde*. http://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2012/12/21/gaz-de-schiste-un-engouement-mondial-mais-beaucoup-de-doutes_1809052_3244.html.

43 *Gasland: About the film* (2012) [online] <http://www.gaslandthemovie.com/about-the-film>.

44 PO (2012). Interview conducted by par Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 18, 2012.

45 Mentioned during interviews by respondents PD, PO, PP, PQ, PT, PU, PV and PW.

46 PT (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

47 PV (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 18, 2012.

48 Mentioned during interviews by respondents PD, PO, PP, PQ, PT, PU, PV and PW.

The way we found out [that we were being spied on] was the former head of Homeland Security got his emails mixed up and sent out an email to one of us. And it wasn't meant for us, it was meant for someone else and that's when we realized we were being watched⁴⁹.

Concerned citizens then reported the situation to the police. A few days later, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) started providing them with legal support⁵⁰. In 2012, surveillance victims appeared before a senate committee and discovered the following:

Apparently we had been under surveillance by the Pennsylvania State Police, Pennsylvania FBI, Department of Homeland Security and they couldn't find anything, [...] so they turned around distributed our names and information to the Marcellus Shale Coalition, to the industry as potential threats. [...] The Marcellus Shale Coalition went and hired ITRR, the International Terrorist Research and Response Group (Institute of Terrorism Research and Response); it's an Israeli anti-terrorist group.⁵¹

Citizens also discovered that these monitoring units were equipped with wiretapping records, surveillance video and private emails about them.

The appearance of citizens before a Pennsylvania senate committee on May 29, 2012 on these issues led the Director James F. Power Jr. of the Department of Homeland Security to resign⁵². « When all this came o light, the Director of the Homeland Security was force to resign and the former Governor of Pennsylvania, Ed Rendell issued a formal apology to all of us⁵³. »

49 PT (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

50 PT (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

51 PT (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

52 Barnes, T. (2012). State homeland security chief resigns [online], *Post-Gazette*. <http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/local/breaking/state-homeland-security-chief-resigns-266319/>.

53 PT (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

The double hat of government officials

Noted in several conversations with residents of the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna, a fact that significantly reduces their trust of the state, is that in Pennsylvania, the governor has the right to be both an elected politician and a lobbyist. This gives a negative image of both the industry and the government to the citizens who are conscious of the politicians' interests to side with industry when conflicts occur. They favour the profit more than the protection of citizens. A need for public transparency is then felt⁵⁴.

The state government has basically been promoting and pushing for gas and not recording all of the citizens stories or any of them to speak, they [politicians] never come here, we have never had a governor that we have invited to come here and meet the people who are being poisoned, and so she admits to being pro-gas, to promote gas, they get gas contributions for their campaigns⁵⁵.

Thus, this impression of collusion between the government and gas companies led people to perceive a genuine breach of trust *vis-à-vis* their different levels of government, be municipal, state and federal.

Strategies used by companies

In addition to the controversial tactics used to obtain leases from the owners and the dividing of communities by the various levels of government, gas companies have been described as being reluctant to release public information, as lacking transparency in reporting their use of chemicals, as using gags to limit the circulation of negative information about them and as using intimidation.

54 Funk, John (2012). Former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge says shale gas producers must be straight with the public [online], *Cleveland.com*. http://www.cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2012/04/former_pennsylvania_gov_tom_ri.html.

55 PD (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 30, 2012.

Lack of transparency, public information gap, event organization and financing of health facilities

Companies representatives interviewed in this research recognize they lacked transparency⁵⁶ during the first two years of operation, (2008 and 2009). They further acknowledge that were not involved in local events and made limited efforts to communicate with the public. Since 2010, however, companies are widely perceived as being more involved, particularly *Cabot Oil and Gas*, which has organized various events to approach the community and answer their questions⁵⁷. The same company has also set up various events for the benefit of a health facility, crucial to the region. In total, \$2.2 million were raised by *Cabot Oil and Gas* to build the local hospital⁵⁸.

A critical aspect referred many times during the interviews with residents concerned companies' lack of willingness to share information on the full list of chemicals⁵⁹ used during hydraulic fracturing. In addition to their hazardous nature, the fact that they are unknown makes the possible damages to the environment and health even worse. This stirred residents' fears.

There are 27 chemicals in [their] [hydraulic fracturing fluid] [...] All these chemicals are part of their special sauce. They do not want people to know the ingredients. No one can know. It is their secret sauce and they [the gas companies] do not want us to know what's inside⁶⁰.

A commitment to transparency on the part of some companies was born in the summer of 2012. Indeed, companies revealed the chemicals used in each well on the FracFocus website⁶¹, created in May 2012. Unfortunately, as of late 2012 very few members of the community knew of this resource.

56 PA (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

57 PA (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

58 PA (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

59 Mentioned during interviews by respondents PJ, PP, PQ, PT, PU and PV.

60 PP (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 17, 2012.

61 FracFocus: Chemical Disclosure Registry (2012) [online]. <http://www.fracfocusdata.org/fracfocusfind/>.

Gag clauses

Gag clauses are hotly debated within the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna. A gag clause is often signed between gas companies and residents affected by their activities⁶², preventing them from disclosing even the principle of this agreement⁶³:

They [the gas companies] killed cows because they lost the copper wiring in the field. [When the cows were dead], the farmer sued the company. They signed an agreement and [the farmer] had to sign a confidentiality agreement⁶⁴.

In concrete terms, this means that a resident who has legally agreed on a rental price for the subsoil or who has settled a lawsuit out of court with a company cannot talk about it. If the gags are not signed, residents are warned not to reveal anything about the incident. This approach has led to a high level of information asymmetry between residents of the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna.

A more pernicious⁶⁵ gag is also used by the gas companies in the northern counties of Pennsylvania, consists in agreeing on these non-disclosure agreements directly with local authorities, such as local politicians in the counties (observed in Bradford) receiving income related to the gas development⁶⁶. These practices significantly contribute to the loss of confidence on the part of some residents regarding the practices of these companies⁶⁷.

62 Ludwig, M. (2012). Silencing communities: How the Fracking Industry Keeps Its Secrets [online], *Truthout*. <http://truth-out.org/news/item/9004-silencing-communities-how-the-fracking-industry-keeps-its-secrets>.

63 Mentioned during interviews by respondents PL, PM, PO, PP, PQ, PT, PU, PV and PW.
64 PM (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on November 27, 2012.

65 Ludwig, M. (2012). Silencing communities: How the Fracking Industry Keeps Its Secrets [online], *Truthout*. <http://truth-out.org/news/item/9004-silencing-communities-how-the-fracking-industry-keeps-its-secrets>.

66 PM (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on November 27, 2012.

67 Mentioned during interviews by respondents PL, PM, PO, PP, PQ, PT, PU, PV and PW.

Intimidation

From 2007 to 2010, conflicts accumulated and intimidation emerged in the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna. An *anti*-gas resident confesses she received anonymous threats on the Internet site where she shares information about the gas industry⁶⁸ and from workers on a gas pipeline⁶⁹. These incidents were reported to the local police. Another *anti*-gas resident said an employee of a gas company that intended to do seismic testing on his property threatened him. When the resident refused access on his property, he insulted his wife and allegedly verbally attacked him.

*He got very ignorant with me and started name calling, called me a tree hugger, some names I wouldn't want to repeat.*⁷⁰

After this confrontation, the employee showed his "weapon" to the resident, and, in the days following the altercation, he remained in his car in front of the residence, pretending to target the resident with an imaginary gun⁷¹. As in other cases of bullying (from either side), this incident was reported to the local police.

Some residents also report that some local citizens employed by the gas companies were fired for reporting problems (water and health) related to gas development⁷².

Local polarization

In addition to their economic, environmental and social impacts, these strategies of engagement used by gas companies led to the degradation of local social relations due to the polarization of viewpoints. Given these conflicts, some *anti*-gas residents began to feel they were citizens on a mission.

68 PD (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 30, 2012.

69 PM (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on November 27, 2012.

70 PT (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

71 PT (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 16, 2012.

72 PL (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 20, 2012.

Even though we don't have money like the gas companies, we are just citizens working class citizens we can still stand up to Goliath like David did in the Bible, David defeated Goliath with a slingshot, he did not need millions of dollars and thousands of lawyers.⁷³

Thus, a movement began to organize to denounce questionable industry practices. It took the form of meetings between opponents, online discussion groups, demonstrations and information sessions about the harmful consequences of shale gas exploitation⁷⁴. Similarly, the *pro*-gas citizens of Dimock in Susquehanna County began a movement called *Dimock Proud* to share, on the Internet and within their community, the pride they experience helping the nation achieve its goals of energy independence.

Discussion and conclusion

The social cohesion of the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna has been deeply affected since 2007. This section maps the relationships affected and identifies indicators of social cohesion in regards of the mechanisms used by gas companies.

Relationships

Four types of relationships have been affected. The first relationship altered is that between gas companies and the government. This is due to the fact that some politicians elected at state level are both politicians and representatives of the gas industry, a situation that many residents of the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna denounce. The second relationship altered is between the government and the community; it is based on two main factors. The first one comes from a loss of trust in citizens of their government, both at the state and federal level, due to the fact that the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have been

73 PD (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 30, 2012.

74 PV (2012). Interview conducted by Emmanuelle Jobidon on October 18, 2012.

widely perceived as more keen to defend the interests of gas companies than those of the citizens. The second factor relates more specifically to the anti-gas citizens who have also lost faith in their government following the establishment of a list describing some activists in the region as “eco-terrorists.” The third altered relationship involves relationships between companies and communities. Strategies of engagement mobilized by companies towards citizens in the early industrial operations set the tone for their relationship. Indeed, upon arrival, the gas companies (directly or through subcontractors) approached the landowners in a rather controversial way to obtain contracts for the exploitation of their subsoil. These approaches based on rough and even sometimes misleading information, which varied from one landowner to another, contributed to local community division, eroded social cohesion, and polarized the population between *pro-* and *anti-*gas citizens. Another factor that affected relationships between businesses and the community is concerned with the climate of fear in residents who are victims of the industry’s damage, such as wells contamination. They refused to speak because they feared retaliation and being ignored. The fourth relationship altered is between community members, into *pro-* and *anti-*gas factions. It appears as conflicts, broken communication channels and threats. This situation has been exacerbated by a heavy media presence.

Social cohesion

All but one indicator of social cohesion have been impacted negatively (see Table 5).

	Indicator	Definition	Present or not	Causes
1	Belonging	Feeling of being part of one big family	No	Conflicts between pro- and anti-gas broke the sense of belonging in the community. Threats among community members altered the trust between the citizens and between the citizens and the companies.
2	Participation	Commitment to political, religious, volunteer or other type of activity	Yes	Citizen involvement in the community has increased since their arrival. This is due to the fact that opponents of the industry have come together to discuss and take political action against the companies. In response to the anti-gas combinations, pro-gas citizens also gathered in order to show their pride to participate in the country's energy independence (Dimock Proud).
3	Inclusion	Equity regarding opportunities and outcomes of labour market, education, health and housing.	No	Inclusion disappeared. The arrival of the gas companies may have brought new job opportunities to the area, but residents believe that these offers are only reserved for foreigners, thereby strengthening their sense of injustice.
4	Recognition	The diversity of opinions and values between different cultures or groups are accepted and respected.	No	Protecting citizens against discrimination and harassment is not encouraged and threats uttered against them are demonstrated. In addition, numerous violations of environmental laws and spills in the region do not instill a sense of security in the population by the gas companies.
5	Legitimacy	Confidence of the population in their role in protecting the rights and interests of community members when it comes to public institutions	No	Legitimacy has eroded in communities considering government actions at both the state and the federal levels, as a result of promoting the rights and interests of gas companies to the detriment of community members.

Tab. 5. Evolution of the social cohesion in the Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna counties

Only the increase of citizen participation has been observed in the county since the arrival of the gas companies. As belonging, inclusion, recognition and legitimacy have been largely negatively affected, it can be concluded that gas companies have contributed to the erosion of social cohesion within the community.

Contributions and limitations of the chapter

This chapter proposed two main contributions which contrast with the dominant view on corporate-community relations and social cohesion. The first contribution of this paper is empirical. It provides a novel, on the ground, and detailed analysis of the erosion of social cohesion in a community, resulting from the strategies of engagement and operations of companies. Indeed, as of 2012–2013, the community of the counties of Bradford, Sullivan and Susquehanna is described as divided between *anti*-gas residents, who advocate environmental and social interests, and the *pro*-gas residents, who defend economic and national interests.

The second contribution concerns the role of the government. The role played by the government, at any level, is primary in the strategies implemented by gas companies. In 1958, Theodore Levitt denounced the change in the government paradigm in relation to business and community relationships: *the government is becoming a player rather than an umpire* (Levitt 1958: 46). Thus, rather than mediating the relationship between businesses and the community, the government is involved, abandoning its primary role of protecting and promoting the common good. This study highlights two conflicting definitions of public good. The first concerns perceived national interests (energy security as a significant driver of US national and international policy), which provides special rights to companies whose operations contribute to achieving this “public good.” By contrast, the second focuses on the respect of civil rights of citizens and quality of life in a community. The experience of these counties, based on this research, suggest that the first definition has prevailed over the second. The second contribution of this paper is to identify the strategies used by gas companies to control a community. We identified several strategies which benefit companies in their local operation. As a conclusion, the analysis of the erosion of the local social

cohesion as a result of the presence, practices and actions of gas companies opens the door to further studies of critical cases that could lead to a better theorizing of strategies of destruction of social cohesion.

Disclaimer

We are not able to conclude whether all of these strategies result from the deliberate intentions of the gas companies or if they are the result of negligent acts or omissions. However, the research presented here suggests that these strategies and practices have contributed to allowing companies to pursue their operations in the local communities.

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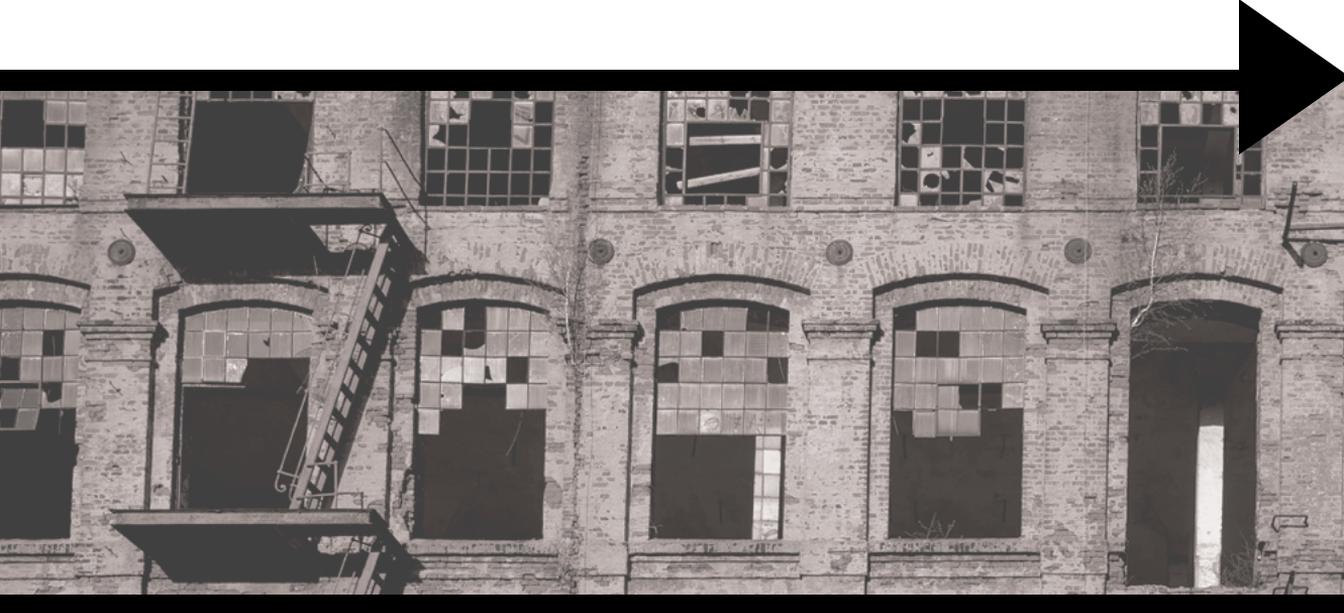
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