

# Social Cohesion

The ties that bind humans together in society have a large bearing on our personal wellness and the health of our community (Putnam 2000, Smith 2003). A social network propagates opportunities to enhance the quality of life to all of its members, and creates a safety net for difficult times. A cohesive community allows open discussion and resolution of difficult problems, and gives its members a sense of identity (Jeannotte et al. 2002). Social



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participation of all concerned citizens is essential to obtaining environmental well-being (Mann 1992). Indicators of social cohesion vary greatly, with the most common indicator being volunteering rates. Measures of the health of one's social network typically revolved around qualitative assessments of existing relationships and quantitative assessments of the size of the network. Feelings and behaviors associated with trust and reciprocity are often used as a proxy for community cohesion. Divorce rates, migration patterns, family demographics, and charitable contributions were some of the more objective measures used to measure cohesiveness.

Social services can establish social norms that promote cohesion, repair and strengthen family cohesion, and provide safe, equitable working environments which foster healthy coworker relationship development. Economic services impact social cohesion by creating equitable wages and redistributing wealth, thereby relieving tensions between different social-economic classes (Rupasingha et al. 2006), and they allow businesses to generate excess revenue to be given back to the community.

## Relationship to Ecosystem Services:

Greenspace and access to nature promote pro-social behavior and help mitigate some of the negative antisocial behaviors associated with crowding and urbanization (Kuo and Sullivan 2001, Kuo 2010). Natural spaces within communities afford people opportunities to interact with others beyond their own family dynamics through proximate open areas reserved for recreational and cultural activities, such as festivals and picnics. A healthy natural environment also helps provide a sense of community by enhancing feelings of pride and a stronger sense of kinship among its citizens who share the common goal of making their community a better place to live (EPA 1997).



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