Community Resiliency in Southern Mill Towns: Concord and Eden, NC
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Shock

Economic Conditions

Socio-demographic Conditions

Community Resilience
“Everyone was in shock. Everything they ever knew was gone.”

“It was part of our soul.”

Residents of Eden, NC recalling the closure of Pillowtex in 2003
Textile Industry Decline 1972-2011

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics/Haver Analytics
Historic Mill Towns

Concord
- 25 miles outside of Charlotte
- Est. 1806, Home of James Cannon
- Kannapolis "model mill town" Est. 1906

Eden
- Rural county, Virginia border
- Fieldcrest Mills headquarters, Karastan rugs est. 1912
- Leaksville, Spray and Draper consolidation 1967
## Economic Variables 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Concord</th>
<th>Eden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textile dependency</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Income</td>
<td>$22,443</td>
<td>$18,409</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>$42,498</td>
<td>$35,258</td>
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## Socio-demographic Variables 1990

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>27,347</td>
<td>15,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working age</strong></td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bachelor degree</strong></td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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“If you could get on at the mill...you were set for life. You didn’t need a high school degree.”
Community Cohesion

Eden

Concord

Lower poverty rate

3 Distinct downtowns

Single, historic downtown
Other Factors

“They had the courage to go against conventional wisdom at the time…you don’t put all of your eggs in one basket.”
Shockingly Death of an Industry

**Concord**
- Textile employment 14.6% → 4%
- 1,700+ layoffs in textile industry
- Pillowtex loss of 4,300 jobs in area, but...
- “The town had already moved on and the new generation was looking for other types of jobs.”

**Eden**
- Textile employment 32.4% → 17.4%
- 3,500 layoffs in textile industry
- Pillowtex loss of 450 jobs, but...
- “It was like a death.”
Back on Track?

1990 Conditions

Eden 2010

Concord 2010
Resiliency Summarized

- Diversify economic base
  - Understand industry mix—systemic risk
- Leadership that will go against conventional wisdom
- Educated workforce
  - May be more important if economic base is constrained
- Leverage resource endowments
- Resilience depends on type of economic shock
  - Is Concord as resilient to motorsports downturn?
The Role of Location?

Trajectories with the shock

Concord  Eden

Trajectories without the shock?

Concord  Eden