

Community Development: Beyond Engagement to Participation, Outcomes to Impact

Department of Applied Social Studies, NUI Maynooth

Participatory planning and evaluation for community development
The Scottish experience, International questions and Irish issues
Thursday May 23rd **2013**

Foreword

This report brings together the deliberations of the seminar on *Participatory planning and evaluation for community development: The Scottish experience, International questions and Irish issues* hosted by the Department of Applied Social Studies at NUI Maynooth on the 23rd of May 2013

Our Department is the longest established provider of professional education and training in community work and youth work in the country. More recently, the Department has developed a reputation for excellence in Social Policy studies.

The seminar was organised as part of our commitment to supporting the development of the community work discipline, and its principles, processes and contributions.

At this point as the language of outputs, outcomes and impact gain dominance, it is important that their requirements do not undervalue or ignore the community development processes which make real collective impact possible. Community work is a process – not a straight line from A to Z – but it is a process which demands outcomes for and with communities.

The seminar's discussions sought to illuminate and pinpoint the pitfalls and possibilities contained in this language of evidence. We are very grateful to Fiona Garven and Stuart Hashagen of the Scottish Community Development Centre for their time and contributions to the day and also to all who engaged in the lively and informative exchanges which took place.

This is work in progress. Community development, like other interventions, and those who undertake it, need to be accountable for actions done and impact achieved. We look forward to continuing to work to find ways to do this which are appropriate for the interests of marginalised communities and groups which remain a priority for community work, and for the needs of the state and other funders as well as for the overall contribution of community development to progress and a sustainable future.

Anastasia Crickley

Department of Applied Social Studies

May 2013

Community Development: Beyond Engagement to Participation, Outcomes to Impact

Renehan Hall, NUI Maynooth, 23rd May 2013

10.30 Registration & Introduction

Session one: Community development- Practice & planning

10.45 Welcome introductions and background to seminar
[Anastasia Crickley, Dept. of Applied Social Studies]

11.15 Community development in Ireland- Current Practice & Future Directions?
[Small group discussions and feedback]

11.35 Community development in Scotland - Current Practice & Future Directions?
[Fiona Garven and Stuart Hashagen, Scottish Community Development Centre]

11.55 Buzz groups and plenary discussion

Session two: Community development - Evaluating outcomes & impact

12.20 Concepts and challenges for 'measuring' outcomes and impact in community development
[Ciara Bradley & Oonagh Mc Ardle, Dept. of Applied Social Studies]

12.35 Evaluating outcomes – the experiences of participants

12.55 Lunch (Pugin Hall)

13.40 The Scottish experience: ABCD (Achieving Better Community Development) & LEAP
(Learning, Evaluation and Planning)
[Fiona Garven and Stuart Hashagen, Scottish Community Development Cen-tre]

14.10 Plenary questions and comments

Session three: Community development-Challenges & opportunities the future

14.20 Small group discussions

14.50 Feedback and plenary discussion

15.15 Concluding comments

15.30 Conclusion & Close

Opening Remarks

(Anastasia Crickley, Department of Applied Social Studies)

Today's seminar seeks to contribute to current discussions regarding the outcomes and impact of community development and associated concerns with community engagement and participation. Despite challenges in background and context, our starting point remains one of a strong and unique Irish community work tradition reaching back well over one hundred years. It has gone beyond engagement to participation and can provide evidence of impact as well as output and outcomes.

Our deliberations take place as proposals for implementing Putting People First¹ (Ireland, 2012) the Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government's plan for local government reform are being considered – including those regarding alignment of local development and local government. Due in 2014 also, is the successor programme to the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP), which brought together most of the previous Community Development Programme and the previous Local Development and Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), and was mostly managed through the Local Development Companies.

In discussions regarding any new programme, it is crucial to find ways to maintain and enhance the contribution of the projects which remained outside the LCDP, especially those involved in the national networks of traveller and women's projects which have been noteworthy in their public articulation of the concerns of the most marginalised. Important also, is enhanced visibility for the community development projects whose integration with local development companies, in addition to removing their autonomous local management has significantly decreased their visibility, seeming in many ways more like assimilation than integration.

Meanwhile negotiations continue regarding Ireland's Partnership Agreement with the European Union for the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds. It is worth noting that the guidance note for use of EU funds in that period calls for 25% European Social Fund (ESF) expenditure on social policies, human capital and social development; and calls for at least 20% of each State's total resources to be allocated to social inclusion and anti-poverty measures. In addition the EU Commission is setting out to extend the use of Community Led Local Development (CLLD) ²(European Commission, 2011), the mechanism through which the LEADER Programme has been implemented over the past number of years.

On the face of it the EU Commission priorities in this area fit very easily with today's discussions, linked as they are with community capacity building, enhanced community ownership, involvement and participation, and with the possibility of using intermediary structures. This was how Area Development Management (ADM) was established with an independent board in 1992. ADM has now been replaced by Pobal whose board is appointed by the Minister responsible. It is also clear that the resources which CLLD might bring are being actively considered in the process of setting up the Social and Economic Committees through which implementation of Putting People First will filter citizen participation.

The overall national context remains one of recession with unemployment at all time highs, marginalised communities and minority groups experiencing increased exclusion and discrimination and issues of equality and rights needing urgent attention.

1 Ireland. Department of Environment, Community & Local Government (2012) 'Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government', Dublin, The Stationary Office, available at; <http://www.environ.ie/en/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,31309,en.pdf>

2 European Commission (2011) 'Community-led Local Development: Cohesion Policy' Luxembourg: Office for official publications of the European Commission

The stated Government policy and focus on maintaining frontline services for people most in need despite scarce finances while essential, is an incomplete picture. It cloaks a preference for addressing symptoms rather than acknowledging and addressing causes, which are hidden by the dominant neo-liberal government policy framework. For example, essential but individually focused child and family services threaten to absorb resources no less essential for youth services and collective community initiatives.

The continued abolition (or absorption into government departments) of groups such as the Combat Poverty Agency and The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism weakens support for, and leadership of informed policy making. This is also exacerbated by departmental restructuring and ongoing policy refocusing. In effect, from the national to the local levels, acceptable levels of dissent and the importance of critique for democratic governance, have been replaced by removal of support from those who question and no roles for state funded groups beyond implementation of state programmes.

However, as stated at the outset the Irish community development tradition remains strong. Loss of the Community Development Programme and the lack of visibility of community development and community work in the actions undertaken in fulfilment of the goals of the LCDP do not mean that it is not taking place (also contributing to the LCDP). The conflation of local and community development serves neither well and does not facilitate the essential contribution of community development to local development – for example by developing local groups and collective initiatives which could successfully and with real impact address the much quoted local development underspend.

A distinct discipline and ethos of community work has evolved, committed to working professionally and collectively with communities and groups for social change, inclusion, and equality, in ways that foster participation and empowerment. Towards Standards¹ (CWC, 2010) provides a clear statement of the principles, qualities and analysis required. Those involved are paid and unpaid, voluntary but not amateur, and combine vocation and profession, bringing a range of skills, including technical ones.

Our annual conferences in 2011 and 2012 acknowledged the need to be clear about our definitions. I reiterate this: we can neither manage actions nor evaluate output, outcomes or impact unless we know what we are talking about. The community work/community development (I use the terms interchangeably) focus is on collective participation in a process mindful of discrimination, gender oppression and environmental sustainability. Those experiencing the issues must be involved at all levels, in defining the problems to be addressed, working to address them, benefiting from any outcomes, and designing and implementing evaluation and impact measurements.

These principles may not sit well with predefined programme frameworks which measure actions sometimes by the half hour, but as indicated in the work of Stuart Hashagen and Fiona Garven from the Scottish Community Development Centre (whom we thank for joining us today), our principled approach serves communities and funders well. Following these principles and echoing the inputs of Oonagh and Ciara about evaluation, we will try today to engage you directly in the process, starting with your views about where community work takes place – which we acknowledge is also well beyond the confines of the programmes already mentioned. We will move on to how outcomes and impact of the programme/your work on are measured, and whose interests get served by the measurement. I look forward to a day with impact.

¹ CWC (2010) 'Towards Standards for Quality Community Work: An All Ireland Statement of Values, Principles & Work Standards', Community Workers' Co-operative, Galway

Community Development in Scotland

(Fiona Garven, Scottish Community Development Centre)¹

We are delighted to be here and to share some of our experiences. We are clearly facing some of the same challenges and we have some additional opportunities as well. There is quite a lot of coherence, reflecting common challenges for community development, I will tell you a little about the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC), the structure we operate within and where community development fits, and finally, the policy environment and some new legislation that's potentially supportive to community development.

SCDC is an independent voluntary organisation, a company limited by guarantee and a charity. We get a tiny amount of funding towards our organisation from government sources - about 5 % of our turnover. We cover the whole of Scotland and have fifteen staff, not all full time equivalents, who work flexibly.

There are three parts to our work, described in our mission statement.

- 1. We work directly with community organisations in Scotland;**
- 2. We work with people who work with community organisations in Scotland to help them develop their practice;**
- 3. We use the experience to try and influence policy in favour of community development. We feel it's important that those policies are grounded in real issues reflecting what's happening for communities and for practitioners.**

Regarding outcomes, I wish to start with the message that we do outcomes in Scotland. We've got a National Performance Framework which is supported by outcomes. The strategic outcomes for Scotland are that we should be wealthier, fairer, smarter, greener, healthier, safer and stronger and so on. Nobody would argue with those outcomes, nobody wants a less clever, more dangerous, unhealthier Scotland. However, it is how these outcomes play out at a local level that is of concern to us and how they are achieved. We have 52 local authority areas. Some, such as Glasgow, are massive, others are smaller wealthier areas. Each area has a local community planning partnership. This is rather a misnomer: actually they are interagency planning vehicles requiring police, fire services, health and local authorities to work out 52 single outcome agreements, setting what they want to achieve, how funding will be dispersed and what those agencies are going to do.

Policy Context and Community Development

The term community development is not really within the lexicon of policy, but it does exist within the approach and values that are being talked about in Scottish policy at the moment. Never has Scottish policy been more conducive or sympathetic to community development. However, this has not filtered through to practice.

Another development we are concerned with and have worked on is community engagement. How do communities help to drive and define the outcomes they want to see achieved in their communities? Scottish policy talks about engagement, but we (at SCDC) don't believe it happens to any meaningful degree. There is still a lot of work to be done towards actually embedding participatory outcome focused planning in Scotland. A further example is regeneration policy.

¹ Please see Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) Available at URL: <http://www.scdc.org.uk/>

In Scotland, this policy has been focused on physical infrastructure, building businesses and creating opportunities for employment – which is predicated on the logic that people will get jobs and earn money which will filter down and improve poor communities. That has not happened.

Now, within regeneration policy we are looking to our communities as assets, to see what communities can do to drive better outcomes for the locality; how do we regenerate the community as opposed to the physical infrastructure? We have a community led aspect to the community regeneration initiative, and we have community safety partnerships which are meant to work like community planning partnerships, where again engagement of local people in making their places safer is a critical component.

Public Health

Within public health, attention is being focused on community assets approaches. This is really thanks to our chief medical officer, Harry Byrnes, who is accessible and very influential in Scottish policy. He has been developing an asset based approach, based on his research on the biological consequences of deprivation. This sets out evidence that if you are born in poverty and experience chaotic lifestyles, physiologically your body reacts and makes you more receptive to disease. Of course, when he speaks to community workers about this, they say they already know, but what is really important for us is the actual evidence for the biological consequences of poverty.

Health enhancing factors are not about what is wrong with your health but what enhances it. If your environment is predictable, structured and comprehensible then you are much more likely to achieve better life outcomes. We would argue that for people to be able to control their lives, they need to come together to understand and collectivise their issues and to influence what happens to them. This has a very clear relationship to community development.

There are other policy developments in relation to Health and Social Care. We have an ageing demographic in Scotland, and we don't have the money to take care of older people in institutional care. We need to keep people in the community for longer. This is where this notion of co-production comes in. Really it just means agencies and communities working together. We (at SCDC) were a bit sceptical about the language of co-production, particularly as at the moment co-production is best understood as working with individuals as opposed to communities. One of the reasons we are prepared to take on the Scottish Co-Production Network is because we want to see more work on co-producing with communities, on actions that lead to better health and social outcomes. We have also been examining what we need to do around public service reform, led by the late Campbell Christy. There is now an impetus within Scotland to make a decisive shift towards prevention and building services around people and communities in the formulation of any policy. We have also got impending legislation around good relations, equality legislation, and emphasis on participation for children and young people.

The Community Empowerment and Renewal bill, currently out for consultation, is really important for community development. We did the stakeholder consultation, looking at placing duties around engaging with local communities, and the transfer of assets and land into community ownership.

“A key issue is creating a better understanding of the difference between local development and community development”

~ Conference Participant

Focus for Community Development

Where is the focus for community development in Scotland? It comes through all these different areas of policy. Community development is not recognised in the Scottish policy lexicon, so in policy terms it's everywhere but it's nowhere. The strength for us is that means it's everybody's business. The weakness is that it is nobody's business. In Scotland, community development fits under the heading of community learning and development. This focuses on three national priorities:

- 1. Achievement in learning for adults,**
- 2. Achievement in learning for young people, and**
- 3. Achievement in building community capacity.**

This last priority above is the closest to community development. However, it tends to be focused on working with organisations in particular localities as opposed to work with marginalised groups. The other issue is that community capacity is the weakest of the three priorities the least well inspected, resourced and understood. We also have the Community Learning and Standards Council for Scotland which is working to make a register of practitioners, developing competencies and continuing professional development. What they really want to do is raise the profile of community learning and development. That takes places across all of the local authority areas but it could be one person working on community learning and development or it could be a team. It is very fragmented in some places located within local authorities and in others within community planning. It is not a coherent picture.

Nationally, the three organisations that focus on community development are: the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC), the Community Development Alliance Scotland (CDAS) (This is a network of about seventy odd national organisations which support community development principles and practices. It includes organisations like the Care Commission, Scottish Refugee Council, Poverty Alliance and so on). Finally, there is the Scottish Community Development Network (SCDN), a member led network for supporting practice; it sets itself up as policy network in order to challenge government agendas. Much more than £15 million a year goes to voluntary and national organisations in Scotland but between the three of us (SCDC, CDAS and SCDN), we get £85,000 a year, though we are 'critical and vital to Scottish national policy'. This gives you an idea of priorities.

There are no longer significant numbers of community development workers working in social work teams. So who does community development?

Some is done through community learning and development, some through development trusts (there are about 200 in Scotland); they are basically local community-led anchor organisations. They are there to own an asset or provide a service around community training and employment. While some do community development, others don't. The Scottish Community Alliance supports the development trust network and other community led organisation, mainly around the ownership of land and assets. There is a plethora of those sorts of organisations in affluent communities. In the areas that have suffered structural, health and social inequalities over the years we don't see that same focus on community led activity and community assets. You will know the reasons why.

The Scottish Regeneration Forum has formed an alliance for action. They are going to do community development work in two very deprived areas, Fyfe and Glasgow.

There is also a housing movement in Scotland. There are lots of housing associations with registered landlords that are community led, community owned and community governed; many are starting to do community development. They are well placed, right in the heart of communities, with strong connections, knowledge of community structures, and so on.

We have a Community Enterprise Network, who say they do community development but I am not sure that they do! They are springing up all over Scotland.

So, community development is happening in different places from where it used to. As a result of austerity, cuts to public services are having an impact on the most disenfranchised and disadvantaged communities. We are at a stage where we need to rearticulate community development. But we also really need to reaffirm and re-profile the values of community development because too many people say they do it and they don't.

Opportunities for Scotland

- There is **increasing recognition** of community development across all areas and support legislation. That's really important when we make the case for community development. We draw on all these policy areas and bring them back to Ministers arguing for commitments to be realised.
- **Accessibility** in influencing policy. Having spoken to people from other countries, we know we are quite lucky in Scotland because we can get policy tabled, are invited to give evidence in parliament, get to see the ministers. Our permanent secretaries and cabinet ministers turn up to conferences and speak and answer questions and so on. From that point of view they are accessible and we need to make the most of those opportunities.
- **Research.** Some research is emerging on the impact of austerity and public sector cuts on disadvantaged communities. For example Joseph Rowntree Foundation research demonstrates that communities feel abandoned and increasingly marginalised, and they need some kind of intervention to help them collectively address the issues they are facing. There is also longitudinal research taking place in Glasgow, comparing the impact of regeneration over ten years on transformational regeneration areas and peripheral housing estates. The focus is not just health; they are also examining empowerment processes and how people feel they can influence local processes. They are finding out some really dreadful stuff with people feeling that they can't influence things at all. This kind of research is really important to use to lobby and campaign for what we know will address these issues.
- We have **the referendum** coming up which is sparking new conversations around what kind of country we want Scotland to be, the kind of place we want to live in? We have some powerful and quite influential speakers, good journalists who are really working to try and preserve what we see as an existing egalitarian ethic in Scotland; we don't want to lose that, don't want just another policy environment which is about increasing wealth.

Challenges for Scotland

- We have had to move away from neighborhood work. There are people working within equality groups and so on but there is nobody doing real neighborhood work to get people out of their houses and support them collectivise around issues and actions. We would argue that one outcome is we now have a deskilled community development workforce.
- In some areas community development is seen as palliative, not really about trying to influence structural change. This supports working with communities on immediate solutions but can ignore structural inequalities and place the blame for problems within communities with local communities. This can be a fine line to walk.
- There is a danger that the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill will enable the wealthy as opposed to poorer and more marginalised communities. Some of the latter don't have community assets, e.g. green spaces etc. The only asset sometimes in those communities is the public money that goes in. This community-assets agenda deflects focus from the need to intervene in communities, which don't have strong networks and are not full of lawyers and accountants. Although there is policy about communities there are no resources committed to building community capacity. We know they innately these communities have capacities but you have to stimulate and mobilise those capacities so people can engage.
- We also see an increase in language around asset based approaches such as co-production. Just about every funding application in Scotland says we do asset based approaches. It's actually much more difficult to use current tools and frameworks to describe how you have worked in a community development way. Being everybody's business and nobody's business means we are also worried that it could move from contested concept to accepted wisdom with nothing much happening in between, as happened with climate change and environmental sustainability. We have a fragmented sector in Scotland and at a time when the environment is ripe for influence, we could find ourselves faced with insurmountable challenges.

“Community development work is still happening in some areas -- despite rather than because of the current frameworks, programme and structures. This is really problematic. Where community work is happening; it is because people are actually making it happen not because the programme and structures are facilitating them to do so.”

~ Conference Participant

Finally, we are continually being asked “show us the evidence”. If community development works, point to its impact. We have been working over the years to find a robust way of trying to plan, measure and evaluate the impact of community development work. We see community development as being about influencing structural change, working with communities to give them the confidence, skills, capacities and knowledge – to politicise people and actually start to chip away for that change. The SCDC have managed to make some headway, with being invited to policy tables now.

(Stuart Hashagen, Scottish Community Development Centre)

I think politicians in Scotland are genuinely concerned to move things to a more participatory and preventative role for government through negotiated change. It's important to say that the tradition of community development in Scotland from 1970-80s has been very much in and around local authorities, either through their education departments or their social work departments. Education departments tend to do a more generalised, learning based approach. Social work departments were more area based, more about neighbourhood work and about challenging inequalities. Since then social work has basically backed away from any form of community work in training and in practice. They are part of a very risk adverse culture and they don't want to get blamed if anything goes wrong with children or parents. That has been at the expense of neighbourhood work on the ground.

“Recent changes in programmes and structures have resulted in the control and silencing of the voices of communities, which in turn actually dismantling community work.”

~Conference Participant

practice guidelines to try and make that engagement genuine and really involving communities. Single Outcome Agreements are a bit more recent. They are basically a statement for the vision of the development of the local authorities’ future, their priorities for investment in health and so on.

Concepts and challenges for measuring outcomes and impact in community development

(Ciara Bradley, Department of Applied Social Studies)

We are going to speak about some of the concepts and challenges around developing appropriate evaluation processes for community development. For today’s seminar we thought it might be useful to tease out some of these issues and problematize the concept of evaluation to begin with. I will introduce some of the concepts and Oonagh will speak about how they apply in a community work context in Ireland.

In effect when we are talking about outcomes and impacts we are talking about evaluation – which tends to be the word used by funders. The word can seem very innocuous- what do we do, how do we do it, ways to describe what we do, and what we achieve. But as we saw in this morning’s discussion, particularly around current and past evaluation measures, outputs are what are typically looked at. At best that misses the point of some of the work; at worst it can be really destructive.

So the purpose of evaluation is really important: defining why we are doing it is the first step. Evaluations are conducted for various reasons: to render judgment on work being done; to facilitate improvement (hopefully) and to generate knowledge (again hopefully). National and international research tells us that evaluation should be seen not as an end-point add-on but as a process, with outcomes defined at the very beginning and embedded in that process. Evaluation at the end of a community work programme or project is summative, but formative evaluation can be really important in improving work and practice as we go along.

The second element worth emphasising is the engagement of stakeholders in evaluation. Again research indicates the importance of their input for the success of evaluations. As community workers, we are stakeholders in evaluation, as indeed are the communities we work with. Unfortunately, evaluation is often prescribed by (and from) a funding perspective to satisfy only their needs. We need to stand up as stakeholders and define and take ownership of the language at an earlier stage.

The other thing I think important to emphasise is that knowledge is contested and evaluations are partly a political as well as a technical exercise, determining what is valued as good, as worth being measured. What do we measure – numerical data, counting bums on seats, or the experience of being involved in programmes or collective outcomes for communities? What are we measuring and how are we measuring it?

Evaluations are concerned with knowledge that is intended for use. Often however, we don’t use the outputs or outcomes of evaluation: they are frequently not published, not reflected on and not used. While research is interested in proving or exploring, evaluation is about improving. I think that’s an important point to start from.

Finally, as already stated, in going forward, I think we need to evaluate each evaluation tool. Does it meet the needs of its users? That’s not just the funders, but also community work practitioners and the communities we work with. Does how evaluation is done allow for this? Is how we go about doing it ethical, is it fair?

(Oonagh Mc Ardle, Department of Applied Social Studies)

Brian Motherway in a community development literature review¹ (2006) said ‘there is no simple, universal, magical way to measure the outcomes and impacts of community development’.

As Ciara has indicated, looking at challenges and complexities related to evaluation in community development work generally, we can establish that it will not be simple. In terms of universality, we can recognise that community development is (and should be) different in different places and with different groups. Communities are not homogenous, therefore the issues facing them are quite different and community workers might be working in different programmes. So it will always be difficult to create a universal measurement tool for community development.

Today, what we are trying to do is not to offer any universal magical, simple solution. Fiona and Stuart aren’t here in that frame. We are trying to acknowledge that while it may not be simple, we can look to potential strategies by offering some thoughts on how we might realise some of those opportunities. Fiona talked about output culture and most of us are very clear on what that means. Outputs are what can you count – who is in the room, how many, what are the groups, how many are up and running? How to push beyond outputs to look at outcomes and impacts: that is an important discussion and really the frame for today’s seminar.

Outcomes are concerned with the answer to the ‘so what’ question. We have people turning up – so what? We have groups up in action – so what? We have communities that are more knowledgeable, maybe more skilled and more confident, but so what? What changes as a result? This may include both the intended as well as unintended outcomes and their impacts.

I could use for example the primary healthcare intention to improve Travellers’ health. If we are to look at outputs, we might say there are five primary healthcare workers working with Travellers, they had twenty meetings in the last month, they have produced a number leaflets in a literacy friendly format. The outcomes may be that there is increased contact with doctors, there are more Travellers accessing primary healthcare services. There are more Travellers attending doctors, more Travellers seeing nurses. But what changes beyond that?

When we start to look at outcomes in community work, we can recognise that a community work intervention is a step towards long-term change but it is not just community workers ourselves who will create that kind of change. Systemic issues like poverty and inequality require interventions far beyond what communities and community workers can do on the ground locally. Our work involves working with others, including decision-makers to create something together that might contribute to longer-term outcomes and impact.

Thinking about and answering these questions are central to community work practice. Some people talk about the importance of theory, others about the importance of practice and experience, while others speak about a theory-practice divide. Community workers are thinkers as well as doers; we can do both. Crucial to our practice is being reflective and active, being able to think and to do, in the frame of Freire’s concern with critical reflection for action and on its consequences. Part of our job is to act as we do, to reflect on what we are doing and what is changing as a result.

Crucial also in community development is that evaluation is not just the job of the community workers but part of the process whereby communities can contribute in a meaningful way.

¹ Motherway, Brian (2006) The Role of Community Development in Tackling Poverty in Ireland A Literature Review for the Combat Poverty Agency Combat Poverty Agency Ireland

This means being more than just targets of research or the focus of the research consultant or expert defining the outcomes. Research in or for community development is central to community development practice itself, where community involvement is part of the process, linked to empowerment, where people gain skills and knowledge to name and claim their own concerns and also to be able to name what has changed as a result.

Anastasia talked about definitions. In any research, good practice indicates the importance of getting agreement on your definition at the outset. You will have difficulty if you don't start with agreed definitions, which in turn support setting agreement on how measurements can be made. I'm suggesting that any focus on outcomes in community development should begin from an agreed definition of community development. Funder evaluation of our work needs to be based on understanding that community work has both a purpose and a process an intervention that seeks to achieve change but in a certain way. Any evaluation of community development should look at both.

Also definitions of community work and community development require a definition of community. Communities are not just geographic and not just local; so any concern with long-term as well as short-term change needs to recognise that. Any focus on evaluating outcomes must also be concerned to ensure that the input at the beginning has a capacity to deliver outcomes. This has implications for the professional status of community workers and associated education and employment requirements.

In conclusion, community workers don't and shouldn't deny that we are accountable. Ultimately while we are most accountable to communities for which we work, we are also accountable to funders, to taxpayers and to each other, to those who carry the name community worker. I think evaluation has the capacity to create the conditions for real change, and I believe that change can be qualitatively as well as quantifiably measured. Taking again the example of the primary healthcare projects where you are evaluating outcomes relating to changes in the health of Travellers, you could establish that with stories but also with numbers.

I think we could join up the dots between what funders are looking for, what communities are demanding and the complexities of research. To do that, we need the collaboration of funders, researchers, community workers and communities. Lots of us here are committed to outcomes linked to lasting change, to making a difference to the lives of marginalised and poor communities. This requires agreement about outcomes and clarity about the structures to determine and name them, all rooted in a process involving communities and community workers and others.

Finally, people earlier argued that community work exists despite rather than because of current conditions. If we are concerned about evaluating community development then we also need a programme or structure in which community development actually exists.

Achieving Better Community Development, Learning Evaluation and Planning and Outcomes

(Stuart Hashagen, SCDC)

Community workers are always being asked to show evidence that it works. Actually there is a lot of evidence, case studies and evaluations. Rarely has there been a piece of work done on community work in Scotland - and I'm sure it's true here - which hasn't been evaluated. I think instead this is a political issue about who picks up that evidence and makes use of it. It's not just about how good the evidence is: the impact (or otherwise) that evidence has on policy makers is quite important.

Fiona mentioned earlier our chief medical officer who has come out saying we need to do asset based work in communities. Of course, people have been saying that for years but as soon as he says it everybody starts listening.

About 15 years ago, Northern Ireland developed a community development approach to health and social welfare to be spread across the health boards. They commissioned SCDC to develop a framework for community development, which could be evaluated in a health and social welfare context. As we always try to do, we talked to practitioners, to communities and others, asking what are the crucial components of community development and what are the expected outcomes. We eventually concluded that the fundamental reason you do community development in this context is to try and bring about conditions where communities are healthy. I don't mean health only in the conventional medical sense, but also as good places to live, reasonably well functioning, reasonably well supported, stuff going on that people value and where people were valued. So –

1. A healthy community is **livable**, a pleasant place to be, services are worth having children can play.
2. It is **sustainable**, it has an income stream and income generation so there is enough money flowing to keep people in work, in food and housing and sustainable in the green sense.
3. It is **equitable** - benefiting not just a small section of the community but the whole community, where people understand and can live with each other.

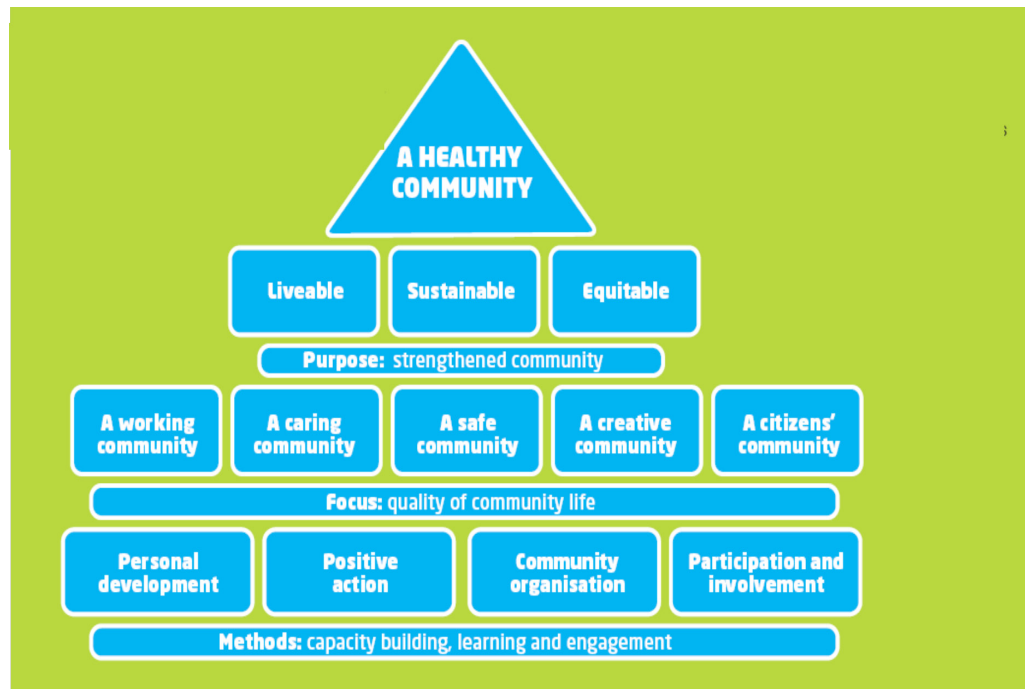
This is a shared vision of what community development is about, one you couldn't really argue with. Obviously many people, civil servants and voluntary organisations have part to play in moving towards that ideal.

Most people in the public service and in the voluntary sector are working somewhere in that middle line so they're maybe trying to create jobs, trying to create training opportunities, providing care and support to people, providing health services, and safe spaces, maybe providing opportunities for artistic expression, games, recreation, and also for participation - people getting involved in a democratic way in decisions affecting them.

This is where it gets to the question about the difference between community engagement and service delivery. In traditional service delivery models all these people work in that middle line to deliver services to people in communities, but not in a way that engages the communities. What you need for that engagement is a community, which is in a position to have those discussions with the service providers, so that the services convincingly or more accurately reflect their needs or issues, and provide the opportunities or resources for the community. So a dialogue or debate is needed to move from top down service delivery to an inclusive community-participation way of planning and taking things forward. Creating the conditions for this requires resourced and robust work which our Achieving Better Community development framework sets out to describe.

“The push towards individual work or issue based work is actually more around service provision than an individual step towards a collective journey. This is having a huge impact on the work, making a collective approach difficult.”

~ Conference participant



This diagram represents ABCD: Achieving Better Community Development (not to be confused with ABCD Asset Based Community Development).

ABCD: Achieving Better Community Development

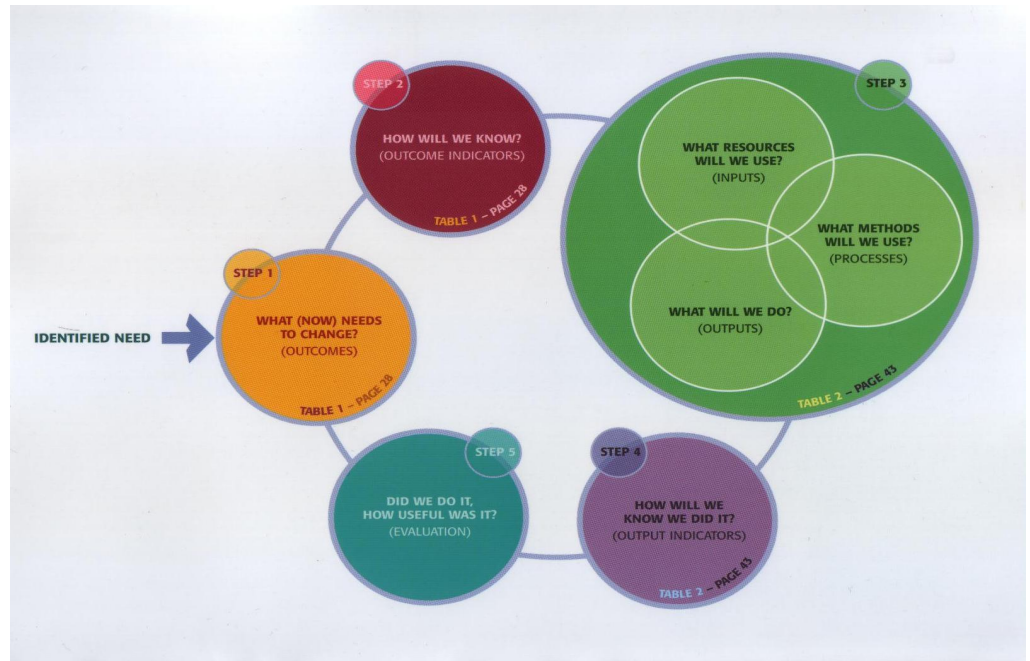
What we looked at was, if service providers want to have an engagement with communities, what do the communities need to be like in order to be reasonably confident that that engagement is going to have meaning? Through the consultation, four main areas emerged as really needing to be in place. We call these the building blocks of community development:

- Personal development – about skills, knowledge, self-esteem, and confidence by doing something and having a sense of coherence with the world. A lot of community work activity, particularly the learning part of it is along these lines.
- Positive action – about equality, working to make sure that disadvantaged people are brought in and engaged.
- Community Organisation – the whole range of things that communities do from local associations to what be quite significant community organisations with big budgets. They may or may not be effective and work well. The task of community development is to get community organisations up and running and taking community issues forward.
- Finally involvement – being influential: taking power, empowering the community, having a better say in what goes on. That’s really the political side of it, letting communities look outwards. It links into the engagement, the kind of structures and processes which are designed for engagement need people to be involved.

Today we are talking about outcomes and impacts. In my view these are all outcomes or can be seen as outcomes. So if you say you are a caring community, that is an outcome statement. A community may be caring right now but if it is to be caring in the future that’s an outcome statement and it becomes an agenda for change.

LEAP

LEAP is an adaptation of the previous diagram into a planning and evaluation practice framework which is participatory, depending on self evaluation rather than external evaluation. It based on the principle that to do good community development work you need to do good evaluation – if only to know that you are doing a reasonably good job yourself, because we all like to think we are doing that. I think it is in our interest to pose critical questions about our work, at community project, programme and government policy levels. People need to know what the impact is; the best way to find that out is to take control of that process – which is what LEAP tries to do. We created LEAP as a kind of alternative to more traditional planning which probably didn't include evaluation.



I will go through this using a piece of work we are currently involved in. It's a one year project funded by LEADER; its aim is twofold: to generate stronger community capacity in twenty-one communities and to produce twenty-one community action plans. The action plans are outputs. We are more or less going to be in control of the community action planning process, where we will take responsibility for producing them with the community and we take responsibility for what they say. The outcomes hoped for from these are going to be named in the contents of those community action plans. We don't know if any of these outcomes will actually be realised because of course, as already discussed, there is a critical difference, between outputs and outcomes. You can control your outputs but your outcomes are subject to all sorts of forces you can't control or be expected to control. What you can be expected to think about is to what extent did the outputs you produced lead to the outcomes people want. That doesn't mean it's always going to happen, stuff happens as they say. All we can do is our best to shape things in a way that the outcomes are possible.

This diagram starts on the left; where it says identified need. This is important because you will not get anywhere unless you have a really good understanding of what the needs, issues, opportunities, and assets are. Working in communities there are a number of ways to take stock of needs, including communities doing their own action research. In the case of this project these needs have already been selected so it's not a purely outcome focused agenda. We know these communities have not done so well out of previous funding programmes so they tend to be the more disadvantaged. The communities that have been selected and people are now doing participatory exercises to try and identify what the needs and priority issues are in each community.

Once that's been done people will be able to sit down together in workshops and discussions and say ok we now have a pretty good handle on what's out there.

Step 1 (Yellow circle): what needs to change is the critical question. The task is to identify a number of things the communities would like to see happen over a period of two years or five years or whatever. This becomes an agenda for change: effectively it becomes a plan but in the form of outcomes, e.g. we would like young people to have more opportunities; we would like people to be healthier. Outcome statements can be quite broad and need narrowing down; outcome statements are distant points which you are working towards. You have some sort of vision, some sort of concept of where you are trying to go.

Step 2 (Plum circle): The next question is: how will we know? It has already been said you need to know how you are going to measure your change before you start doing it. Otherwise you will never know whether any change has taken place. You need to find ways to understand whether, how and when your outcomes have actually been achieved. Sometimes when you get to this point you begin to refine your outcomes as well, particularly if they are very general and when you start looking at indicators you realise you can't really measure outcomes and need to be more precise. In any case those two steps are fairly crucial.

Step 3 (Green circle): Then you get to the next big step. What will we actually do? How will we do it? That requires you to say what resources we have, your inputs. That can be money but it can also be knowledge, skills, networks, enthusiasm, motivation, energies; lots of soft things as well as concrete things. What methods will we use? Will we have consultations? Will we do research, will we train people up, will we do counselling or whatever. There are various methods so there's choice there. The crucial question is how do we know that what we are going to do will achieve the outcomes we set? How will we be able to measure it using the specified indicators? In the case of this project we know what the output is going to be: twenty-one community action plans. What we hope will happen is that those plans will speak to the outcomes of the discussions in each of these communities.

Step 4 (Purple circle): Once we have got a plan in place step four is how are we actually going to execute it? What's going to happen? Who is responsible for it? When is it going to happen? How is it going to happen? You need to monitor that- if the meeting took place, who turned up, did they find it useful and have we done what we said we were going to do?

Step 5 (Blue circle): Then finally how useful was it? What did we learn? Like the questions that we had earlier, what do we know, what have we learned, what can we say about it, what would we do differently next time? Again it is a cyclical process. If you have changed the world and everything is fine then you can say good job, well done, and go home. Quite often though, you think no we didn't quite achieve the outcomes we sought, so you need to go back to the first point and say what now needs to change and then go around the cycle again. You can do that many times in a much bigger picture. That's how LEAP is intended to work.

As I said, though we are trying to make this example outcome driven, it isn't really so. This is because the resources were committed, and the areas selected beforehand; and of course as a LEADER programme it's actually driven by targets, not outcomes. For example, we have to produce three hundred beneficiaries some of whom have to be under 25 (which is challenging), half need to be female and half male. That's just targets; we are not very happy with them but that's the reality of the world we are in.

“The new programme really needs to go back to basics, to good quality community work with resources to follow, consultation with stakeholders and the people who will be ultimately implementing it”

~ Ann Irwin, Community Workers' Co-operative

Concluding Reflections

Ann Irwin (Community Workers' Co-operative):

We have discussed moving beyond engagement, to participation. We have reminded ourselves of the difference between outputs, outcomes and the longer term impact. We were reminded that the current main programme that facilitates community work doesn't really facilitate that type of evaluation. The new programme really needs to go back to basics, to good quality community work with resources to follow, consultation with stakeholders and the people who will be ultimately implementing it.

For this, some preconditions are required. In this regard it could be helpful to look at other current discussions on positive duties, and examine how positive duties might be embedded in our work.

Ciara Bradley (Dept. of Applied Social Studies, NUIM):

Evaluation and community work are very much interlinked and embedded; they are not separate processes. Community development process and practice focuses on exclusion and more marginalised groups; that's why it's important to name those processes. Their perspective is not from the top down; it is organic and bottom up involving communities in and throughout the process. So, it is important that community development practices are embedded throughout the whole process of evaluation.

We also need to distinguish between evaluating community development practice and looking at community development as an outcome. I think the two things are getting intertwined.

Community work is a process with a purpose - to address inequalities and disadvantages for communities, marginalised groups, Travellers and so on. Evaluation of community work has potential to improve the quality of the work and develop how we do it. To that end, I think the ethos of the work needs to be reflected and evaluated in the process. As community workers we need to take ownership of the language and the process of how we are being evaluated.

Oonagh Mc Ardle (Dept. of Applied Social Studies, NUIM):

The big issue is about bringing local and community development together, how they have been brought together through the Local and Community Development Programme and how they might be brought together in the proposed new programme and policy on local and community development. In the LCDP, tensions emerged because they have been thrown together without recognising their distinct and complementary approaches and without recognising that they operate from distinct ideas, concepts and theories. Putting them together has ignored these and the associated power differentials.

At our NUIM community work conference last November, participants developed a clear statement about how local development and community development could complement each other – which is not to say that they are the same thing. The importance of making the case for community development, which starts and ends with a clear articulation of what it is and what it can achieve, is instrumental at this point. However I don't think it is just the job of community workers to always have to defend its value and to name, claim and evaluate its outcomes.

We would welcome working with the people who will design the new policy (if it emerges) and programme to base both on a clear articulation of community development and try and ensure that the programme and policy can result in real outcomes and lasting changes for marginalised communities.

Anastasia Crickley (Head of Dept. of Applied Social Studies)

It seems to me there are a number of very clear messages emerging from today. Firstly, this is a time of change with new Irish and European programmes emerging. Whether it's Community Led Local Development (in the case of LEADER), or the success of the Community Development Programme, the frameworks and rules under which they are rolled out and the way they are put together, are very important. The task is to make sure that the good practice people are managing to do without really supportive frameworks, that this practice will be supported by the new arrangements.

Secondly, we can't claim everything for community development, but it is connected to successful outcomes in a number of areas. For example, I just found a Pobal document – written between 1994 and 1999 and to my knowledge still organisational policy – outlining why community development is essential for local development. Good local development requires community development processes, but as many people have pointed out today these essential connections need to be articulated and made more visible.

However, you can only connect processes which are understood, defined and undertaken in their own right, community development, in order to continue its contribution to local development, and indeed other areas, must be funded in its own right both separately from and as part of local development initiatives. It needs to be undertaken and managed by competent professional community workers and as has already been pointed out evaluation of outcomes needs to be consistent with its premises and processes.

The outcomes may not always be the sort of evidence demanded but the evidence emerging could, I am convinced, help bridge the gap between the two and make the case for community development which works with marginalised communities and groups towards a just and sustainable future.

