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Tackling disadvantage in rural areas?
Studies of the community-based voluntary
sector in County Durham

Rob Macmillan

Ph.D thesis

2004

Department of Geography and
Community and Youth Work Studies Unit,

University of Durham

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Abstract

This thesis aims to add to the qualitative understanding of the nature of community-based voluntary action. It does so through a close investigation of the organisation and impact of community-based voluntary sector projects which seek to tackle disadvantage in rural areas. This exploration illustrates some of the challenges faced by community groups, and supporting voluntary sector agencies, as they aim to address different forms of disadvantage.

The thesis examines the contextual background in which community-based projects operate. This includes debates over the nature, extent and measurement of disadvantage in rural areas, but also the increasing interest amongst policy-makers and practitioners towards community-based approaches to tackling disadvantage. This is argued to amount to a 'community turn' in public policy. The empirical research undertaken for the thesis involved a collaborative link with a non-academic voluntary organisation, the Durham Rural Community Council. Research took the form of an intensive and extended ethnographic interaction with several case study projects operating in different rural areas of County Durham.

Analysis of the case studies highlights three qualitative dimensions of the dynamic process of organising community-based voluntary action. Firstly projects operate within a semi-enclosed, and deeply contested 'field' in which individuals, groups and organisations act as differentially-positioned and insecurely-resourced participants in pursuit of scarce resources to preserve or advance their position. Increasingly at stake in this 'field' is how resources are allocated over time, and how long it should take to 'make a difference' in relation to disadvantage. The temporality associated with community-based projects thus forms an illuminating second dimension examined in the thesis. Finally, the scale at which projects are organised provides a third dimension explored through the case studies, illustrating the challenge in rural areas of remaining 'close' to users and participants whilst generating a viable scale of activities over large areas with dispersed populations.

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Declaration

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Chapter 1

Studies of the community-based voluntary sector: setting the scene

This thesis aims to add to the growing qualitative understanding of the nature of community development and community-based voluntary action, particularly in areas outside towns and cities. It does so through a close examination of the dynamics of community-based voluntary sector initiatives, explored through a series of linked case studies operating in the rural areas of County Durham. As later chapters reveal, these case studies illustrate some of the challenges faced by community groups as they seek to make a difference in their field of concern. The major theme examined in this thesis is the extent and the manner in which community-based voluntary action might address issues of disadvantage in rural areas. This introductory chapter sets the scene for the rest of the thesis, describing in turn the different 'worlds' occupied by community-based voluntary action; the aims, objectives and research questions which underlie the thesis; a brief discussion of some of the contested terms in use; and then a section which describes the organisational setting of the research. A final section provides an overview of the structure of the thesis, and how its argument develops through the remaining chapters.

1. A tale of two worlds - 'policy world' and 'everyday life'.....

A feature article of a national weekly 'community regeneration' magazine asked readers what they would do if they were regeneration minister for a day and they had three wishes. One reader suggested a trip to see "*Josephine Underclass at 2, Unlettable Terrace, Unpopular Village, Ex-Industrial Community, Poor Shire County*" (Lipman 2001: 12-13). Implied here is a need to get out and meet the people to overcome the apparent yawning gap between ministers, and perhaps regeneration professionals on the one hand, and the communities that are the subject of the bewildering array of initiatives, schemes and projects on the other. They would perhaps do well to get closer somehow and see for themselves what it is really like for those with least in our society. In all probability this particular reader was referring to somewhere in County Durham, not only because his description seems quite

apposite in a County Durham context, but also because the article mentioned that he worked for one of the local authorities in the County.

But leaving this aside, the quotation draws attention to what many see as a chasm between the increasingly jargonised and specialised world of initiatives and schemes in regeneration, community development and work around 'social inclusion' on the one hand, and the ordinary world of 'everyday life' in all kinds of communities, deprived and otherwise, on the other. Writing in the context of an analysis of social exclusion in European cities, Madanipour *et al* (1998: 286) refer to the need for strategies which are more sensitive to the needs of everyday life in neighbourhoods. Arguably, most of the time, and despite the current aspiration and efforts to 'join up' and to integrate top-down and bottom-up approaches, the world of policy, initiatives and schemes seems to be a long way from the world of everyday life.

Every day, in all kinds of places, people go about their ordinary business. They work, or try to find work, they bring up children, they laugh, worry about money, the future and other things, they cry, provide care, play, help and hinder other people. They read newspapers, they drink, they shop and they sleep. They 'get by', sometimes with immense difficulty. Some face a set of circumstances that are much harder to cope with than others. These are the kinds of thing implied by ordinary, everyday life. In amongst this some people 'get involved' somehow in community or voluntary activities. They might volunteer, give time, money, or skills and experience. This is also part of everyday life, although overall it is perhaps only a marginal or hidden part. But every day a sizeable number of people have some kind of involvement with voluntary and community groups and organisations. The type and degree of involvement vary, from people who oversee, manage, work in, make a living out of, research and volunteer in voluntary and community groups and organisations, to people who may sometimes use the services of organisations, or may have some awareness of 'community' and 'voluntary' things going on in their places. Some of this activity may involve people taking on multiple roles, 'wearing different hats', or may involve different types and degrees of involvement at different times, of weeks, months, years and lives. Some involvements will be regular or sustained, some might be more fleeting. Some involvements may lead to others, some might not.

Latest figures suggest that approximately 563,000 people worked in the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom in 2000, representing 2% of the national workforce (Jas *et al* 2002), of whom just under two-thirds were full time, and about two-thirds were

female. Approximately 16.5 million people in England and Wales (39%) volunteered formally with an organisation or group at least once in the 12 month period ending in May 2001, and approximately 11.2 million (26%) at least once a month (Prime *et al* 2002: 6). Many other people will know these people, or know of them. Some will studiously avoid them and their community and voluntary activities, for fear of getting dragged into something that is somehow 'not for them' or not their 'cup of tea'. They might fear having their arm twisted to 'get involved' or to join a committee of some sorts. They could be anxious that once on the committee they might not be able to get off¹. Some will enjoy being involved and might stick around, others may decide that it was not really what they were looking for. Some will try to juggle involvement with other demands, others may have to forego it because they lack the time, may need to find work, or look after children or relatives. Some people are involved for overtly political reasons, some as part of their faith. Some people want to meet others, or to enjoy a bit of a social life, or to have something to do which might be useful. Some people want to change the world, or at least make it somehow a little better than otherwise. Others will try their hardest to keep it the same. This is part of everyday life, the part which some try to define, albeit as a 'loose and baggy monster' (Kendall and Knapp 1995), as a 'sector' of social activities, distinct from the statutory, private and informal sectors, but part of the 'welfare mix' nonetheless (Alcock 1996, Philip and Shucksmith 2003).

Meanwhile, from an entirely different direction, governments, politicians and policy makers have become increasingly interested in talking about, and perhaps 'talking up', the voluntary and community sector. In 'policy world', perhaps the three most

¹ Fear of committees is perhaps aptly exemplified by this poem, courtesy of a newsletter of one of the Councils for Voluntary Service in County Durham (2D 2002):

*'Oh give me your pity I'm on a committee
Which means that from morning to night
We attend, and amend, and contend and defend
Without a conclusion in sight.....
We confer and concur, we defer and demur.
And reiterate all of our thoughts
We revise the agenda with frequent addenda
And consider a load of reports.....
We compose and propose, we support and oppose
And the points of procedure are fun
But though various notions
Are brought up as motions
There's terribly little gets done.....
We resolve and absolve, but we never dissolve
Since it's out of the question for us.
What a shattering pity to end our Committee
Where else would we make such a fuss.'*

important politicians of the new Labour government continue to make speeches and write books and articles which have made reference to voluntary and community activities, groups and organisations (Blair 1999a, 2000, 2002, Blunkett 2001a, 2001b, 2003, Brown 2000). They have made repeated references to things like civil renewal, social and community cohesion, the significance of 'community' and 'active communities', social entrepreneurship and social enterprise, tackling social inclusion, encouraging grassroots community initiative and 'harnessing social capital'. Now it is probable that 'Josephine Underclass' might view all this as irrelevant jargon, but somewhere in amongst all this is an assumption that the 'loose and baggy monster' has something which might be able to make a contribution to achieving some of the goals of a wider social policy programme. With further pieces of jargon, this is perhaps the idea of the 'added value' of the sector (NCVO 2002), or its 'comparative advantage' (Billis and Glennerster 1998).

But elsewhere in 'policy world' governments have established a plethora of arrangements and agreements between departments based on the achievement of milestones, targets and successful performance against specific indicators (HM Treasury 2002a). In yet another piece of jargon politicians, policy makers, and further downstream, regeneration managers and others involved in policy implementation, need to ensure the successful 'delivery'² of government programmes, initiatives and schemes. In the current government's second term, the emphasis on 'public service reform' and the demonstration of improvements, through targets and performance benchmarks and league tables, has assumed immense political significance. This covers all aspects of government activity, such as the familiar and newsworthy emphasis on core public services like health and education, but it also affects aspects of the everyday activities loosely described above. Hence, as part of its 'public service agreement' with the Treasury, upon which resources depend, the Home Office has ten performance targets, including *"increasing voluntary and community sector activity, including increased community participation, by 5% by 2006"* (HM Treasury 2002a: 14), which is a 'smarter' target than its previous one of

² The voluntary and community sector is not immune from this type of language. Increasingly it seems, the more professionalised section of the sector has to convince a variety of 'partners' that it can 'deliver'. As an example of how perverse this can sometimes sound, an invitation received during the course of the research for this thesis to a conference on the nature of the voluntary sector in County Durham referred to the fact that the organisation holding and organising the event would be '*delivering*' the conference. It transpired that 'delivering' such a conference was part of a funding agreement from the government's Single Regeneration Budget.

"making substantial progress by 2004 towards actively involving one million more people in their communities" (Prime *et al* 2002: 1).

We have described two worlds: 'everyday life' and 'policy world'. These are obviously abstractions, but they encapsulate perhaps some features of the different worlds associated with the community-based voluntary sector. This sector is arguably located in a pivotal position between 'policy world' and 'everyday life', and it draws resources (financial and otherwise), credibility and purpose from both. Some commentators are worried about the seemingly closer relationship which is developing between the sector and the government (see, for example, Dahrendorf 2001). The potential gains accruing from such a 'partnership', they argue, are far outweighed by the risks and losses, in terms of independence and credibility. This has made for the reinvigoration of a lively debate about the terms upon which the sector appears to be taking an enhanced role in the social policy-welfare mix (Craig and Taylor 2002, Taylor *et al* 2002, Alcock and Scott 2002, Etherington 2003).

This thesis examines some of the interconnections between 'policy world' and 'everyday life'. Voluntary organisations and community groups, of all shapes and sizes, act in intermediary roles between the two. For much of the time the everyday life in which the voluntary and community sector intervenes, whether consciously or not, is that of people that somehow have less than others. They might live in deprived communities, or they may experience disadvantage and exclusion irrespective of where they live. Broadly, the thesis asks two main questions: how the community-based voluntary sector is organised at a local level, and what difference to 'everyday life' it might make.

II. Informing the research - background and research questions

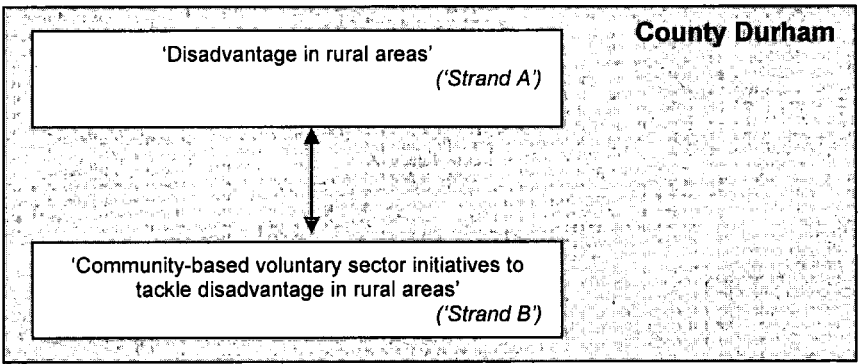
The research undertaken for this thesis examines quite closely the community-based voluntary sector in a particular geographical setting, 'rural' County Durham. The research aimed to consider how specific social policy interventions at a 'community' level relate to an increasingly important policy 'current' regarding 'social exclusion/inclusion' (Billis 2001). Later chapters will explore in more depth how this policy focus has emerged, how the debate over rural deprivation has developed, and how more recently the 'community' is seen as an object of policy focus which might be harnessed in the effort to address, and/or be seen to address, disadvantage and

exclusion. The thesis focuses on the inter-relationship between four areas of interest. These were encapsulated in the original thesis title, which was “*The role of voluntary sector community-based initiatives in alleviating levels of disadvantage in rural areas, with particular reference to County Durham.*” Disaggregating this into its four elements, as represented in the Figure 1.1 below, enabled the construction of a number of distinct research areas which form key research questions. The project aimed to explore:

- **Disadvantage** in rural areas
- how the community-based **voluntary sector** can best address disadvantage in rural areas
- with specific reference to **County Durham**.

Throughout the research this has been conceptualised in terms of two key research ‘objects’ or areas of study (Strand A: ‘disadvantage in rural areas’ and Strand B: ‘community-based voluntary-sector-initiatives-addressing-disadvantage’) both situated within a particular locality, County Durham.

Figure 1.1 Research objects



This picture, of two main research areas in a defined geographical setting, is reflected in the structure of what follows. The context for the research is outlined in a conceptual and literature-based consideration of the issues around the notion of disadvantage in rural areas ('Strand A' in figure 1.1). This is discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. The main empirical part of the thesis concerns the exploration of a number of community-based voluntary sector initiatives designed in part to address and tackle issues of disadvantage in rural areas. This part ('Strand B' in figure 1.1) is described in Chapter 6 and discussed at length in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

The 'two-objects-and-a-setting' conceptualisation also informed the generation of research questions to guide the thesis. Following Blaikie's (2000) distinction between research questions designed to consider issues of description ('what?'), explanation ('why?') and change, policy and practice ('how?'), indicative research questions have been generated for the two strands suggested above. In reality no hard and fast distinction can be drawn between the three 'modes' of question, but they have been used here for their heuristic value. The key questions which guided the research, and some idea of methods deployed, are indicated in Table 1.1 below. This will be explored more fully in Chapter 5 when the more detailed methodology is discussed.

Descriptive questions aim to scope the terrain, to describe key features and characteristics. In the terms of this thesis, therefore, the aim is simultaneously to examine the nature and forms of disadvantage in rural areas, alongside an examination of the range, organisation and impact of community-based voluntary sector initiatives. The key guiding questions here are 'what?' and derivatives such as 'when?', 'where?' and 'how much?' **Explanatory** questions aim to account for, or to deepen an understanding of, the things we have described. The main emphasis here is on providing some steps towards an understanding of causation. The key motivating question here is 'why?', or 'how did things come to be so and not otherwise?' (Archer 1998: 71). Given the focus of this thesis as outlined in the two strands, the emphasis here is on the causes of disadvantage in rural areas, and an understanding of how community-based initiatives come to be organised and have the impacts in the way that they do. Finally questions around **change, policy and practice** appeal to more applied and practical considerations, including evaluation. Here the emphasis is on how circumstances might somehow be changed, and the key guiding question is one of 'how (to change things)?' In this thesis these questions relate to appropriate policies for tackling disadvantage in rural areas and for enhancing the work of the voluntary sector, alongside practical considerations about how best to organise and develop projects which may make a greater or more enduring difference to disadvantage.

Table 1.1 Research questions

General areas	Mode of Question (after Blaikie 2000)	Specific questions	Methods/Comments
<u>STRAND A</u> On disadvantage in rural areas.... (both national and Co. Durham context)	Descriptive – ‘What?’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is ‘disadvantage in rural areas’ and what different forms does it take? In what way are indicators used in resource allocation and political agendas? 	Review of literature Theoretical development Secondary data on indicators
	Explanatory/ Understanding – ‘Why?’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What causes disadvantage in rural areas? What accounts for patterns of disadvantage (a) over time? (b) between places? and (c) between groups? 	Review of literature Theoretical development
	Change, policy and practice – ‘How?’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What range of policies and interventions seek to address disadvantage in rural areas? How might it best be captured by appropriate indicators? How can disadvantage in rural areas most effectively be tackled? 	Review of literature Theoretical development
<u>STRAND B</u> On voluntary sector attempts to tackle disadvantage in rural areas... (Co. Durham context)	Descriptive – ‘What?’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What range of voluntary sector community based initiatives attempt to address disadvantage in rural areas? How are they designed? developed? organised? implemented? What impacts are created? To what extent are their impacts different? Are some projects more effective than others? 	‘Mapping’/census of initiatives Case studies Theoretical development
	Explanatory/ Understanding – ‘Why?’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why are initiatives formed in this way? What accounts for differences and similarities between projects? What factors lead to differences in outcomes and impact? Why might some projects be more effective than others? 	Case studies Theoretical development
	Change, policy and practice – ‘How?’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can successful projects be replicated? Can lessons be learnt from less successful projects? How can effectiveness/outcomes be improved? What types of initiatives could be developed in the future? How should new projects be designed, developed and implemented? 	Case studies Theoretical development

Importantly, the research project which underlies this thesis has been both an ‘academic’ and an ‘applied’ exercise, and has involved both intellectual and practical

aims. The project was organised and designed as a 'collaborative' venture which aimed to bridge the familiar divide between research and policy/practice. Thus the research was conducted through a 'partnership' with a non-academic organisation, the Durham Rural Community Council (DRCC), and was hosted by two academic departments at the University of Durham (the Department of Geography and the Community and Youth Work Studies Unit in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy). This had some bearing on the organisation of the research, on the development of research questions and on some aspects of the research design. The research was funded through a studentship under the Economic and Social Research Council's CASE award scheme³, with an additional contribution made by the collaborating partner, which in this case was funded by a local voluntary sector funding organisation, the County Durham Foundation.

At an academic level, the research aimed to contribute to continuing intellectual debates around three principal areas:

- on the nature of social exclusion and disadvantage, with particular reference to disadvantage in rural areas
- on the changing role of the voluntary sector in relation to (a) the restructuring of the social democratic welfare state and (b) social exclusion, and
- on the nature of 'contextualised' social action and the development of collective strategies in 'micro' social settings.

³ The ESRC's CASE ('Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering') award scheme facilitates collaborative research between universities and non-academic organisations, and forms part of the growing emphasis on making academic research relevant to the non-academic community (see, for example, Macmillan and Scott 2003). Collaborating non-academic organisations make a financial contribution to the academic department(s) hosting the research, as well as a 'top-up' financial contribution to the normal ESRC Postgraduate Award. An ESRC leaflet (ESRC 2000) directed towards potential collaborating partners in the public and voluntary sectors includes various examples of recent topics – including the project upon which this thesis is based – and promotes the scheme thus:

Academic research has much to offer the public/voluntary sector, but collaboration does not always happen as much as it could. Although key questions are often widely recognised, it is not always easy for universities and organisations to link up effectively and many may be put off by the costs involved, perhaps for an uncertain outcome. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funds academic research in the social sciences and actively promotes the widest use of this research in the public/voluntary sector. We also are trying to ensure that future social scientists are not only highly trained researchers but also have the skills to work in a non academic as well as an academic environment. To this end over the last five years we have been developing a collaborative awards scheme linking academic and non-academic partners in the training of PhD students.

In so far as the research has an 'applied' character however, it not only sought to explore and explain the role of the voluntary sector in addressing different forms of disadvantage in rural areas, but also to evaluate that role, and thereby inform developing practice in this area. The research therefore has a number of additional practical and policy related aims:

- to assist the collaborating partner, and policy makers more broadly, in their efforts to design and implement initiatives 'on the ground' which seek to address disadvantage in rural areas,
- to contribute to the wider strategic development of the collaborating partner, and
- to contribute to ongoing policy debates around appropriate strategies for addressing social exclusion *in* rural areas, and for the development of rural areas.

III. A note about terminology and working definitions

The thesis aims to explore the 'community-based voluntary sector', and its role in tackling disadvantage in rural areas in County Durham. Studies in these overlapping fields of interest are replete with definitional problems and different uses of various terms.

The idea 'disadvantage', and related notions of poverty, deprivation and exclusion have been the source of a great deal of definitional and conceptual elaboration. This is explored in more depth in Chapter 2, but throughout the thesis disadvantage is used in a deliberately broad fashion, to denote "*an inability of individuals or households to share in the styles of life open to the majority*" (Shucksmith *et al* 1996: 5). Thus conceived, this idea of disadvantage opens the door to a wide variety of projects and initiatives which could claim to be addressing disadvantage in some form or another. Crucially, the idea of disadvantage expressed in these terms is not just about money and low incomes. Hence the community-based voluntary sector might be in a position to address different 'states of disadvantage' faced by individuals and groups, including financial (the lack of purchasing power, and its consequences), personal (an inability to articulate needs and preferences), societal (discrimination and stigmatisation) and community (disadvantage based on where people live) (Billis 2001).

There are many alternative formulations and descriptive labels in use for the 'voluntary sector', including references to 'the third sector', the 'voluntary and community sector', non-governmental organisations, 'Not-for-Profits', the social economy, clubs and associations, and civil society (Kendall and Knapp 1995, Osborne 1996, Cabinet Office 2002: 14). These labels are often used interchangeably, but they do not necessarily refer to the same thing. The research in this thesis is primarily concerned with organised voluntary and community activity, rather than the informal, one-to-one reciprocal activity which Williams (2003a, 2003b) describes as a 'fourth sector'. Perhaps the most common distinction in current use in these academic and policy debates arises between a community sector (primarily consisting of smaller, more informal and less professionalised groups and organisations, operating within specific communities of interest or place, and usually with little or no paid staff) and a voluntary sector (comprising mainly larger, more formal and professionalised organisations, often providing services, with larger funding regimes and paid staff teams). In this thesis the term 'community-based voluntary sector' is used deliberately to emphasise that the focus of attention is oriented towards community development approaches which aim to support the development of relatively smaller, 'community-based' initiatives and projects. The 'community' aspect of the 'community-based voluntary sector' is therefore a signpost rather than a strict definition. It points in the direction of an aspect of the 'loose and baggy monster'. The 'community-based voluntary sector' is one way of attempting somehow to capture a generic 'institutional space' (Jones 1998) of activities which operate somewhat beyond, or at least on the margins of and between the state, the private sector, and the informal sector. Of course there are significant 'frayed edges' and blurred boundaries between these sectors. In effect the focus here is the interface between parts of the professionalised voluntary sector and emerging groups in the community sector⁴.

If issues around alternative definitions of 'disadvantage' and the 'voluntary sector' seem to escape settled and agreed understandings, then this is probably even more the case regarding 'rurality'. Rurality and 'rural' have been the subject of much

⁴ This 'interface' between voluntary and community sectors has become more salient with the recent and long awaited publication of the 'Code of Practice on Community Groups'. This has been developed as the fifth code of practice from the original Compact between the statutory and voluntary sector (Home Office 1998, Home Office 2003b), and includes Voluntary Sector undertakings to the Community Sector (Home Office 2003b: 11).

heated debate over different definitions and discourses (see, for example Hoggart 1990, Halfacree 1993). These debates appear to range over whether 'rural' is a characteristic of particular places, and if so how this might be defined, or whether 'rural' is a meaningful analytical concept at all, or whether it should be seen more as a social construct. The tendency now, amongst academics at least, is to talk of 'differentiated countrysides' and ruralities (Marsden 1999, Cloke 2003). As we shall see in Chapter 4, trying to think through issues relating to the 'rurality' of County Durham is deeply problematic, and has historically been discussed in terms of County Durham's particular industrial past based on 'carboniferous capitalism' (Robinson 1992). Informal discussions with people throughout the research project led to questions over whether it would be considering, for example, the 'real' or 'deep' rural areas to the West of the county, and whether the project would include initiatives from the ex-coalfield areas of East Durham, which '*aren't really rural*'. The County thus appears to have an 'ambiguous rurality', incorporating different notions and different kinds of 'rural'. For operational purposes this thesis uses a simple threshold distinction. Since the main research objects are case studies of community-based projects, a working definition has been used in which projects can be considered 'in scope' if they tend to operate outside of settlements with populations of 10,000 or more people⁵.

IV. An organisational setting for research - Durham Rural Community Council

The research outlined here is primarily oriented to the work of the Durham Rural Community Council (DRCC), even though, as will become evident in later chapters, it is practically impossible to disentangle one organisation from the complex array of inter- and intra-sectoral relationships, connections and links with other organisations and agencies operating at a range of different scales. The impact of undertaking collaborative research is discussed further in Chapter 5, but here it is appropriate to provide a brief overview of the structure and work of the collaborating organisation. DRCC is primarily a countywide community development organisation, involving a specific focus on rural issues, but with a 'strapline' which refers to "*promoting*

⁵ This formulation follows that used by the Countryside Agency (1999, 2000), based on earlier definitions used by the Rural Development Commission. In practice the threshold rules out projects operating primarily in ten towns in County Durham: Bishop Auckland, Chester-le-Street, Consett, Durham City, Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Seaham, Shildon, Spennymoor and Stanley (Durham County Council 2000a).

Community Development and Voluntary Action in County Durham" (DRCC 2002). It is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee, managed overall by a voluntary Executive Committee with a wider membership 'council'. DRCC is perhaps best described as an example of a Local Development Agency (LDA), defined by Osborne (1999: 1) as *"those voluntary organisations which work in a specific geographic area and whose prime users are other voluntary and community organisations. Their role is to support and encourage voluntary activity in that area"*.

The organisation's origins lie in the inter-war depression years of the 1930s. Founded in 1935, the 'Community Service Council for Durham County', as it was then called, had the main function of coordinating local responses to unemployment, primarily through the establishment of 'service clubs'⁶ and through personal 'social service' casework (CSCDC 1936). It was one of the first of several new countywide bodies which became Rural Community Councils, and as such over time it developed an increasingly close relationship with the government's Development Commission, the arm's length agency which had the responsibility of encouraging development in rural areas⁷ (Rogers 1999). Until the 1980s most RCC funding came from the Development Commission, to the extent that the independence of RCCs was periodically called into question (Rogers 1986).

Until the 1980s the organisation acted partly to establish other voluntary organisations (such as Citizens Advice Bureaux) and partly to provide secretarial and other support to a range of organisations and committees (such as the local association of parish and town councils, the Durham County Federation of Community Organisations and local committee promoting small industry in rural areas). From around 1984 the work of 'Community Service for Durham County' (as it had become known) became heavily influenced by its involvement with the newly developing Rural Development Programmes established for each of the two

⁶ The purpose of 'service clubs' was *"to enable men to use their enforced idleness so that it may be of some profit to themselves and to the community in which they live. They are not intended to be an alternative to normal industrial employment but are designed so that men may maintain their morale towards the day when they can once more take their place in industry"* (CSCDC 1936: 6)

⁷ The Development Commission was established by the reforming Liberal Government in 1909, and eventually became the Rural Development Commission (RDC) in 1983. The new Labour government, elected in May 1997, decided to abolish the RDC as part of a wider commitment to the development of regional agencies. The regeneration aspects of the RDC were transferred to the new English Regional Development Agencies in April 1999. The remaining work areas of the RDC, including responsibility for Rural Community Councils, merged with the Countryside Commission to form the new Countryside Agency from 1st April 1999. For a useful historical overview of the RDC's role, see Rogers (1999).

designated Rural Development Areas in County Durham (covering East and West Durham respectively) (CSDC 1985). It subsequently changed its name to Durham Rural Community Council in 1986, and has steadily grown into what has now become a large scale rural community development agency. DRCC is part of a network of 38 Rural Community Councils operating throughout the non-metropolitan counties of England⁸. In 2001/2 these organisations together recorded an annual income of over £30m⁹. DRCC's income was above the average and amongst the twelve largest RCCs.

When the research for this thesis commenced in October 1999 DRCC operated from two main offices, in West and East Durham respectively, but also had staff out posted in a number of other offices throughout the County. It employed 36 staff members and had an annual budget of £1,000,097 (1998/9). Of this, £261,750 (26%) represented income for 'core' activities, and £738,347 (74%) represented income from specific projects. Table 1.2 below indicates how this has changed over recent years.

The three shaded years in the table coincide roughly with the time of the core part of the research for this thesis. In these years DRCC has recorded its highest ever levels of income and expenditure, largely consisting of income derived from specific time limited projects. The major fluctuation from 1993/4 to 1994/5 was the increased income arising from a large scale Community Development Initiative in East Durham (EDCDI), which employed 18 members of staff as part of a RECHAR-funded package of work in response to the last pit closures in the County in the early 1990s. After its first two years this was scaled back, indicated by the fall in income from 1994/5 to 1995/6. The dramatic fall in income and expenditure from 2000/1 to 2001/2 was the result of a large number of projects coming to an end simultaneously without replacement by new or extension projects.

Table 1.2 Durham Rural Community Council financial outcomes 1983/4, 1984/5 and 1993/4–2002/3

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Year	Income	Expenditure	Balance	Total	Unrestricted	Free cash

⁸ The majority of RCCs in England are members of a national umbrella body, ACRE – Action with Communities in Rural England, which was established in 1987. For several years DRCC, along with a number of other 'northern' RCCs disaffiliated from ACRE to establish the alternative 'Federation of Rural Community Councils' instead. In the last two years or so efforts have been made to bridge the divide and re-establish a single voice for rural community councils.

⁹ Source: Charity Commission database, available for on-line searching at www.charitycommission.gov.uk

ending 31 st March	£	£	£	funds £	funds £	reserves £
1984	60,307	57,118	3,189	17,417	na	na
1985	60,891	61,684	(1,056)	15,863	na	na
1994	422,953	464,107	(41,154)	304,987	na	na
1995	834,032	767,942	66,090	371,077	na	na
1996	699,833	724,352	(24,519)	346,558	na	na
1997	666,487	670,570	(4,083)	342,475	289,886	63,876
1998	945,077	940,448	4,589	347,063	296,733	73,645
1999	1,000,097	994,476	5,621	352,684	318,241	100,438
2000	1,196,244	1,173,518	22,726	375,410	313,019	99,293
2001	1,462,549	1,423,556	38,993	414,403	290,215	81,237
2002	996,238	1,045,710	(49,472)	364,931	262,783	56,318
2003	824,672	858,564	(33,892)	331,039	259,037	57,867

Source: CSDC (1985) and DRCC Annual Reports 1993/4, 1994/5, 1996/7, 1997/8, 1998/9, 1999/2000, 2001/2 and 2002/3

Notes:

1. na – not available
2. Column D indicates the year on year difference between income and expenditure
3. Column E indicates the accumulated balance, made up of restricted funds (representing advance payments earmarked for projects) and unrestricted funds
4. Column F indicates the unrestricted funds, which is made up of fixed assets and free cash reserves
5. Column G indicates the free cash reserves available to the organisation

This period was a particularly taxing one for the organisation and its staff, where an emerging financial 'hole' of approximately £67,000 in the 2001/2 budget led to two redundancies and a restructuring of the management team.

DRCC's core funding comes from two main sources: an annual grant from the Economic Development and Planning Department at Durham County Council and an annual grant from the Countryside Agency. Both core funding streams involve tightly specified Service Level Agreements. Core activities include the work of two 'field' officers, one acting as a 'Village Halls Advisor', the other undertaking policy work, including the annual survey of rural services, and also providing generic support and advice to community groups, including undertaking community profiles and appraisals. The bulk of DRCC's resources, however, come from time limited projects funded through a variety of government and charitable sources. Over the last few years the main project funders have included the Rural Development Programme, Single Regeneration Budget Challenge Fund (rounds 4,5 and 6), European Union Objective 2 and 5b funding, District Council contributions, the National Lottery Charities Board/Community Fund and the Northern Rock Foundation. In order to provide some sense of the range of work undertaken by the organisation, Table 1.3 provides a breakdown of the projects running at the time the research commenced in October 1999.

Table 1.3 Durham Rural Community Council Projects (in operation October 1999)

Project	Area	Staff	Funding	Timescale
Community Advice and Support Unit <i>support to groups on fundraising and other development issues, through one to one advice, training courses, a resource centre and the quarterly newsletter 'Community News'</i>	County Durham	3	NLCB	Jan 1998 – Feb 2000
Hands on Health <i>courses promoting healthy eating on a budget</i>	County Durham	1	Various	Started Oct 1994
One Voice Network <i>DRCC manages the secretariat of this strategic network seeking to advance the interests of the voluntary sector as a whole</i>	County Durham and Darlington	3	NLCB ESF	July 1998 – June 2000
Our Lives Our Choices <i>advocacy project with and for groups of people with learning disabilities</i>	County Durham	2	Health Authority	May 1996 – Mar 2000
Easington Community Development Initiative <i>community development work in 8 targeted villages in East Durham</i>	East Durham	1	RDP DC	Mar 1999 – Feb 2001
East Durham Villages SRB Project <i>community-based regeneration work in six targeted villages in East Durham</i>	East Durham	4	SRB4	Mar 1998 – Mar 2000
Over the Hedge <i>community development work in eight villages in Sedgfield</i>	East Durham	1	Comic Relief	Feb 1999 – Feb 2002
Derwentside Community Development Initiative <i>community development project in targeted wards in Derwentside</i>	Mid-Durham (North West)	1	RDP DC	Dec 1997 – Dec 2000
Derwentside Rural Crime Initiative <i>project seeking to address issues of crime and inter-generational conflict in five villages in Derwentside</i>	Mid-Durham (North West)	1	RDP DC	Jan 1998 – Sept 2000
Edmondsley Community Partnership <i>one year project of capacity building work in isolated village in Chester-le-Street</i>	Mid-Durham (North West)	1	EU Obj.2 DC	Sept 1999 – Nov 2000
Dene Valley Villages Projects <i>Three linked projects around enterprise support, transport and play and parenting in former Category D villages in Wear Valley</i>	Mid-Durham (South West)	3	RDP NLCB CiN	Mar 1999 – Mar 2001
Teesdale Rural Villages Support Project <i>second three year project of community development project in villages across Teesdale</i>	West Durham	1	OneNE DC	Jul 1999 – Jun 2002
Teesdale Village Halls Consortium <i>staff for this project to link and upgrade facilities in village halls in Teesdale managed by DRCC</i>	West Durham	3	NLCB EU Obj 5b	Sept 1998 – Dec 2001
Upper Teesdale Agricultural Support Services <i>new project which aims to provide practical support and advice to farming households in Upper Teesdale in order to address issues of stress and isolation</i>	West Durham	3	MAFF- EAGGF	Sept 1999 – June 2001
Wear Valley Community Development Initiative <i>Three year community development project in targeted wards in Wear Valley</i>	West Durham	1	RDP DC	Dec 1997 – Dec 2000

Notes:

CiN – Children in Need

DC – District Council 'matched' funding contribution

ESF – European Social Fund

EU Obj 2/5b – European Union resources for declining industrial areas (Obj 2) and peripheral rural areas (Obj 5b).

MAFF-EAGGF – European Agricultural Guidance Guarantee Fund administered by the MAFF (now DEFRA)

NLCB – National Lottery Charities Board (now the Community Fund)

OneNE – One North East (Regional Development Agency)

RDP – Rural Development Programme

SRB4 – Single Regeneration Budget Challenge Fund, Round 4

Table 1.3 is organised so that 'countywide' projects are listed first, followed by projects dedicated to specific areas in East, Mid and West Durham respectively. Apart from the sheer scale of operations, and the associated complexity for an organisation endeavouring to manage fifteen ongoing projects with different timelines, the diversity of projects appears to be the main characteristic which stands out, in terms of the focus, the geography and the funding involved. Overall, the balance of funding sources suggests that DRCC operates under a 'portfolio' funding regime, involving a diverse range of sources, none of which predominate (Alcock *et al* 1999).

This is a significant change from the period up to the mid-1980s, when the (Rural) Development Commission was the main funding body. A more diverse funding base does not suggest that some sources of funding are not more important than others. Rather it emphasises the point that any minimisation of risk associated with a wide range of funders (i.e. the risk that the organisation could be seriously destabilised if a single predominant funder reduced or withdrew its funds), is likely to involve relatively high transaction costs in managing the demands of a large number of different funders. This was recognised in the management restructuring which took place in the organisation in mid-2001, when a dedicated post of 'Funding Programme Manager' was created. This post has the specific task of ensuring that funding claims and monitoring returns to funding bodies are submitted correctly and on time, and to facilitate better planning of the range of different income streams.

The risk for a project-dominated organisation like DRCC arises from the multiple timelines of its project regimes. Looking at the end dates for each of the projects listed in Table 1.3 indicates not only how relatively short term they are, but also how a significant number of projects were due to end in the near future. Of the fifteen projects listed here, two were due to end within six months, and a further eight were due to end within another twelve months. An organisation in this position would need either to prepare for a significant contraction of its resources, activities and staff (which happened in fact in mid-2001), or would need to be particularly energetic in fundraising to continue these projects or develop new projects to replace project income streams coming to an end. In the event, nine of the fifteen projects continued in some form or another after their original end dates, although only four continue with DRCC in September 2003.

The 'projectification' of DRCC also has implications for staff turnover. Of the 36 members of staff in post when the research began in October 1999, only 18 were still in post by the end of July 2001, showing that the 'half-life' of DRCC's staff complement over this period amounted to 667 days, or one year and ten months. Staff leave organisations for all kinds of reasons, and as indicated above, DRCC has gone through its share of redundancies, as well as the occasional dismissal and resignation 'under a cloud'. However the figures for staff turnover in DRCC are not necessarily unusual for an organisation of this size involved in this area of work. Community development workers employed on projects are typically employed on relatively insecure time limited contracts (Glen *et al* forthcoming), and towards the end of a project they may be looking somewhat nervously at the prospects for continuation and at further job possibilities. It is important to acknowledge the effects this may have on the effectiveness of the organisation as a whole, and on the particular projects. With such turbulence in staffing, it is possible that the organisation's collective memory, and its collective culture and sense of purpose or direction may be compromised or dissipated. Insofar as this is related to an accumulated stock of expertise and experience (or its 'organisational capital'), this may become depleted by rapid staff turnover. The danger of course is that the reputation of an organisation (as one which has 'asset specificity' (Coulson 1998, Jessop 2000b), or the reserves of expertise and experience to carry out effective community development work) may extend beyond its actual capacity to deliver, especially if at the same time that organisational capital is being disrupted.

Observing the activities of the collaborating partner over the course of the research has led to a sense that the potential depletion of reserves of expertise and experience was perhaps compounded by the apparent differences which sometimes arise between 'core' staff and 'project' staff, and by the geographical dispersal of many of the workers. Of late the management team of DRCC appears to have been making concerted efforts to devise ways of mitigating this fragmentation and keeping the organisation and its staff team together as a more or less coherent whole, through staff meetings, training sessions and away-days.

However, 'organisational capital' and collective memory work both ways. An organisation's embedded culture may become a barrier to effective work or to flexible adaptation in the light of changing needs or circumstances. This seemed to be a central, if rarely stated, aspect of the troubling situation for the organisation in mid-2001 when the management team was restructured. Since October 1999 when the

research project which provides the basis for this thesis began, projects and staff have come and gone. By September 2003, there were only seven members (just less than one fifth) of the October 1999 cohort left. We shall return to this theme in Chapter 8, when the temporality of community-based voluntary action becomes the main issue of attention.

DRCC's purpose is described in its latest annual report as *"to improve the quality of life for people and communities in the rural areas of County Durham"*, and its values include the statement that *"DRCC works to create opportunities for people and communities to challenge the causes of poverty, disadvantage, isolation and exclusion"* (DRCC 2002: 2). This thesis makes a contribution to an examination of the extent to which this statement is implemented in practice, by considering in close detail the work of a small number of case study projects.

V. Research overview

The thesis is divided into three main parts. Firstly, three contextual chapters describe in more detail the background for the research, based around the structure established in figure 1.1. This is followed by a middle part which covers issues of research design and methodology, alongside a description of the case study community-based projects which form the empirical basis for the research. The third part of the thesis consists of three distinct, but inter-related, analytical accounts of the community-based voluntary sector, derived from the empirical case studies.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provide some contextual background for the empirical research in general, and the theoretical arguments which follow. These are mainly the result of an initial literature review which, given the rapid expansion of work in this field, has been supplemented as the research has been undertaken. Chapter 2 considers the nature of the research and social policy 'problem' (i.e. disadvantage in rural areas). This considers recent debates in Britain over the nature of poverty, deprivation, disadvantage and more recently social exclusion, both generally and then specifically in rural areas. Consideration is also given to how disadvantage, particularly in rural areas, might most appropriately be measured. Chapter 3 examines the current and recent structure of potential policy and practice 'solutions' to the issue of disadvantage in rural areas. In particular this chapter explores in some depth the developing nature of a 'community turn' in policy and practice. This provides the

academic and policy context for the research undertaken here, and acknowledges that the evidence base for the voluntary and community sectors, and community development more generally, in rural areas, is remarkably thin. Chapter 4 aims to provide a deeper understanding of the specific geographical setting for the research, through an examination of three elements of the County Durham context: its socio-economic history, the nature and degree of deprivation evident in the County and finally evidence relating to the nature, condition and structure of the voluntary and community sectors in the County.

Chapter 5 explains the methodology behind the research, outlining in turn how it has been structured in three ways: as intensive research (informed by realist social theorising and methods), alongside a collaborative partner organisation (with all the dilemmas, opportunities and constraints that this provides) and by adopting a temporal dimension (designed with the intention of capturing the dynamics of community-based projects). The chapter also explains the seemingly more mundane issues of research techniques and subsequent analysis. Chapter 6 provides some detailed descriptive accounts of the case study community-based projects which form the empirical centre of the thesis.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 are the three main analytical chapters, which outline the three key ideas, or clusters of ideas, that provide the core argument of the thesis. Without pre-empting too much the discussion in these chapters, box 1.1 below provides some simple explanatory statements designed to convey the three basic ideas. Together they can be seen as three inter-related ways of viewing and interpreting key aspects of voluntary and community action, derived from the empirical research amongst the case studies. These can be considered as three qualitative dimensions of the voluntary and community sector, to set alongside the usual quantitative 'dimensions of the voluntary sector' such as, for example, size, workforce, volunteers, numbers of organisations and income and expenditure (see for example Jas *et al* 2002, Charities Aid Foundation 2002).

These three dimensions by no means exhaust the possibilities for qualitative analysis of the voluntary and community sector. A great amount of new work, for example, is beginning to explore the role of the voluntary and community sector in specific policy domains (such as regeneration and neighbourhood renewal), specific new initiatives, such as partnership working (Osborne *et al* 2002a, 2002b) and 'local strategic partnerships', as well as more abstractly in terms of the contribution and position of

Box 1.1 Analytical dimensions of the dynamics of voluntary and community action

1. Field, capital, strategy (chapter 7)

In a common, but contested, world of voluntary and community action, some individuals, groups and organisations are in a better 'position' than others in terms of the possession of, and access to, different forms of capital which might be at stake. Participants in this partially enclosed world seek in different ways to secure or improve their position.

This dimension draws on the social theory associated with Pierre Bourdieu, and in particular his theory of social fields, different forms of capital and the strategic work of field-participants as players.

2. Time, change, project and impact (chapter 8)

Voluntary and community action in many ways attempts to achieve deliberate social change (through advancing a particular issue, or alternatively by resisting changes already occurring) in a complex and turbulent world. Increasingly at stake in this 'field' is how resources are allocated through time, and how long it might or should take somehow to 'make a difference'.

This dimension is informed initially by an increased sensitivity to temporality in social policy analysis, based on the quantitative examination of longitudinal data sets, alongside recent ideas around time in social and political theory.

3. Scale, proximity and rurality (chapter 9)

In rural areas in particular, resources are often spread thinly over large geographical distances and populations. Projects and organisations often come under pressure to increase the geographical and organisational 'scale' of operations. But this raises a tension, because an enduring issue is how 'close' or 'remote' organisations, including infrastructure bodies, are perceived to be to their constituency of users and participants.

This dimension developed from a specific reading of a rapidly emerging literature around 'scale' in human geography and political economy.

the voluntary and community sector in the policy and political process (Craig and Taylor 2002) and in terms of new debates around the potential significance of different conceptualisations of social capital (Jochum 2003). So, while there are plenty more possible inroads, the three dimensions highlighted here are those found to be particularly illuminating from the case study analysis undertaken in this thesis. Each theme relates to the other two, but each chapter seeks to place one of the

themes at the forefront. Together they form the basis for further work to examine the qualitative dynamics of community-based voluntary action.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis by reviewing its major arguments in the light of the research objectives and questions. The main implications for practice and policy around community-based voluntary activity are discussed, particularly the consequences of addressing the key themes explored in earlier chapters. Finally, the concluding chapter suggests some further directions for research on community-based voluntary action and community development more generally.

Chapter 2

Disadvantage in rural areas

This chapter considers how academic debates regarding disadvantage in rural areas have emerged and developed in the last 25 years, in the context of wider debates around poverty, deprivation and, more recently, social exclusion. In this thesis the idea of disadvantage is conceived as a term encompassing concepts such as poverty, deprivation and social exclusion, and defined suitably as *“an inability of individuals or households to share in the styles of life open to the majority”* (Shucksmith *et al* 1996: 5). Thus defined, disadvantage can seem to involve both economic and non-economic factors, since ‘styles of life’ embraces many different aspects of social life. However, following others, the thesis involves an implicit assumption that economic factors are most significant in determining life choices, and thereby life chances more generally (Townsend 1979, Kempson and White 1998: ii). The definition of disadvantage also incorporates a notion of ‘sharing’, and this chapter includes an important sub-theme of what inclusion, membership and participation in social life might entail.

The chapter is organised in three main sections. It begins by considering the changing nature of debates and discussions around disadvantage, outlining the conceptual shift in thinking over the last few years towards the idea of social exclusion. As well as considering the different dimensions and changing scale of disadvantage, some attention will be given to different theories of disadvantage and exclusion, and particularly the spatial and temporal dimensions of exclusion. The chapter then goes on to discuss disadvantage in rural areas, looking at how early debates around ‘rural deprivation’ have been superseded by others around a wider notion of ‘social exclusion’. Thus the debate on disadvantage in rural areas mirrors quite closely the more general debate, although with distinct concerns and issues. Is the nature of disadvantage in rural areas different? Or its extent? Or its experience? In the final section some consideration is given to how disadvantage, particularly in rural areas, might be measured.

I. Shifting terms: disadvantage, poverty, deprivation and social exclusion

In recent years the term 'poverty' has seemingly been replaced in academic, policy and political circles by the more encompassing, and perhaps less precise notion of social exclusion (MacGregor 2003). For some these developments have signalled a productive opening up of the debate away from what was often regarded as an over-preoccupation with measuring the numbers below certain income thresholds. With 'social exclusion' the debate could move to embrace the multiplicity of factors which might affect people's life chances, as well as signal the fact that the excluding is a process, implying agency and an idea of groups actually doing the excluding (Burchardt *et al* 2002a: 4). For some this meant the possibility of moving away from the tendency to 'blame the victim' for their individualised situation, and look more towards systemic and societal factors. However, the rush to embrace the idea of social exclusion has not been greeted with wholehearted approval. Some regard it as a synonym; merely a polite way of discussing poverty, or have watched with dismay how the focus of attention has fallen on those labelled socially excluded as 'the poorest of the poor', and alongside this narrowing of focus has come a behavioural approach in which the attitudes, activities and behaviour of the poor are the subject of policy attention (Levitas 1998).

Moving towards social exclusion: debates on poverty and deprivation

In the UK much of the post-1945 debate around poverty was framed in terms of the comprehensive citizenship rights which were thought to be associated with the Beveridge welfare state. The 're-discovery' of poverty in the 1960s and early 1970s (Abel Smith and Townsend 1965) was part of a research tradition which refined a conceptualisation of poverty in relation to the society in which people live. Poverty was a relative concept, and by developing the notion of 'relative deprivation', meaning 'an inability to participate in activities which were customarily associated with that society', Townsend's landmark study of poverty in the UK (1979) encapsulated this approach. Research on poverty after Townsend has focused on debating the connection between relative deprivation and inequality, over the suitability of income as a proxy for poverty, and over the framing of an appropriate 'threshold' or poverty line below which an individual or household could be considered to be in poverty. These debates continue today, and have been given an enhanced political edge given the more recent pledge made by the Prime Minister at

the Beveridge Lecture in March 1999 to abolish child poverty within twenty years and halve it in ten (Blair 1999b). Slower progress than hoped for (Piachaud and Sutherland 2001) has caused some difficulty for the government, and has led to a consultation exercise on acceptable definitions of child poverty (DWP 2002a, 2003). Townsend's definition of poverty involves the idea of participation in the activities of a society. It is this notion that forms part of the conceptual shift which began to take place in the mid-1990s (Room 1995a). The importance of participation in a society is central to the idea of social exclusion.

Definitions and theories of social exclusion

The Social Exclusion Unit, launched by the new Labour government in December 1997, has a broad cross-cutting remit to tackle social exclusion, which it defines in these terms:

Social exclusionincludes poverty and low income, but is broader and addresses some of the wider causes and consequences of poverty. The government has defined social exclusion as: 'a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown'.

(Social Exclusion Unit 2001b: 10)

The Social Exclusion Unit suggests that the scale of social exclusion depends on the kinds of aspects of exclusion at stake:

- *The 'most extreme forms of multiple deprivation' (for example rough sleeping) affect 'a fraction of one percent'*
- *'Significant problems' (for example 16-18 year olds not in learning or work) are suffered by 'almost ten per cent'*
- *Those 'in some way at risk' (for example children growing up in low income households) amount to 'as many as a third or more'*

(Social Exclusion Unit 2001b: 11)

The papers collected in Room (1995a) encapsulate the debate in the early stages of the transition towards a focus on social exclusion. The contrast between poverty and social exclusion is based on different understandings, relating to two different intellectual traditions: an Anglo-Saxon liberal individualist tradition, which looks at the

resources available to individuals in a market-oriented society, and a continental republican tradition in which the concern is over the extent that society's members are integrated in a collective moral social order (Room 1995b: 5-6). Room indicates that:

The notion of poverty is primarily focused upon distributional issues: the lack of resources at the disposal of an individual or a household. In contrast, notions such as social exclusion focus primarily on relational issues, in other words, inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power

(Room 1995b: 5).

The shifting focus, and the emphasis on social exclusion, is captured by Room (1995c: 233-4) as

a three way broadening of perspective:

- *from income/expenditure to multi-dimensional disadvantage*
- *from a moment in time to dynamic analysis*
- *from the individual or household to the local community in its spatial dimension.*

Fundamentally social exclusion is about more than just money, has a temporal or dynamic dimension in which duration matters, and has a community and spatial dimension in which where one lives also matters. A focus on the dynamics of poverty and disadvantage partly reflects the debate around social exclusion, but also reflects the growing availability of longitudinal data sets through which to explore ideas of durations, spells, entries to and exits from poverty, low income and benefit receipt. The key argument here is that an emphasis on the dynamics of poverty, as a more or less temporary spell rather than a 'state', actually changes not only how poverty comes to be viewed, but also what kinds of policy might be developed in response (Ellwood 1998, Hills 2002). The contrast is between poverty and disadvantage understood as affecting a significant minority, over extended periods of time, or understood as affecting a larger number of people over much shorter spells (Walker 1995, Leisering and Leibfried 1999, Leisering and Walker 1998). In addition to the concern to highlight the temporal aspects of disadvantage, further work has explored

its spatial aspects (Moulaert 1995, Madanipour *et al* 1998)¹⁰. Empirical work here has sought to chart the spatial distribution of poverty and disadvantage (DETR 2000d, 2001b), the extent to which poverty is concentrated in some areas, and at some scales, rather than others (Townsend 1979, Fieldhouse and Tye 1996, Berthoud 2001, McCulloch 2001) and the existence or otherwise of 'area effects' (Buck 2001, McCulloch 2001), in which the concentration of disadvantaged people in particular places creates certain additional externalities, increasing the disadvantage faced by those individuals. These debates have tended to feed into policy discussions around the justification for area-based resource targeting, which we discuss more fully in Chapter 3. Alongside these discussions of the spatial aspects of disadvantage (i.e. concentrations of disadvantage and the polarisation between areas), a further spatial dimension is added when issues of rural-urban contrast are introduced, to which we turn in section II of this chapter.

Most of the debate around social exclusion has so far concerned different understandings of the concept itself. Levitas (1998) sought to examine different discourses of social exclusion as the debate unfolded at political and academic level. She identified three 'clusters' of ideas, organised into ideological/political discourses, which form the basis for different perspectives on social exclusion: a redistributive discourse ('RED'), which focuses on poverty and a lack of material resources; a social integrationist discourse ('SID'), which focuses on the importance of employment as a source of integration; and a moral underclass discourse ('MUD'), in which behavioural and cultural aspects of poverty are highlighted, and where an 'underclass' exists with different norms to the rest of society. These three discourses represent different ways of framing an understanding of the problem of social exclusion and potential solutions. Fundamentally the social excluded face problems either because they lack money (RED), work (SID) or morals (MUD). Levitas suggested that New Labour's approach to tackling social exclusion primarily emphasised work, but has also involved behavioural understandings of exclusion. For Bauman (1998), the emphasis on work is misguided. In post-modern societies employment no longer provides the integrating force it once did. Poverty must now be considered in terms of the inability of people to participate in the cultural life of society. Since culture is increasingly focused around consumption norms and the commodification of different lifestyles, the poor in this view are considered as 'flawed

¹⁰ Interestingly, there are few studies which have sought to combine both temporal and spatial approaches, but for some recent exceptions, see DETR (2000, 2001) and Lupton and Power (2002).

consumers'. However Byrne (1999) takes issue with this perspective, and argues that social exclusion should best be understood in the context of changes in the structure of labour markets under late capitalism. He points particularly to the rise of temporary, casual, low paid and low skilled employment, underpinned by an insecure welfare system for those of working age, where there is a considerable amount of 'churning' of people in and out of 'flexible' employment at the bottom of the labour market. The effect is that the socially excluded form a 'reserve army' which acts as a disciplinary threat to those in employment.

Following Berghman (1995), Shucksmith *et al* (1996: 6) argue that:

Poverty is an outcome, denoting an inability to share in the everyday lifestyles of the majority because of a lack of resources (often taken to be disposable income). Social exclusion is a multi-dimensional, dynamic concept which refers to a breakdown or malfunctioning of the major societal systems that should guarantee the social integration of the individual or household.

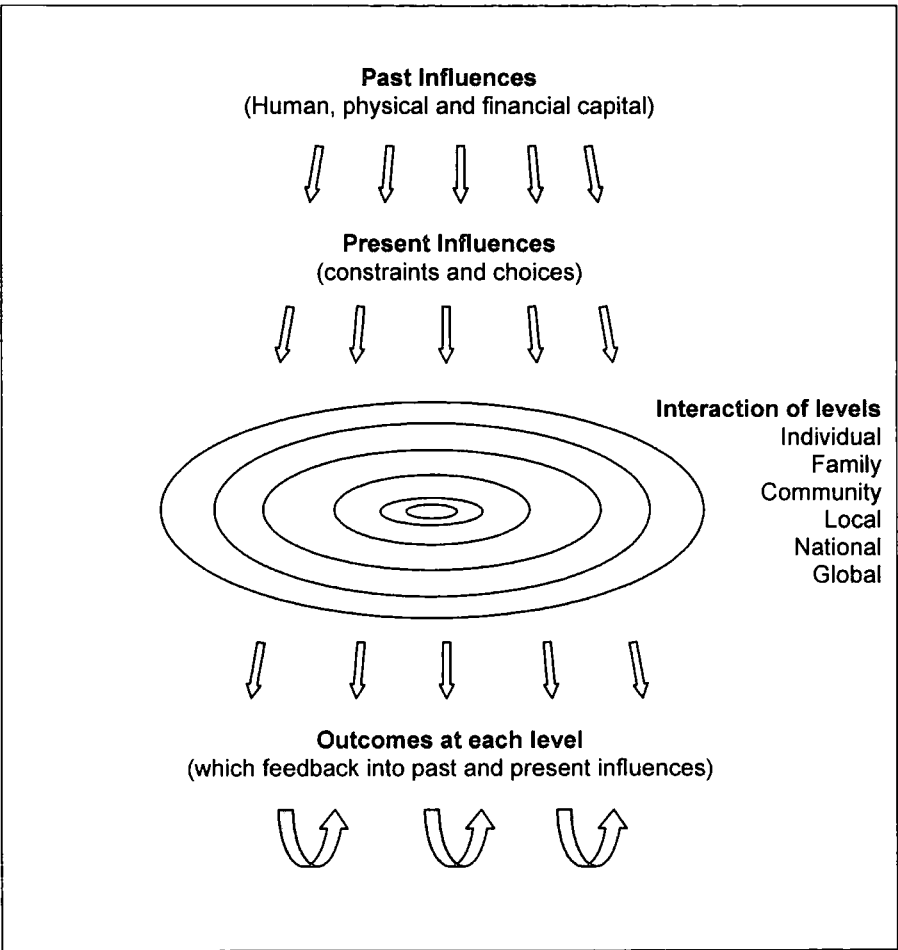
This is an important definition in that it enables an examination of different dimensions of disadvantage through explorations of system failure, through processes of exclusion rather than merely counting the victims (Shucksmith 2000b: 16). Philip and Shucksmith (2003) refer to the need to analyse the implications for individuals, households and localities of the interaction of four overlapping spheres of integration through which resources are allocated: market processes; state systems of services and transfer payments; services and activities provided through the voluntary sector; and finally those provided through the informal reciprocal solidarities of kin and friendship. This is a particularly useful conception for examining systems and spheres of integration, and facilitates a consideration of the role of community development and the voluntary and community sectors in addressing issues of disadvantage, a point which is further explored in Chapter 3. A similar approach, based on different spheres and forms of participation, is used by Burchardt *et al* (1999, 2002b) in their attempt to frame an operationalisable definition of social exclusion, in which "An individual is socially excluded if he or she does not participate in key activities of the society in which he or she lives" (2002b: 30). Their research considers four key dimensions of participation: consumption, production, political engagement and social interaction.

Arguably Bill Jordan (1996, 1998, 2000, 2003) has developed the most sophisticated theory of social exclusion, linked to the Weberian idea of social closure (Parkin 1979). Jordan uses 'club theory', an approach initially framed within public choice approaches to political economy (Buchanan 1965), to develop his account of social exclusion (Jordan 1996: 40-79). Social exclusion occurs as a consequence of the fragmentation of traditional social collectivities into narrower solidarities, which become more or less exclusive, and highly stratified and selective, societal 'clubs'. Clubs imply membership, and the benefits of membership are secured by pooling resources and membership contributions, by externalising any costs, and by excluding those who might themselves cost more or otherwise dilute the collective gain. Jordan's basic thesis is that the narrowing of solidarities into clubs serves to exclude those who cannot make the required contributions of membership because they lack material resources and other capacities and they face higher risks.

Although Jordan's account is theoretically well developed, it does not say much about what kinds of resources are at stake as potential membership contributions. As we will see in later chapters, it might be fruitful to use Bourdieu's social theory in this context, to think of resources as different forms of capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). In this extended view, the excluded come to be excluded because they lack not only material resources, but also social, cultural and political resources with which to participate in a variety of 'fields'. The theory is based around the idea of participation and involvement – and their counterparts, non-participation and non-involvement. This provides a conceptual link not only to theories of social exclusion based on the idea of participation, but also to the increasing political and policy emphasis on encouraging participation and involvement, which will be explored in more depth in Chapter 3.

Burchardt *et al* (2002a) develop a framework for understanding social exclusion which incorporates past influences, present influences and outcomes at a range of different and interacting levels, such as individual, family, community, local, national and global (see Figure 2.1 below). This model is useful not only because it incorporates the idea of different forms of capital, but also because it involves a notion of temporality in the production of specific outcomes, alongside the idea of different interacting levels and spaces.

Figure 2.1 A framework for analysing social exclusion



(Source: Burchardt *et al* 2002a: 9)

Having considered debates around poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and participation in general terms, the next section will examine the parallel debate which has applied some of these ideas in a rural context.

II. Disadvantage in rural areas

There has been a growing research literature examining the existence and extent of poverty and disadvantage in rural areas in Britain (Shaw 1979a, McLaughlin 1986, Bradley 1987, Cloke *et al* 1994, Shucksmith *et al* 1996, Kenway 2000, Shucksmith 2000b). Broadly the debate has moved from a concern to raise the profile of the distinctiveness of 'rural deprivation', then to efforts to measure its dimensions, and then from this concern with 'counting the poor' to explore the diverse (and theoretically problematic) experiences of disadvantage faced by different groups in

different rural areas (Cloke *et al* 1994, Woodward 1996). In recent years this focus on 'rural lifestyles', on the differentiated experience of disadvantage, and of the need to address the concerns of 'others' in rural areas (Philo 1992) appears to have dominated much of the research in this field, inspired to some degree by the apparent 'cultural turn' in parts of the social sciences (Cloke and Little 1997). However, mirroring the development of general debates detailed above, concerns regarding 'social exclusion' in rural areas have more recently animated research on disadvantage in rural areas.

Rural deprivation: planning and services or low incomes?

It was not until the late 1970s that issues of rural deprivation began to rise up the political and academic agenda. Bradley *et al* (1985) note how rural local authorities, and other pressure groups, began to lobby around the idea of rural deprivation in the mid-1970s when targeted resources were being designated for inner urban areas. Earlier studies of rural issues tended either to relate to specific issues around land use planning and agriculture, or sociological examinations of 'village life' in the 'community studies' tradition (Crow and Allen 1994). In the late 1970s however, a number of academics and lobby groups began more detailed investigations of problems in rural areas, including studies of transport and accessibility (Moseley 1977, 1979), incomes (Thomas and Winyard 1979) and land use (Rose *et al* 1979).

The papers in Shaw (1979a) perhaps best exemplify the dominance at this time of a tradition of research on rural deprivation which gave particular emphasis to 'physical' issues of services, planning and accessibility. In this framework the specific and distinctive nature of rural deprivation relates to the consequences for rural populations of a lack of services. Shaw (1979b: 182-3) suggested that rural deprivation could best be understood as a dynamic, cumulative and reinforcing combination of three 'types' of deprivation: 'household deprivation' (in the form of low income and changing housing markets), 'opportunity deprivation' (access difficulties in three spheres: employment, private sector facilities and public sector services) and 'mobility deprivation' (inability to access private transport and inadequate public transport). In this model of a 'rural deprivation cycle' household deprivation has a similar character in both urban and rural areas, and it is mobility deprivation which presents "*the nub of the real rural problem*" (1979a: 189). This makes it harder for specific groups to adjust to opportunity deprivation, and this in turn perpetuates household deprivation.

Whilst Shaw's analysis focused on the physical aspects of rural deprivation, others sought to examine the significance of low incomes in rural areas. This tradition perhaps makes more explicit the class and income differences within rural areas, and gives less emphasis to the argument that rural populations are 'all in the same boat'. McLaughlin's study for the Department of the Environment and the Rural Development Commission caused some controversy at the time in finding higher degrees of poverty and deprivation than previously thought (McLaughlin 1986, Bradley 1987). Carried out in 1980, and using income data from 876 households in five case study areas, McLaughlin found that approximately 25% of households in rural areas were living in or on the margins of poverty, using the standard and well-known measure of poverty derived from Townsend (1979), where "households with incomes of up to 139% of their supplementary benefit entitlement are identified as living in or on the margins of poverty" (McLaughlin 1986: 294). Remarkably, fairly consistent aggregates were found across the case study areas, ranging from 21.4% in Suffolk to 27.3% in Northumberland, producing an average of 24.9%, or "McLaughlin's 25%" (Cloke *et al* 1994: 16). The study was received sceptically within government, and was never finally published, but was seemingly quite influential beyond (ACORA 1990). In addition, the research calculated a further measure of the proportion of households with incomes at less than 80% of the locally derived mean household income. By this measure, an average of 51% of households were in or on the margins of poverty across the five case study areas (Bradley 1987: 153). This emphasises a further aspect of the debate, that rural areas have relatively high proportions of both wealthy and poor households. McLaughlin (1986:294-6) argued in this respect that:

The full extent of the rural poor's marginalisation is underlined by the patterns of inequality in the distribution of household income. In contrast to the national pattern.....in which 11% of households had gross disposable incomes of at least three times their [Supplementary Benefit] level, the corresponding rural aggregate was 26%.

Significantly, the two strongest sources or risks of disadvantage were old age, and low wages, in, for example, farming, tourism and catering. Elderly people, particularly those living alone, were the group most at risk of poverty. On average across the five areas, the probability of being in or on the margins of poverty for elderly households was 0.54, compared to 0.19 for families with dependent children (Bradley 1987: 164).

From rural deprivation to rural lifestyles

In the early 1990s two subsequent pieces of research moved the debate beyond the issues raised by McLaughlin. Both argued that greater importance should be given to the contested understandings of what deprivation might mean in a rural context, and that hitherto research had assumed it was an unproblematic and operationalisable concept. Scott *et al* (1991: 24) noted the limitations of McLaughlin's survey research (in particular that it provided a fragile basis upon which to explain deprivation in rural areas) and sought instead to examine deprivation in specific case study settings in the Peak District, using a variety of intensive qualitative methods. They were particularly exercised by the specific sociology of village life, and how this may in itself affect how deprivation is identified, recognised and measured. Deprivation is likely to be 'hidden' because people are thinly dispersed, may have restricted expectations or understandings of what deprivation might entail and may not wish to have their deprivation recorded, identified or dealt with. In addition it might be hidden from view by researchers (through use of blunt concepts and methods) and practitioners (who might unintentionally overlook the interests and issues of those with fewer resources in efforts to promote the 'community' as a whole) (Scott *et al* 1991: 20-21).

McLaughlin's survey research was subsequently updated and extended a decade later in the 'Rural Lifestyles' study (Clope *et al* 1994, 1995, 1997), undertaken in 1990 for the Rural Development Commission, the Department of the Environment and the Economic and Social Research Council. This aimed to address a number of questions left unresolved in the earlier study, which was criticised for being too narrowly conceived and, given a sample of only 150 households in each of the five case study areas, for the potential unrepresentativeness of the findings (Clope *et al* 1994: 16-17, 1995: 90). The Rural Lifestyles research covered 3000 households in 12 areas, but also sought to extend the range of issues to be analysed. In particular the research team contended that "*we require a redirection of the focus of research towards a greater understanding of different cultural contexts with which rural deprivation is intertwined*" (Clope *et al* 1994: 14). In particular this involved a close examination not just of deprivation as a material and concrete concern, but also of the differential experiences of deprivation in rural areas, so that:

research must move away from being solely reliant on externally defined 'objective' criteria towards an approach that encompasses the differences of experience to the changing material and cultural conditions of rural

life.....[which] necessarily involves an attempt to present a wider understanding of rural lifestyle than just an account of the material conditions affecting supposedly deprived groups

(Cloke et al 1994: 17).

Sources of difference included the nature of rural areas themselves, the range of groups which may experience deprivation, but also the experience of deprivation itself. Thus different groups in the same place may have different needs, expectations, willingness to cope with problems, strategies for coping and cultural views of what rural life should be like. The stress on differentiated experience of deprivation opened up the question of whether people's own conception of their circumstances coincided with externally derived categorisations of 'deprivation'. Where they do not, the research highlighted the importance of whether "*people's own expressions of their problems [are] restricted by limited expectations, the fear of stigma, the wish to characterise themselves as self-reliant, or other such factors*" (Cloke et al 1994: 17, 1997: 213).

Although the research was not explicitly framed by a multidimensional view of disadvantage, or by the idea of 'social exclusion', it is interesting to note that it broadened the material scope of enquiry from income deprivation to encompass issues of housing, population change, work, mobility and accessibility, service provision and living in a rural environment. Issues highlighted from the research included the role of in-migration and its effect on housing competition; the restructuring of the rural economy and the continuing difficulties of unemployment, underemployment, informal labour markets and seasonal, casual and part-time employment, lack of private and public transport for particular groups within and between households, and consequently a differentiated experience of access to increasingly urban based services (Cloke et al 1994: 161-9).

Regarding income levels, the research highlighted the importance of different 'countrysides', noting the existence across the 12 case study areas of 'low income' (e.g. Nottinghamshire, Northumberland, North Yorkshire) and 'high income' (e.g. Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, West Sussex) areas. This is in contrast to McLaughlin's finding of similar deprivation levels across different rural areas. Using the Townsend indicator, deprivation levels amongst households across the twelve case study areas ranged from 6.4% (West Sussex) to 39.2% (Nottinghamshire) with an average of 23.4%. The research team reported that in some areas:

there is a strong case for suggesting that households in rural areas have income levels which will create difficulties for them in the purchase of housing, mobility, leisure activities and a host of other opportunitiesUsing the Townsend indicator of household incomes less than 140% of state benefit entitlement, nine out of our twelve study areas contained 20% or more households which were classified as being in, or on the margins of poverty

(Cloke *et al* 1994: 164)

Importantly, the research again found polarised incomes within rural areas, with high proportions of both high and low incomes. It also argued that the suggestion that rural poverty would increasingly become anachronistic (as lower income households move out or die off) was misplaced. In many areas low income households were continuing to move to rural areas, and this may serve to reproduce problems of deprivation in many rural areas (Cloke *et al* 1995: 94-5). However, the very notion of deprivation was problematic for many respondents who were generally reluctant to acknowledge its existence in their areas. For some it was stigmatic, but for many others it was 'out of sight, out of mind' (Cloke *et al* 1995: 100).

From rural lifestyles to social exclusion in a rural context

It was not until the second half of the 1990s that 'social exclusion' began to form a reference framework for studies of disadvantage in rural areas. Models of social exclusion and integration typically start from the question of where individuals and households get what they need for their 'living' and welfare (Philip and Shucksmith 1999, 2003, Goodin 2000). Philip and Shucksmith define social exclusion as: "a *breakdown or malfunctioning of the major societal systems that should guarantee the integration of individuals and households within their communities*" (1999: 15). Thus individuals and households typically make their living, meet their needs and 'get by' through the operation of private markets (for labour, for housing, for consumer goods and services), through state services (the welfare state as traditionally conceived), through families and informal care and through the community/voluntary sector. In this model the voluntary sector is seen in terms of what it may contribute to the inclusion or exclusion of individuals in the broadest sense.

Shucksmith and colleagues suggested in their literature review that despite two large scale national surveys, a number of local studies of deprivation and a wide range of research covering different aspects of disadvantage, there were still substantial gaps in research knowledge regarding disadvantage in rural areas (Shucksmith *et al* 1996). In particular, they indicated that:

little is known about the dynamics of rural life and the trajectories of individuals in and out of disadvantage.....more research should attempt to transcend the crude "arithmetic of woe" to explore the processes and system failures behind social exclusion in a rural context.

(Shucksmith *et al* 1996: i)

The overriding priority for future research suggested by the review involved a more detailed exploration of the dynamics of disadvantage in rural areas:

Our knowledge of disadvantage in rural areas is based on static snapshots, derived from surveys at a point in time. Little is known about the dynamics of disadvantage in rural areas, either of individual experience or of the changing forces which act unevenly upon rural people and rural areas.....For example, we have no knowledge of whether those individuals identified by McLaughlin as experiencing poverty in rural England in 1980 were still experiencing poverty when Cloke undertook his survey in 1990. Are we dealing with short spells of poverty experienced by many people in rural society, or long spells of poverty experienced only by a small minority.

(Shucksmith *et al* 1996: 67).

The dynamics of disadvantage and social exclusion

Two research projects took up the challenge of examining the dynamics of disadvantage in rural areas, using emerging data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) (Kempson and White 1998, Chapman *et al* 1998). Partly reflecting the emergence of debates around 'social exclusion', this approach attempts to investigate the processes of exclusion using longitudinal data to explore the different trajectories of individuals and households (Philip and Shucksmith 1999). In terms of disadvantage, this facilitates an understanding of the wider factors which might lie behind 'pathways' into and out of situations of disadvantage. This approach typically

concentrates firstly on the groups most at risk of disadvantage and secondly on the types of risk factor they face.

Use of the BHPS to compare dynamic experiences between individuals and households in rural and urban areas has yielded some interesting results (Chapman *et al* 1998, Phimister *et al* 2000, Kempson and White 2003). The research indicated that on average over the first five waves of the panel, from 1991 to 1996, 24% of the population overall had incomes below half mean income, when mean income was taken either as 1991 or as each subsequent year. In rural areas, defined quite tightly as those settlements with populations of less than 3,000, the figure was 18% compared to 25% in other areas (Phimister *et al* 2000: 410). Confirming earlier findings of a greater polarisation of incomes in rural areas, 18% of the population as a whole had incomes on average of one and a half times the mean income. In rural areas this figure was 21%, and in non-rural areas 17%. Mobility between income groups is more prevalent in the middle income groups than at the top and bottom. Most people in both the lowest and highest income groups do not move into different groups. Over the five waves 33% of the population in rural areas had experienced at least one spell of low income, compared to 42% in other areas. Persistent poverty, defined as incomes below half the mean on all five successive waves, was approximately 9% of individuals in rural areas (Phimister *et al* 2000: 412). Similar groups of people in both rural and non-rural areas are most likely to experience spells of low income (namely retired people, dependent children, single elderly households, households with no earners and lone parents) and persistently low income. Again the chances of 'escaping' from low incomes are similar between rural and non-rural areas. One key difference however is the role played by low pay in rural areas, where higher proportions of households with at least one earner in rural areas experience low and persistently low income compared to non-rural areas (Phimister *et al* 2000: 413).

Exploring the links between aspects of social exclusion in rural areas

Most recently the Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned ten discrete projects under its 'Action in Rural Areas' programme, which were in part designed to take up some of research issues previously outlined in 1996 (Shucksmith *et al* 1996, see also Shucksmith 2000b). Studies looked at, among other things, income dynamics as described above (Chapman *et al* 1998), labour market participation in different rural contexts (Monk *et al* 1999), social housing (Bevan *et al* 2001), combining work and family life (Mauthner *et al* 2001), and, with a specific focus on young people, a series

of studies which highlighted the links between the labour market (Furlong and Cartmel 2000), transport (Storey and Brannen 2000) and the housing market and family formation (Rugg and Jones 1999, Pavis *et al* 2000).

A much more complex picture of disadvantage in rural areas emerges from these studies, demonstrating perhaps the differing experiences of exclusion over a broader range of factors, affecting a wide range of groups and in different ways depending on different rural contexts. Key themes which cut across the studies include some distinctive difficulties which people face in rural areas, including high prices for private owner occupied housing, limited availability of social housing, restricted employment opportunities, the importance of private transport and the inadequacies of public transport, the significant role in close-knit communities of 'word of mouth' and informal networks to access both employment and housing opportunities.

The guiding theme appears to be a concern with exploring the dynamics and concrete manifestations of different aspects of social exclusion in a range of different rural contexts. In particular the studies appear to be addressing Room's characterisation of social exclusion as a multidimensional, dynamic and contextualised phenomenon (Room 1995c). Hence some of the studies explore aspects of disadvantage other than just low income, some have explored transitions over time, and some have adopted methodologies which consider contrasting case study areas. However, although the links between different aspects of exclusion appear to have been explored, the relationships between different 'systems' have not. The different operational logics and practical implications of market, state, voluntary/community and familial/informal systems of welfare in rural areas do not appear to be discussed at length in the studies, even though they have been the subject to some prior (Shucksmith and Chapman 1998, Philip and Shucksmith 1999, Shucksmith and Philip 2000), and subsequent (Shucksmith 2001, 2003, Philip and Shucksmith 2003) theorisation about social exclusion. Thus there is a strong case for the argument that the operation of housing and labour markets are heavily implicated in influencing life chances and life choices for people in rural areas (Shucksmith 2001: 15), but the role of other statutory, third and informal sectors does not seem to merit much attention, even by way of noting their (relative) insignificance. Exploration of the role of the voluntary sector, and of community development, appears not to have been addressed. This remains a fundamental gap in our knowledge not only of responses to disadvantage and social exclusion, but of community development and the voluntary sector generally. We shall return to this theme in the next chapter when

we consider potential policy and practical responses to social exclusion in rural areas.

A geography of disadvantage?

Meanwhile attempts to theorise the underlying causes of disadvantage in rural areas continue. One, focusing on rural areas as units of analysis, calls for an examination of the comparative performance of rural regions and localities (Marsden 1999, Philip and Shucksmith 1999). However disadvantaged areas and disadvantaged people are not necessarily the same thing. Firstly not all disadvantaged people live in areas seen or designated as disadvantaged. Although it is often argued that deprivation and poverty have become increasingly concentrated in particular areas (Social Exclusion Unit 2000), it is clear that such areas (be they cities, wards, neighbourhoods or estates) do not exhaust the scale and scope of disadvantage. Shucksmith *et al* (1996: 20) acknowledge this problem, which may be even more acute in areas said to have a more dispersed pattern of disadvantage:

There are ... dangers in attempting to identify specific geographic areas that appear to be suffering from disadvantage. Most households suffering from disadvantage will not live in priority areas identified through the use of such indicators. People, not areas, suffer rural disadvantage, and as such an area-based approach may be inappropriate.

The press release accompanying the publication of “*The State of the Countryside 2000*” (Countryside Agency 2000a) indicated that “*Behind the rosy image of the rural idyll lie some very real problems of rural isolation, a declining environment, pressurised and declining services and a vulnerable rural economy. Disadvantage can be hard to uncover because it is often masked by the proximity of affluence*” (Countryside Agency 2000b).

Secondly, discussion of ‘deprived neighbourhoods’ often refers to more than just a consideration of disadvantaged individuals or households. Reference is also made to a number of social and economic processes which are viewed as characteristic of deprived areas: for example, housing decline and abandonment, low educational achievement, substance misuse, high crime rates and dependence on informal economic activity (see, for example, Social Exclusion Unit 2000: 23-31). There are dangers here of fuelling a stigmatising ‘ghettoisation’ of those areas deemed to be

deprived, but what matters in these discussions is the combination of processes that result in an area being categorised as deprived.

III. Measuring disadvantage – the role of indicators

For many years at least part of the debate around disadvantage, both generally and in a rural context, has concerned the extent to which it could be identified or captured in official statistics (Shucksmith *et al* 1996, Noble and Wright 2000). This final part of the chapter reviews continuing efforts to measure disadvantage, and subsequently to refine instruments to identify the geography of disadvantage.

'Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion' – the role of indicators

On the arrival in 1997 of what was considered to be a government more sympathetic to concerns around poverty and disadvantage, a case was made around the need to develop a more systematic approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion. This will be covered in more detail in Chapter 3, but it is appropriate at this stage to highlight the fact that one aspect of the debate was the argument that there should be an annual report monitoring the progress in addressing key indicators of poverty and social exclusion, and in meeting defined targets for poverty reduction (Howarth and Kenway 1998). In response annual reports continue to be produced both by the government each September (DSS 1999, 2000, DWP 2001, 2002b) and independently by the New Policy Institute each December (Howarth *et al* 1998, 1999, Rahman *et al* 2000, 2001, Palmer *et al* 2002). Both of these series involve a wide range of indicators covering different age groups through the life cycle ('children and young people' 'working age' 'older people') and statistics covering indicators of poverty at 'community' level. There has been some concern that the indicators are too wide ranging, allowing governments the possibility to 'pick and choose' how progress in some areas is highlighted while decline or lack of progress in others is overlooked. In addition there has been concern that a focus on quantifiable indicators downplays the importance of the everyday lived experience of poverty and social exclusion. It cannot thus easily be seen as a guide to appropriate policy interventions (Oppenheim 1998).

These reports allow some consideration of progress (or otherwise) over time on key headline indicators, but they do not differentiate or offer comparisons between areas. However, more recently Harrop and Palmer (2002) have produced an analysis for

the Countryside Agency of urban-rural comparisons of 51 indicators in 42 categories drawn from the data in the two annual series, as well as a comparison between ‘accessible’ and ‘remote’ rural areas. They conclude that the range of indicators “*reveal significant levels of poverty and social exclusion in rural England*” (Harrop and Palmer 2002: 3). Echoing previous findings, they indicate that in 2000/1, 18% of the rural population (amounting to 2.6 million people) lived in households with incomes below the government’s main threshold of low income. Table 2.1 indicates this, showing the number of people in households with low incomes in remote rural, accessible rural and urban districts. Three low income thresholds, 60%, 50% and 40% of (Great Britain) median net disposable household income, after housing costs, adjusted for the size of the household, are presented to show the extent and intensity of low income.

Table 2.1 Individuals in households below low income thresholds in England

	Population		Below median 60%		Below median 50%		Below median 40%	
- Remote rural	5.3 m	100%	1.1 m	21%	0.7 m	13%	0.4 m	7%
- Accessible rural	8.7 m	100%	1.4 m	17%	0.9 m	11%	0.5 m	6%
Rural (combined)	14.0 m	100%	2.6 m	18%	1.6 m	11%	0.9 m	7%
Urban	34.9 m	100%	8.4 m	24%	5.5 m	16%	3.0 m	9%
Total	48.9 m	100%	11 m	22%	7.1 m	14%	3.9 m	8%

Source: Households Below Average Income 2000/01 (Family Resources Survey 2000/01), DWP, 2002 (Harrop and Palmer 2002: 13)

Guided by data availability, Harrop and Palmer analyse the data at district level, using the Countryside Agency’s classification of districts, developed by Oxford University, into ‘urban’, ‘accessible rural’ and ‘remote rural’. By this classification approximately 29% of the population in England live in rural districts, and nearly a quarter (23.6%) of all low income households live in rural districts. Comparing all 51 indicators in the analysis, Harrop and Palmer conclude:

Overall, there is less poverty and social exclusion in rural authorities than urban authorities: the rural statistic is better than the urban one on 30 of 51 occasions, similar on 18, and worse on 3.....Nevertheless, on nearly all of the indicators, there are significant levels of poverty and exclusion in rural authorities, both remote rural and accessible...Over many of the indicators, ‘remote rural’ areas are noticeably more disadvantaged than ‘accessible rural’ areas: the ‘remote rural’ statistic is worse than the ‘accessible rural’ one on 20 of 36 occasions, similar on 22 and better on

*5 (with 4 for which remote/accessible comparisons are not possible).
More specifically.. 'Remote rural' areas are worse than, or similar to,
'accessible rural' authorities for all of the income, work, health and
housing indicators.*

(Harrop and Palmer 2002: 4)

From the ILC, to the ILD, to the IMD and beyond

A second form in which the spatiality of deprivation has been considered is in the extent to which it is concentrated in certain areas rather than others. Identifying the specific geography of deprivation has exercised researchers for many years, and there has been a lively continuing debate around the identification, measurement and comparison of deprivation across different areas. This has ranged over discussions of the use and mis-use of area-based statistics, in particular the dangers of the 'ecological fallacy' (Fieldhouse and Tye 1996, McCulloch 2001), the spatial distribution of deprivation (Townsend 1979: 543-564, Fieldhouse and Tye 1996, Berthoud 2001) and questions of appropriate statistical technique (Bradford *et al* 1995, Robson *et al* 1995, Connolly and Chisholm 1999).

When the new government entered office in May 1997 the standard measure of area deprivation was the 1991 Index of Local Conditions (ILC) (Bradford *et al* 1995, Robson *et al* 1995), which used indicators at enumeration district, ward and district level based largely on 1991 Census data to generate an overall index for comparison between areas. Despite criticisms the government continued to defend its use:

*The Index has been subject to criticism – mainly from areas that would
lose out if targeting were to be based on it (including some rural areas)
and some academics. However, it is accepted that there is no ideal way
of measuring deprivation and the broad message from most academics
and other commentators seems to be that the ILC is the best means
available of measuring relative deprivation in a consistent way across the
whole country*

DETR (1997: Annex B, para 1)

However Robson and colleagues were asked to update and revise the ILC to incorporate new data from 1996, changes to variables and some methodological revisions. However, the basic structure of resultant index, the 1998 Index of Local Deprivation (ILD), remained the same. Connolly and Chisholm (1999), based on

work in County Durham (Local Identity Agency 1998b), mounted a substantial methodological challenge to its use as a basis for prioritisation and funding allocations to local areas. They argued that the index suffered both from significant cross-correlations between supposedly independent variables which comprise the index, and, by use of chi-square scores, from scale dependency. This echoed previous arguments made over the use of the technique for the classification of Rural Development Areas (Hodge *et al* 1996). Significant correlation between variables implied that an index which nominally offered equal weighting to its component indicators actually involved disguised distortions to weighting between variables (Connolly and Chisholm 1999: 471). More importantly, however, scale dependency meant that wards with higher populations were more likely to be given higher chi-square scores for a given level of indicated deprivation. This was demonstrated by an artificial thought experiment which examined the ILD scores for County Durham's existing 152 electoral wards, in comparison with those for 51 larger 'synthetic' wards constructed from the 152. Approximately 17,000 people (3.4%) featured in the top 80 most deprived wards in the North East when 152 wards were examined, but 37,000 people (7.4%) would be featured in the most deprived 80 wards in the North East using the 51 synthetic wards (Connolly and Chisholm 1999: 468).

Scale dependency was acknowledged as a weakness in the large scale review of the Index which was carried out throughout 1999, and which eventually led to the publication of the new *Indices of Deprivation* in August 2000 (DETR 2000b), and which have formed the basis for most analysis of area deprivation in recent years. In this approach a ward-based Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) was created which was argued to be independent of population size. In the old ILD *"The signed chi-squared method conflates the seriousness of the deprivation with the amount, and this gives larger scores for larger areas"* (DETR 2000b: 21, see also DETR 2000c: 55). The new IMD made use of different statistical techniques and the increasing availability and sophistication of ward-based administrative data, particularly around receipt of social security benefits (see also Noble and Wright 2000). Thirty-three indicators were grouped into six deprivation domains - income, employment, health, education, housing and geographical access to services – and then combined with different weights to construct the new IMD. One key aspect of this work is a rejection of the idea that a single overall index can be formulated which would capture the multifaceted nature of deprivation (Noble and Wright 2000: 305). This argument led to the development of the idea of 'bundles' of indicators grouped according to specific aspects of deprivation, such as health, employment and income (Dunn *et al*

1998, Hodge *et al* 2000, Midgley *et al* 2003). This became translated as 'domains' in the IMD, and is also now referred to as 'themes' (Countryside Agency 2003a), allowing different data sets to be used for different purposes, and a focus on particular problems for particular groups of people. Whilst the different domains reflected the multi-dimensional nature of deprivation, their weighting partly reflected a view of their different significance. In the IMD the income and employment domains are weighted more heavily than the others, since it was argued that these were the most significant (DETR 2000c: 59). Ward-level data was published for all 8,414 wards in England, involving the scores and ranks for each ward on the overall IMD and for each domain. Chapter 4 makes some application of this data for County Durham wards and districts.

The IMD and rural areas

The general critique of area-based deprivation indicators has partly come from a rural perspective (Countryside Agency 2003a: 5). This critique appears to have had some influence in the construction of the IMD. As well as avoiding scale dependency, it has been suggested that administrative data is better able to capture the nature of poverty in rural areas than either the ILC or the ILD (Noble and Wright 2000). Additionally the IMD gives some weight to a group of indicators of geographical access to services. Although an improvement on earlier indicators from a rural perspective, it has not wholly escaped criticism. Three further implications of the IMD, and the role of indicators, are worth exploring here.

Firstly, there is an obvious, but sometimes only implicitly acknowledged, 'politics of indicators'. During the final consultation period before the publication of the IMD *The Guardian* published a report entitled "*Cities lose out in poverty league table: Rural areas set to gain more as new index changes priorities*" (Guardian 3rd April 2000). The report quoted a representative from a London borough as follows: "*We don't want to get into this perverse beauty contest but the realities of social exclusion and economic deprivation are apparent for all to see in large parts of Greater London and it would be unfair for resources to be skewed to rural areas.*" Claims were made that the new Index would involve a transfer of resources away from London and other metropolitan areas since it "*failed to acknowledge the scale and depth of the problems of deprivation in large metropolitan authorities, where populations can be more than five times the size of those in shire districts*". Meanwhile, an officer from Easington District Council, in County Durham, which rose dramatically up the rankings in some of the district-based Indices of Deprivation, was reported to have

said "We have always felt the previous method was biased towards the urban conurbations. Areas like this suffer enormous economic and social deprivation"

In later chapters the politics of responding to disadvantage overall are presented in terms of a 'field' characterised by particular 'rules of the game'. Deprivation indicators, and their consequences in terms of resource flows, can be argued to constitute part of the (contested) rules of the game. They set certain stakes where particular places, and types of places become advantaged (in terms of funding) to counter, and perhaps to compensate for, their less advantageous position (in terms of 'need' and deprivation). The quotations above, made in the period before the Index was released, provide some sense of what might be at stake between different areas, along dimensions such as urban-rural, North-South, and large scale metropolitan and other areas. At least some residual part of the technical arguments surrounding indicators and indices is motivated by the likely consequences, and their perceived fairness, for particular local areas. This might also explain the decision by Durham County Council to commission research looking at public expenditure resource allocation mechanisms (Local Identity Agency 1998b, Connolly and Chisholm 1999).

A second linked implication is how rural areas might fare in the new IMD. The incorporation of indicators regarding 'geographical access to services' is likely, other things being equal, to raise the profile and rankings of rural areas, which are often characterised by their lack of proximity to key services. The team responsible for the construction of the Index noted the comments made by consultation responses (DETR 2000c: 24):

Some non-rural respondents criticised the [Access] domain because they said it would prioritise rural concerns. An equally sized group gave their support for the domain because it recognised rural issues. However, the domain is relevant for all areas because access to services is just as important an issue in run-down urban areas, and in the suburbs, as well as in rural areas.

However, the Countryside Agency's (2000c) public response to the new Index stated:

The new Index of Multiple Deprivation is a big improvement on the previous Index of Local Deprivation. The inclusion of the 'access to

services' category is especially welcome because it acknowledges a previously unrecognised problem facing people in remote rural areas..... However, the Index, like any area-based description of deprivation, has limitations - especially for rural areas where problems tend to be less concentrated. Inflexible use of the Index to direct expenditure to areas with concentrations of deprived people would result in large numbers of people in need being overlooked, especially in rural areas.

A later press release indicated that 99% of the wards considered most deprived in terms of access to services were in rural areas (Countryside Agency 2001a). Although the access domain only has a 10% weighting in the overall IMD, its very existence in the IMD had been the source of controversy and for some there has been a sense that rural areas may have gained at the expense of some urban areas.

One potential limitation of the new Index is its reliance on administrative data, and particular relating to the receipt of social security benefits. The IMD reflects an assumption that, until demonstrated otherwise, take-up of benefits is either uniform between areas, or shows no systematic pattern. But this may be questionable (Hodge *et al* 2000: 1870, Noble and Wright 2000: 299). Shucksmith (2000b: 20) argues there is clear evidence that take-up rates are lower in rural areas:

The culture of independence and self-reliance in rural areas would appear to be an important factor mitigating against the collection of state benefits. Individuals [are] reluctant to claim benefit, seeking instead a second or third job, or preferring to live a more spartan existence. Apart from culture, there is a lack of anonymity in collecting benefits (usually at the village post office) and a greater distance to, and general paucity of, information and advice about eligibility for benefits.

The team which constructed the new index recognised this, but argued that

Unfortunately little is known with any certainty about the spatial variation of benefit take-up. None of the evidence provided by research to date is robust enough to apply to the Index. While take-up may vary by area, the administrative data remains a nationally recognised and up-to-date measure of low income for all areas in England.

(DETR 2000c: 6)

Geographical work on take-up has been undertaken in Scotland (Bramley *et al* 2000), and this argued that urban-rural differences in take-up of eligible benefits are mainly accounted for by differences in the relative affluence of areas, rather than their 'rurality' per se. The tendency for eligibility to exceed take-up is far greater in affluent areas, suggesting that poverty in 'unexpected places' might not easily be captured by deprivation measures based on benefit data (Bramley *et al* 2000: 516).

Which rural areas are most disadvantaged?

Whilst the Index of Multiple Deprivation enables a comparison of deprivation across all areas, and has gone some way in highlighting deprivation in areas other than larger towns and cities, it has frequently been argued that comprehensive deprivation indices generally tend to reflect an 'urban bias' (Bruce *et al* 1995, Martin *et al* 2000, Hodge *et al* 2000: 1871). This leads to an argument that 'rural-specific' indicators should be developed, a case which seems stronger insofar as there are marked differences between rural and urban areas. Indicators specifically intended to capture rural experiences have been in development for some time (Dunn *et al* 1998, Hodge *et al* 2000, Midgley *et al* 2003) and a final set has recently been published by the Countryside Agency (2003). These are intended to highlight aspects of deprivation thought to be of relevance more directly to rural areas, on the argument that the IMD does not fully reflect aspects of rural disadvantage (Countryside Agency 2003a: 5). The set of twelve indicators, organised in five themes, are indicated in table 2.2 below.

The new indicators are based on a dataset which is intended to allow comparisons within and between rural areas, rather than with urban areas. Some of these come from the IMD, but the analysis is based only on wards designated as rural using a revised ward-level definition (Countryside Agency 2003a: 6). Wards are then ranked and split into quintiles to facilitate comparisons between rural areas. Maps for each indicator are shown in the report, rather than statistical tables or analyses.

Table 2.2 Countryside Agency Rural Disadvantage Indicators

Theme	Indicator
Income and Financial Disadvantage	1. ID (2000) income deprivation domain – rural ranks
	2. Low income/% households with below 60% of median income
	3. Geographical availability of Post Offices

	4. Geographical availability of Banks/Building Societies
	5. Geographical availability of Cash Points
Employment Disadvantage	6. ID (2000) Employment deprivation domain – rural ranks
Educational Disadvantage	7. ID (2000) Education, skills & training deprivation domain – rural ranks
	8. Geographical availability of Primary Schools
	9. Geographical availability of Secondary Schools
Health Disadvantage	10. ID (2000) Health deprivation and disability domain – rural ranks
	11. Geographical availability of doctors' surgeries
Housing Disadvantage	12. Mortgage Index

(Source: Countryside Agency 2003a)

Many of the indicators show marked income and employment disadvantage in more peripheral areas, such as rural coastal areas, the South West peninsula and areas of the Nottinghamshire and North East coalfields, including areas of County Durham. Access indicators show disadvantage more evenly distributed across the country. Health disadvantage is particularly evident in the North East, whereas housing disadvantage, measured by a district-based 'affordability' measure, is more marked in southern counties.

Although in general it is argued that disadvantage and poverty is more dispersed amidst affluence in rural areas compared to urban areas (Shucksmith 2000b, Countryside Agency 2003a: 5), it is pertinent to ask to what extent poverty is concentrated in particular wards rather than others. This is not a matter of ranking wards on ward-based scores of deprivation, but of examining how many people on low incomes overall live in wards with the highest rates of low income. Harrop and Palmer (2002: 10) have recently analysed the geographical distribution of benefit claimants within rural areas, using ward-level benefit data from 1999 on recipients of means-tested benefits (at the time these were Income Support, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance and Family Credit) as a proxy for low income. Whilst overall 10% of the population in rural wards are recipients (or dependents of recipients) of means-tested benefits, there is some degree of geographical concentration. As Table 2.3 below shows, nearly a quarter of the population in receipt of means tested benefits in rural areas live in those 25% of wards with the highest rates of benefit receipt, but these wards cover just 10% of the rural population. The remaining three quarters of wards cover 90% of the rural population, and 78% of benefit recipients.

Table 2.3 English wards categorised into four quarters by levels of benefit receipt

	1 st Quarter (19%-59%)	2nd Quarter (11%-19%)	3rd Quarter (7%-11%)	4 th Quarter (1%-7%)
Share of total rural population (%)	10	25	32	33
Share of rural benefit recipients and dependents (%)	22	34	27	16

Harrop and Palmer also indicate that almost half of benefit recipients are in the most accessible quarter of rural wards (using the access domain from the IMD), and they suggest that concentrations of low income tend to be found in and around rural towns, rather than in the more remote countryside.

IV. Concluding comments

The discussion in this chapter has moved from conceptualisations and theories of disadvantage, firstly in general terms and then in rural areas, to specific questions of measurement and identification. Research over the last 25 years has developed so that ‘rural deprivation’ (the former favoured description) and ‘social exclusion in rural areas’ (the description currently in favour) have become more salient features of debates over poverty and disadvantage. We might conclude from the evidence discussed in this chapter that disadvantage in rural areas:

- exists, and is measurable
- has similarities, but also significant differences, with disadvantage in urban areas
- tends to appear in statistical analyses as significant, but in lower proportions than in urban areas, and
- remains contested – both within and beyond rural areas, and in discursive and policy making terms.

Having considered the available research evidence on disadvantage in rural areas, and some of the changing terms of the debate, it is appropriate now to ask what kinds of policy and practical responses might be forthcoming. What should we do about disadvantage in rural areas? In particular we have noted at various points that the role of community development and the voluntary sector remains an ‘unturned stone’, despite featuring as a small part of the preliminary discussion and theoretical

development of ideas around social exclusion. Relating community development to ideas of disadvantage and exclusion, Marsden's (1999) review of the future of rural society identified, among a number of pressing research themes, the role played by community development as part of broader strategies for social inclusion and economic development:

Research needs to examine the changing forms of social exclusion in rural areas, to evaluate the efforts of community development to overcome them and to clarify the limits such efforts face in becoming self sustaining

(Marsden 1999: 514).

This has also been echoed by Philip and Shucksmith (1999: 28, 2003: 475), in their suggestion that:

A priority for both research and policy must be to investigate how [community development] approaches might be adapted to empower excluded groups within rural societies, if this is possible.

We turn to this area in the next chapter, where we consider strategic, policy and practical responses to disadvantage in rural areas, noting especially how government policy in this area has taken what we call a 'community turn'.

Chapter 3

The 'community turn' in policy and practice

This chapter extends the discussion in Chapter 2 by looking at political, policy and practical responses to social exclusion and disadvantage. This forms the context in which studies of community-based voluntary action can be placed. In terms of policy development relating to disadvantage in rural areas, policy makers and politicians seem keen to transcend merely charting the existence of disadvantage, and, as part of the agenda of 'what works' and 'evidence-based policy and practice', are seemingly more concerned to know what to do about it. The potential role of community development and the voluntary sector in the government's wider social and economic strategy is discussed here in terms of a 'community turn' in public policy and practice (Macmillan and Townsend 2001, Taylor 2003, Imrie and Raco 2003). It is appropriate to ask how the emphasis on community action in public policy emerged, and to what extent it forms part of a wider social and economic strategy.

The chapter starts from an analysis of the changing welfare state as a response to poverty and disadvantage, but does this from a particular political economy perspective. This is important as it can help explain why community activity in relation to social exclusion may have become more salient in public policy terms. Following an exploration of community-based action in the light of analyses of the 'third way', the chapter then considers the nature of responses to poverty and social exclusion. The argument is that the role of community-based activity reflects quite well the new concern to approach poverty not through cash transfers, but through services, activities and, most significantly for what follows, through projects. Following this the discussion considers the current government's thinking on tackling the specific nature of rural social exclusion, and particularly the role of the voluntary sector and community development in rural areas. The suggestion is that the enhanced role for community-based voluntary action can be understood as a 'community turn' which might form part of a wider 'institutional fix'.

I. The 'community turn' as part of the 'Third Way'

New Labour's social and economic 'project' has been characterised as a 'Third Way' beyond both the old statist notions of traditional labourist social democracy, and the market-centred neo-liberalism of the new right (Giddens 1998, 2000). Although the concept of the 'Third Way' is the source of much debate (Hargreaves and Christie 1998, Hay 1999, Finlayson 2003) it remains an important narrative of what the current government claims to be about. The significance for this thesis lies in the extent to which the 'Third Way' acts as an ideological context which might privilege activity beyond the state in civil society, and in particular community-based voluntary action. Tony Blair himself made the direct connection in a speech to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in January 1999 (Blair 1999a):

In the second half of the century we learnt that government cannot achieve its aims without the energy and commitment of others - voluntary organisations, business, and, crucially, the wider public. That is why the Third Sector is such an important part of the Third Way.....And history shows that the most successful societies are those that harness the energies of voluntary action, giving due recognition to the third sector of voluntary and community organisations.

To make sense of this trend, however, it is necessary to look back over the dramatic shifts in the political economy of social and economic policy of the previous three decades. These shifts have tended to privilege governmental strategies which impose limits on the scope of progressive social policies, as well as those which are not associated with the spiralling costs and inefficiencies said to be characteristic of the public sector. It is amidst this complicated context that an enhanced role for the voluntary sector arises. In short the voluntary sector, and other activities that might reasonably assume a 'community' prefix, are being highlighted because they are relatively inexpensive, not primarily associated with the state, and may offer the prospect of improving the effectiveness of policy in a range of 'wicked' areas.

Pierson (1998a, 1998b: 794) has argued that throughout the 1990s policy makers have placed an increasing emphasis on welfare issues to different policies of 'structural adjustment'. This new focus, which seeks to align policies with what are seen to be the necessities of an increasingly global economic and political system, has replaced earlier concerns with the emergence of a crisis (in the 1970s) and how it came to be contained or managed (in the 1980s). Commentary on the welfare state

in developed societies in the 1970s was marked by a widespread belief in the idea that the apparently comprehensive social democratic welfare state associated with the post-war Beveridge reforms had somehow become unsustainable in the more problematic economic climate. The resultant 'fiscal crisis' was leading to an 'overloaded' or ungovernable state in which increasing public expenditure threatened to crowd out private investment and consumption (O'Connor 1973, King 1975, Gough 1979, Offe 1984, Mishra 1984). Subsequent debate has mainly focused on the different responses of states and political elites to this 'crisis' (Esping-Andersen 1996, Pfaller *et al* 1991, Pierson 1994). In Britain, as in some other states, neo-liberal based governments in the 1980s and early 1990s sought to retrench and reshape the welfare state. For commentators inspired by regulationist theorising (Aglietta 1979, Boyer 1990) this was part of an overall attempt to fashion a new mode of regulation, covering both economic and social aspects, suitable to stabilise and ensure the reproduction of an emerging 'Post-Fordist' regime of accumulation (based on niche consumption patterns and flexible production systems and labour markets) out of the exhausted remains of a 'Fordist' regime based on mass production and mass consumption (Jessop 1992, 1994a, Amin 1994). Others sought to step back a little from the strict dualism implied by the shift from Fordism to Post Fordism, and suggested that neo-liberalism represented a complex attempt to manage and resolve the 'after-Fordist' crisis, and therefore became what was characterised as a new 'institutional fix' (Peck and Tickell 1994). In terms of the welfare state, the neo-liberal fix consisted of efforts to introduce competitive market disciplines into public services, through privatisation, marketisation and new forms of managerialism. Pierson (1998a) suggests that in those areas where the state has become increasingly subject to international economic pressures, social policies, in particular around social assistance and labour market policy, have similarly become more focused on supporting and enhancing competitiveness. In areas less sensitive to economic competitiveness states have sought to contain costs by improving efficiency and productivity, using privatisation and quasi-markets to introduce 'market disciplines' into the state.

Jessop's is perhaps the most sophisticated account of the new political economy of the welfare state (1994b, 1999, 2000a, 2002). He argues that part of the process of unravelling the Fordist regime of accumulation which characterised the 'Golden Age' post war years is a complex reorientation of the state. Rather than a simple withdrawal or retrenchment, capitalist states are undergoing a complex 'hollowing out', involving a dispersal of powers and responsibilities upwards (to supra-national

bodies), downwards (to devolved regional, local and neighbourhood levels) and outwards (to a range of non-state actors and institutions). He posits a gradually emerging, but contingent and contested shift, from what he calls the 'Keynesian Welfare National State' (or 'KWNS'), exemplified in the post war 'Golden Age' of Fordism, to a possible 'Schumpeterian Workfare Postnational Regime' (or 'SWPR')(Jessop 1999, 2000a, 2002). This is shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 From the KWNS to the SWPR

	Economic Policy	Social Policy	Scale	Mode of Governance
from the 'KWNS'	Keynesian	Welfare	National	State
to the 'SWPR'	Schumpeterian	Workfare	Postnational	Regime

Community-based voluntary action has some significance when seen in the light of the latter two dimensions of Jessop’s quartet, that is, in relation to changes from ‘national to postnational’ scales and from ‘state to regime’ as preferred mode of governance. The national scale is no longer the primary locus of economic and social policy and political power, where both sub- and supra-national scales are increasingly important. In this view the apparent focus on local activity is part of a complex ‘rescaling’ of political, social and economic life (MacLeod and Goodwin 1999). Additionally the shift from ‘state’ to ‘regime’ signals that non-state actors have increasingly become important elements in governance. Here the rise of partnerships and networks, or what Jessop refers to as ‘heterarchy’, is noted as a potential response to both market and state failure (Jessop 2000b). Heterarchy implies *“horizontal self-organisation among mutually interdependent actors”* (Jessop 2000b: 15) and stresses the role of dialogue, negotiation, and attempts to build locked-in inter-dependencies and solidarity across organisational and sectoral boundaries. In this view the state retains significant powers to steer different systems ‘from a distance’, by influencing not only the scales of economic and social activity, but also the context in which other actors at different scales operate. Jessop suggests that a range of ideal-typical ‘SWPR’ variants may be envisaged, including neo-communitarian strategies which:

emphasise the contribution of the ‘third sector’ and/or the ‘social economy’ (both located between market and state) to economic development and social cohesion and the role of grassroots (or bottom

up) economic and social mobilisation in developing economic strategies. They also emphasise the link between economic and community development, notably in empowering citizens and community groups; the contribution that greater self-sufficiency can make to reinserting marginalised local economies into the wider economy; and the role of decentralised partnerships that embrace not only the state and business but also diverse community organisations and other local stakeholders

(Jessop 2000a: 179).

The overall social, political and economic context behind the rise of community-based action can be summarised as the complex outcome of four developmental trajectories, as indicated in table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Some contextual features behind the rise of community-based voluntary action

Government political strategy	Government-citizen relationships
<p>‘Necessitarianism’ In this perspective globalisation creates exogenous imperatives for state policies which can only be breached with considerable cost. In particular, states must reshape policies in order to pursue and safeguard their own ‘competitiveness’. This cannot be threatened by the expansive social welfare programmes associated with social democracy, and implies continuing constraints on state expenditures.</p>	<p>‘Disentitlementarianism’ The basis on which citizens receive welfare support is being changed so that a passive ‘something for nothing’ is being gradually replaced by an active ‘something for something’. This involves a redefinition of responsibility for welfare and in some areas makes entitlement conditional on particular forms of activity. In order to benefit from welfare services, recipients are increasingly expected to contribute and participate in certain ways.</p>
<p>‘Managerialism’ Faced with particular constraints – from above (global imperatives) and from below (electoral demands for low taxation), states pursue performance-oriented strategies which seek to ensure ‘more for less’ from public services. This can be seen in the continuing use of output and target-based regimes of accountability associated with the ‘New Public Management’, emphasising value for money, efficiency and effectiveness.</p>	<p>‘Communitarianism’ In this view citizens are part of a whole inclusive community, and as well as having rights, owe certain reciprocal obligations to that community. The state’s role is to enforce the acknowledgement and performance of these duties. Alongside this notion of ‘rights and responsibilities’, there is a greater emphasis on <i>participation</i> in the community – be that through labour markets or through community-based activity.</p>

Watson and Hay (2003) argue that key figures in the development of ‘new’ Labour appropriated a *necessitarian* ‘logic of no alternative’ (see also Hay 1998) in their interpretation of the economic, political and social implications of globalisation. The

adoption of a 'strong' version of 'business school' globalisation, with its requirement for a counter-inflationary macroeconomic orientation, economic competitiveness and a less actively interventionist state, implied that exogenous economic imperatives severely circumscribed the potential for a progressive and expansionary economic and social programme. Rather than the reality of globalisation affecting the subsequent political programme, the programme was devised *as if* the world was globalised. The discursive construction of globalisation appears to have become more significant than the rather more patchier evidence that makes up the 'reality' of globalisation in the first place. As Watson and Hay argue (2003: 295) *"In this way, the contingent logic of social and economic reform with which New Labour has come to be associated is rendered necessary by the appeal to globalisation as an exogenous economic constraint"*. However, importantly, they go on to suggest that the adoption of this logic was designed to meet domestic political ends *in advance* of the 1997 election. New Labour's electoral strategy was informed primarily by 'preference accommodation' rather than 'preference shaping' (Hay 1999: ch.2) in which the primary task was not to upset the voters of 'middle England', which was not to be burdened with the higher taxes and heavier public spending associated with 'old' Labour and previous Labour governments.

This informed the pledges made by new Labour prior to the 1997 election to maintain direct taxation rates at existing levels throughout the subsequent Parliament, and to maintain the existing Conservative government's spending plans for the first two years. Achieving this has meant that the New Labour government has continued, and adapted, the neo-liberal emphasis on improving the efficiency of public services under the guise of the 'New Public Management' (Hood 1991, McLaughlin *et al* 2002). Arguably this has involved the intensification of the *managerialism* of the state (Clarke and Newman 1996, Newman 2001), using specific techniques of performance management, audit, accountability, targets and an emphasis on outputs, outcomes and 'value for money', which has continued to be the defining characteristic of New Labour's approach to public policy and public services. Underpinned by public choice perspectives in political economy, this approach aims to increase the impact of public services whilst constraining the costs. By seeking to provide 'more for less', it must therefore be seen as a tool for dealing with essential services without increasing the burden of taxation, and as such, part of the ongoing politics of public expenditure constraint.

Although contested, many commentators have characterised the neo-liberal political economy of welfare, including that followed for the most part by the New Labour government, as one of welfare retrenchment (Hay 1998, but see Pierson, P 1996 and Annesley 2001 for alternative perspectives). In general writers in this perspective highlight issues such as the increasing focus of employment-centred social policy (Jessop's 'workfare' in the 'SWPR' (Jessop 2000a)), backed by a stronger emphasis on conditionality and sanctions. This reorientation of the basis of citizenship, exemplified in the new government's welfare reform green paper in March 1998 (DSS 1998) has been termed by Peck, in the context of the United States, as a particular form of the politics of '*disentitlementarianism*' (Peck 1998, 2001: 117-22). In some versions of this politics, problems of poverty and deprivation are reformulated into problems of 'welfare' and the behaviour of welfare recipients, using theories of welfare dependency (Field 1995) and the 'underclass' (Murray 1984). If 'welfare' (now a term of abuse) is the real problem, then welfare needs 'reform', and for Peck (1998: 158) this amounts to a discursive political strategy aimed at undermining national (in the US, federal) welfare entitlements. The new 'workfare' approach involves a 'work first' strategy of rapid labour market re-insertion (Peck and Theodore 2000), under the threat of time limits and conditional withdrawal of benefits, combined with a 'new localism' (part of Jessop's 'postnational' in the 'SWPR' (Jessop 2000a)), where the support received as a claimant depends in part on where you live. Debates in the US have resonated quite strongly in the UK, where New Labour's 'new contract' for welfare requires the fashioning of a new welfare relationship between citizens and the state. 'Workfare' conditionality, involving a rebalancing of 'rights and responsibilities', and encapsulated in the government's New Deal employment programmes, operates under the new reciprocity principles of 'something for something' and 'hand ups' rather than 'something for nothing' and 'hand outs'. Jordan (2000) describes the approach of states offering new opportunities with attached conditions as involving a form of 'tough love' as social policy.

New Labour's continued emphasis upon 'rights and responsibilities' forms part of its adoption of a form of '*communitarianism*' as one of the guiding threads of 'Third Way' political philosophy (Driver and Martell 1997, 1998, Heron 2001). However, this agenda appears to run in two directions. On the one hand, rhetorically at least, government ministers have made great play of themes of reviving community spirit, and in the latest versions, have shown a great deal of interest in notions of community capacity, capability and social capital (Blunkett 2001a, 2001b, 2003, Blair

2002, Putnam 2000, Performance and Innovation Unit 2002). Before being heckled and slow hand-clapped by the Women's Institute triennial conference in June 2000, the Prime Minister neatly summarised the importance of 'community' and 'community renewal' to the New Labour 'project' of responding to a rapidly changing society:

*At the heart of my beliefs is the idea of community. I don't just mean the local villages, towns and cities in which we live. I mean that our fulfilment as individuals lies in a decent society of others. **My argument to you today is that the renewal of community is the answer to the challenges of a changing world...***

Whenever I analyse the world in which my children are growing up, I come back to the spectre of change. Business, work and with it community and social life are all in the throes of change.....The world seems in a state of perpetual revolution. It is no wonder people feel insecure, frightened for their future.....we all share the anxieties of today's world..

.....Lives that cry out for the helping hand of an active community not the cold shoulder, the cruelty, of those who say "you're on your own". A community there for them when they need it, helping them cope with change, supporting their families

(Blair 2000, emphasis added)

However, on the other hand, Driver and Martell (1997) and Heron (2001) argue that from a range of possible communitarianisms, New Labour has adopted and used a particularly regressive and conservative form, associated mainly with Etzioni (1997), in which the state takes on a strong proactive role in enforcing the acknowledgement and performance of obligations and duties which all citizens owe to the community as a whole. This can be seen in a number of policy areas, such as labour market policy as we have already seen, criminal justice and 'anti-social behaviour', and over education policy and the treatment of truancy. The guiding emphasis appears to be the need for the state to regulate and condition behaviour in order to strengthen the 'community'.

This quartet of trajectories - necessitarianism, managerialism, disentitlementarianism and communitarianism - which lie at the heart of the government's approach, has led

to the intensification of a 'community turn' in public policy (Macmillan and Townsend 2001). In this, politicians, policy makers and think tanks, both rhetorically and in policy formulation, have become increasingly interested in 'community-based' approaches across a wide range of policy areas (Imrie and Raco 2003, Nash and Christie 2003, Taylor 2003). The task appears to involve seeking to construct strategies and policies somehow embedded in the idea of 'community', despite the conceptual difficulties accompanying the term. The argument here is that this approach is primarily designed to achieve 'third way' objectives for social and economic policy in an era characterised by continuing cost constraints. Despite its affinity to, and accommodation with, the neo-liberal settlement of previous Conservative governments (Hay 1999, but see also Driver and Martell 1998, 2002, Kenny and Smith 2001), New Labour displays some 'progressive' elements in its willingness to re-direct public expenditure towards health and education under its successive comprehensive Spending Reviews, and to acknowledge that issues of poverty and exclusion might be areas in which a government has a legitimate concern and could address. However, these mildly progressive aspirations, pursued by stealth and a range of 'quietly redistributive' measures (Lister 1998, 2001) are tempered by the need maintain its fiscal credibility with financial markets, the Conservative press and its electoral coalition dominated by the swing voters of 'Middle England'. As a result New Labour has become increasingly interested in fashioning 'costless solutions to social problems' (Mohan 2000, Mohan and Mohan 2002). The 'community turn', reflected in the interest in concepts such as community capacity and social capital, in a new localism which emphasises community-based approaches to regeneration and tackling social exclusion, and in new policy developments such as the Compact, Local Strategic Partnerships, and support for the role of the voluntary sector in public services delivery (HM Treasury 2002b), is fundamentally part of this relentless search for more effective, costless solutions, 'beyond-the-state'. As such it is appropriate to think of this 'turn' as part of an 'institutional fix', designed to achieve social and economic ends in a period marked by the unravelling and reshaping of the guideposts of the relatively comprehensive (social democratic) welfare settlement. In this new approach, an emphasis on equality, redistribution and a less meagre social security benefits system are rendered politically 'off limits'. Instead, New Labour offers enhanced opportunities for 'participation', in the labour market, in local decision making, and in community activity and volunteering.

II. Policy approaches towards tackling disadvantage

One clear characteristic of New Labour's approach to issues of deprivation and social exclusion has been the renewed interest in area-based initiatives. In the first term of the new government a wide range of initiatives, such as Health Action Zones, the New Deal for Communities and the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, developed across a number of different policy domains and at various levels. These tended, like other policy initiatives, to anticipate and encourage cross-sectoral and inter-organisational collaboration in new strategic and delivery 'partnerships' (Glendinning *et al* 2002, Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). This led to some complexity on the ground, and complaints of initiative overload became more vociferous. It also led to efforts to unravel the complexity.

Given the range of partnership-type initiatives that are in development, and the variety of participants across many levels, with different interests, cultures and resources, it seems like a complex, contested and crowded field is emerging. Alongside characterisations of the state as 'networked', 'differentiated' or 'hollowed out', Skelcher (2000) characterises the new complex world of public policy intervention as the 'congested state', involving *"a complex of networked relationships between public, private, voluntary and community actors creating a dense, multilayered and largely impenetrable structure for public action"* (Skelcher 2000: 4). In this view a new level of 'tertiary' co-ordination is gradually being constructed, which involves partnerships of two or more agencies in pursuit of public policy objectives. This is in contrast to the primary (i.e. bodies operating directly to politicians) and secondary (i.e. appointed agencies and quangos) levels. The congested state tries to capture *"an environment in which high levels of organisational fragmentation combined with plural modes of governance require the application of significant resources to negotiate the development and delivery of public programmes"* (Skelcher 2000: 12). Substantial efforts are made by a range of actors, including the voluntary and community sectors to form partnerships, build and realign networks and integrate services.

Part of this partnership structure at local level now involves the establishment of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). These are single, non-statutory and non-executive bodies which *"bring together at a local level the different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives, programmes and services support each other and work together"*

(DETR 2001a: 15). LSPs developed from the interconnection between three different policy areas: firstly the work around Local Government modernisation, with local authorities now being expected to take a lead at local level in orchestrating the production and implementation of comprehensive community strategies; secondly the review undertaken by government into regeneration programmes, which concluded that there was a need for more integrated, 'joined up' activity on the ground, and thirdly the work of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) on neighbourhood renewal. The creation of LSPs was a key recommendation of one of the SEU 'Policy Action Team' reports, which argued that regeneration efforts had been hindered in the past because they were fragmented and disparate (DETR 2000a). In a separate development, the Treasury had instigated a cross-cutting review into 'Government Intervention in Deprived Areas' (GIDA) (HM Treasury 2000). This report made the case that the main policy tool for tackling deprivation should be mainstream programmes rather than targeted initiatives, although targeted initiatives still had some function. Mainstream budgets could be 'bent' to achieve objectives relating to social inclusion.

Whilst partnership-based spatial initiatives have become increasingly fashionable in recent years, it is appropriate to ask to what extent they are only appropriate in so far as deprivation and disadvantage are concentrated in only a relatively small number of definable, primarily urban, areas (Mohan 2000, Chatterton and Bradley 2000, Fieldhouse and Tye 1996). As we saw in Chapter 2, deprivation in rural areas tends to be more dispersed than in urban areas, even though some smaller concentrations, or 'pockets' of deprivation may still be found. This leads to a fundamental question around how to target resources in order to address rural deprivation (Shucksmith *et al* 1996). Robson *et al* (2000: 49) suggest that individual and household approaches to tackling social exclusion in rural areas may be more appropriate than area based initiatives:

While the evidence suggests that there can be extensive deprivation in non-urban areas, few if any rural areas show the degree of deprivation that is found in cities. This is partly a function of the scale at which deprivation is measured, since deprived households in rural areas are typically a relatively small proportion even at the scale of wards or enumeration districts. Moreover, the principal distinguishing element of rural deprivation is isolation and poor accessibility to goods and services. Such problems would appear to be tackled best not through area-based

initiatives, but rather through a twin-track approach of using the individual-based benefits system on one hand and addressing accessibility (through supporting dispersed services, rural transport and peripatetic services) on the other.

Bradshaw (2001: 14) contrasts four different approaches which the government appears to be taking in its efforts to tackle social exclusion, and particularly child poverty:

1. **Labour Market measures** ('work for those who can') – the minimum wage, child tax credits, the national childcare strategy and increases in Child Benefit
2. **Social protection measures** ('security for those who cannot') – increases in child allowances on Income Support
3. **Preventive measures** – including Sure Start and the Children's Fund
4. **Neighbourhood measures** – a plethora of 'area-based initiatives' such as the New Deal for Communities and action zones in health, education, employment, and now Neighbourhood Renewal funds.

Broadly speaking the first two could be described as focusing on *income maintenance* measures (including tax changes and tax credits), whereas the second two tend to comprise *initiatives or 'project' based* measures. The former considers the amounts of income available to individuals and households, whereas the latter seek to address other issues (for example unemployment and training, childcare or ill-health).

Arguably the role of 'project-based' approaches to tackling social exclusion has become more significant for the new Labour government, for a variety of reasons:

1. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the analysis of social exclusion appears to play down somewhat the importance of income. Whereas income deprivation is a key characteristic of exclusion, the government argues that exclusion is about more than just a lack of income, stressing instead the multidimensionality of exclusion. Linked to this, social exclusion emphasises the dynamic nature of disadvantage. Ellwood (1998: 49) makes the powerful case that dynamic thinking has begun to shift the emphasis in policy away from income maintenance:

Static analysis asks about the who and the what of today. Dynamic thinking asks about the past and the future and, at its best, it helps to answer the question of why.....As a tool for policy, dynamic analysis is especially potent, for it inevitably points towards helping people to reshape the events in their future. By contrast, static analysis more commonly leads to remediation of the overt manifestations of the current situation.....

If we ask for example who are the poor today, we are led to questions about the socio-economic identity of the existing poverty population. Looking to policy, we then typically emphasise income supplementation strategies. The obvious static solution is to give the poor more money. If instead we ask what leads people into poverty, we are drawn to events and structures, and our focus shifts to looking for ways to ensure people escape poverty.

2. As discussed earlier the government is unhappy at the idea of spending further amounts of revenue on benefits, which is seen as 'failed expenditure'. The 'hand up' in this scenario involves a range of initiatives designed to address the causes of exclusion rather than its symptoms.
3. Jordan (2000) suggests that the government's approach to 'tough love' and conditionality in social policy is placing greater emphasis on one-to-one interactions between clients and professionals in various guises including, for example, social workers, community workers, youth workers, counsellors, welfare advisers and mentors. A key example here is the significance said to be played by New Deal Personal Advisors in helping those excluded from the labour market. Jordan suggests that increasingly social policy attention is being placed on the ability of professionals working alongside clients in the effort to tackle social exclusion. Human services, rather than income maintenance or even less basic income have come to the fore.
4. Although the government has set ambitious targets to abolish child poverty over a generation, this task is likely to become increasingly difficult (Bradshaw 2001). Those already 'lifted from poverty' are likely to have been the 'easiest to lift', whereas those with more deep-seated problems, and with

more entrenched poverty, are likely to require more intense support. The more intense support is likely to come from projects and initiatives to 'counsel', educate and activate people rather than through income-based measures.

If exclusion is multifaceted, and dynamic, then government measures to address it would need to be multifaceted, and flexible. The implication is a need to work alongside poor and marginalised people and devise strategies which might somehow transform their multi-dimensional circumstances of disadvantage. In the government's approach, the focus is usually on some form of labour market activity, but this is not always the case. Involvement in community activity and volunteering for example are increasingly being promoted as ways to overcome isolation, meet new people and help transform local (deprived) communities. Such things may lead people onto training and possibly employment in due course. Designing suitable projects to meet these objectives in this view would be a way forward, and it is here that the concern to tackle disadvantage through means other than income also chimes with the community turn's insistence on the added value and innovation which might be brought to bear by the voluntary sector and community development.

III. The new rural agenda, social exclusion and the voluntary sector

Over the last five years or so the varying concerns of rural Britain have rarely been far from the media spotlight. Headlines regarding rural issues have typically involved mass demonstrations of 'country folk' in London organised by the Countryside Alliance, mainly around fox hunting, alongside a wider set of concerns regarding the deepening plight of sections of the farming industry, fuel protests and blockades, crime and policing in rural areas, the seemingly inexorable withdrawal of post offices and financial services and lastly the dramatic outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease. These issues have been characterised as an emergence of a new 'politics of the rural' (Woods 2003) in which conflict and political action has centred around a defence of what is taken to be 'rural' (economy, way of life, community) and associated with the articulation of a specifically 'rural' identity. Whilst older forms of 'rural politics' could be seen as ordinary politics in rural space, the 'politics of the rural' is defined by *"the centrality of the meaning and regulation of rurality itself as the primary focus of conflict and debate"* (Woods 2003: 312).

Changes in the character of rural politics have been matched by a seemingly unprecedented period of policy analysis oriented towards rural areas. In the prolonged period of anticipation before the publication of the government's Rural White Paper in November 2000 (DETR 2000f) a wide range of accounts of the 'state of rural Britain' were published from a variety of quarters (DETR 1999, Countryside Agency 1999, 2000a, Rural Group of Labour MPs 1999, Performance and Innovation Unit 1999, Cabinet Office 2000, Harrop 2000). There may never before now have been such a wide-ranging and thorough-going attempt to document the state of rural Britain and analyse different policy options for its future. It is arguable that the government's interest in rural policy is at least in part a reflection of its concern to develop and deepen a wider 'one nation' political strategy beyond the support it might assume in its 'heartland' constituencies. In this view the concern with rural issues becomes an element in the strategy of occupying the 'middle ground' in politics, and of appealing to the concerns of 'middle England'. However, this forces a closer examination of the extent to which a contested electoral politics of 'rural' areas is being constructed (Ward 2002).

Academic analysis of rural policy has meanwhile charted the ongoing consequences of the social recomposition and economic restructuring of rural areas (Cloke and Goodwin 1992, Goodwin *et al* 1995, Marsden 1996). This involves, *inter alia*, a shift towards 'post-productivism' and 'pluri-activity' within agriculture, and a shift away from agriculture as the foundation of rural economies and societies (Performance and Innovation Unit 1999, Marsden 1999). A new research agenda has sought to examine the emerging and shifting 'governance' of rural localities through new partnerships (Edwards *et al* 2000, 2001, Osborne *et al* 2002a, 2002b) and new initiatives such as the RDC's 'Rural Challenge' Initiative (Little *et al* 1998, Jones and Little 2000), the European Union LEADER initiative (Ray 1998, Shucksmith 2000a) and the 'Objective 5b' designation of peripheral rural areas (Ward and McNicholas 1998a, 1998b). Here the emphasis in the rural studies literature has been on charting the emergence, scope and potential of what has come to be called 'integrated rural development' (with a focus on rural areas as whole localities rather than through separate sectoral policies) (Shortall and Shucksmith 1998, Marsden and Bristow 2000) and the linked notion of 'endogenous rural development' (Ray 1999, 2001). These approaches consider rural areas in their regional and local setting, beyond the centrality of agriculture, towards integrated strategies involving enterprise development, tourism, and other services. Some commentators suggest that, following the example set by LEADER programmes and projects, community

development may form part of a strategy for developing the endogenous 'capacity' of a rural area (Ray 2001). In so far as this might contribute to enhanced social capital (Putnam 1993, 2000) or 'institutional thickness' (Amin and Thrift 1995), it may facilitate the economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged rural areas.

Following others in highlighting the potential theoretical insights which might be gained from developing Foucault's ideas on 'governmentality' (or the 'art of government')(Rose 1996, Rose 1999, Raco and Imrie 2000), Woods (2003: 312) draws a connection between these developments in rural areas and the wider 'community turn' discussed in section 1, explaining these changes as follows:

In restructuring their strategy for the governance of rural areas, states have adopted a new mode of governmentality—'governing through communities'—in which integrated approaches to rural policy are encouraged at the local scale, and rural citizens are required to participate politically through identification with rural communities.

Rural Britain has thus become the site of a great deal of policy and academic attention. The new Labour government began to reconfigure the institutional framework for dealing with rural issues when it sought to establish Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in England (Ward *et al* 2003). In April 1999, the new Countryside Agency was created out of the Countryside Commission and part of the former Rural Development Commission (RDC)(Countryside Agency 1999, Rogers 1999) to act as a 'champion' to promote the countryside in England. The remaining part of the RDC, dealing with rural development issues was transferred to the new RDAs. In central government the departmental framework for agriculture was finally changed after the June 2001 election, in the midst of the Foot and Mouth crisis, when the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) was incorporated into a new department with a broader environmental remit, the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

After considerable delay, central government eventually published its Rural White Paper in November 2000 (DETR 2000f), mapping out the intended strategy for different aspects of rural policy. Along with the Urban White Paper published around the same time (DETR 2000e) a 'new vision' was set out for villages, towns and cities in England. In both papers the government emphasised the key role to be played by local communities, who were to be given new opportunities to have their voices

heard in policy developments, once again reflecting the wider 'community turn'. This commonality in the two white papers is aptly expressed in the opening paragraphs of the Urban White Paper:

*The approach that underlies our two white papers is the same: people must come first. Our policies, programmes and structures of governance are about **engaging local people in a partnership for change and enabling communities to take a decisive role in their own future***

(DETR 2000e: 13-14, emphases added).

In the Rural White paper, the government committed itself to:

***empower local communities** so that decisions are taken with their active participation and ownership. We will help communities map out how they would like their town or village to evolve and let them take on more responsibility for managing their own affairs*

(DETR 2000f: 11, emphasis in the original)

Throughout both White Papers there are repeated references to community 'involvement' 'engagement' and 'participation', although the details of how these would be enshrined were a little less than clear. Divided into four main sections, relating to the themes of a Living, Working, Protected and Vibrant Countryside, the Rural White paper included several means by which rural communities could shape and influence the development of their local areas:

- As part of a 'Living Countryside' the White Paper referred to community involvement in a number of specific service areas and over a range of issues, including action on seeking to improve services and tackle deprivation. Here *"local communities have a vital role to play in identifying priorities for tackling deprivation and improving services in their areas"* (DETR 2000f: 37, 39). A new fund to support additional Community Development, amounting to £4.5m over three years, was introduced and administered through the Countryside Agency, and has been used primarily to support the 38 Rural Community Councils in England in their existing community development work. Each RCC has been given the resources to employ a Community Development Worker specifically to address issues of social exclusion in rural areas.

- As part of a '*Working Countryside*', a commitment to regenerating market towns includes the development of a 'market towns health check' (DETR 2000f: 78, Countryside Agency 2002, see also Edwards *et al* 2003), involving a local steering group supported to put together an action plan for the development of the town.
- As part of a '*Protected Countryside*', the aim is that "*local communities have the opportunity to play a part in shaping the landscape around them*" (DETR 2000f: 107). Local Authorities were to be encouraged to develop Local Biodiversity Action Plans in which all sections of the community contribute to the identification of priorities and actions.
- Further proposals relating to the theme of community participation are, as might be expected, contained in the section on a '*Vibrant Countryside*'. Here the government's interest in community involvement seems to take centre stage:

We want to enable rural communities to improve their quality of life and opportunity. We want to give them a bigger say in managing their own affairs and the chance to give everyone in the community a say in how it develops (DETR 2000f: 146).

Rural communities are said to have had few opportunities to influence the development of their villages, and have lacked support. The resultant lack of involvement has sometimes created adversarial circumstances around development and change in rural communities (DETR 2000f: 145). Policy proposals to increase the opportunities for community involvement in rural areas include: reform of town and parish councils through the development of a Quality Town or Parish Council, characterised in part by the degree to which it is representative of all parts of the community and how it actively engages residents; helping to "*give rural communities the chance to set out what their town or village should look like*" (DETR 2000f: 150) through enabling rural communities to develop town, village or parish plans; and the 'Modernising Local Government' programme would be tailored to suit the circumstances of rural areas where the active involvement of communities in the preparation of community strategies was to be encouraged through specific guidance for Local Authorities in rural areas.

If these proposals represent a range of direct means by which community participation and involvement is to be encouraged in rural areas, the white paper also made some suggestions around how the overall voice of rural communities can be more effectively heard at national, regional and local levels, through the role of a new Rural Advocate at national level, 'Regional Rural Sounding Boards' and local rural consultative groups or rural forums.

As indicated above the Countryside Agency itself has been given a much enhanced role as a result of the White Paper. The agency subsequently published its own strategic plan, echoing many of the themes of the White Paper (Countryside Agency 2001b), such as, for example, how one of its eight programmes, on 'Vital Villages', aims to *"equip communities to shape their futures"*. The list of things the Agency will do to promote this aim includes 'helping communities to identify what they need to revitalise their villages and combat social exclusion'; 'Give local people a voice in planning their futures' and 'Help will be given to enable villages to develop their own village plans covering improvements to local services, transport, housing and village design'. These actions relate directly to the new policies indicated above, around community development to tackle social exclusion and around assistance with the development of parish and village plans.

Following the Foot and Mouth crisis, and the establishment of DEFRA as the new sponsoring government department, the Countryside Agency has more recently produced a revised strategy (Countryside Agency 2003b), which summarises its role as *"statutory champion and watchdog; influencing and inspiring solutions through our know how and show how; delivering where we are best placed to add value"* (Countryside Agency 2003b: 7). This style of language is repeated throughout the strategic plan and seems to suggest a pro-active agency with clear aims and a focused approach. This reflects, perhaps, precisely the 'business-like' government which is argued to be central to the New Public Management discussed above. Given the distinction between 'policy world' and 'everyday life' with which we began this thesis, it seems from this that the Countryside Agency's strategy is firmly embedded in 'policy world'.

However, despite appearing to become more outcome-focused, and having 'quality of life' as the new overarching aspiration, the new strategy does not seem to stress so much the Countryside Agency's role in tackling social exclusion in rural areas. It

intends both to create a high quality of life for people living in the countryside (through its aims and programmes of 'vital villages', 'essential services' and 'new enterprise') and a high quality countryside for everyone to enjoy (through its objectives of 'living landscapes', a 'wider welcome' and a 'countryside for towns')(Countryside Agency 2003b: 2). Regarding the former, the Agency indicates that:

Everyone living in the countryside should have equal opportunities to enjoy a good quality of life, whether their home is in a market town, village or in remote countryside. They should have access to the services they need, from shops and transport to affordable housing, and a say in how their community develops. All this should be underpinned by a vibrant rural economy providing jobs and incomes.

(Countryside Agency 2003b: 12).

The 'essential services' programme appears to place more emphasis on issues around disadvantage in rural areas, but discusses these in terms of rural 'proofing' of services, affordable housing, access to local services and appropriate transport. However, one of several activities the Agency is undertaking in relation to essential services is described as:

Rural disadvantage defined and tackled. *Our goal is to achieve more accurate insights into the nature, scale and causes of rural deprivation. We will carry out research, focusing on the young and use our expertise to advise on how better to identify rural deprivation. We will fund demonstration projects to test solutions.*

(Countryside Agency 2003b: 19, emphasis in the original)

The vital villages programme aims to achieve 'empowered, active and inclusive communities', and thus its rationale, as explained in the Countryside Agency's strategy, with its emphasis on supporting self-help, appears to echo quite closely the direction and aspirations of the wider 'community turn':

Many rural communities do not have organisations on their doorstep who understand their needs and provide appropriate solutions, including everyday services. Self-help is often the quickest and most effective way forward. We are developing tools, techniques and networks, in

partnership, across the country to help local communities devise solutions to local priorities at the same time as building their own capacity. Applying these solutions will help the Government deliver its public service targets for rural areas.

(Countryside Agency 2003b: 14)

The programme focuses on action to improve local services, facilities and the environment, support for 'effective and inclusive local governance' (i.e. parish councils) and support for the rural voluntary sector. This will lead to a situation where:

- *Communities will be able to make sure they have the facilities they need and be able to shape their local environment.*
- *Parish councils will be empowered to tackle local needs and will have the support of their communities.*
- ***The rural voluntary sector will offer effective and efficient support to help communities help themselves.***

(Countryside Agency 2003b: 16, emphasis added)

The Countryside Agency clearly sees a role for the voluntary sector in rural areas, but its own analysis of the sector (following Wilding *et al* 2002 and Yates 2002) refers to its fragility:

The voluntary sector can help fill many service gaps in the countryside. However, most rural voluntary organisations suffer from under funding and operate in isolation. Residents in rural communities are twice as likely to offer time voluntarily as their urban counterparts but 70% of rural voluntary organisations are small, with annual incomes under £10,000, limiting their impact. Lack of funding is a particular problem in rural areas, where the cost of delivering voluntary services is higher; around 90% of these organisations only operate locally. They are not part of a national network, and so can't easily share in expertise and training. 70% have no contact with national support agencies.

(Countryside Agency 2003b: 14)

However, this emphasis on a sector of formal community-based voluntary organisations has been viewed with some scepticism. In an important series of

papers Colin Williams (2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c) has argued that the official public policy emphasis on encouraging organised community-based voluntary action, in both urban and rural areas, is somewhat misguided. This 'third sector' approach, involving support for the development of community groups and voluntary organisations, is not in keeping with what he identifies as the distinctive 'culture of participation' associated in particular with deprived communities. Instead a 'fourth sector' approach should be adopted which involves encouragement of more informal one-to-one reciprocity based on 'doing favours' for friends, family and neighbours. Nonetheless, the latest Countryside Agency strategy indicates that it still aims to develop 'a strong rural voluntary sector':

We fund Rural Community Councils (RCCs) to advise rural voluntary organisations on how to get funding and run themselves efficiently. RCCs are encouraged to share their skills and expertise with parish and town councils, community groups and individuals.

(Countryside Agency 2003b: 16)

IV. Concluding comments

In this chapter we have suggested that public policy strategies for tackling disadvantage and social exclusion have taken what we have called a 'community turn'. We have shown in some detail how 'Third Way' and communitarian ideas have informed the current government's policy approach, and have set this in a wider historical and political economy context. We have also indicated how social exclusion is conceptualised in policy and how this affects the policy response. Finally we have examined how policy responses to social exclusion as a problem of rural areas are being formulated in government. Once again this involves a central role for the voluntary and community sector, enlisted to ensure that policy remains 'in touch' with the concerns and issues of local communities.

From a previous era when the voluntary and community sector was regarded as a relatively insignificant 'junior partner' in the welfare mix, the sector is now being given a great deal of official endorsement and encouragement. Since taking office in May 1997 the New Labour government has sought to develop a deeper and clearer relationship with the sector, so much so that one recent commentator has suggested that the sector is now being brought into the mainstream of the policy making

process (Kendall 2000). As part of the emerging 'civil renewal' agenda, Home Secretary David Blunkett recently stressed the significance of the voluntary and community sector to the Government's aspirations and overall programme:

*Departments are already engaging a wider range of partners in their work than ever before but they need to go further, recognising the range of people and organisations who share their objectives and have a part to play in delivering them. In particular they need to reach out to the many voluntary organisations and community groups who are much closer to the problems which Government is seeking to address, and **to involve them as strategic partners, valuing their expertise and knowledge and recognising their ability to devise new and different ways to solve difficult problems.** Government needs to be prepared to resource them to do this and develop their capacity to make the contribution of which they are more than capable, providing they have the right kind of support.*

(Blunkett 2003: 26, emphasis added)

Within this short quotation a clear steer is being given by the government on the importance of the sector (its ability to play a part in delivering objectives and the sector being closer to key issues and problems), the reasons why the sector is valued (for its expertise, knowledge and innovative capacity) and some of the problems which need to be addressed in order to fulfil this role (issues of capacity). At a rhetorical level at least, the voluntary and community sector is being heralded now as a '*strategic partner*' in the design and implementation of policy across a wide range of issues. This represents a step change in its role and function, and is a central element of the 'community turn' in public policy.

Chapter 4

The research setting in context: County Durham

The research reported in this thesis focuses on County Durham, and in particular the rural aspects of the County; those which come under the remit of the Durham Rural Community Council (DRCC). This chapter provides three separate descriptions of the immediate context for the research. The first part provides a basic description of the County. This is followed by a closer examination of the nature of disadvantage and deprivation in County Durham, building on the arguments and evidence provided in Chapter 2 on disadvantage in rural areas more generally. Finally, and following the argument in Chapter 3, some attention is given to the voluntary and community sector in County Durham.

I. Ambiguous rurality in County Durham: from 'mostly mining' to 'mostly rural'?

County Durham is primarily a rural county in the 'heart of the North East Region' (County Durham Economic Partnership 2002: 7). It lies between the urban areas of Tyne and Wear to the north (which includes Newcastle upon Tyne, Sunderland and Gateshead) and Teesside/Tees Valley to the south (which includes Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, Stockton on Tees and Darlington). It is bounded to the west by the Pennines watershed, and to the east by the North Sea. Its population of approximately 500,000 people reside in an area of some 2,226 square miles.

The geo-physical contrasts between the fells, dales and foothills of the Pennine west Durham, the lowlands of the River Wear valley and 'mid-Durham', and the magnesian limestone plateau of east Durham, provide a key backdrop to the socio-economic history of the area. In the west, the area was traditionally a site of mineral extraction (chiefly lead mining, which peaked towards the end of the 19th century) and livestock farming on the poorer soils and harsher climate of the uplands. Livestock farming remains the main agricultural base of the area, but its employment significance has declined markedly. In mid-Durham the defining feature of the last 150-200 years was the growth and subsequent decline of coalmining on what was called the 'exposed coalfield'. Mid-Durham also contains several of the larger towns

in County Durham along the A1(M) corridor, including the main administrative and tourist centre, Durham City. East Durham was characterised by later mining development, as technological advances allowed shafts to be sunk to much lower depths in the 'concealed coalfield' (concealed by magnesian limestone). Notable here was the development of much larger pit villages, which almost have the character of small towns.

Table 4.1 below gives some details of the population and population density of County Durham and its constituent districts in comparison with the rest of the North East and the UK as a whole, indicating that, at least in terms of population density, the County has significant differences between districts.

Table 4.1 Population and population density

	Area (square km)	Population (thousands)	Population Density (people per sq. km.)
United Kingdom	241,930	58,837	243
North East	8,573	2,517	294
<i>of which:</i>			
Northumberland	5,013	307	61
Tyne and Wear	540	1,076	1,993
Teesdale	794	639	805
County Durham	2,226	494	222
<i>of which:</i>			
Chester le Street	68	54	794
Derwentside	271	85	315
Durham City	187	88	470
Easington	145	94	650
Sedgefield	217	87	401
Teesdale	836	24	29
Wear Valley	503	61	122

Source: ONS 2002: table 2.10

In fact, under the Countryside Agency’s classification of districts, only Teesdale and Wear Valley are classed as ‘rural’ (Countryside Agency 2000a: 4, 65)¹¹. This suggests that the ‘rurality’ of County Durham is at the very least ambiguous, a factor that has, as we shall see, disrupted and defied attempts to define, classify and describe its character. This is primarily because the area’s economic development, and consequent social history has largely been based around heavy staple industries. County Durham’s ambiguous rurality derives from its industrial legacy and

¹¹ The Countryside Agency argued that the district-based classification based on work for the Rural Development Commission (1993), and subsequently used by the Cabinet Office (2000) and the Performance and Innovation Unit (1999), would be the preferred classification until further refinements had been developed. This classification involves a five-point breakdown of districts as either Metropolitan (none in County Durham), Urban (Durham City), Coalfield (Chester le Street, Derwentside, Easington and Sedgefield), Accessible Rural (none in County Durham) or Remote Rural (Teesdale and Wear Valley). Use of this type of classification has more recently been criticised in a comprehensive review of urban-rural classification systems (ODPM 2002).

consequent settlement pattern. Durham County Council reflects this in its own description of the county:

*Although most of the County is rural, its settlement pattern is unique, with over 60% of its population living in settlements of less than 10,000 people.... The County is also unique in terms of its economic and social geography, with **urban issues set in a rural context**. Despite their attractive setting, many of the County's settlements suffer from high levels of deprivation*

(Durham County Council 2002: 7, emphasis added)

Similarly the report into 'Rural Poverty' in County Durham, commissioned by Durham County Council, suggests that

County Durham.....became a land of industrial mining villages in a rural setting.... 'Village' is something of a misnomer as these settlements bore the classic hallmarks of small Victorian industrial towns.....What makes Durham so unusual is that despite its heavy industrialisation it remained a largely 'rural' county. A county in which the majority of people lived, and still do live in small towns and villages

(Local Identity Agency 1998a: 9-10)

In this thesis ten towns with populations of 10,000 people or more are classed as 'urban areas', and everywhere else in the County is classified as 'rural'. This distinction is made for operational purposes, in full recognition, as we suggested in Chapter 1, that such a classification cannot do justice to the multiple meanings of 'rural'. Here the category involves a combination of the smallest hamlets, larger villages and small towns such as Easington Colliery, Crook and Barnard Castle. Table 4.2 indicates the main settlements in County Durham.

Successive phases of local government reorganisation have meant that the County has become smaller in size, less populated, and less 'urban'. In 1974 the major urban areas on the mouths of the rivers Tyne (Gateshead), Wear (Sunderland) and Tees (Hartlepool) were lost in the creation of the metropolitan areas of Tyne and Wear and Cleveland respectively. Latterly, in the late 1990s Darlington

Table 4.2 The main settlements in County Durham

Settlement Population	No. in Co. Durham	Cumulative	Settlements
50,000+	0	0	
30,000-49,999	1	1	Durham City
20,000-29,999	6	7	Newton Aycliffe Chester le Street Seaham Peterlee Bishop Auckland Consett
10,000-19,999	3	10	Stanley Spennymoor Shildon
5,000-9,999	12	22	Annfield Plain Barnard Castle Blackhall Brandon Crook Easington Colliery Ferryhill Horden Murton Ouston Sedgefield Willington
1,000-4,999	61	83	
500-999	29	112	
0-499	129	241	

Source: Durham County Council (1994) and author's calculations using 1991 and 2001 census.
Note: the shaded part represents those areas classed as 'urban' settlements for the purposes of this thesis

became a unitary authority, and now tends to be grouped with 'Tees Valley', this being the built up area around the mouth of the Tees (i.e. the unitary authorities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees). Over the last thirty years, therefore, as a result of local government reorganisation, and subsequently to the continuing decline and eventual demise of the coalmining industry, County Durham has moved from a situation where it could be described as 'mostly mining' to one where it is now considered to be 'mostly rural'.

II. Disadvantage in County Durham

County Durham is not a wealthy place. Although there has been much general discussion over the need to identify and address 'pockets of deprivation', in County Durham it might be more realistic to talk of pockets of affluence amidst a generally deprived County. In this section we shall explore the patterns of deprivation in some depth, utilising data from the Indices of Deprivation, from the 2001 Census, and from other sources.

Table 4.3 indicates some data derived from the Indices of Deprivation 2000 (DETR 2000b) for the 'sub-regions' of the North East. This uses the six measures of district-based deprivation, but deployed at a 'sub-regional' scale to obtain an indication of deprivation throughout the North East. The figures amalgamate ward and district level statistics on the IMD to the four different 'sub-regions' of the North East.

Table 4.3 Sub-regional analysis of deprivation in the North East, 2000

'Sub-region'	Districts	Pop'n (1)	Employ't Scale (2)	Income Scale (3)	'Average of Ward Scores' (4)	'Average of Ward Ranks' (5)	'Extent Score' (6)	'Local Conc'n Score' (7)
Northumberland	6	307,186	22,521	67,079	26.91	5395.00	12.23	7504.23
County Durham	7	493,470	47,758	138,900	34.48	6129.99	26.64	7943.87
Teesside	5	638,844	63,597	206,380	39.19	6310.87	42.15	8294.30
Tyne and Wear	5	1,075,979	109,356	351,468	39.79	6716.62	40.81	8261.70
Total	23	2,515,479	243,232	763,827				

Sources: 2001 Census and author's calculations from Indices of Deprivation

Notes:

1. **Population** figures are taken from the 2001 Census (ONS 2002: 8)
2. **Employment Scale** measures the number of people in each area considered to be 'employment deprived'. The sub-regional figures are taken by adding the measures from each district.
3. **Income Scale** measures the number of people in each area considered to be 'income deprived'. The sub-regional figures are taken by adding the measures from each district.
4. The **'average of ward scores'** measures, for each district, the average score on the composite Index of Multiple Deprivation taken from every ward in the district. The higher the score, the greater the deprivation as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (across England as a whole the highest score was 83.77, and the lowest 1.16). In the North East the highest score was 82.52, the lowest 3.71. The sub-regional figure comes from taking a simple arithmetical mean of these ward scores.
5. The **'average of ward ranks'** measures, for each district, the average rank for the composite Index of Multiple Deprivation taken from every ward in the district. A rank of 1 would be the least deprived area, while 8414 would be the most deprived area. The sub-regional figure comes from taking a simple arithmetical mean of these ward ranks.
6. The **'extent score'** looks only at the most deprived wards in each district, and by measuring what proportion of a district's population lives in wards amongst the most deprived 10% in England, aims to indicate the extent of high deprivation in a district. The sub-regional figure is derived by taking a simple arithmetical mean of each district score. The figures for Northumberland and County Durham are significantly lower than Tees Valley and Tyne and Wear because each of the former contain districts with no wards in the most deprived 10% of wards in England.
7. The **'local concentration score'** looks at the most deprived wards in each district which contain 10% of the district's population, and, by taking an average of the rank of these wards on the composite Index of Multiple Deprivation, measures the 'intensity' of deprivation in the most deprived wards in each district. A rank of 1 would be the least deprived area, while 8414 would be the most deprived area. The sub-regional figure comes from taking a simple arithmetical mean of these district based scores.

The figures in table 4.3 appear to show that deprivation in Northumberland and County Durham is less marked than in the more urban 'sub-regions' of Tyne and Wear and Teesside. The two scale measures are obviously population related, in that nearly three quarters of the region's income and employment deprived population are found in the two primarily urban areas. The other four measures of deprivation also indicate that the two mainly rural areas appear less deprived than

the two urban areas, with County Durham somewhat 'closer' to scores in the urban areas than Northumberland. This is primarily because the table shows averages of the districts in each sub-region. Whilst the local authorities in the two mainly urban sub-regions show a fairly consistent pattern of high deprivation as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation, in both Northumberland and County Durham high scoring areas are combined with lower scoring areas to result in lower averages overall.

Again using the Indices of Deprivation we will now consider deprivation in County Durham more closely, firstly at district level, and then at ward level. Table 4.4 below illustrates the position of County Durham's local authority districts in the 'league table' of district-based deprivation in England. Of County Durham districts, Easington comes highest in any of the ranks on England's most deprived districts – 8th on local concentration, 6th on extent, 7th on average ward score and 4th on average ward rank.

Table 4.4 County Durham district rankings of deprivation

	District	Income Scale	Employment Scale	Average of Ward Scores	Average of Ward Ranks	Extent	Local Conc'n	Average rank (1)	Percentile (2)
1	Easington	65	96	7	4	6	8	6.25	1.77
2	Wear Valley	154	177	22	19	21	28	22.5	6.36
3	Derwentside	107	117	45	41	52	45	45.75	12.92
4	Sedgefield	103	129	52	39	68	70	57.25	16.17
5	Chester le Street	204	270	124	126	111	113	118.5	33.47
6	Durham City	148	213	142	155	136	135	142	40.11
7	Teesdale	347	351	169	173	158	148	162	45.76

Source: DETR (2000b) and authors calculations.

Notes:

1. The 'average rank' is calculated as the arithmetical mean of the ranks of four of the six district based measures of deprivation – average of ward scores, average of ward ranks, extent and local concentration.
2. The percentile represents the ranking as a percentage in terms of the distribution of the 354 local authority districts in England.

Using the four measures which most accurately reflect deprivation in County Durham (i.e. by omitting the two scale-based measures), an average of the ranks for each of the districts can be calculated. The final column represents this figure in terms of percentiles in the distribution of Local Authority districts in England. Hence Easington is amongst the most deprived 2% of districts in England, Wear Valley amongst the top 10% and Derwentside and Sedgefield amongst the most deprived 20%. By falling also within the most deprived 88 Local Authority districts in England, these four districts are also eligible for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the Community Empowerment Fund. Finally Chester-le-Street, Durham City and Teesdale feature

between a third and halfway along the distribution of deprived local authorities in England. Using this average measure as an indicator, both Easington and Wear Valley feature highly in the 'league table' of district rankings in the North East, as shown in Table 4.5 below

Table 4.5 The ‘top ten’ most deprived districts in the North East

	District	Sub-region	Average (1)	Percentile (2)
1	Easington	County Durham	6.3	1.77
2	Hartlepool	Teesside	9.8	2.75
3	Middlesborough	Teesside	15.5	4.38
4	Sunderland	Tyne and Wear	21.0	5.93
5	Wear Valley	County Durham	22.5	6.36
6	South Tyneside	Tyne and Wear	23.0	6.50
7	Redcar and Cleveland	Teesside	28.0	7.91
8	Newcastle upon Tyne	Tyne and Wear	28.8	8.12
9	Wansbeck	Northumberland	31.8	8.97
10	Gateshead	Tyne and Wear	39.0	11.02

Source: DETR (2000b) and author's calculations.

Note:

- Of course, by basing the averages on only four of the six district based measures, it could be suggested that this works to the 'disadvantage' of, and mis-represents the situation in, urban districts. Using all six measures, Easington falls to 4th, Wear Valley to 12th and Sunderland becomes the most deprived district in the North East by this measure. However, while scale measures are important to illustrate the sheer numbers of people affected by a situation, it is important to avoid the use of measures which conflate the scale of deprivation with its seriousness (DETR 2000b: 21).¹²
- See Table 4.4 note 2 for an explanation of how this figure has been derived.

So far we have considered deprivation in terms of the composite ward-based Index of Multiple Deprivation at *district* level, in the context of County Durham, the North East and England as a whole. We will now begin the move towards a more finely tuned ward-level analysis of deprivation in County Durham. Table 4.6 below illustrates how wards are distributed by decile on the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

¹² In deciding the eligibility criteria for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, the government chose to identify as eligible any district which featured in the highest 50 districts on any of the six district-based measures, including those relating to income and employment scale. As a result 13 of the 88 eligible Local Authority districts, including Brighton, Bristol, Leeds and Wakefield, became eligible for approximately 9% of the initial allocation of funds between them solely because of scale considerations.

Table 4.6 The number and percentage of wards in each decile on the IMD: County Durham and North East comparisons

		Decile									
	No. of wards	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
Easington	26	21	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wear Valley	21	9	3	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Derwentside	23	7	7	5	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
Sedgefield	22	5	12	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Chester-le-Street	17	1	5	1	4	2	2	0	0	1	1
Durham	24	3	4	5	6	1	0	0	1	1	3
Teesdale	19	0	3	0	4	4	2	3	2	1	0
County Durham	152	46	39	19	12	16	6	4	2	4	4
Northumberland	120	14	10	20	24	19	11	9	6	6	0
Teesside	119	50	12	16	7	8	11	4	5	4	2
Tyne and Wear	113	50	28	13	8	4	4	1	2	3	0
North East	504	160	89	68	51	47	32	18	15	17	6
	Percentage										
Easington	100	81	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wear Valley	100	43	14	29	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Derwentside	100	30	30	22	4	9	4	0	0	0	0
Sedgefield	100	23	55	9	5	5	0	5	0	0	0
Chester-le-Street	100	6	29	6	24	12	12	0	0	6	6
Durham	100	13	17	21	25	4	0	0	4	4	13
Teesdale	100	0	16	0	21	21	11	16	11	5	0
County Durham	100	30	26	13	8	11	4	3	1	3	3
Northumberland	100	12	8	17	20	16	9	8	5	5	0
Teesside	100	42	10	13	6	7	9	3	4	3	2
Tyne and Wear	100	44	25	12	7	4	4	1	2	3	0
North East	100	32	18	13	10	9	6	4	3	3	1
England	100	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

In County Durham the more extreme deprivation can be found across Easington, Wear Valley and Derwentside. In each of these districts there are very few relatively affluent wards, and high numbers of wards featuring in the upper decile and quintile of the distribution. The comparisons between 'sub-regions' demonstrate that the deprivation characteristic of County Durham is spread across a wider range of wards than in the other areas. In terms both of absolute numbers of wards, and percentages of wards, it can be seen from Table 4.6 that the North East shows a skewed distribution of wards in the more deprived deciles. There are very few areas in the least deprived deciles, reiterating the point that in County Durham, and across the North East as a whole, that it is more appropriate to talk of pockets of affluence in the midst of wider deprivation. Of County Durham's 152 wards, 46, or 30% were amongst the most deprived 10% of wards in England. Over half (85, or 56%) were amongst the most deprived 20% and two-thirds (104, 68%) amongst the most

deprived 30%. By adding in population figures, over 150,000 people in County Durham live in the wards in the most deprived 10% in England, and nearly three quarters of the County's population live in wards amongst the most deprived 30% in England. Compared to Teesside and Tyne and Wear, County Durham has a smaller number of 'very deprived' wards (i.e. in the first decile), but greater numbers of wards in the second and third deciles.

Table 4.7 below attempts to disaggregate the deprivation evident in County Durham. As we saw in Chapter 2, the Index of Multiple Deprivation is a composite index of six 'domains' of different forms of disadvantage.

Table 4.7 Analysis of severe deprivation in County Durham by separate domains of the Index of Multiple Deprivation

	Area	County Durham	CLS	D'side	D-City	Eas'n	Sedge	T-dale	W-Valley
Total	Wards (1)	152	17	23	24	26	22	19	21
	Pop'n (2)	489669	54737	85548	80870	93829	88761	24251	61673
	% of Pop'n	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Income	Wards	34	2	6	1	14	3	0	8
	Pop'n	119548	4778	19691	2033	53706	13551	0	25789
	% of Pop'n	24.4	8.7	23.0	2.5	57.2	15.3	0.0	41.8
Employment	Wards	62	4	11	4	22	9	2	10
	Pop'n	196456	7598	38648	6423	78802	31280	3622	30083
	% of Pop'n	40.1	13.9	45.2	7.9	84.0	35.2	14.9	48.8
Health	Wards	84	3	15	9	26	17	2	12
	Pop'n	283068	5948	55302	27229	93829	60562	3622	36576
	% of Pop'n	57.8	10.9	64.6	33.7	100.0	68.2	14.9	59.3
Education	Wards	18	0	4	0	9	1	0	4
	Pop'n	65428	0	15574	0	36451	2322	0	11081
	% of Pop'n	13.4	0.0	18.2	0.0	38.8	2.6	0.0	18.0
Housing	Wards	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Pop'n	4294	0	0	0	0	0	0	4294
	% of Pop'n	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.0
Access	Wards	8	0	0	0	0	0	7	1
	Pop'n	6746	0	0	0	0	0	5310	1436
	% of Pop'n	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.9	2.3

Source: Author's calculations from ward-based Indices of Deprivation 2000 (DETR 2000b)

Notes:

1. Based on boundaries prior to 1st April 2003.
2. Population figures are taken from 1998 estimates of ward populations provided by Durham County Council (2000b), at the time the Indices of Deprivation were being constructed.

For each domain in the table, and for each district, the number of wards and the proportion of a district's population are given for those wards featuring amongst the

most deprived 10% of wards in England on each domain. Hence all 26 of Easington's wards, covering 100% of its population, feature amongst the 10% most deprived wards in England on the health domain. Regarding income, 8.7% of Chester le Street's population, resident in 2 wards are amongst the 10% most deprived wards in England.

From table 4.7 we can see that the pattern of severe deprivation in County Durham, as measured using the 10% threshold of most deprived wards in England, mainly covers the Income, Employment and Health domains. Relatively severe deprivation on the education, housing and access domains is much less evident. Across the County, the severest problems in relation to income are in Easington and Wear Valley, in relation to employment in Easington, Wear Valley and Derwentside, and in relation to health in Easington, Sedgefield and Derwentside. On a much smaller scale, the most severe problems in regard to access to services occur in a number of wards in Teesdale.

Health status comes across as one of the major features of disadvantage in County Durham, particularly in former mining towns and villages, and especially in Easington, Wear Valley and Derwentside. Six of the most deprived ten wards, out of all 8,414 wards in England, are in Easington District. Eighty-four wards in County Durham (55%), covering 58% of its population, are amongst the most deprived 10% of wards in England on the health domain. Table 4.8 confirms this analysis using recent 2001 Census data.

Table 4.8 Limiting long-term illness and general health

	Limiting long term illness		General health	
	Percentage of people	Percentage of working age population	Percentage of people whose health was 'good' or 'fairly good'	Percentage of people whose health was 'not good'
England and Wales	18.47	13.84	90.66	9.34
North East	22.73	17.94	88.02	11.98
County Durham	24.53	19.79	86.81	13.19
Chester le Street	21.50	16.95	88.44	11.56
Derwentside	24.97	19.88	86.59	13.41
Durham City	20.10	15.29	89.43	10.57
Easington	30.77	27.48	82.70	17.30
Sedgefield	24.84	20.15	86.70	13.30
Teesdale	19.87	14.18	90.29	9.71
Wear Valley	24.72	19.41	87.01	12.99

Source: 2001 Census (ONS 2003: 88, table KS08)

All districts have results higher than the national figures on each aspect of long term illness and poor general health. Again Easington, and to a slightly lesser extent Derwentside, Wear Valley and Sedgefield, stand out as exhibiting much poorer health than national (and regional) figures.

So far we have considered the geography of deprivation only in terms of sub-regions, districts and wards. But to what extent is deprivation in County Durham an urban or a rural characteristic? Table 4.9 replicates the analysis of table 4.7, but this time divides wards into 'rural' and 'urban' wards, using two different categorisations of 'rural'.

Table 4.9 Severe deprivation in County Durham: urban and rural comparisons

	Area	County Durham	Author's categorisation		Countryside Agency	
			Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Total	Wards	152	97	55	63	89
	Population	489669	273519	216150	150233	339436
	% of Pop'n	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Income	Wards	34	14	20	7	27
	Population	119548	41241	78307	21063	98485
	% of Pop'n	24.4	15.1	36.2	14.0	29.0
Employment	Wards	62	39	23	19	43
	Population	196456	106376	93120	47282	149174
	% of Pop'n	40.1	38.9	43.1	31.5	43.9
Health	Wards	84	49	35	25	59
	Population	283068	151856	131212	67190	215878
	% of Pop'n	57.8	55.5	60.7	44.7	63.6
Education	Wards	18	12	6	4	14
	Population	65428	39611	25817	9174	56254
	% of Pop'n	13.4	14.5	11.9	6.1	16.6
Housing	Wards	2	2	0	1	1
	Population	4294	4294	0	1648	2646
	% of Pop'n	0.9	1.6	0.0	1.1	0.8
Access	Wards	8	8	0	8	0
	Population	6746	6746	0	6746	0
	% of Pop'n	1.4	2.5	0.0	4.5	0.0

Sources: Author's calculations from Indices of Deprivation 2000 (DETR 2000b); Durham County Council (2000b) population estimates; Countryside Agency categorisation of rural wards (Countryside Agency/ONS 2002)

On both categorisations, the severest deprivation problems, judged by the number and proportion of people living in the most deprived wards, are more associated with urban than rural wards and populations. Higher proportions of the County's urban population than its rural population are resident in wards amongst the most deprived 10% in England on the domains of income, employment and health. For example,

using the Countryside Agency's definition of rural wards, whilst overall nearly 25% of the County's population live in the most deprived 10% of wards, this involves nearly 30% of the County's urban population, and about 15% of its rural population. Rural wards classified as such under the author's categorisation exhibit deprivation characteristics closer to the urban experience than with the Countryside Agency's categorisation. This perhaps serves to illustrate a continuing problem for the nature of deprivation in County Durham, that its problems at some risk of being overlooked as being too 'urban' to be considered as 'rural' deprivation, and 'too rural' to be considered as urban deprivation. This again reflects the nature of deprivation in an ambiguously rural area.

Table 4.10 illustrates what proportion of the population of, in turn, the County as a whole, rural areas and urban areas, is covered by wards amongst the most deprived 10%, 20%, 30%, 50%, and least deprived 50% of wards nationally on each of the six deprivation domains, as well as for the IMD as a whole.

Table 4.10 Urban - rural deprivation comparisons at different thresholds

Deprivation threshold		<10%		<20%		<30%		<50%		>50%	
Domain	Area	No. of wards	% Pop'n	No. of wards	% Pop'n	No. of wards	% Pop'n	No. of wards	% Pop'n	No. of wards	% Pop'n
IMD	County	46	31.2	39	57.2	104	72.1	132	88.0	20	12.0
	Rural	26	27.5	51	55.8	66	74.7	84	88.5	13	11.5
	Urban	20	35.8	34	59.0	38	68.8	48	87.3	7	12.7
Income	County	34	24.4	72	48.5	96	66.8	122	84.9	30	15.1
	Rural	14	15.1	43	46.6	59	66.7	76	85.4	21	14.6
	Urban	20	36.2	29	50.8	37	67.0	46	84.4	9	15.6
Employment	County	62	40.1	95	65.2	118	82.2	139	93.5	13	6.5
	Rural	39	38.9	59	67.4	72	81.6	89	95.4	8	4.6
	Urban	23	41.7	36	62.5	46	83.0	50	91.1	5	8.9
Health	County	84	57.8	108	76.0	128	88.5	138	93.0	14	7.0
	Rural	49	55.5	67	76.4	80	89.3	88	94.4	9	5.6
	Urban	35	60.7	41	75.4	48	87.5	50	91.1	5	8.9
Education	County	18	13.4	32	21.8	59	40.4	90	60.9	62	39.1
	Rural	12	14.5	22	23.7	33	36.7	56	62.2	41	37.8
	Urban	6	11.9	10	19.4	26	45.2	34	59.3	21	40.7
Housing	County	2	0.9	19	12.5	53	35.2	97	64.0	55	36.0
	Rural	2	1.6	9	8.5	33	34.5	67	71.5	30	28.5
	Urban	0	0.0	10	17.5	20	36.0	30	54.5	25	45.5
Access	County	8	1.4	14	3.3	30	11.3	73	41.9	79	58.1
	Rural	8	2.5	14	5.9	29	19.4	62	57.3	35	42.7
	Urban	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.1	11	22.6	44	77.4

Source: Author's calculations using Indices of Deprivation 2000 (DETR 2000b). Population figures are taken from 1998 Durham County Council (2000b) estimates (2000b)

The population figures in each case represent the proportion of the population of the specific category of area, for example County, Rural and Urban, covered by the specified number of wards. Hence, the 26 rural wards within the most deprived 10% of wards nationally represent 27.5% of the estimated 'rural' population of the County.

In most cases, at the 10% threshold, the urban wards predominate in terms of the population covered. However, at the 20% and 30% thresholds there is only marginal difference between the most deprived urban wards and the most deprived rural wards in terms of the population covered. This suggests that the nature of deprivation in the County's rural wards, whilst not typically as severe as some of the most deprived urban wards, is still evident at the 20% and 30% thresholds.

Deprivation in County Durham appears to exist on a wide scale, rather than in just a few (urban) pockets. That being said however, the 10% threshold indicates that there are a number of severely deprived urban wards, in Peterlee and Seaham in Easington, Stanley in Derwentside and Bishop Auckland in Wear Valley.

So far we have considered deprivation in terms of the national rankings on each of the domains of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, as well as the whole population covered by a particular deprived ward or set of wards. However, a further consideration is worth exploring: the extent to which the population of deprived wards is itself 'deprived' and the extent to which 'deprived people' live beyond those wards categorised as deprived. As we discussed in Chapter 2, this issue has been the source of much debate over several years (Townsend 1979, Fieldhouse and Tye 1996, Berthoud 2001, McCulloch 2001). Most of the political and policy attention has focused on those wards identified as amongst the 'most deprived', and for most purposes this has been considered to be a 10% threshold. But what of deprivation in areas considered not so deprived? The data used for the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, when allied to ward-based population figures, allows a consideration of the scale of deprivation which might pertain outside the wards defined as most deprived.

Area based initiatives and regeneration strategies targeted at particular 'deprived' communities or areas assume a sufficiently significant difference in the deprivation levels in the targeted areas when compared with the non-targeted areas. These differences do exist, in County Durham and in England as a whole. But, are they sufficient to justify targeting resources to those areas (and sometimes only those

areas) rather than to other areas? What are the consequences of such targeting? Who benefits? Who is overlooked? How do rural areas fare in such a strategy?

There are a number of different justifications and rationales (both officially stated and 'real') for area targeting. These include, among others,

- increasing concentrations of deprivation in a few defined places,
- theories of disadvantage which include a key spatial element,
- concentrating resources to create more impact ('spreading jam more thickly'),
- societal and/or economic needs – responding to perceived market failures,
- administrative convenience and cost efficiency,
- local political pressures, and
- national 'heartland politics'.

Closer analysis of the Index of Multiple Deprivation figures in County Durham suggest firstly that there are more 'income-deprived' people living outside the most deprived areas in County Durham than living inside them, and secondly that disadvantage is more concentrated in 'most deprived' wards in urban County Durham than in areas outside the main towns. The proportion of disadvantaged people in rural wards in the County living outside the most deprived areas is higher than the comparable proportion in urban wards.

It is possible to imagine a geographical distribution of disadvantage measured between different administrative units (e.g. wards) as lying somewhere between two limiting cases. At one extreme, deprivation is wholly and exclusively contained in a definite number of areas. There are no 'non-deprived' people in these areas, and no 'deprived people' living outside them. This kind of pattern would appear to provide a strong rationale for area-based targeting of resources to address deprivation. At the other extreme deprivation levels are distributed evenly between geographical areas, such that there are no differences between areas. Targeting applied to this distribution would be non-sensical.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 aim to illustrate graphically the distribution of deprivation across urban and rural wards in County Durham ranked according to the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation. Each column in the two figures shows the percentage of 'Income Deprived' people in each ward (using only scores on the Income Domain).

Figure 4.1 The distribution of 'income deprived' people in County Durham wards ranked on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000

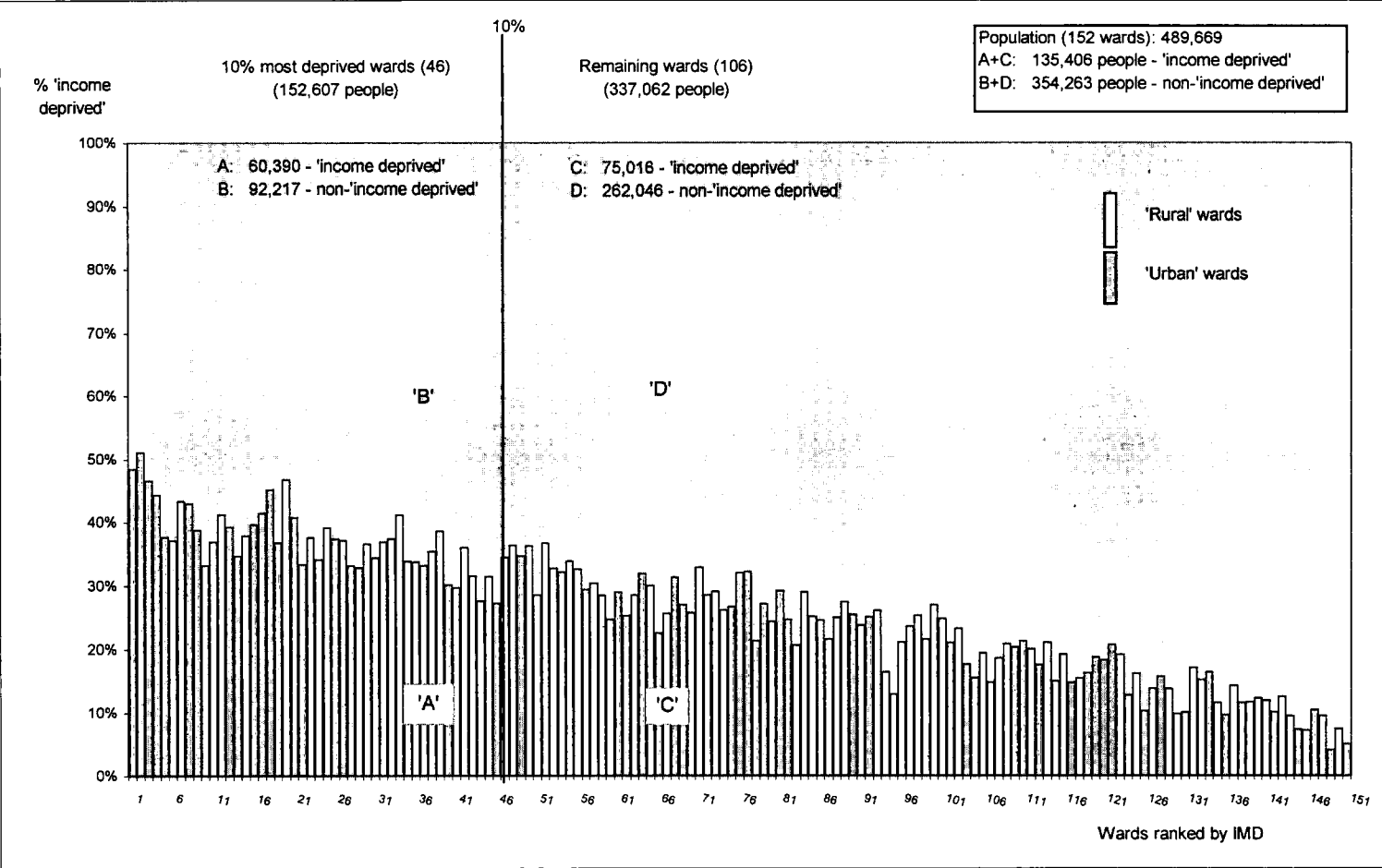
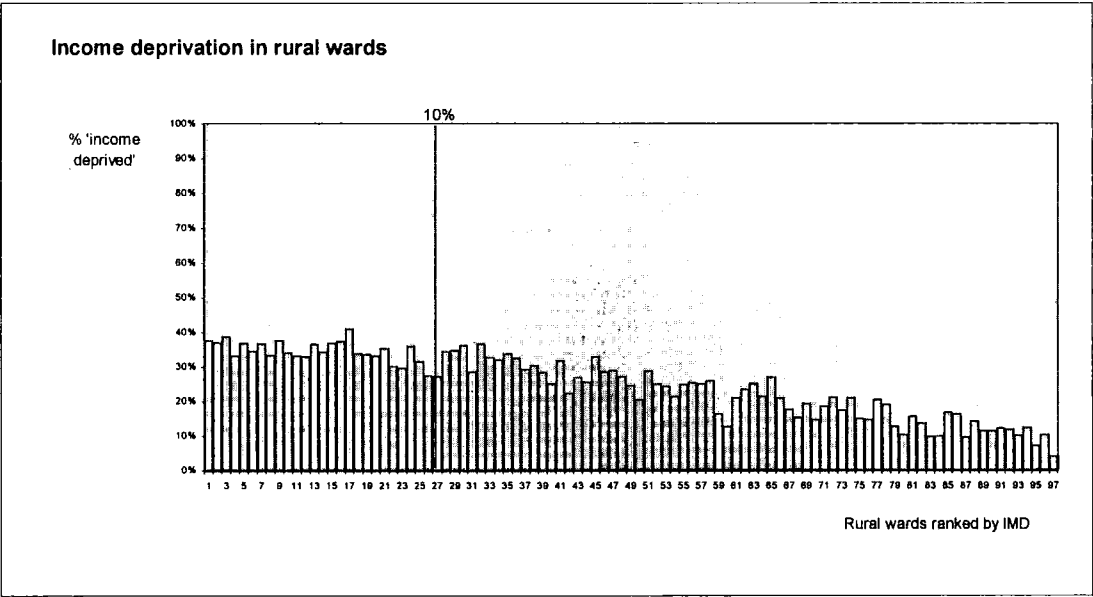
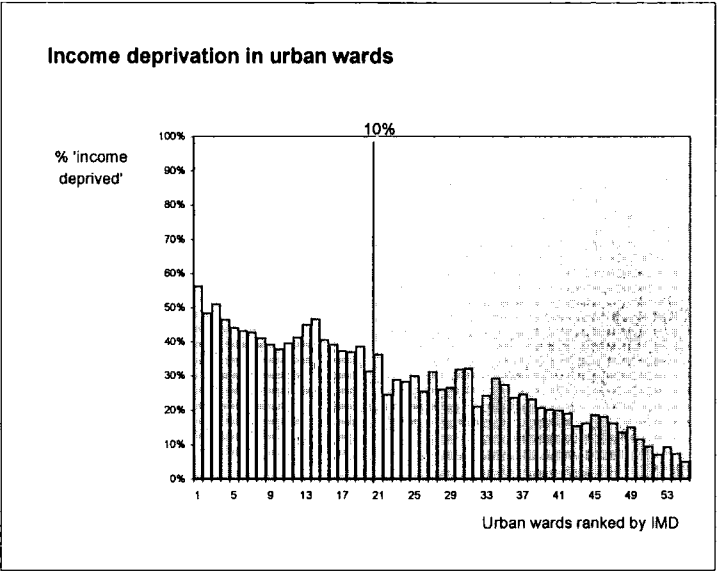


Figure 4.2 Urban and rural distributions of 'income deprived' people in County Durham wards ranked by the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000



Notes:

Each column shows the ward 'income deprivation' domain score, representing the percentage 'income deprived' population for each ward. Wards are ranked using the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The 10% line represents the threshold of the wards amongst the most deprived 10% in England.

Urban

The 55 'urban' wards in County Durham represent 216,150 (44%) of the total population.

These are wards in the following towns:

Bishop Auckland
Chester-le-Street
Consett
Durham City
Newton Aycliffe

Peterlee
Seaham
Shildon
Spennymoor
Stanley

Rural

The 97 'rural' wards in County Durham represent 273,519 (56%) of the total population.

Of the 46 wards in County Durham amongst the most deprived 10% in England, 20 are urban and 26 rural

Figure 4.1 illustrates that there are 'income-deprived' people everywhere in County Durham, not just in the most deprived wards. County Durham's geographical distribution of income deprivation might best be described as 'high and widespread'. The most severely deprived wards are mainly 'urban' (all of the 5 most deprived and 7 of the most deprived 10). As discussed above, there are lots of wards in County Durham with high levels of deprivation which are found just outside the 10% threshold which is usually used to determine resource allocations, and, reflecting County Durham's geography, many of these are rural wards.

But the 'Income Domain' ward scores are direct percentages of ward populations considered to be 'income deprived' (through receipt of means-tested social security benefits). Thus it is possible to calculate the **numbers** of people considered to be 'Income Deprived' in each ward, and across classes of ward. From this it has been possible to estimate that the total number of 'income deprived' people living outside the 'most deprived' (10% threshold) wards (75,016 people) exceeds the total number living inside them (60,390 people). Targeting resources solely on wards within the 10% threshold thus involves a potential misallocation of resources in two ways. Firstly, in area B on Figure 4.1, an estimated 92,217 non-income deprived people might potentially benefit from resources targeted in their areas, and secondly, in area C, 75,016 'income deprived' people would not directly benefit from resources targeted in the 'most deprived' wards.

Figure 4.2 groups together the urban wards and the rural wards, and compares their distributions. The urban distribution in County Durham approximates more closely to the hypothetical extreme case of deprivation limited to a few defined areas. Disadvantage is more concentrated, and the distribution is more polarised, with extremes of deprivation levels at either end. The rural distribution is more evenly distributed, and approximates the other hypothetical extreme. Tables 4.11 and 4.12 provide some figures that distinguish between the urban and the rural distributions.

Table 4.11 indicates that the different distributions of deprivation across urban and rural wards are borne out by standard deviation calculations. The table also indicates that average disadvantage, measured in this case as 'percentage income-deprived', in urban wards overall is slightly higher than that in rural wards (29% to 25%). But average disadvantage in the most deprived urban wards is disproportionately higher than that in the most disadvantaged rural wards (43% to 35%), while average

disadvantage in the remaining urban wards is similar to that in the remaining rural wards (21.3% to 21.6%).

Table 4.11 Income Deprivation data for County Durham wards

	No. of wards	Average % per ward	Standard deviation
England	8414	18.9%	11.31
County Durham	152	26.6%	10.70
<i>of which:</i>			
10% most deprived	46	38.3%	5.75
Remaining wards	106	21.5%	8.03
Urban wards	55	29.0%	12.59
Rural wards	97	25.1%	9.24
Urban 10% most deprived	20	42.6%	5.60
Urban remainder	35	21.3%	8.05
Rural 10% most deprived	26	34.9%	3.02
Rural remainder	71	21.6%	8.08

Source: Author’s calculations from Indices of Deprivation (DETR 2000b)

For urban wards, the average ‘income deprivation’ score in the most deprived wards is twice that in the remaining wards, but the average score in the most deprived rural wards is only 1.5 times that in the remaining rural wards. Once again this demonstrates that urban deprivation is more concentrated than rural deprivation, and suggests that area-based resource targeting to address disadvantage in rural areas may be less effective in reaching deprived people.

Table 4.12 Income deprived populations - urban and rural wards in County Durham

	No. of wards	No. of 'Income Deprived' people	%
Urban 10% most deprived	20	33728	53.3
Urban remainder	35	29558	46.7
Urban total	55	63286	100.0
Rural 10% most deprived	26	26662	37.0
Rural remainder	71	45455	63.0
Rural total	97	72117	100.0

Source: Author’s calculations from Indices of Deprivation (DETR 2000b)

Table 4.12 translates ‘income deprivation’ scores into estimated populations, and indicates that in County Durham there are more ‘income deprived’ disadvantaged people in rural wards (72,117) than in urban wards (63,286). This reflects County

Durham's high population living outside the main towns and the widespread disadvantage across the wards in the County. However, within the most deprived wards (measured at the 10% threshold) there are more income deprived people in urban wards (33,728) than income deprived people in rural wards (26,662).

Of the 'income deprived' urban population – 63,286 overall – 53.3% are resident within the most deprived wards (10% threshold). However, of the 'income deprived' rural population – 72,117 overall – only 37.0% are resident in the most deprived wards. This suggests that the effectiveness of area-based resource targeting would be greater in urban than rural areas. If you happen to be in receipt of means-tested benefits in a rural area, and therefore regarded as 'income deprived' for these purposes, you are less likely to be surrounded by similarly placed people. Insofar as resources are targeted in practice to areas classified as the 'most deprived', disadvantaged people in rural areas are less likely to be included.

In this section we have explored in some depth the nature of disadvantage in County Durham, both in national and regional contexts, and within the County itself. Extensive use has been made of official statistics which have become available whilst the research for this thesis has been undertaken. The increasing availability of a wide range of neighbourhood statistics, alongside the emergence of results from the 2001 Census, should enable a more fine-tuned analysis of different dimensions of disadvantage in County Durham in the future. Notwithstanding this, however, we have been able to use the Indices of Deprivation statistics to examine how different forms of deprivation are found at district and ward level in the County, and have been able to draw some conclusions about the relationship between multiple deprivation and County Durham's ambiguous rurality. In the final section of this Chapter we will look at the voluntary and community sector in County Durham as a third contextual feature of the research undertaken for this thesis.

III. The voluntary and community sector in County Durham

A number of research projects have been undertaken in and around the voluntary and community sector in County Durham (One Voice Network 2000, VONNE 2000, Macmillan 2002a, 2002b, Wilding *et al* 2002), but these have usually been for highly specific purposes, with the result that a picture of the sector can really be pieced

together only from disparate sources. Tables 4.13 and 4.14 indicate the position with regard to the number and distribution of registered charities in County Durham.

Table 4.13 Registered charities in County Durham

District	Number	%	Population	Per 1,000 pop'n
Chester le Street	74	8.6	53,694	1.38
Derwentside	135	15.6	85,065	1.59
Durham City	179	20.7	87,725	2.04
Easington	93	10.8	93,981	0.99
Sedgefield	122	14.1	87,206	1.40
Teesdale	126	14.6	24,457	5.15
Wear Valley	136	15.7	61,342	2.22
Total	865	100.0	493,470	1.75

Source:
Charity Commission register (accessed 10.12.02)
Population figures taken from 2001 Census (ONS 2002)

Within County Durham it seems that the more remote rural districts (Wear Valley, Teesdale) have a higher number of registered charities per 1,000 population than elsewhere. The most deprived district, Easington, has the lowest number per 1,000 population. The relatively high figure in Durham City reflects the fact that many charities have their base within the City itself.

Table 4.14 The largest ten registered charities in County Durham

	Organisation (1)	Base District (2)	Year ending	Income, £	Expenditure, £
1	DISC (3)	Sedgefield	31/03/2001	4,107,703	3,964,248
2	Groundwork East Durham	Easington	31/03/2002	3,854,286	3,784,104
3	Groundwork West Durham	Wear Valley	31/03/2001	2,719,291	2,705,806
4	South West Durham Training	Sedgefield	31/03/2001	1,576,756	1,358,877
5	Durham Rural Community Council	Derwentside	31/03/2002	996,238	1,045,710
6	Seaham Training Trust	Easington	31/03/2001	387,573	604,715
7	Age Concern County Durham	Durham City	31/03/2002	567,900	483,738
8	Consett YMCA	Derwentside	31/03/2002	404,081	359,129
9	Sedgefield Citizens Advice Bureau	Sedgefield	31/03/2002	347,812	342,187
10	Park View Community Association	Chester-le-Street	31/03/2001	282,276	252,038

Source: Charity Commission register (accessed 10.12.02)

Notes:

1. These ten charities are the only registered charities in County Durham with income and expenditure of over £250,000 in the latest year available
2. The base district is only the location where, for the purposes of Charity Commission, the organisation is registered. This does not give any necessary guide to where the organisation operates.
3. DISC (Developing Initiatives for Support in the Community) is the largest charity in County Durham, but although it originated, and is based in, the County, it also works in other areas of Northern England, primarily Teesside and North Yorkshire. In County Durham, on behalf of the One Voice Network, it is the lead body for the New Deal Voluntary Sector Option and the Voluntary Sector Academy.

But registered charities do not exhaust the voluntary and community sector, both generally and in the County. However, research on the scale and scope of the sector locally is somewhat threadbare. A survey for VONNE (2000) included Wear Valley as its exemplar rural district for the North East (response rate 37%). The overall findings were not geographically disaggregated and not presented separately, but the research did estimate that in Wear Valley there were approximately eight volunteers for every paid member of staff in the voluntary sector (compared with 2.6 in the exemplar urban area, Gateshead, and 3.4 in the exemplar industrial area, Redcar and Cleveland) (VONNE 2000: 17-18). This could be indicative of a higher propensity to volunteer in rural areas, or a concentration of funding for staff in urban areas, or both.

The 'Mapping the rural voluntary sector' study carried out by NCVO (Wilding *et al* 2002) involved postal surveys of voluntary organisations and groups in Teesdale and East Northamptonshire. With a 40% response rate in Teesdale, the researchers found that its 271 voluntary organisations had a combined estimated total income and expenditure of £4.8 million and £4.7 million respectively, but around half of this was accounted for by the largest five per cent of organisations. Excluding Housing Associations, the sector generates approximately £193 per year for every person living in Teesdale (Wilding *et al* 2002: 31). The sector mainly comprises very small organisations operating at a local level. Twenty eight percent of organisations had an income of less than £1,000 per annum, and sixty-nine percent had an income of less than £10,000 per annum. Approximately one third of organisations employ staff, and the sector employs 438 staff overall, a third of whom are part time. In addition, an estimated 4,963 volunteers are used by voluntary organisations in the sector. In Teesdale the 271 organisations represent a figure of 10.8 per 1,000 people, which is higher than in East Northamptonshire (5.6) and previous Home Office research for urban areas (2.6) (Yates 2002: 5, see also Chanan 2002: 23-6 for discussion).

A recent study for the County Durham Councils for Voluntary Service Network (a relatively informal group consisting of the six district CVSs and DRCC as 'the countywide CVS') confirmed the picture of the voluntary and community sector in County Durham as comprising a large number of relatively 'young' and predominantly smaller groups and organisations. The research involved a postal survey of a stratified random sample of approximately 500 voluntary organisations and community groups across the County, producing a response rate of 39% (Macmillan 2002b). The sampling frame was compiled from the combined mailing

and membership lists of the seven organisations, producing a list of 1,231 groups and organisations. The survey found that 57% of groups were registered as charities, and 41% had been formed in the last ten years. Most tellingly the sector is marked by a large number of small groups: 45% of groups had an income of less than £5,000 per annum, 61% less than £10,000, 74% less than £20,000, and only 13% had an income of more than £50,000 per annum. Fifty percent of groups have no paid staff at all and 31% have less than 2.0 full time equivalent staff, 23% of groups have less than five volunteers and 44% have less than ten volunteers.

That the voluntary and community sector in County Durham primarily comprises a large number of small organisations and groups is not unusual. Perhaps the most visible aspect of the sector, its infrastructure of second-tier organisations and Local Development Agencies has developed quite rapidly in the last twenty years in County Durham. New organisations have been established and others have grown. More recently strenuous efforts have been undertaken to develop networks across organisational boundaries, and separately, a number of central organisations have either faced financial and personnel difficulties, or have folded altogether.

Whilst Durham Rural Community Council has a long history dating back to the interwar depression, more recently other larger voluntary organisations have developed in specialist areas. Two Groundwork Trusts have been established in the County, covering East Durham (established 1986) and West Durham (1992), specialising in landscape improvements, sustainable development projects and community-based environmental regeneration. A Co-operative Development Association was established in 1989 after a two year pilot project. This organisation, which grew rapidly towards the end of the 1990s on the strength of growing policy interest in community economic development and community enterprise, specialised in the provision of support, services and projects in the social economy, including co-operatives and credit unions. However, under the increasing weight of retrospective funding regimes, it finally went into liquidation in July 2001. The County Durham Foundation was established in 1995, specialising firstly in building an endowment fund from which small grants can be paid to community groups, and secondly in administering a number of small grants and 'community chest' regimes.

In the second half of the 1990s developments to establish a cross-organisational network were set in train to explore the benefits of collaborative work in the sector



and to advance its interests as a whole. The 'One Voice Network'¹³ (OVN) stresses that it should be seen as a network rather than an organisation in the usual sense, and was established after a groundbreaking conference in the winter of 1996 to 'unite voluntary and community groups across County Durham and Darlington by examining the practical benefits of working together'. OVN has a small secretariat managed by DRCC, and is currently funded through the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB5). Its work is organised through a steering group which meets bi-monthly and bi-annual conferences are also held to discuss issues of common concern in the voluntary sector. Significantly, the work of the One Voice Network has brought major developments to the work of the voluntary and community sectors, including the New Deal Voluntary Sector Option (with one of OVN's steering group members, DISC, being the lead agency), the successful development and eventual launch on 19th October 2001 of the local Compact agreement for County Durham (One Voice Network 2001), and finally the lead role in three phases of a large SRB5 programme to strengthen the role of the voluntary and community sectors in community regeneration throughout the County. Research commissioned by OVN (One Voice Network 2000) into the development needs of the voluntary and community sectors in the County set the stage for an action plan and an SRB5 funded programme of work to develop the sector. Among other things, the research called for greater clarity of roles and responsibilities between organisations in the voluntary and community sectors, which could be achieved through enhanced collaboration between LDAs, beyond that already achieved in the One Voice Network. Lack of collaboration, based on short-term and competitive funding regimes, had created a situation of possible duplication, where end-users would be confused as to which organisation was responsible for what activities and services. The report recommended the development of a 'pact' or framework of understanding within the sector outlining roles and relationships between organisations to complement the Compact between the voluntary and statutory sectors (One Voice Network 2000). Three main strands of work are underway at the moment on this programme: a 'Voluntary Sector Academy' has been established to coordinate training and improve skill levels in the sector; a voluntary sector support and quality assurance project, and finally ongoing work to achieve the full development and implementation of the local Compact.

The One Voice Network was also instrumental in the development of a full complement of district-based Councils for Voluntary Service in the County. Two

¹³ In subsequent chapters we shall refer to this as the 'Voluntary Sector Forum'

phases of development work managed through OVN in each of the districts was significant in helping to complete the jigsaw of CVSs across the County. Taking a broad overview, CVS development in County Durham has taken place in roughly four stages (Macmillan 2002a: 9-12):

1. 1966-1995: Easington CVS was established in 1966, and for most of the time subsequently has been the only CVS in the County.
2. 1996-1998: From 1996 three Volunteer Development Agencies were established in Wear Valley, Derwentside and Chester-le-Street with support from the Home Office 'Make a Difference' programme designed to encourage volunteering (Davis Smith 2001).
3. 1999-2000: Work throughout 1999-2000 in Sedgefield and Durham City, assisted by the One Voice Network, led to the establishment of CVSs in each district in the middle of 2000.
4. 2001: Finally in 2001 the CVS/VB in Wear Valley has re-launched as '2D': a new organisation covering both Wear Valley and Teesdale.

Although the network is complete, it is not particularly strong, and is built on relatively small funding from District and County Councils topped up with short term project funding (Macmillan 2002a). The more recent development from 2001 of Community Empowerment Networks in four of the districts has also added to the development of the County's infrastructure, but has also taken its toll on CVSs. Two of the three CVSs have gone through succession crises as Chief Officers have resigned, one relating to a growing conflict between the network and the CVS over the administration of the Community Empowerment Fund. A third CVS has had its funding withdrawn when structural and management gaps were revealed before the Community Empowerment Fund was introduced. The local Community Empowerment Network here is currently trying to re-establish the CVS.

Until more recently, because there was only partial CVS coverage across the County, DRCC fulfilled many of the functions of a CVS, especially in those areas with no CVS or only newly emerging CVSs. From around 2000, as a result of the development of the CVS network, DRCC, like many other organisations, has begun to re-examine its focus and remit, reformulate strategic plans, and has been re-orienting its work in the light of the changing voluntary sector environment. However, there remains a large potential for overlap and duplication in the services provided by these organisations. Durham Rural Community Council and the CVSs participate in the informal 'CVS network', which, as well as seeking to develop new services to

plug gaps in infrastructure provision, has been considering how to respond to the government's Capacity Building and Infrastructure Strategy (Home Office 2003c). The One Voice Network has been undergoing a period of change and reassessment in the light of new circumstances over the last few years, and tends to refer to itself as a 'network of networks', rather than a grassroots membership network. Councils for Voluntary Service act as links to local groups and organisations, and the network as a whole, as well as individual organisations, are members of the Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE), the regional voluntary sector infrastructure network, established in April 2000. Separately One Voice Network is seeking to use interactive Information Technology systems to develop specific issue-based 'communities of interest' for voluntary organisations and community groups. The latest of these, around the funding of village halls, has attracted national attention since the local Compact was invoked in an effort to resolve the issue.

The last three chapters have outlined the detailed context for the empirical research undertaken for this thesis. In turn we have explored the nature of disadvantage, particularly in rural areas; changing political, policy and practical responses to disadvantage; and finally the County Durham backdrop in which the case studies of community-based voluntary activity are set. The next two chapters act as a bridge to the extended discussion of issues and findings in later chapters, by turning towards methodological questions.

Chapter 5

Methodology - structuring the research

This chapter details the methodology involved in the research for this thesis - the way in which the research was designed and carried out. The design and practice of the research was structured by three main themes. Firstly the project was designed to be undertaken as **intensive** research, through the study of a number of qualitative case studies. Secondly the research specifically attempted to deploy a **temporal** dimension, by adopting a 'stretched', 'real-time' involvement over the life of projects. Thirdly, and as mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, the research was a **collaborative** study, undertaken in partnership with a non-academic organisation. This chapter is organised around these three themes, which are discussed in turn.

1. Intensive research: case studies and case selection

The research in this thesis was informed by Sayer's (1992: 241-251) description of 'intensive research'. Here the particular 'objects' of the research (in this case, voluntary sector community-based initiatives seeking to tackle disadvantage in rural areas) are examined from what might be called a 'worm's eye' perspective (as opposed to a 'bird's eye' perspective). Close examination of a number of concrete cases facilitates a qualitative exploration of processes and dynamics. Sayer's contrast between intensive and extensive research follows a concern to render the insights of realist philosophies of social science of use in a concrete research programme. Realist approaches to explanation in social science suggest the need to consider how events and social phenomena are produced or generated through time as a result of the interplay between causal mechanisms and mediating contexts (Keat and Urry 1982, Sayer 1992, 2000, Archer 1995, Pawson and Tilley 1997). For Pawson and Tilley (1997), it is only the interaction between the causal powers of underlying structures on the one hand, and contingent mechanisms on the other, that combine to generate outcomes observable at an empirical level. Voluntary sector community-based projects are simultaneously the outcome of earlier and wider

causal processes and decisions, but also take their own place in the complex causality of particular effects and impacts 'on the ground'.

The empirical component of the project consisted of a qualitative investigation of a number of case study community-based voluntary sector projects. These are organisationally meaningful 'framing devices' for the examination of the particular research questions of this study. In so far as the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 are oriented towards the *process* of developing initiatives to tackle disadvantage in rural areas, an intensive qualitative methodology utilising case studies would seem appropriate (Yin 1994, Stake 1994). In the familiar trade-off, the intention has been the pursuit of 'depth' rather than 'breadth', which leads to the possibility of a more fine-grained understanding of how a voluntary sector project is designed, developed, implemented and its activities and effects monitored. Greater depth allows more attention to be given to the micro-dynamics of project development, allowing a variety of different 'voices' to be heard. An alternative 'extensive' or largely quantitative research strategy might signal wider trends in the development of projects, but it does not lend itself to the analysis of the causal processes at work in individual cases. Accordingly this strategy was not pursued here.

It is possible that the research objectives could have been met by an intensive study of a single voluntary sector project. However, given the heterogeneity of both the voluntary and community sector (as a 'loose and baggy monster' (Kendall and Knapp 1995)) and of rural areas themselves (Hoggart 1990, Marsden 1999), the study of a *range* of projects in different settings was more appropriate and allowed some protection against findings that might be considered to have been purely idiosyncratic. A small range of cases allows selection to proceed along dimensions that are thought to be of theoretical importance. In organisational terms this could be along criteria such as 'size' of the project (funding, human resources), aims and scope of the project, organisational structure, and location, as explained below.

The primary empirical component of the research was thus framed as a set of four case studies. Originally six cases were selected but recruitment difficulties subsequently caused a re-orientation of the research. The original six were selected from a prior scoping exercise which involved the gradual collection of data from a range of sources on the variety of projects that have been operational in the selected locality over a defined period of time. A 'picture' (or 'map') was built up of projects

using data from DRCC records, rural and other funding programmes, for example the Rural Development Programme, LEADER II, National Lottery Charities Board awards database, and records of other Local Development Agencies such as Groundwork and the Durham Co-operative Development Association.

From this 'map' a 'long-list' was drawn up of projects which:

- a) were in some sense voluntary sector community-based,
- b) attempted to address disadvantage,
- c) operated in the rural areas of County Durham, and
- d) would have been in operation at some point in the five year period from 1st April 1995 to 31st March 2000.

Cases were selected to ensure a **range** of projects on key criteria - particularly in terms of:

- a) the **different ruralities** of different areas of County Durham

Given the different types of rural area evident in County Durham, as outlined in Chapter 4, the aim was to select cases which reflect some of these differences.

- b) the **role of DRCC** as a supporting and sponsoring Local Development Agency

The aim here was to select some projects organised and managed through DRCC, and some that were supported or developed through other means.

- c) the **scale of the projects**

The aim here was to explore the different scales at which projects operate, for example over a single settlement or village, over several linked villages, over part or all of a district, or on a county-wide basis.

- d) the **'orientation' towards disadvantage**

The key question here is whether initiatives and projects work primarily with **individuals** considered to be disadvantaged, or with community **groups** of people (who may or may not be disadvantaged) whose own work may then directly affect people considered to most disadvantaged. In the former case a project may improve a situation of disadvantage for those individuals, and may become a 'stepping stone' out of disadvantage. An example might be a voluntary sector training scheme which allows an individual to access the labour market, or a benefits advice take up scheme which improves the financial circumstances of an individual or household. In terms of working with

groups, an initiative may serve to build its capacity to act and develop its own projects, which may then facilitate the cascading of skills and experiences within that group, as well as improving the availability of local services and facilities.

In addition to these four case study projects, the research has looked in some detail at the functioning of a strategic-level voluntary sector network which operates across County Durham, and in which DRCC is a leading member. This has brought additional insights not only into the development of the community-based voluntary sector, but also into strategic-level interactions and relationships between larger voluntary sector agencies. The research undertaken here, primarily through extended ethnographic participant observation of steering group meetings and other events, provides a further setting for a fifth case study. The cases selected for more detailed empirical study are listed in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Selected case studies

Case study (1)	Description (2)
Community Development in East Durham	Two DRCC projects undertaking community development work in targeted wards and villages in ex-coalfield areas of East Durham
Dales Community Project	A DRCC-managed initiative operating at a sub-district level in the upper dales of West Durham
Village Community Partnership	A DRCC community development project based in a single remote village in a primarily urban district in Mid-Durham
Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative	An initiative supported by a Local Development Agency operating at a district level in West Durham
Voluntary Sector Forum (3)	Case study of cross-organisational networking at a 'strategic' level, involving DRCC in 'partnership' with other voluntary agencies

- Notes:
1. These names are pseudonyms
 2. The descriptions were accurate when the fieldwork commenced. However, as will become evident in later chapters, some features date rapidly
 3. 'Voluntary Sector Forum' was a supplementary case study to the four main case study projects. Research here also included involvement with a separate network of Local Development Agencies ('LDA-network')

Ultimately the aim has been to be able to say with confidence that the selected cases are not untypical of the kinds of community-based voluntary sector projects and activities which might be developed with the aim of tackling disadvantage in the rural areas of County Durham, and by organisations like the collaborating partner. With

five cases the aim is *not* to achieve some form of statistical 'representativeness', a characteristic of quantitative or 'extensive' research. Because the research is grounded in a notion of complexity (of projects, of factors affecting projects and of contexts) and of heterogeneity, then aiming for statistical generalisation involves too much of an abstraction from the complexity of cases. If it is possible that a range of complex interacting factors, at different levels of context, could create the conditions within which certain outcomes are produced or not, it would seem inappropriate to decide in advance the singular characteristics of a project for which it could be considered (statistically) representative.

The importance attached to notions of detailed context has significant theoretical implications for the degree to which the research can be considered *generalisable outside* of this context. If certain outcomes are the final consequence of a variety of different interacting mechanisms, mediated by the complex local context, there may be limits to the generalisability of the research findings. While this may be true, the issue here is one of exploring what those limits might be, and of considering which mechanisms, and which processes are of relevance and how they might operate in differing contexts. This follows the need in qualitative research to attend to the generalisability of theoretical accounts of process which are being developed (Alasuutari 1995: 156-7, Bryman 1988: 90). We shall return to this theme in the final chapter.

The degree to which case studies are seen as a distinct methodology or research strategy (Yin 1994) or as a method of data selection (Blaikie 2000) is a matter of some debate. To the extent that they are seen merely as 'framing' devices through which to bound research objects, they do not imply specific methods. In this project the case studies have been examined using a combination of what Dingwall (1997) called 'hanging out', 'asking questions' and 'reading the papers'. Thus a range of different methods have been used, including semi-structured interviews and informal (though still largely 'interviewer-led') discussions; observations from meetings, training sessions, project activities and other events, and reading and analysis of project documentation, informed by the growing literature on qualitative methods in social research (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, Coffey and Atkinson 1996, Silverman 2000, 2001, Bryman 2001)

With varying degrees of formality, over 140 interviews have been conducted in total. Of these, 48 interviews, with key respondents for each case study project, were

recorded and transcribed. These included interviews with unpaid community participants in projects (18), project workers (14) and a range of interviews with other stakeholders, including senior managers in local development agencies (16). The remaining 94 interviews and discussions were a little less formal, and here comprehensive notes were taken. These less formal discussions include a number of 'induction' and 'context' interviews carried out during the early scoping, mapping and design phase of the research, as well as later interviews and discussions designed to gain updates from key respondents of the latest developments and issues for each project. Alongside key respondents, additional research undertaken in three of the five case studies enabled over 150 additional people to make a contribution to the research, as detailed in Table 5.2 below:

Table 5.2 Additional respondents

Project	Additional Respondents	Methods
Dales Community Project (DCP)	107	Postal survey of 210 members of DCP (51% response rate)
Village Community Partnership (VCP)	18	In-depth interviews with residents randomly selected from the electoral register, designed to contribute 'qualitative' information to a village 'appraisal'
Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative (DRCFI)	38	Postal survey of 130 adult members of DRCFI (30% response rate)

Interviews were supplemented by extensive observation of project activities and meetings. Throughout the research approximately 200 meetings have been attended, with contemporaneous notes being taken at the majority. This has tended to involve (relatively) unobtrusive non-participant observation. In most cases I was able to sit alongside other participants, or sometimes to take a position just to the side of the meeting. In most cases, I had the sense that project participants became accustomed to my presence, and did not appear to take much notice of my note-taking, although there were some exceptions to this rule. The range of meetings includes early scoping and induction meetings, regular attendance at DRCC staff meetings, AGMs and other meetings and events, regular attendance at the bi-monthly joint steering group of the Voluntary Sector Forum, LDA-network, and associated events and conferences, as well as regular project, team, steering-group,

partnership and management committee meetings held within the case study projects.

Project documentation was extensive when aggregated together, but somewhat patchy in extent and degree of organisation between projects. Thus the written materials associated with the two smaller projects – Village Community Partnership and Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative – were much less comprehensive, and harder to access, than elsewhere.

When combined, the different research activities in the case studies and for the study overall have generated a large amount of empirical material for analysis. For qualitative researchers this can often cause a number of problems, in terms of both the headache of *managing* all the material, but also in terms of data *analysis* (Bryman and Burgess 1994).

In this thesis, data analysis was undertaken not so much as a separate activity after fieldwork and before writing up, but more as an iterative process throughout the study. This involved a continuing cycle of data collection and reflections on the fieldwork, informed by ongoing theoretical reading and reflection. Separate notebooks for each case study were used for this purpose, containing details of research activities, observations and reflections. As the period identified for fieldwork drew to a close, the task then became more weighted to the interplay between analysis and theoretical reflection.

Analysing the data from the case studies was informed initially by 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Strauss and Corbin 1998). Here the aim is to allow the data to 'speak for itself' without researchers' initial preconceptions. Categories and concepts are 'surfaced' or emerge from the data itself and theory is consequently developed. However, this inductive approach runs the risk of producing little more than descriptive accounts of the social world as 'found'. There is a danger that qualitative researchers might drown in a mass of particular descriptions of issues, events and stories, losing the opportunity to 'make sense of it all' (Coffey and Atkinson 1996).

In this study material gathered from interviews, notes and documentation was read and re-read several times over in order to highlight key themes or issues, which were then compared and contrasted within and across cases. But this approach to

analysis amounted neither to a pure attempt at grounded theory, nor was it undertaken solely in relation to the case studies themselves. Accordingly, in this study, the analysis took the form of an iteration between a more 'top-down' deductive approach which used insights from ongoing theoretical reading to cast different spotlights on the case study material, and a 'bottom-up' inductive approach, involving analysis of the key themes, issues and stories which emerge from the case studies.

Analysis was therefore initially a part of seeking to make sense of what happened and what issues were important, and how these might be similar or variable in other settings. However, quite quickly the focus shifted towards the three clusters of ideas selected as analytical frames for further exploration, that is, 'field', 'time' and 'scale-proximity'. These became the viewpoints through which the overall argument of the thesis was subsequently developed. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 use only some of the gathered empirical material to report and discuss in depth three of the main issues which the research sought to address.

The primary aim in the selection of material to illustrate the main arguments presented in the analytical chapters was to demonstrate the potential of each of the three clusters of ideas to increase our understanding of the nature of community-based voluntary action, rather than to suggest that these might represent the 'final word' on the subject. An account of community-based voluntary action is just that – an open, provisional, potentially contested *account*. A range of other perspectives and issues could also be interpreted and reported from the material generated. This may form the basis for further work in the future.

II. A temporal dimension: taking time seriously

The research with the case studies in this thesis explicitly adopted a temporal or dynamic dimension (Bechhofer and Paterson 2000: ch.8, Macmillan 2001). The key methodological suggestion behind dynamic research is that there is a need to 'take time seriously' because static research techniques are unable to deal with change and development. Insights from static research are limited insofar as they bracket time off, and in doing so effectively assume that the social world is largely stable. This may have immense problems for the potential 'shelf life' of the research in question: the degree to which its insights might still be seen as relevant after a certain period of time.

Dynamic research in the social sciences has largely been dominated by research which adopts a quantitative focus, using either simulated models of change, as in complexity theory (Byrne 1998), or large scale panel surveys and cohort studies, as in studies of long term and short term poverty (Leisering and Walker 1998, Leisering and Leibfried 1999). This is not to say that there has been little contribution made by qualitative researchers. There are a number of qualitative research techniques which aim to adopt a temporal dimension, including, for example, biographical methods such as oral histories and life histories (Miller 2000, Chamberlayne *et al* 2000). However, the objects of such research have typically been individuals or families, rather than organisational forms. There seems to have been less dynamic qualitative research which has attempted to consider the 'biographies' of organisations or projects (Macmillan 1999).

Much case study research, especially with voluntary sector organisations, has tended to involve cross-sectional 'short sharp shocks'. Researchers establish contact and consent, and then over a period of four to six weeks (depending on the research design and funding conditions), undertake a series of interviews (with individual and/or groups) with different people associated with each case (for example managers, volunteers, trustees, clients/users) about the particular topic driving the research (see, for example, Alcock *et al* 1999, Russell and Scott 1997). Having managed to achieve this, the case study has then seemingly been 'done'. However there is an important sense in which this cross-sectional approach misses the important feature of organisational life as dynamic, involving change, development and emergence. A 'short sharp shock' approach is unlikely to be able to apprehend or even appreciate this dynamism. But given the research focus here, of examining how projects emerge, develop and produce certain outcomes, it would seem essential that a temporal dimension is used in the design and analysis. In order to capture something of the dynamism inherent in operating a community-based voluntary sector project, and then to assess how decision-making might be informed by wider contexts and strategy, the aim here has been to develop a longer 'real-time' research association with each case. There are two aspects here: the 'stretched' research involvement, and the 'real-time' research involvement.

Extending a period of research involvement facilitates the use of a 'real time' perspective, but is also important to avoid the limitations of cross-sectional approaches. An issue examined in a cross-sectional study is rarely contained in that

attenuated research moment. It has a beginning before the research, a continual development, and a continuing story after the research involvement. It is likely that conclusions drawn from a cross sectional study might therefore be limited insofar as the involvement has been collapsed over time. An extended involvement has the potential to capture and appreciate these developments and changes. However, this may be a matter of timescale, depending on the duration of the extended research involvement, the research questions and the 'natural rhythm' of the issues at the centre of the research. A year in the life of a voluntary sector project is unlikely to be able to answer much longer 'historical time' questions such as the changing role of voluntary organisations in the development of the welfare state. For the research undertaken in this thesis, it is suggested that the development of community-based voluntary sector projects, and the outcomes they may produce, can be appreciated by an extended research involvement. Whilst it is possible that an even more extended involvement might be necessary to attend to the impacts of projects, this is limited by practical and funding constraints. On the argument that 'it is still too early to tell what the impact of the French Revolution has been', it is possible that the impact of a project simply may not be fully assessable within the confines of a three to four year research study. This is not to suggest that judgements about the impact of projects cannot be made, but merely to suggest that these will always be provisional and 'in progress'.

A 'real-time' approach aims to explore the dynamics of case study projects as they occur. The aim here is to seek to understand what might be called the 'everyday life' of community-based voluntary sector projects. The benefit of this approach is that it may avoid the problem of selective memory in retrospective accounts. However, this is not always automatically an advantage, given that sometimes the capacity to reflect upon events as they occur might be limited, and participants may appreciate some time 'distance' to do this. However, 'of the moment' real time analysis and reflection is useful to the extent that it can explore how immediate decisions and judgements are made within changing contexts of events and interactions between participants within projects. In practice the fieldwork for the research described here involved a combination of 'real time' and retrospective analysis and accounts. For example, some methods are typically retrospective (analysing documents) whereas others are by definition 'real time' (observing meetings and other project activities).

In order to examine, then, how projects develop and change, a temporal dimension is necessary. Earlier stages of the case study research sought to gather basic

information about what the nature of the project, what its aims are, who is involved and how it emerged. This is not unlike establishing a 'baseline' from which to assess subsequent developments, although since it is not exactly the same, the whole approach might be referred to as 'quasi-longitudinal'. Subsequent phases sought to address questions of dynamic 'movement' of the projects and how projects 'respond to events' as well as more evaluative questions of potential impact and outcomes.

III. Collaborative research: some opportunities and dilemmas

As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, the research project which formed the basis for this thesis was funded through an ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) CASE (Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering) studentship, a scheme which aims to facilitate collaborative research between academic and non-academic organisations. The studentship ran for three years from October 1999 to September 2002. In this case the research was a collaboration between two departments of the University of Durham and the Durham Rural Community. The ESRC promotes the benefits of the scheme to non-academic organisations in terms of the opportunity to access expertise that may not exist within the organisation, and in terms of the potential benefits of collaborative research 'for a relatively modest outlay' (ESRC 2000).

The idea for the research undertaken here originated in discussions within the collaborating organisation regarding its role in tackling disadvantage in the rural areas of County Durham. This was in the context of a rising concern with issues of rural poverty at a policy level locally and nationally. Chapter 4 has already outlined some of the difficulties experienced in a County going through immense economic and social change in the last 20 to 30 years. Discussions with two DRCC board members (who also wear 'academic hats') led to the idea of a research project to explore the potential role DRCC might have in responding to disadvantage in rural areas in County Durham.

That a study is organised in such terms has important methodological implications (Macmillan and Scott 2003). A researcher embarking upon this kind of research project is undertaking something which is likely to have involved a considerable amount of preliminary work. By the time the research began in October 1999, much preparatory work had already been done in the preceding 12 to 18 months. As a

result the researcher comes to a project upon which particular expectations and aspirations are laid - the researcher does not start on a *tabula rasa* basis. Although the researcher has the freedom to change substantial areas of the general research approach and design, the potential consequences of doing so are greater than for non-collaborative researchers. This is because in some sense the non-academic partners have an independent 'stake' in the research, framed around certain expectations regarding the focus of the research, research questions and how it might be carried out. A collaborative researcher therefore has an additional series of negotiations around research design, rather than simply with academic supervisors. This may or may not cause problems. In the case of this research there has been only a small degree of variation from the initial research design outlined in the original studentship application. The issue of 'ambiguous ownership' is explored further below.

Opportunities and dilemmas

Researching a thesis in a collaborative environment presents a number of both opportunities and dilemmas. The opportunities relate to eased access to research materials and the possibility of close examination of an organisation 'under the skin' or veneer which might otherwise be presented. In addition there is a greater prospect that the research might have more immediate practical consequences, rather than being simply read by supervisors and examiners and, if successful, shelved in the notorious dusty corner of a library. Research for a collaborative thesis to some extent has an automatic audience within the collaborative partner. But collaborative research also involves a number of dilemmas (Macmillan and Scott 2003), and it is instructive to focus a little on four of these: ownership, positionality, access, and confidentiality. As well as being issues about ethical conduct in social research, they are also very practical issues, experienced on a day-to-day basis as the research proceeds. As such they have to be 'negotiated' with some care.

'Ambiguous Ownership' – whose project is it anyway?

Whereas ownership in a non-collaborative thesis is more clear-cut, there is a degree of ambiguity with collaborative research projects. Strictly speaking a thesis remains the property of the researcher, but the involvement of other partners in the design, facilitation and examination of the results renders the lines of ownership a little less clear-cut. A distinction between '*de jure*' ownership, which remains with the researcher as intellectual property, and '*de facto*' ownership, relating to the different claims which can be made over a project, is useful here.

Ultimately, de jure ownership of the research should prevail, but during the project the potential tension relating to different interests and expectations potentially renders de facto ownership a more contested terrain. The degree to which this contested terrain becomes apparent and explicit can depend on a number of factors, including the nature of the collaborating organisations, the personalities involved in staking any claims, how the researcher might be positioned and perceived (for example as old/young, male/female, experienced/inexperienced, competent or otherwise), and the different stages through which a project progresses (Macmillan and Scott 2003).

In so far as this last point applies, it makes 'de facto' ownership a fluid negotiation over time between researchers and collaborators. At the beginning de facto ownership is likely to rest with the original applicants for the studentship, the academic supervisors and collaborators. Given the recognition of de jure ownership, they gradually 'hand over' the project to the researcher. Key subsequent moments might ensure that the researcher solidifies ownership: design, fieldwork and writing up accounts of 'findings'. As the project proceeds, the researcher may become more of an 'expert' than others, and so other stakeholders become more reliant on the researcher for discussions regarding the research. In the research undertaken for this thesis the different claims which could lead to conflict over the direction of the research have been mercifully few. However, this is not to rule out the possibility of some form of pre-emptive adaptive behaviour, by the researcher, by the collaborating partners and by academic supervisors to ensure that conflicts might be avoided. Nevertheless, the practice of undertaking the research for this thesis has not seemed to involve any tension between de jure and de facto ownership of the project. From a very early stage it seemed that the research process was not burdened with clashes over direction, design and conduct.

Positionalities: enduring and transient

In recent years researchers have been far more open about the possibility that 'who' they are might have some bearing on the research being undertaken. Led by feminist approaches in social science, the notion of a detached, independent, remote researcher, observing the social world from a distance, appears to have become something of an anachronism. Instead, there is far more attention given to the idea that a researcher's understanding, or for that matter anybody's understanding, of the social world is mediated by their position within that highly differentiated world (Rose

1997). As a result, it is important to acknowledge that this thesis is being written by somebody who has a number of what might be termed *enduring positionalities*, that is, male, white, able-bodied and 'thirty-something'.

These are considered enduring because they are elements that are less likely to be immediately transcended, and less likely to be disguised. In a sense they are less permeable. However, this does not exhaust the notion of positionality, since there are other factors which have relevance in a research endeavour. More permeable or *transient positionalities* relating to a researcher's class background, lived experiences and life history are also significant (Milligan 2001: 105). Everybody has a 'story', and it is unlikely that this story is without some bearing on the conduct and outcomes of a research undertaking. However, aspects of this story are more amenable to disguise and are more easily transcended. Myriad aspects of this experience may have relevance, but to 'position' the research in this thesis it may be sufficient to say that it has been undertaken by someone from outside of the North East region, who had a first-generation 'higher education', which has its own consequences for the sometimes awkward relationship between social class origins and current class 'status'. In addition I had previously lived in a commuter-belt 'village' for 18 years and a metropolitan city for 15 years, and so had limited experience of rural life. I had some practical and academic knowledge of the voluntary and community sector (as a volunteer, management committee member, paid worker and contract researcher), but rather less understanding of community development theory, history and practice.

The point of raising these issues is to reflect upon the possible points of connection and distance between the researcher and the researched: between potential insider status and outsider status. Thus the research here was conducted by an outsider in the region, with an outsider's accent, but perhaps with an insider's knowledge and understanding regarding some aspects of the voluntary and community sector. There are challenges in thinking through the consequences of different aspects of insider and outsider status. The implications for research practice of these points of difference and similarity between the researcher and different research participants are not clear. For example, whilst a point of similarity might establish a connection, and generate a degree of ease, 'rapport' and trust between a researcher and a participant, there are dangers that similarities and shared understandings might lead to a situation where key questions get left unasked and unanswered. This might occur in the course of an interview where researcher and researched foreclose

further reflection and discussion, nod in agreement and concur by saying that 'I know what you mean'. The challenge for researchers is to constantly remind themselves to ask the seemingly naïve or innocent question.

For researchers undertaking collaborative research projects for a thesis, a further aspect of transient positionality enters the equation: the degree to which an association with the collaborating organisation is assumed or used by different actors in the research process, including the researcher. For example, on one occasion a member of the collaborating organisation stated to me that "*You're one of us really aren't you?*" This example encapsulates the dilemma for collaborative researchers - the sometimes hazy nature of the association between researcher and researched, and between academic and non-academic identities. This association is something that can be emphasised or downplayed by the researcher, or there may be circumstances where it is assumed, or stated by others and not subsequently challenged. The affiliations and associations in this research have been multiple. In part these associations are important in order to give 'credit' to the collaborating partners for being involved with or funding the research. In most cases I have sought to introduce myself as '*Rob Macmillan, University of Durham working on a research project in association with Durham Rural Community Council*'. However there have been situations where the sequence of the University – collaborating organisation link has been reversed to change the emphasis. There may be some kind of automatic association with the collaborating partner, but it is fluid, and the signals are amenable to management in different situations and with different audiences for different purposes.

It is important to stress that these transient positionalities represent a means by which researchers can carefully negotiate their own positioning, and this has not gone without use in the research for this thesis. The research here involved wearing multiple, and sometimes confusing, hats. Research participants may also have been confused about the relationship between the researcher, the academic departments and the collaborating organisation, an issue which raises important ethical considerations of 'informed consent'. This issue is illustrated with an example below.

Access and 'getting in'

With collaborative research projects for a thesis, issues relating to access, or "getting in", arise both within, and outside, the collaborating organisation. This gives rise to different dilemmas and issues which may need to be addressed.

Access with respect to the collaborating organisation has not been an immense problem. In CASE collaborative research projects, detailed negotiation of access to the collaborating partner may not be so necessary given that there are already sets of mutual expectations about what the work involves. The collaborative organisations are part-funding the research and so it is arguably in their interest to let the researcher have access to materials they might need. In effect the collaborating organisation has 'bought in' to the process of facilitating access for the researcher. However, although access has been facilitated, it does not mean that co-operation with all employees of the collaborating organisation is ensured. Different people and interests may have different notions of the role of the research and the researcher. There is considerable potential for suspicion of the researcher, particularly if the research is evaluative or is likely to have some bearing on the structure or operation of the collaborating organisation. The worry amongst some potential participants might be that the research is to be used as a tool to achieve some form of organisational change. There has been little sense in this research that access has been restricted or obstructed for these reasons, although there have been signs of anxiety amongst research participants at different stages.

However, when it came to the 'recruitment' of potential projects for closer investigation, the process was somewhat disrupted when one of those selected declined to participate. This initial refusal was a major setback, and felt at first like a personal rejection. The key gatekeeper here was a staff member of the collaborating organisation, and even negotiations higher up the managerial hierarchy could not produce a change of heart. In retrospect this may have been a blessing since reluctant participants may not be wholly accessible or reliable participants. The case study was not replaced, and the task of managing the fieldwork in five rather than six projects proved to be quite arduous in any case.

Negotiating and obtaining access is an issue for most researchers, but with collaborative projects researchers may in addition benefit from, or suffer from, a specific 'badge' that they might have to wear – the association with the collaborative partner. It may facilitate access, but there are problems, as illustrated in the following example. For one of the case study projects, recruitment was sought through a DRCC staff member, a project worker on a community development initiative in East Durham. The project was independently overseen by the community group. In seeking to recruit the group, it was felt that an initial approach by a gatekeeper would

be more appropriate as a first step than an approach directly from me. In the meantime however, relations between this group and the collaborating organisation had taken a turn for the worse. As part of the falling out, the potential participants refused to participate in the research *because* of the link to the collaborating partner. The gatekeeper reported back to that they had effectively said that '*we want nothing to do with them*'. Access to research participants in this case became bundled up with the collaborating partner. It seems that the collaborative link had been stressed by the gatekeeper and the University connection downplayed or overlooked. As a result, access was denied, and the question remains open as to whether there would have been more success if the University connection had been emphasised. After some time delay I made contact again with the same group of participants. This time however, the academic badge was emphasised - a 'research student from the University of Durham' - with no mention of the collaborating organisation. Access was gained, and several participants were interviewed. It is not clear whether they remembered anything about who it was that was initially trying to recruit them. Nothing was raised. Whilst it would not be difficult to argue that the participants consented to the research, it is not clear in this instance whether they were fully informed, or as informed as they could have been about the research taking place. It was consent, but it is not clear that it was informed consent. But this raises the question over whether research participants are ever sufficiently informed in their decision-making about participation in research projects.

Confidentiality and sensitivity: small worlds

Issues of confidentiality arise in all research. In this study the main issue has concerned the reporting and dissemination of research findings in what might be called a 'small world'. There are many cross-cutting personal and professional networks in the world of voluntary and community sector activity, and it often seems to be the case that everybody knows each other, or has at least heard of each other. In Chapter 7 this is represented as a complex 'field'. This implies that considerable care has to be taken to protect the privacy of research participants, even if it has been harder to safeguard the anonymity of case study projects. Anonymous disguises have to be extra-sensitive to the possibility that somebody reading a research report in this small world will have some idea, or could make an educated guess, as to who participated and who said what in confidence.

As part of the process of requesting interviews I was keen to provide potential participants with the option to decline. At least part of this involved an attempt to

ensure that an interviewee had a fair degree of control over the process. This involved assurances of confidentiality (so that only the researcher sees or hears the detail), anonymity (if anything is used in the research, steps would be taken to ensure that the interviewee is not identifiable) and reassurances about the taping of interviews. A more or less standard way in which taped interviews were introduced is indicated in box 5.1 below.

Box 5.1 Introducing interviews

"I have a series of things I want to ask you about, and although there may not be anything that is particularly sensitive in here, you don't have to answer all of my questions. If there are any questions that you'd rather not answer, please let me know, and we'll move on.

Separately, if you don't mind answering a question, but you'd rather it was not on tape, then let me know and I'll switch the tape machine off and we can carry on. Other people have done this on several occasions, although one person merely wanted me to switch it off so they could swear!"

The small world does not just extend to other community workers, other professional workers or community activists. It also reaches into academic settings. Normally the process of academic dissemination involves audiences that are so far removed from the original research setting that there are few dangers that participants could be identified. However, locally, the situation might be quite different, given that fellow researchers are often working in the same locality and same field of enquiry. Efforts to discuss emerging findings and issues arising in research are then in some difficulty since the small world includes academic colleagues (Macmillan and Scott 2003). The ability not to cause harm to research participants may be in jeopardy given that it is a small world, and additional care is required to ensure that the interests of participants are not harmed. Throughout the research I have sought where possible to disguise the identity of participants, and have felt the need to be particularly circumspect in discussing the detail of interviews undertaken here.

Having detailed how the research was designed and carried out, the next few chapters examine some of the results. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 explore the more detailed findings from the analysis undertaken in this research. Before this, however, Chapter 6 provides a brief descriptive account of each of the case studies. This is intended to

provide some contextual background to the empirical analysis which follows, and provide an opportunity to 'tell the story' of each case study project.

Chapter 6

Case studies of community-based voluntary action

This chapter looks broadly at the main empirical case studies which form the basis for the substantive argument of the thesis. As we discussed in Chapter 5, six case studies were selected initially, in partnership with the collaborating organisation. Five of these have become the central focus of the thesis: four specific community-based projects and a supplementary case study involving a strategic network of voluntary agencies operating on a county-wide basis. In this Chapter we will consider only the four main case study community-based projects. Background information on the fifth case study, 'Voluntary Sector Forum' was provided in the discussion in Chapter 4 (pages 99-102). Before we look at separate analytical issues arising from the case study work in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, it is appropriate to outline how each of the case study projects were selected and 'recruited', and provide a brief descriptive summary as a reference point for the analysis which follows. For each case the reasons for selection, the process of recruitment and a broad description of the project is provided. The case study projects provide a variety of settings through which to examine the key questions informing the research, previously outlined in Chapter 1.

Within the rural context of County Durham, the projects are located in different kinds of rural area, illustrating the point that there is no single homogenous rural area. The cases have been chosen deliberately to explore the differences between the remote upland Dales area to the west of the county, the more industrial rural character of mid-Durham and the more recent coalfield area to the east of the county. These characteristics form part of the context through which these case study projects emerged in the first place. Each is specific to its local context, from the stresses and pressures of isolation and farming crisis in the dales, to the broader and continuing socio-economic crisis faced by ex-mining villages. Separately, the case study projects demonstrate a variety of other characteristics, from their origins and early development, to their organisational scale of activities and to the size of project. A summary of the basic characteristics of each project is provided in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 Describing the case study projects

	Community Development in East Durham	Dales Community Project	Village Community Partnership	Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative
Geography Where in Co. Durham?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• East Durham villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• West Durham dales	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mid Durham village	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• West Durham dales
Purpose and Origins Why is there a project here at all?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Response to profound social and economic crisis• Decline of mining industry; problems of coalfield communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Response to specific crisis• Suicides; rural stress and isolation; crisis in farming industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targeted as a deprived ward• Unemployment and poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local concern• Issues re making ends meet/debt
What is the starting point for each initiative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Public issue'• Top-down• LDA/funders instigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Private troubles'• Bottom up• Community-led – local concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Public issue'• Top-down• Targeting and local council lead to LDA involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Private troubles'• Bottom up• Local women enquire about finance initiatives
Scale Over what area is the project to be based?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sub-district• Linking 6 villages in 5 wards in west of East Durham	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sub-district• Remote upper dale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Village – ward• Single isolated village in 'urban' mid Durham	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• District• Common bond covers all of Dale (upper and lower)
Population income deprived	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12417• 4360 (35.1%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4076• 590 (14.5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 564• 208 (36.9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 24251• 4016 (16.6%)
Size What level of resources are dedicated to the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Big project• £240K over 1½-2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Big project• £120K per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small project• £20K per year (½ time worker)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small project• £20K per year (½ time worker)
Research access How was participation secured?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DRCC gatekeeper• access refused until 'regained' some time later	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DRCC gatekeeper• steering group• research 'contract'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DRCC gatekeeper• chair of partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local development agency• steering group

Notes:

1. 'Private troubles and public issues' comes originally from C Wright Mills' (1959) manifesto for sociology "*The Sociological Imagination*" which calls for a sociology to be animated by a concern to link history and biography: with social change and its consequences for people. See also for example Bauman and May (2001:7):

Although deeply immersed in our daily routines, informed by practical knowledge oriented to the social settings in which we interact, we often do not pause to think about the meaning of what we have gone through; even less frequently do we pause to compare our private experiences with the fate of others except, perhaps to have private responses to social problems paraded for all to consume on television chat shows. Here, however, the privatisation of social issues is reinforced, so relieving us of the burden of seeing the dynamics of social relations within what are instead viewed as individual reactions. This is exactly what sociological thinking can do for us. As a mode of thought it will ask questions such as: 'How do our individual biographies intertwine with the history we share with other human beings?'

2. Population figures are 1998 estimates (Durham County Council 2000b)

3. Figures for estimated number of income deprived people are author's estimates using the Income Deprivation domain of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (DETR 2000b) and estimated ward population figures. The percentage represents the number of income deprived people in the case study area as a proportion of the total population.

I. Community Development in East Durham

'Community Development in East Durham' covered two relatively short term community development initiatives managed and operated by Durham Rural Community Council. The initial research plan was to recruit and study closely the activities and operation of the 'Federation of Community Partnerships' (FCP)¹⁴. Established in January 1997, the Federation was an umbrella organisation linking four community partnerships across six small villages in the western part of East Durham. These are all settlements in close proximity across five of the most deprived wards in County Durham and in England. All five wards feature amongst the most deprived 10% of wards in England according to the Indices of Deprivation 2000 (DETR 2000b). The main reason behind the selection of this project was its focus as a reasonably large DRCC-managed project operating in the East of the County.

In July 2000, a two year programme of regeneration work funded under round 4 of the Single Regeneration Budget had come to an end and the Federation was considering its future as a fulcrum of community-based regeneration activity in the area. It was agreed that the request for research participation would be to a Federation meeting by the project manager, who was employed by DRCC and then funded under a Coalfields Regeneration Trust grant to co-ordinate and develop the Federation's activities. Unfortunately, the request was refused. The minutes of the meeting, held on 14th September 2000, state that:

[The Project Manager] informed the committee that a researcher, Rob Macmillan from DRCC in conjunction with Durham University was interested in the work of the [Federation] as a project/case study. The aim is to explore the effectiveness of voluntary and community based initiatives in alleviating disadvantage in rural areas. Rob has asked if the [Federation] be interested in him using their work as a case study.

Action: Motion denied.

¹⁴ The 'Federation of Community Partnerships' is a pseudonym

It became apparent in subsequent conversation with the project manager that the request for research involvement had become linked to a gradual deterioration of relationships between the Federation and DRCC. The fact that the research was a CASE project linked to DRCC was of obvious relevance. The research project had apparently become bundled up with wider issues between the community group and the Local Development Agency.

As a result of this setback, it was decided to retain the case study but reshape the planned programme of research. Fieldwork would consist of interviews with those associated with the project and an examination of available documentation held by DRCC as the managing agent. In addition, it was proposed to examine the work of a second complementary community development initiative run by DRCC in the same area. By then, in Autumn 2000, this initiative was entering its last six months of a two year work programme funded jointly by the Rural Development Programme and Easington District Council to work in eight deprived villages across the district, including some covered by the Federation. DRCC was again the managing agent, employing a full time community development worker from March 1999 to February 2001. The steering group for this project was much more heavily weighted towards the local council, since the work was aiming to provide additional support to the Council's emerging Community Development Strategy. Through contact with the worker and the DRCC line manager the project was shadowed for a short while in its last few months, to provide an additional insight into the circumstances for community development in East Durham.

Taking a longer term historical perspective, it is evident that both these projects had developed from previous community development work in the area. DRCC itself had a legacy of work in East Durham. Since 1986 it had run a small scale project in the East Durham Rural Development Area: the 'East Durham 2000' project. This ended in May 1995, but by then a much larger community development programme had been established. The *East Durham Community Development Initiative* (EDCDI), which ran for four and a half years from October 1993 until March 1998, was funded through the European Union RECHAR programme. This initiative involved 18 workers in four teams working in a variety of settlements through the East Durham coalfield communities which had been blighted by the final round of pit closures in the early 1990s.

As the EDCDI programme drew to a close, proposals for further work were in development. The Federation was established as a response, and by 1998 the SRB4 Partnership became the only programme funded under Round 4 of the Single Regeneration Budget in County Durham. Funded to the tune of £230,500, the scheme involved 11 discreet projects in what was described as a 'community capacity building scheme'. The scheme involved a number of agencies providing support to the constituent village partnerships: including training, advice, a community newsletter and a programme of 'capacity building'.

As the funding for the Federation came to an end in November 2000, there was little by way of a development strategy for the future. With no central hub occupied by a paid worker, it was always a possibility that the Federation would come to an end, or reformulate. In the end it became a discussion forum for issues of common concern across the villages rather than the previous close partnership work as a single voice and organisation for the area. With no further funding in place, the individual partnerships appeared to concentrate on developments in their own villages. The project manager found work elsewhere, as did the worker employed under the broader community development initiative when its funding ended in March 2001.

II. Dales Community Project

Dales Community Project has recently moved from being a substantial and largely successful community-based rural stress project, with a team of seven staff managed by DRCC, to becoming a fully independent organisation and registered charity. It has also had a lengthy and turbulent genesis, beginning again back in the first part of the last decade.

Research selection and recruitment in this case followed a formal approach to the project manager through the Summer of 2000 and a subsequent appearance before the project steering group in October 2000. The aim here was to examine a reasonably large-scale community project operating in the close-knit and remote circumstances of the Dales area in the West of the County. The sensitivity of the project, given its focus on rural stress in a largely isolated and relatively close-knit community, demanded that concerns around access to research materials and confidentiality were addressed. In the event, a research 'contract' was drawn up and signed by the supervisors, collaborative partners, researcher and steering group,

specifying the arrangements under which the research was to take place. Although there was some concern about how the research might become somewhat constrained as a result of the contract, it is very doubtful that research participation and access would have been agreed without it. The minutes of the meeting in October 2000 at which access was granted state:

Rob MacMillan addressed the meeting, put forward his proposal for the research project, answered questions and then left the meeting. The only main concerns appeared to be confidentiality and ownership of material. Staff and Steering Group members came to conclusion that the research itself could be beneficial to the [Dales Community] project as long as it was with certain conditions to safeguard the project, service users, Steering Group and community.

Dales Community Project has had a problematic gestation before the project itself finally got underway in the latter end of 1999. The idea for the project came from a number of members of the upper dale community expressing concerns regarding isolation, depression, stress and suicides in remote rural communities. Discussions between community members and local health and care professionals led to the formation of an informal group which aimed to develop some form of local response to the issue. Eventually funding was agreed to undertake a study in the community of aspects of Dales life, including stress and isolation. The study took place in 1996-97 and was completed in March 1997, with a confidential report to the Director of Public Health. During this time discussions about the development of a community-based project to address issues of isolation and stress were underway, with the prospect that funding may be forthcoming from the then government department, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF).

From the publication of the research report however, it took a further two and a half years before a project was finally established under the management of DRCC. Over this time several attempts to put together a viable proposal for a funded support service to the local community were frustrated. For those involved in the steering group, including the local community development worker for the RCC, it appeared that professional support agencies were not carrying out the promised task of completing the funding proposal. Eventually however, it was suggested by the government department that only much reduced funding would be available rather than the sums initially suggested and anticipated. A new, dramatically cut, project

proposal was submitted and finally agreed in early 1999, to be funded through the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund administered by MAFF.

The project was finally established in October 1999 and a base was secured in the local market town for the area. A project manager and a number of specialist advisers and community-based workers were recruited, including an agricultural secretary, a farm liaison worker and a social and cultural communications worker. One year later, when the research was due to start, the project was still deliberately keeping a low profile. Concerns around the confidentiality of any discussion regarding problems faced by community members were uppermost. If word got around that the project was not as watertight regarding confidentiality as it could be, the whole point of the project would be damaged, and the success of the project jeopardised.

However, mid-way through the period of research fieldwork, the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak hit the farming community across England and Southern Scotland. In hindsight it would seem that this unfortunate situation, with its devastating effects on many rural livelihoods, had a major impact on the Dales Community Project. In effect the project was in the right place, at the right time, doing the right things. Here was a community-based, locally trusted, support service for the Dales farming community, situated in the middle of that community. It was providing expert advice and support to farmers at the very moment that severe restrictions were being placed on livestock movements as the government struggled to contain and eradicate the disease. Key contacts within the service were able to maintain daily and privileged access to information emanating from MAFF about the latest regulations and licence provisions for the movement of livestock. If the period up to the outbreak of Foot and Mouth represented a period of gradual and painstaking emergence of the project, with a deliberate emphasis on building trust through word of mouth in difficult circumstances, the period during the crisis involved a dramatically raised profile, amongst both key policy makers and the wider community. Alongside other rural stress initiatives, Dales Community Project received national attention. Staffing the service at this time was extended under emergency conditions to cope with the number of enquiries from users. When a local outbreak occurred over Easter 2001, the base of Dales Community Project was inundated with concerned and often fraught service users, and for several months the Project was operating under a continuing emergency footing. It was often said to be difficult to remember what the project was like before the outbreak began.

As the disease has faded from public attention, and as livestock movement restrictions have been eased, the Dales Community Project has begun to operate outside of its 'emergency footing'. In recent months it has re-established and extended its training programme, and begun to consider further ways of meeting the needs of its membership. A membership survey, carried out for both the project and the research for this thesis, yielded interesting results about the priorities for the service as seen by members. From the end of 2001 through to the first few months of 2002 Dales Community Project sought and gained charitable status and eventually independence from DRCC, in a somewhat problematic and lengthy process of asset transfer. By the summer of 2002, the project was seeking its own funds as a separate organisation.

III. Village Community Partnership

Research in this project consisted of intensive shadowing of a small village community partnership through the end of a community development initiative and during the subsequent months. The case was selected to examine a small scale community development project operating in a single village.

Village Community Partnership is a body of local residents of a small village in mid-Durham. The village is one of the smallest in County Durham, with a ward population of about 600 people in 1998. Locally it is often described as a 'forgotten village' given its size and its location at the edge of a primarily urban local authority district. However, latest figures suggest that it is one of the most deprived areas of the district and county. In the Index of Multiple Deprivation it is ranked amongst the most deprived 15% of wards in England and approximately 36.9% of the population are in receipt of means-tested benefits.

Despite this ranking, the village has not been well targeted for area based regeneration funds, missing out on designation for Rural Development Programme and Single Regeneration Budget funding. However, it has been targeted by European Union structural funding under 'Objective 2' and more recently by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust. It was targeting as an Objective 2 designated ward which led to the formation of the Village Community Partnership. The village has a small Parish Council, but a broad partnership was required to undertake a

community appraisal of the village and to develop an action plan of specific projects which could be used to draw down Objective 2 funding.

The village was the last of the Objective 2 wards in County Durham to undertake an appraisal. The local authority requested the help of DRCC in facilitating this process, and the work was carried out between July and December 1998, funded by Objective 2 and the district council. The DRCC fieldworker coordinated the process, which involved a number of public meetings supported by the Parish Council to bring interested residents together to form a steering group. This group eventually became the Village Community Partnership. The appraisal consisted of several strands, including a questionnaire devised by the steering group and a number of different focus groups. A final report was produced in December 1998 and a summary circulated in January 1999. The appraisal identified a number of priorities, including support for young people - a youth club, information in the village - a newsletter and notice boards, and capacity building support for the newly formed Village Community Partnership.

The Village Community Partnership was constituted in March 1999 but it was not until September 1999 that a part-time community development worker was employed by DRCC for twelve months (later extended to fourteen), and funded through Objective 2, to support the projects identified in the appraisal. The main focus of the work was to support the work of the Partnership and its activities rather than adopt a wider profile for encouraging involvement in the village. Recruitment of the Community Partnership as a case study took place during the summer of 2000, through contact with the Community Development Worker and subsequently a letter to the Chair. The decision to participate in the research was made by the Chair and the Community Development Worker, without actually being put to the Partnership as a whole.

The community development work came to an end in November 2000, and since that time the Village Community Partnership has had no dedicated worker support. A bid for continuation funding from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust was delayed, and eventually sent in just before the Objective 2 funding came to an end. Subsequently this bid was rejected as the programme was inundated with applications shortly before the end of its first period. The community development worker subsequently found similar work in a neighbouring area.

The Village Community Partnership has continued to meet after the end of the community development work, and small projects and activities have continued, including environmental work and a local history and heritage project. However, there are fears that without the dedicated support from a worker, some activities, for example the youth club, have suffered and faced dwindling involvement. The Partnership as a whole is somewhat fragile, and reliant on the efforts of a small handful of people to carry out activities. This has led to ongoing debate within the group about how involvement could be encouraged, and whether the village overall has a culture of people 'sitting back' and not wanting to get involved.

More recently the village has undergone a 're-appraisal' for the next round of European funding. Again a household survey was complemented by focus groups, but this time in addition some in-depth interviews with residents were carried out for both the re-appraisal and the research for this thesis. The appraisal process unveiled a number of ongoing tensions within the village about its future direction, between older and younger people in the village and over the potential use of community facilities. This latter issue has remained a perennial problem throughout the period of the Partnership and the research involvement, with most concern expressed about the fate of the Parish Hall, which has been gradually falling into a state of disrepair. By the Summer of 2002 some funding had been obtained to carry out a feasibility study into possible future uses for the hall, and investigating the costs of refurbishment or replacement.

IV. Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative

The Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative was established formally in May 1999 after approximately two years development and training. The idea for the initiative came initially from discussions amongst a group of female friends concerning financial difficulties in making ends meet on limited budgets in a time of economic hardship. Eventually, after a hesitant start, and difficulties accessing appropriate external support and training, a core group of people underwent a programme of training provided by a local development agency. Additional support was provided by the newly appointed Community Development Worker for the area, employed by DRCC. By the Spring and Summer of 1999 the initiative was established and launched to cover the whole of the local authority area, in the West of County Durham and one of the most sparsely populated districts in the country. Eligibility for

membership comes from the 'common bond': the common characteristic which all potential members share. For the Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative, the common bond is based on residence in the local authority area. Funding was secured from the Leader II programme, the County Durham Foundation and in-kind support provided by the district council.

The initiative operates as a small but expanding friendly society offering the opportunity for members to save regularly and on the strength of this to borrow small sums of money at affordable rates of interest. Surpluses accumulated from loan interest are either reinvested in the Initiative or distributed as a small dividend amongst the membership. The initiative operates on an entirely voluntary basis. A core Board of Directors meets monthly to discuss and determine the overall direction of the organisation, and two additional committees decide on applications for loans and provide an internal audit function for the initiative. Members savings and loan applications are taken at local collection points, run on a weekly basis, again staffed by volunteers.

By October 2000, when the fieldwork for the research was due to commence, the Rural Community Finance Initiative was operating three weekly collection points: two in different parts of the main market town, and one in a church in a small village nearby. Although an extended presence throughout the district was an aspiration, this was seen as some way off given the need to consolidate the existing work. The Initiative was recruited as a case study initially through contact and discussion with the local development agency, which still retained a link with the Initiative, even though the initial training had come to an end. A presentation about the research project was made to the Board of Directors about the research project, and about what involvement in the research would entail. The decision to agree to participation was made at that meeting, with the researcher present. The case was of interest in that it was a district-based project without, at that time at least, direct DRCC involvement.

Since then however, the Initiative has gone through some turbulent times. Faced with potential difficulties attracting new members and volunteers, the Initiative has always struggled to keep on top of the detailed and extensive procedures, rules and regulations which govern community finance institutions. A development project to develop collection points and expand the membership in the two most deprived wards of the district began in January 2001, although the precise origins of the

project and its development remain contested. Funding from Round 5 of the Single Regeneration Budget and the district council enabled the employment of a part-time worker employed by the local development agency. However, at the end of July 2001 the worker was made redundant as the agency went into liquidation. Efforts by the local authority over the ensuing months to find a way to continue the work ended with the project being transferred to the Durham Rural Community Council. DRCC became the 'host' organisation, managing the budget and employing the worker. This transfer has not been without difficulty however, and relationships between the Initiative and DRCC as managing agent have been strained at times.

Separately, in a wider context, the overall regulatory framework governing community finance has changed. From July 2002, a stronger regulatory regime has been introduced, with community finance institutions now being regulated under the Financial Services Authority in a similar framework to mainstream banks and building societies. To provide stronger safeguards for members' money, increased requirements regarding operating procedures and solvency have been put in place. In the new regime, community finance institutions are expected to expand and to operate as effective community businesses, working to a detailed and viable business plan and detailed codified operational procedures. The effect of the shift to the new regulatory body has been dramatic for the Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative over the last six to nine months. The motivation to keep the Initiative going remains strong amongst its active members, reiterated at a strategic planning meeting October 2001 and subsequently. However, at times it seemed that the organisation has been close to folding, and it enters the new regulatory regime in an uncertain position.

V. Concluding comments

In this Chapter we have described some key features of the main empirical community-based case study projects, including the process through which they were 'recruited' to the research study. Each case study has a distinct story or 'biography' (Macmillan 1999) which its participants can tell, with different narratives of origins, developments, progress and difficulty. In the next three Chapters we look more analytically at some of the key themes which have emerged from the empirical research. In turn, we consider the relationships between different participants in the semi-enclosed world of community-based voluntary action, the different notions of

time, change and impact experienced by the case study projects and some of the challenges of organising and coordinating community-based voluntary action in rural areas.

Chapter 7

Community-based voluntary action as a contested field

When I go to a meeting for the first time, I want to know who the key players are and what they think they're playing at. I want to know what game they're playing

Community Work manager

I. Playing games in the voluntary sector

Many theories of the voluntary sector consider questions such as the fundamental rationale for the existence of voluntary organisations, or the changing relationship between the 'third' and other sectors, particularly the state (Kendall and Knapp 1996: 11-15; Harris, Rochester and Halfpenny 2001: 11-14, Halfpenny and Reid 2002: 541-3). Existing theories of the existence of voluntary action end up postulating (usually from first principles) why voluntary organisations might be developed, or why volunteers act so as to establish organisations in the first place (James 1987, Weisbrod 1988). There appears to be no ensuing analysis of the relationship with other organisations. Instead each tends to be discussed as a discrete unit, originating and operating on its own. Theories of the relationship between the sector and the state similarly adopt one of two approaches. In the first instance a 'sector' is postulated which abstracts away from the diversity and differences which might exist between organisations (Seibel and Anheier 1990, 6 and Leat 1996). Secondly theories have looked at the campaigning strategies of individual organisations with respect to the state (Craig and Warburton 2001, Taylor *et al* 2002). There seems to be much less in the way of analysis of linkages and relationships between organisations and agents in the sector. This chapter examines this third area of importance, involving some of the **relationships within the sector itself**, and how they may be linked to relationships with agents in other sectors. My focus is on the sometimes awkward relationships which develop between voluntary organisations at an 'intermediate' level and other service-oriented voluntary agencies and community groups. In particular it considers the contested roles played by local development agencies (LDAs), which form an essential part of the 'infrastructure' of the UK

voluntary and community sector (Ball and Unwin 1998, Osborne 1999). In seeking to support and promote voluntary and community action, such organisations operate within a crowded 'institutional space' (Jones 1998) of different roles, understandings and expectations. This chapter explores some of the resulting tensions and challenges.

In this chapter I want to use the social theory developed over a number of years by Pierre Bourdieu as a way of throwing some light on the 'world' of voluntary and community action. The suggestion of this chapter is that this institutional space might fruitfully be conceptualised as a contested, uneven and dynamic social 'field'. Voluntary organisations and community groups, and the individuals associated with them, participate in a common, but contested, environment of values, expectations, relationships, funding streams, rules and resources. In this environment some groups are in a better 'position' than others, but it is important for each to secure or improve that position.

In general terms Bourdieu's social theory involves a sophisticated use of a game metaphor. In Bourdieu's theory agents, be they individuals, groups or organisations, are 'players', developing and deploying 'strategies' in a complex and dynamic 'game'. However, it is important not to be deceived by the metaphor into thinking that games are less than serious. Reflecting on Bourdieu's use of games, Calhoun (2003: 275) highlights their seriousness for participants:

By game [Bourdieu] did not mean mere diversions or entertainments. Rather he meant a serious athlete's understanding of a game. He meant the experience of being passionately involved in play, engaged in a struggle with others and with our own limits, over stakes to which we are (at least for the moment) deeply committed. He meant intense competition. He meant for us to recall losing ourselves in the play of a game, caught in its flow in such a way that no matter how individualistically we struggle we are constantly aware of being only part of something larger – not just a team, but the game itself.

Metaphors of games, strategies, boards and players are a fairly familiar aspect of social and economic theorising, and have also been formalised in rational choice perspectives in social science and game theory (Hargreaves-Heap *et al* 1992, Ward 1995). They are also an essential aspect of the everyday conversation in social and

political life. No doubt we can all recall situations where the term 'players' has been used rather than, for example, terms such as 'participants' or 'stakeholders'. Everyday notions such as 'scoring', 'own goal', 'loaded dice' and so on have been used as metaphorical frameworks for a variety of social issues. For example, even the Prime Minister has made some use of the metaphor in a pamphlet outlining current challenges for local government:

The fragmentation of responsibilities is also affecting the services local people receive. There are all sorts of players on the local pitch jostling for position where previously the council was the main game in town..... Sometimes they work well together as a team. But sometimes someone takes their bat home with the result that co-operation gives way to conflict and local people lose out

(Blair 1998: 10)

Such conceptions have also animated our understanding of important issues facing the voluntary and community sectors. Studies of community involvement in regeneration activity provide an important illustration of this metaphor in use where analysis of 'partnership' and 'empowerment' have been discussed in terms of games - who plays, according to what rules, and with what cards (Taylor 2001: 98-102, 2003: Ch. 8).

II. Using Bourdieu – field, capital, strategy and habitus

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) made a wide ranging contribution to sociology and anthropology over a number of years (Jenkins 1992, Fowler 2000) but in this chapter we will focus on the utility of his core concepts of 'field', 'capital', 'strategy' and 'habitus'. Following much detailed social enquiry, Bourdieu developed this new conceptual schema to describe a range of empirical situations. He stresses that the key concepts need to be discussed together and in relation to each other. Our discussion in relation to the role of voluntary and community action starts with a brief exploration of Bourdieu's framework.

Bourdieu's aim was to overcome what he regarded as the false and unhelpful distinction between micro and macro, or agent and structure, or in his reference, between subjectivism and objectivism (Wacquant 2001). In place of this dualism, and

alongside similar social theories of 'structuration' (Thrift 1983, Giddens 1984, Parker 2000), the aim was to develop a fuller theoretical framework, and in Bourdieu's case a new theoretical language, that could bring these two strands together. So disenchanted was Bourdieu with existing theoretical frameworks for understanding social life (such as 'structure' and 'agency') that he invented his own terminology (i.e. 'field', 'capital', 'habitus' and 'strategy') to explore the ideas he was developing. Bourdieu's social theory is a theory of practice, where practice is used as a means to move beyond structure and agency by illuminating how structure is continually reproduced through everyday practices.

For Bourdieu, the social world is not a single entity, but comprises a number of interrelated, semi-autonomous and overlapping '*fields*', or social 'microcosms'. The field is an arena of struggle amongst different agents. For example, the health field is linked to, but separate from the field of academia. In a voluntary and community sector context, occupants in the field might include individuals (policy makers, workers, volunteers and even researchers) and different groups, networks, projects and organisations. According to Bourdieu a 'field' is defined as

a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in their determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation in the structure of the distribution of the species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions.

(Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97)

Crucially fields largely operate according to their own logic. The things, or stakes, that arise in one field are less significant in others. This is not to suggest that fields are completely isolated. Bourdieu recognises that some fields are more significant, and more powerful than others, and that fields exist in relation to each other. In this thesis it is suggested that the world of voluntary and community activity can also be seen as a field. As such it has occupants ('players', agents, institutions) who exist in relation to each other. A field might be recognisable in the sense that common and recurring issues arise, and in the sense of familiarity that participants have in the world in which they take part. If the phrase 'rogue's gallery' or 'the usual suspects' is

a phrase often used about a particular milieu, and this has been my experience throughout this study, then this might be indicative of a field in operation.

For Bourdieu the existence of a field arises from some common understanding amongst agents regarding the things, or forms of '*capital*', that are likely to be at stake. These are all things worth striving for, the things that keep agents linked to each other and are usually in short supply. Generically, capital is a prized resource, generating power for its possessors. Capital represents anything of value to the participants or players in the field. In Bourdieu's words capital is "*all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation*" (Bourdieu 1990: 51).

In a voluntary and community sector context they might include tangible resources such as funding and physical resources, but might also include intangible assets such as legitimacy, status and reputation, information, influence and connection. Bourdieu distinguishes four different types of capital: crucially, capital is not just money ('economic capital') but is also connection, information and networks ('social capital') as well as educational credentials, social skills and taste ('cultural capital') and status, regard and authority ('symbolic capital').

Significantly for Bourdieu, and also for this analysis, there is no automatic assumption that economic capital, or material wealth, is more important or powerful than others. Such a view is seen as an empirical question and depends upon the field itself and its occupants. We will explore in a little more detail what things are important in the field of voluntary and community action further below. Moreover, another key aspect of Bourdieu's notion of capital is that it is in principle convertible. Thus the power accrued by social connections and networks can be used to advance the aims of an organisation, creating economic capital in the process.

Arguably the most useful aspect of this framework is that it provides a way of understanding the everyday contention that some groups, organisations and individuals are in a better or stronger position than others, however that position might best be judged. They might be better resourced, better connected, better endowed with a sense of 'how to do' things, or better regarded than others. In Bourdieu's terms the field is uneven, favouring some groups and organisations rather than others (Foley and Edwards 1999). This view is linked to wider theoretical work in political science on how the traditional pluralist conception of the political process

is ruptured by 'structured inequality' in which it is always 'happy hour' for those with money, knowledge and power (Marsh 2002). Similarly it resonates with Jessop's view that politics operates through the 'strategic selectivity' of the state, in which some agents and some strategies come to be privileged over others (Jessop 1990, 2002).

In a voluntary and community sector context some groups have greater influence, or money or time or perhaps 'capacity' and expertise than others. Some groups are better connected than others, whilst some groups are more familiar with the 'rules of the game' than others, including its terms and its language, and have more experience in how to play it. The framework suggests that different agents already possess different levels and qualities of resources or 'capital'. In the fieldwork for this thesis comparisons between the 'capacity' of different groups often boiled down to differences between different forms of capital between people. Some people who get involved in community groups have greater money, educational qualifications, practical know-how, confidence, connections and so on, than others.

As an example, the chair of one case study group, a professionally qualified engineer and industrial manager, spoke of his emerging understanding of what might be involved in 'capacity building' in his assessment of other members of the group:

The thing that some of us professional people take for granted, was that the thing they lacked the most was confidence. This fear of the unknown was tremendous..... The thing that struck me particularly was that a lot of the volunteers, on a personal level, were more than capable of doing a great deal, but anything unknown or slightly different, the lack of confidence for taking it on was unbelievable. Women who have brought up three children without major problems didn't want to get into anything slightly different unless you were going to go with them and hold their hand.

That was an eye-opener for me. And I think the capacity development bit, the building capacity is really just about building that little bit of knowledge and confidence.

Chair, community partnership

In contrast, the chair of another case study group, a working class woman who had been the founding member, considered that she struggled with certain aspects of work in the community group. After a particularly difficult meeting of members of the group with a representative of a supporting LDA, a post-mortem discussion in a tea-room in the town included the chair reflecting on what she considered to be her poor performance at the meeting. She indicated that *"I'm not stupid, but I sometimes don't have the words.....We need a good chair with a, you know, gift of the gab"*. Informed by the theory of fields and capital, I interpreted this as a display of a lack of confidence that might come as part of having fewer reserves of different types of 'capital'.

But in the voluntary sector there may be particular rules and ways of proceeding which might be mystifying for those 'not in the know'. Community development in this conception may be viewed as part of a process of enabling groups to learn 'how to play the game'. A founding member of another group gave an account of the very early stages of how the group was gathered together to advance an issue of growing local concern:

I'd read [about European Objective 5b] in the....local paper – somebody had said that there was this money, I didn't know that it was called 5b then, European money or something. So I started to go to 5b meetings which were just absolutely well beyond me.....When I think, I'd got me sleeves rolled up again and I was out on a mission, but I'd come away just absolutely not knowing what the hell had gone on in that meeting....

At one of these meetings she met a community development worker who suggested gathering together local people to form a group:

We began meeting as a group, we'd maybe had a couple of meetings about 'what could we do?' And this is where I didn't know about minutes or chairs or anything. I'd sit, and I'd made the sandwiches....

Within each field there is a multitude of different agents, and different forms of capital are at stake. Bourdieu's social theory also suggests ways of understanding how those stakes become apparent in everyday relationships between individuals and organisations. Here Bourdieu suggests that different agents operate so as to advance their interests by seeking to secure their own position and to gain further

access to limited resources. Agents develop *strategies* to preserve or advance their position, and positional advantage, in relation to the capital at stake. Agents with strong endowments tend to seek to preserve their privileged position whilst those with less resources will seek to advance their own position. This is not dissimilar to Archer's conception of a societal structure which, in its distribution of resources, creates vested interests among agents for either the reproduction or transformation of that structure (Archer 1995: 204):

Those who find the cards stacked against them do not simply have the bad luck to come from a long line of bad card players. With any such position come vested interests and with these come motives for the reproduction of advantages or the transformation of disadvantages.

The interaction between different interests can be co-operative or collaborative, but can often be more openly competitive, leading to familiar experiences of 'turf war'. Either way the framework suggests that different agents (be they individual, group or institutional) have different interests, which inform how they operate in relation to each other and what strategies are developed.

Bourdieu is, however, at pains to suggest that strategies are not the deliberative, conscious and calculated orientations often associated with the term 'strategy', and implied in rational choice theory. In Bourdieu's framework a strategy is a pre-conscious orientation to the world. It involves a more encompassing notion of action, less directly intentional than that implied by rational calculative strategies, though still purposeful. Strategies arise from the defence of various positions and the pursuit of valued capital in a field. Because strategies do not necessarily operate at a conscious level, they work as a semi-automatic 'feel for the game', or as Bourdieu calls it, from 'practical reason'.

Bourdieu's suggestion is that strategy emerges from the combination of the location of agents within a particular field, which defines what things are of value to agents and how they might be apprehended, and their deep-seated understanding of that location – this is Bourdieu's idea of a pre-conscious *habitus* or disposition towards the social world. This is a foundational concept that links the enduring dispositions of agents, acquired through early socialisation, and reinforced through education, to everyday practice in the world. It is manifested in the way agents behave, how they dress, how they comport themselves, accent, gesture and a structure of expectations

about the world. Fundamentally habitus is how individuals 'carry' themselves or 'go on' in the social world. Habitus generates practice, which, in the pursuit of different forms of capital in a field, informs strategies. In a voluntary and community sector context, Painter (1997: 138) for example, suggests that a habitus might be embodied in gut orientations towards particular issues, such as an automatic suspicion amongst voluntary and community organisations of statutory authorities.

For some commentators Bourdieu's combined use of deep-seated 'habitus' informing pre-conscious strategies is problematic. Alexander (1995), for example, suggests Bourdieu's whole approach is underpinned by an economic reductionism, and specifically that the idea of 'unconscious strategy' is somewhat oxymoronic. Bourdieu indicates that an emphasis on the strategic runs the danger of suggesting that all action is guided by a strategic and rational calculation of effort, risk and consequences, reminiscent of rational action theory. Given that this is perhaps a narrow conception of action, and leads to a familiar charge of an underlying economism, Bourdieu stresses the unarticulated, the less-than-conscious orientation to the world, in which norms, values and ways of being are so taken for granted that they are rarely subject to question.

A similar move in relation to 'strategy' and consciousness has been made by Hay (2002: 132-3). Based on Jessop's groundbreaking account, Hay has sought to develop a 'strategic relational view' of 'structure' and 'agency', in which strategic actors formulate strategies within strategically selective contexts, and then act accordingly (Jessop 1990, Hay 1995, Hay and Wincott 1998). But given that this emphasises strategy and calculation, Hay has recently tried to avoid the possibility that this becomes indistinguishable from a contextually-sensitive theory of rational choice. Instead he proposes that

all action contains at least a residual strategic moment though this need not be rendered conscious. This makes it important to differentiate clearly between intuitively and explicitly strategic action.....Any specific action is likely to combine both intuitive and explicit strategic aspects, though to differing degrees. Even the most explicit strategic calculation is likely to be infused with intuitive assumptions at the level of 'practical consciousness'.

(Hay 2002: 132-3)

Intuitive, routine and habitual practices are strategic inasmuch as they are oriented to a surrounding context, even if they remain unarticulated, unchallenged and implicit.

Bourdieu's framework, adapted for a voluntary and community sector context, is summarised in the Table 7.1 on pages 145-146 below.

In the remainder of this chapter I will outline in some detail two examples, taken from the fieldwork undertaken for this thesis, which serve to illustrate my application of the framework developed by Bourdieu. In the first example, some interactions from project-level activities are discussed, where relationships between a sponsoring Local Development Agency (LDA) and a funding local authority are explored in some detail. In the second example the field is characterised by interactions and discussions between voluntary organisations at a senior and mainly strategic level. This comes from regular observations over three years of meetings of the strategic, county-wide Voluntary Sector Forum. The two cases are linked, which in itself is an indication of an overlapping field at work. Issues arising between one LDA and a local authority recur as part of the discussion between LDAs at a strategic level.

III. Example 1 - negotiating a 'field' at project level

In the East Durham case study, DRCC had been managing a number of short term community development projects covering specific villages. One of these projects was a two year 'Community Development Initiative' (CDI) project. Here one full time community development worker was funded jointly by the Rural Development Programme and the local authority to support and develop community projects in eight targeted rural wards in the district. Community development work in the area had seemingly been beset by the problems associated with short term funding and consequent short term project work. Of particular concern was that project workers would stay only for short periods before trying to find work elsewhere. Commenting on activity over the period 1993 to 2000, Halse (2002)

Table 7.1 Bourdieu's framework: a 'theory of practice'

Concept	in Bourdieu's words....	Explication	Voluntary and community sector (in Co. Durham)
Field	<i>"a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions.....social microcosms"</i> (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97)	A semi-autonomous set of structured social positions, arranged in terms of power relations. A game defined by the things which are at stake in each particular field. A competitive arena or site of struggle between different agents and institutions.	<p>Consists of: individuals; institutions; networks, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large countywide voluntary organisations • Formal and informal networks • Smaller voluntary organisations • Project workers • Community activists/volunteers • Local councillors – county, district, parish; cabinet and backbench • Local Authority officers in different guises • Other statutory bodies: health authorities, Learning and Skills Council • Agents outside the field – e.g. funders, central government • Researchers <p>Scale: Multiple – local, district, county, region, national; Overlapping – centres and corners, different levels - within orgs, between orgs</p> <p>Dynamics: Drivers of change: funding streams, policy development, national initiatives: Local Government modernisation, Compact, 'Community Turn'</p>
Capital	<i>"all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation"</i> (Bourdieu 1990: 51)	The goods at stake in a field, anything worthy of possession. Capital is a resource which yields power and commands access to further resources. Bourdieu distinguishes four main types: economic, social, cultural and symbolic	The distribution of capital: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is uneven between agents and organisations • changes over time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic 	Bourdieu rarely says much about economic capital – largely takes it as given	Material wealth: income and assets	Funding – from elsewhere (e.g. an 'absent presence' in the field) – regeneration, Local Authority grant and contract funding, regional, Community Empowerment Fund
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social 	<i>"the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition"</i> (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119)	Social contacts and networks – 'who you know' rather than what you know, connections and group membership	connections and engagements with other people and bodies; network positions; knowing that these others exist, what they do and how to utilise them; knowing who potential allies are
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural 	(Bourdieu 1984)	Cultural tastes, educational and professional credentials, aesthetic tastes. Knowledge and skills from socialisation.	strategies of distinction : 'we're not like x or y' e.g. creating a distance from the past (workers and managers)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbolic 	<i>"the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognised as legitimate"</i> (Bourdieu 1989: 17)	Legitimacy, distinction, status, authority, social prestige. Includes the power to define what things are of value in the first place	status – being regarded as a professional body, well managed, a 'safe pair of hands', a reliable worker, strategic rather than fund-driven, outward looking rather than insular, team player rather than competitive; voice and influence – being taken seriously; scale of operations.

Concept	in Bourdieu's words....	Explication	Voluntary and community sector (in Co. Durham)
Strategy	<p><i>"You have to include in the theory the real principle behind strategies, namely the practical sense, or, if you prefer, what sports players call a feel for the game, as the practical mastery of the logic.....of a game – a mastery acquired by experience of the game, and one which works outside conscious control and discourse"</i> (Bourdieu: 1990: 61)</p>	<p>Practical sense, or 'feel for the game', in which the aim is the preservation or accumulation of capital. An unconscious relationship between habitus and field – where actions are oriented towards goals without necessarily involving rational calculation and conscious pursuit.</p>	<p>Forms of capital limited/scarce, organisations precariously funded and managed (core funding issue, term funding issue). Thus strategies for survival and development are pursued by organisations.</p> <p>Preservation of capital: maintaining a presence Accumulation of capital: building a presence and a 'lead' in a particular area</p> <p>DRCC strategy – preserve capital and build new forms, but cautiously. Dealing with a shaky past; not jumping in – gaining respect for backing off; Recognising own limitations of capacity and status; Breaking in to new areas – of work, or geography.</p> <p>Talking other organisations up or down Voluntary Sector – talk of 'added value', accessibility, innovation, proximity, under funding Local Authorities – wariness of 'predatory' organisations, talk of 'weaknesses', parachuting, amateurism, lack of representativeness/accountability</p>
Habitus	<p><i>"an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted"</i> (Bourdieu 1977: 95)</p> <p><i>"a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, and actions"</i> (Bourdieu 1977: 82-3)</p>	<p>How agents apprehend the social world. A set of durable, embodied dispositions: thoughts, feelings, expectations and comportment in relation to the world. Habitus generates strategies in relation to particular fields, but, although heavily influenced by socialisation and class, is not immune to transformation in new settings.</p>	<p>1. Deep seated habitus: individual orientations to the world (from childhood, and class background)</p> <p>2. Permeable habitus: associated with different sectors, or different 'geographies'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Community sector ethos: informal, accessible, us-them, concrete experience ◦ Voluntary sector ethos: traditional-service, inclusive?, professional? managerial ◦ Statutory sector ethos: bureaucratic, 1st among equals, accountability, coordination ◦ Business sector ethos: dynamic, competitive, bottom-line, 'business like', entrepreneurial ◦ Urban/rural and Coalfield habitus links to community studies debates around cohesive, stable communities

notes that

there is a feeling from residents that their villages are viewed as less important than other places in Durham because workers move on to 'better jobs elsewhere'

(Halse 2002: 54)

This aspect of the organisation of community development work will be further explored in Chapter 8. However it is useful to mention it at this juncture as it provides an important context for the discussion below. In the CDI case, the two year project involved two successive workers, each in post for approximately one year. The first worker had left the sponsoring organisation, DRCC, and a new worker continued the project until its funding ended in March 2001.

The exchanges detailed below come from a series of meetings held towards the end of the CDI project, as staff from DRCC attempted to engage the local authority in discussions over possible extension to the work beyond its end date. Two staff members from DRCC were involved – the CDI project worker (a community and youth worker of some experience), and the line manager (a senior manager within DRCC who also had a background as a local authority councillor and in local labour politics). The Local Authority was represented by a range of members and officers. Three meetings over a five week period were observed, and comprehensive handwritten notes were taken of the discussions. In the end, a continuation project was not developed or funded and the work ceased. In the discussions, however, the resources used by each side illustrate how different participants might operate in the field, how they promote the perceived advantages of their position, respond to potential weaknesses and defend themselves against potential criticism. These exchanges give some clues to the things that are at stake in the field. In the discussion below, six excerpts are used to illustrate this point. In the excerpts 'LA' refers to the Local Authority, 'E-LDA' is an local environmental development agency and 'CELDA' a local Development Agency supporting and developing community enterprises.

This first excerpt comes from the beginning of the first meeting. Two senior local authority managers and two local authority members are asked for their assessment of the work that has been undertaken supporting groups in targeted villages.

Excerpt 1: from meeting 1 – mid November

DRCC manager

Its important to think about the project as a whole, about the work that's been done and about what needs to be done.

LA manager

No problems at all with the work that [project worker] is doing,

DRCC manager

*What should be done next? Is there a role for this kind of project and for DRCC in [East Durham]? If not, fine...If so where are the gaps?
Applying for continuation funding will take approximately 4 months.*

LA manager

Now that [the local authority] have [the community development manager] in post, this is excellent. We can develop a strategy for community development across the whole district, and have a more holistic approach. But there needs to be a strong push on the partnerships – to develop them (this will be essential for drawing money down, especially in connection with the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Local Strategic Partnerships. The District Council can't do all the identified project work. Therefore we look to DRCC here. However it has to be a project with a beginning and an end and with clear outputs etc

DRCC manager

One advantage of working with voluntary organisations like DRCC is that we can bring in extra resources that you can't access, for example John Paul Getty....

Overall the local authority's priorities seem to be for 'co-ordinated and holistic' community development and more specifically for work that will help the area to access forthcoming funding. The concern is to develop and support community partnerships as a necessary aspect of drawing down funding related to central government's initiatives on neighbourhood renewal and Local Strategic Partnerships. The local authority could be seen here to be responding in a practical way to an apparent shift in the nature of the field in line with an agenda set elsewhere, in central government.

The assessment made by the local authority of the project work is vitally important. However DRCC asks a broader question – is there actually a role for it in the district at all? This could be interpreted, from a field perspective, as an interaction in which the LDA and the local authority both have certain assets accompanying their respective positions, but arguably each needs the support of the other. The local authority has a list of things it needs doing, but cannot do the project work. DRCC can access a wider range of funding sources, or, in Bourdieu's terms it can access different forms of economic capital to support community development. But if the work is to continue, DRCC is also arguing that it needs not only local authority funding, but also a wider sense of political support for the work to take place. In effect it seems to be seeking permission to keep working in the area.

After the local authority elected members left the first meeting, the DRCC manager sought a further, frank answer to the question of whether the project work has been well regarded. This exchange takes place towards the end of the first meeting.

Excerpt 2: from Meeting 1 – mid November

DRCC manager

We've heard no complaints about the project, but do tell us frankly if you've anything to say – we can take it on the chin.

LA manager

We've absolutely no criticism of [project worker's] work. But we feel there is a need for more direct management, more contact time – we've both been a little stretched recently. Therefore it needs more direction, this would allow the sustainable in-depth work to continue.

DRCC project worker

Over the period since I started there's not been much direction in the actual work done. Therefore its been necessarily reactive.

DRCC manager

In recent years DRCC (and others like CELDA and E-LDA) have grown rapidly but have not had the systems in place to manage all the staff and projects: far too many staff – no personnel support. Though DRCC are working on this.

Here the DRCC manager acknowledges the often threadbare management structures that exist within an LDA, and whether it is sufficient to manage projects

effectively. However, since this is a brief interaction in a larger meeting, a wider explanation for why management structures might be 'thin' is not explored. For the local authority, the concern seems to be that the effectiveness of the project could have been improved if there was more direct management. This is potentially a weak point for voluntary organisations – a vulnerability in the 'field', a point which recurs in the second example discussed in this chapter.

Further weak points for the voluntary sector are then aired. In the next excerpt concerns about coordination, leadership and extending the work of the local authority are raised.

Excerpt 3: from Meeting 1 – mid November

DRCC manager

There has been a previous worry about the growing plethora of workers on the ground. But this is being worked through now for example between CELDA, E-LDA and DRCC.

LA manager

The district wants to take the lead on community development, but it cannot do it all. There's so much to be done

LA community development manager

There is so much community development capacity building work to be done – so we need as many workers as we can get. But there is a danger of duplication on the ground. Therefore we need to work together – get all the agencies together. People need to know what others are doing – to make it all work cohesively. When I first came to East Durham I realised that there was loads of cynicism about workers coming and going – there's so much history to deal with.

LA manager

This is why the district council needs to lead – it can't do everything but it is the most consistent thing that you've got.

DRCC manager

Yes – I can't disagree with this. The voluntary sector has often come and gone in an area when the funding runs dry. A local authority is not going to leave. Its good that there is a role for DRCC in East Durham. Its refreshing to hear this.

DRCC project worker

I've specifically concentrated on areas where there weren't other workers (cites example of one village)

LA community development manager

Its good to know that DRCC and the CDI are aiming to fit in with the district council's own priorities – its not to do with, as is so often the case, keeping projects going and workers on so you can keep getting your 10%.

The local authority is argued to be 'always there' in contrast to LDA workers who are here for a while and then move on, echoing in concrete terms the more general point made in Halse (2002). The local authority makes claims that voluntary sector agencies create problems of being 'here today gone tomorrow', of 'parachuted' workers, and of poor co-ordination between staff of different LDAs. These are considered to be self-serving organisations interested only in the management fees associated with project work. Again these are all vulnerabilities associated with LDAs, and some of these claims may not necessarily be unwarranted. The point being made here though is that these claims are used as resources in a concrete interaction. In the field perspective, the legitimacy, or symbolic capital, of voluntary organisations, is being challenged by the local authority. DRCC is almost at an automatic disadvantage in this exchange. It is hard to resist the problematic description or labelling of being involved with temporary projects and 'parachuted' workers. Importantly, the context which creates the situation where LDAs operate on time-limited projects is not discussed. The LDA has to defend itself against the consequences of time limited funding, almost as if it is their responsibility, without a consideration of what might cause the situation in the first place.

The project worker notes that while undertaking the work, some ground level co-ordination has taken place, even if it is merely through avoiding areas where work is already underway. DRCC's manager refers here to a process of larger LDAs trying to work together to co-ordinate their work more effectively. Involved in this was a specific event held ten days prior to the exchanges detailed in this example, where most of the staff of three LDAs, DRCC, CELDA and E-LDA, attended an all-day meeting to discuss their different roles, remits and work.

In the second meeting, in mid-December, DRCC staff were trying to put together some concrete proposals, with suggestions for funding, with the local authority

community development manager. Here the local authority was being asked to determine the priorities for a potential project, rather than any sense that the priority was coming from experience on the ground, or from local community groups themselves. In this case it could be argued that when it comes to determining priorities for community action, the voice of the local authority, and hence its symbolic capital, is greater than that of community groups. Once again, however, issues about the fraught relationships between LDAs with different emphases come to the surface.

Excerpt 4: from Meeting 2 – mid December

DRCC manager

We wanted this meeting to get more of an idea of what you and [senior manager] want from us. I've asked [LDA project worker] to put some questions together.

LA community development manager

I've got a note from [senior manager]. Its work on [names of three villages].

DRCC project worker

Is this a continuation project, or an entirely new project?

LA community development manager

Its new. In [names of two villages] its about re-establishing the partnerships. Building them up and reinvigorating them. It will be working together with [Rebecca – community development worker] in this area. People are fed up – its very hard to get into these places to work.

DRCC project worker

What would be the focus of the work?

LA community development manager

Its about getting the partnerships into functioning units. The work is exclusive to these three areas.

DRCC project worker

Is [Rebecca's] work CELDA work? Because this can often cause a problem. They have a particular model they work with. How does it work?

LA community development manager

The Enterprise workers came about through a joint bid between CELDA and [the local authority]. I manage the staff of 4 – job titles being

Community Development Enterprise Workers.... They do the pre work – aiming to get groups working before considering things like Co-ops and community businesses.

DRCC project worker

This can cause conflicts because it's a particular model of constituted groups – going for a Company Limited by Guarantee. They want to register groups as companies. There have been lots of conflicts over this.

LA community development manager

There are lots of different models – my preference is for the Industrial Provident route.

DRCC manager

Its important not to get too hung up on these here.

DRCC project worker

But they don't work with charities.

LA community development manager

You'd have to talk directly to CELDA about this. I think they are less keen on charities because they see groups of people working together and then not being in a position to employ themselves because of charity rules. Co-ops and community businesses are a way around this.

DRCC manager

We've recently had a meeting with CELDA.....about this regarding the Voluntary Sector Forum. There are obviously lots of different models with different things going for them. I think its best that we should give people the options and let them decide.

LA community development manager

Yes. ICOM [Industrial Common Ownership Movement] have a thing called 'Select a Structure' where you go through the different models. I prefer the Industrial Provident Society. I'm not into telling people which one they should have.

DRCC manager

Its about people making a sensible choice.

LA community development manager

[Rebecca's] remit is not to register co-ops. Its about community development – about explaining options to people and allowing them to choose.

DRCC manager

Lets not get stuck on this here. What needs doing in these areas?

As soon as the group begins to talk about the priorities for work in three smaller villages, questions of community enterprise return to the discussion. On the ground there seems to be a clear and ongoing conflict between professional workers trying to advise and suggest ways forward for community groups. This is one source of genuine conflict between different LDAs in the field. At stake is potentially what community-based regeneration should look like. CELDA specialises in community businesses and enterprises, DRCC specialises in more generic community development. It is arguable that rising concerns about local economic activity and the need to respond to unemployment and non-employment in deprived areas have led to a shifting field. A premium is placed on those organisations able to exploit this agenda, but potentially at risk are professional relationships between workers on the ground seeking to advise and support the same people in different, and potentially competing, ways. Priorities for the work in these villages are then discussed more fully in the next excerpt:

Excerpt 5: from Meeting 2 – mid-December

LA community development manager

In these areas, not a lot of work has gone in. So its about reinvigorating partnerships, capacity building and support. Getting them to take responsibility for doing things and running things in their own areas.

DRCC manager

We could call it the "Towards Partnership" project.

LA community development manager

Yes. Basically it comes from the fact that Village Appraisals are crap. And [pointing towards researcher taking notes] you can write that down! They basically asked the question 'Do you like chocolate?' 'Yes!' All are due to be redone. We've started doing this in [deprived ward in coastal town] – having an away day to develop an action plan

DRCC manager

So in the three areas there's work to be done around re-appraisals, building strong realistic partnerships and facilitating action plans

LA community development manager

[To DRCC project worker] You'd be in these areas and I'll take a co-ordinating role. Making sure there's continuity of service. Its important to fit in with [Rebecca] on the ground.....I've just been involved in a row in [deprived ward in town]. I was at a meeting and they said I was like totally foreign – parachuting in from outside. But I said that the district has always been here. Its never been different. So we can't be parachuting in! I think it's the other agencies that had the problem.

DRCC manager

We're happy to work in these areas for you. It's not a continuation project – this is a completely new project. It will need repackaging as a completely different thing.

Calling the project "Towards Partnership" resulted in seemingly positive murmurings around the table. Notable here though again is the local authority seeking to take a co-ordinating and leadership role. For them the project would be a means of adding to its capacity – adding another member of staff to its community development team. At the end of this extract, even the local authority has been accused of being a 'parachute,' but this is strongly resisted by the community development manager. Parachuting is a characteristic not of councils, but of voluntary sector agencies.

A third meeting was held with another local authority senior officer, who was thought by DRCC staff to have more political clout within the local authority, and may therefore be able to progress things faster than hitherto. Once again however, concerns about LDAs working together are raised:

Excerpt 6: from Meeting 3 – Late December

LA senior manager

The last time I met with you and [DRCC director] you said that you were going to have a seminar with CELDA about joint working. Work is still too fragmented so you need to work on this.

DRCC manager

Yes, that's right. We had that seminar – and E-LDA were involved as well. The way that was to be taken forward was then by looking at how workers work together on the ground. So I think we have a nice project

that we can develop here, but we need to know where the resources come from.

LA senior manager (to DRCC project worker)

I know that you did your report a short while back, but it would be good to have a 'wrapping up' report, say by mid-January.....This is effectively a continuation project.

DRCC manager

Well its actually a new project – working on new things in completely new areas. We'll be able to access money that you can't.

DRCC project worker

There's a problem with your CELDA community enterprise workers because they work to a specific agenda.

LA manager

Yes. I thought we'd put a stop to that. They were working more in a CELDA way than for the District. I'm very unhappy with CELDA – I'm forever talking to [their directors] about this.

DRCC manager

*Well that's the advantage of this project – we're able to involve the community in **all** options.*

DRCC project worker

Yes, this work means that I can go to people with no set agenda.

LA manager

*Yes. **Theirs** is a very narrow route.*

DRCC project worker

Existing partnerships based on broader foundations.....

Here DRCC seems to be attempting to distinguish itself from CELDA. Whereas CELDA tends to focus on a limited range of models of group development and constitution, DRCC argues in these interactions that it operates with a more open agenda. The stress in the meeting is one of 'distinction' – 'we are not like them'. The DRCC manager seems also to be trying to concentrate on the question of resources available from the local authority to support a potential project. The local authority manager's opening words in the meeting were explicit: *'The bottom line is....I need to know what this is going to cost the council'*.

Eventually it is agreed to pursue a new bid through the Rural Development Programme, with support and matched funding from the local authority. For the DRCC manager it is essential to see the work as a new project. After the meeting she explained - the funders would cut the funding straight away if it was seen as a continuation project. Here is a sense of a voluntary sector manager using her experience of 'the rules of the game' to repackage what might be seen as a continuation project as something 'new', given the way funding regimes are reluctant to pursue continuation funding.

From these meetings my suggestion is that elements of the contested field can be seen in operation. This is just one set of discussions about the possible continuation of one reasonably well regarded project organised by DRCC. Within those discussions, however, a sense of a much wider context is at hand. The participants are pursuing a practical outcome, in which DRCC seeks to gain economic capital (funding from the local authority), social capital (access to funding through matching this to other sources) and symbolic capital (the political support and legitimacy bestowed by the local authority). The local authority, on the other hand, seeks to be able to extend its work in areas that are seen as priorities, but in doing so also seeks to raise issues about the co-ordination of community development work. It uses this issue to assert its leadership role. In the Table 7.2 below I have sought to outline some elements of the case study above in terms of the 'field' perspective, drawing on the concepts outlined earlier in this chapter.

The points mentioned under each concept are indicative rather than exhaustive. The different elements of capital are those things which are at stake in the field of voluntary and community action. These are variously the strengths and weaknesses that both 'sides' to these exchanges can deploy to their advantage in pursuit of their respective strategies.

Table 7.2 Negotiating a 'field' at project level

	Local Authority (LA)	Local Development Agency (DRCC)
Field	Voluntary and community action Community Development in East Durham	
Economic Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well resourced compared to DRCC, but some services stretched. Access to targeted regeneration funding. Access to some funding tied to working in 'partnership' with communities and LDAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorly resourced compared to LA. Has direct access to some funding through charitable status Has less direct access to some funding as a 'partner' of statutory authorities
Social Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider political connections at policy making level in government Access to knowledge and information about issues and initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacts 'on the ground' with activists in communities Connections with other agencies Wide network of support and good practice Not so well informed at district level
Cultural Capital	Not so relevant in an organisational context – more applicable to individuals	Not so relevant in an organisational context – more applicable to individuals
Symbolic Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability – representative democracy (often seen as a strength: a source of local democratic legitimacy, though in decline) Continuity – 'always there' Able to claim to be able to take a leadership/coordination role, as opposed to a particularistic perspective taken by voluntary agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability – participatory democracy (often seen as a weakness: rarely subject to elections for positions) Expertise and experience in its niche role Lack of continuity – follows the funding and so 'parachutes in and out' Ill-co-ordinated with other agencies – often creates conflict over what regeneration should look like 'Community turn' and 'involvement' agenda increasing the role LDAs can play
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To draw in additional resources To extend community development capacity To lead development of services To co-ordinate services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain resources to help it fulfil its aims and objectives To continue community development work in this locality To be seen as a neutral LDA without a pre-set agenda
Habitus	Assumed to be the leading body in a locality Tends to be suspicious of LDA motives	Motivated by strong ethos and values of empowerment, practical action, inclusiveness Often suspicious of costs of local authority work and of local politics

IV. Example 2 - the Voluntary Sector Forum and the demise of a Countywide Local Development Agency

Two community enterprise workers had been invited to the bi-monthly meeting of the 'Voluntary Sector Forum' (VSF), a network of larger voluntary organisations in the locality. The usual participants in the group included, amongst others, directors and workers from larger countywide development agencies and service providers, district based Councils for Voluntary Service, and a representative from the regional voluntary sector network. The task of the two invited guests was to do a presentation explaining what community enterprise was, and how their project, hosted by the local Business Link, was seeking to promote it in the area: through fundraising, developing business plans, registration, marketing strategies and through organising more generic forms of 'capacity building' for local groups. My observations of the meeting included the thought that despite cordial appearances, the exchanges between the different participants seemed to be a little tense. After their presentation the community enterprise workers were asked some taxing and forceful questions by VSF members, including '*what do you do that a CVS (district-based Local Development Agency, or D-LDA) would not do with a group?*' and '*Do you advise groups that there are alternatives to community enterprise in putting their ideas into practice?*' When the community enterprise workers had completed their slot and left the meeting, the person leading the next agenda item joked about not wanting to sit in the 'hot-seat' like they had.

It is worthwhile asking how this situation emerged, what was at stake, and why the exchanges seemed to be characterised by what I took from my observations to be a sense of mistrust and hostility. Seeking answers to these questions may give some sense of why the 'field' framework might be a useful perspective for enquiry.

The events and interactions at the meeting can only really be understood in a contextualised sense of understanding the recent history of the voluntary sector in the locality. A year earlier a large county-wide Local Development Agency, 'Community Enterprise Local Development Agency' (or 'CELDA'), already referred to in the first example above, had gone into liquidation. Its role was to promote, develop and support co-operatives, community enterprises and credit unions across the County. When it collapsed funders had lost money, around fifty workers had lost their jobs and groups were left without continuing support. Funding for a new

community enterprise project, under a high-profile national scheme, had just been awarded before CELDA went into liquidation, and a team of new workers had just been recruited. The former director of CELDA had suggested that this new funding might ease or resolve its increasingly precarious financial situation. However, when CELDA's financial difficulties became more pressing, the project and its team was transferred to the local Business Link, a private sector agency. Two of this team were the two invited guests in the hot seat at the VSF.

CELDA's demise had been the subject of much local debate in and beyond the voluntary sector. Various VSF meetings had addressed the issue. However, it remains unclear, and somewhat contested, how it finally collapsed. Competing theories include the difficulties of securing matched funding for existing projects, an inability to cope with the bankrolling demands necessitated by an increasing reliance on retrospective funding, weak management structures, in particular in relation to financial and project management, and political infighting between different factions on the Board of Directors and amongst staff. It is arguable that the full explanation for the organisation's demise might involve an interacting combination of all of these factors. For example, a weaker management structure might have been able to withstand a less 'taxing' funding regime, but not the more demanding regime associated with the need for a bankrolling capacity and matched funding. From observations of the reactions of other voluntary sector organisations in the VSF, the fact that explaining CELDA's collapse remains complex and contested became quite significant.

The VSF had been discussing the possibility of formulating a response to the collapse of CELDA for some time, which would look at some of the lessons which might be drawn from the episode, and how future support for community enterprise could be coordinated. At one meeting it was suggested that a statement needed to be made about the lack of strategic financial support for the voluntary sector, and the ongoing difficulties presented by current funding regimes. The suggested strategy was to press the case for sustainable core funding for infrastructure bodies. However, in an interesting twist, VSF members decided to be much more circumspect about how they pursued this. At a VSF meeting earlier that year they acknowledged that CELDA was not a particularly good case study for this argument about retrospective funding given the doubts about its management structures.

How CELDA actually operated in practice was also a cause for consternation amongst several VSF members. Prior to its collapse it had grown quite rapidly, in terms of turnover, projects and staff. New projects were developed around the growing emphasis on community economic development in regeneration programmes, and particularly in European structural funding programmes. For other LDAs in the VSF there was a concern that it had grown faster than its management capacity. In addition CELDA was often argued by other LDAs to have adopted a one-dimensional strategy with respect to advice for community groups about ways to develop project ideas. Repeatedly senior managers from other LDAs had mentioned that CELDA was too narrowly focused. It was said to be reluctant to advise groups about options for the development of their ideas other than co-operatives and community enterprises. This was a recurring theme and has already been seen in the context of example one above.

The credibility of LDA work in general seemed to be in question since it was commonly argued that community group meetings would be (over)populated by staff members from various LDAs. Groups were said not to understand who was supposed to be doing what. Conflicting advice about the best way forward intensified this position. One director of a Local Development Agency describes the difficulties:

one of the problems was, we were tripping over each other on the ground. There'd be a DRCC worker, an E-LDA worker, someone from CELDA, and the poor community didn't know what was happening to them. You know, and what a waste of resource. I mean there's more than enough work to be done out there. We should be maximising our resources to do a more effective job, because we were actually jointly are all committed to the same thing. We're just delivering different elements of the same bigger picture. And we should have greater clarity about that.

The situation had developed to the point where a ground-breaking joint away day between staff of three locality-wide LDAs (DRCC, CELDA, and an environmental regeneration agency, E-LDA) had been arranged, as already mentioned. This aimed to clear the air and clarify roles between each agency. The director goes on:

We had that joint venture between E-LDA, CELDA and DRCC. Because there was this feeling that we're all treading on each others toes.....we were doing things that the CELDA were doing. We were doing things that E-LDA were doing and vice versa. And so we had a collective meeting. All the staff and the directors, to say 'right, we want to work together, we want to collaborate, and we want to draw up protocols for joint working. And it went down really well.

However, the demise of CELDA and staff changes within DRCC and E-LDA meant that the initiative was not taken forward into the suggested 'pact' or 'protocol' that had been mooted:

We were on the threshold of really achieving something, and the County Council were very interested in this. We were going to draw up a collaborative working protocol...I still think that was well worth doing and it did go a long way to opening dialogue between workers on the ground.

However, at one VSF meeting shortly after CELDA's collapse, some relief was expressed, albeit in muted terms, that the voluntary sector 'market' had become less complex now that a competing LDA had disappeared. But alongside this some members of the VSF expressed a worry that the practices and orientation of CELDA were in danger of being replicated under the new guise of the private sector agency hosting the Community Enterprise project. The role of the private sector body was also in itself a cause of some resentment. At one VSF meeting it was suggested that funds which had been 'won' for the voluntary sector in the area from a national scheme had now been passed over to the private sector.

This context provided by recent history is necessary for a full understanding of the tensions experienced at the VSF meeting. If the community enterprise workers were being given a 'hard time' in the 'hot seat', this was arguably a consequence of conflicts from elsewhere, and from some time before. In this example it is possible to use Bourdieu's framework as a way of understanding some of the tensions and exchanges. Various forms of capital have been at stake at the meeting.

Arguably funding streams, and hence the pursuit of economic capital, have been the major driver behind many of the activities reported here. Given an overall sense of funding insecurity faced by organisations, even relatively well-resourced

organisations, the need to obtain reliable, secure funding seems an overwhelming organisational need (Benson 1975). But organisational strategies are also developed in the light of whatever opportunities may be emerging or becoming evident. Strategies are formulated in the light of an assessment of the context (of opportunities and constraints) faced by actors (Hay 2002: 132). However, in order to take an opportunity, an organisation has to have sufficient stocks of different forms of capital, for example economic capital, including finance and staffing capacity, and social capital, including access to information and privileged bidding positions. In Hay's terms once again, a context is 'strategically selective' insofar as it privileges the strategies of some actors over others (Hay 2002: 127-131). But bringing Bourdieu's perspective to bear, the selectivity of a context in relation to actors and organisations is dependent on the existing distribution of different forms of capital.

CELDA's recent organisational story is one of expansion on the back of funding regimes which have promoted community enterprise and community economic development. The rise of the language of the 'social economy' and 'community economic development' (Lloyd 1996), and its incorporation into a range of funding regimes, could perhaps be represented here as a favourable tilting of the 'field' towards organisations like CELDA. This has continued recently with the production of a central government strategy for promoting 'social enterprise' (DTI 2002). The language and policy push in this direction privileged CELDA's position in relation to the voluntary sector in this locality. As a result CELDA had been able to gain valuable economic capital. However, it appears to have turned out to be something of a 'poisoned chalice', since it came attached with requirements which CELDA's financial and management capacity perhaps were unable to meet.

Amongst other neighbouring LDAs though, CELDA's increase in its economic capital was viewed with some suspicion. It appears to have lost some status locally amongst peer organisations because of its expansion and alleged 'mission drift'. Some LDAs reported that CELDA had been promoting community enterprise amongst community groups seeking advice and support, whether or not this was the most appropriate way forward. Again this has already been reflected in the first example discussed here. Insofar as CELDA was alleged by other members of the VSF to have been engaging in basic 'capacity building' and community development, when this was beyond its remit, its 'symbolic capital', at least within the VSF, was under question. It is possible that this suspicion was based to some extent on the potential threat to the survival of other VSF members as scarce

sources of economic capital became 'mopped up' by an apparently expansionist LDA.

It is arguable that the symbolic capital associated with the voluntary sector overall has been viewed with some scepticism by other 'players' in the field. The status of the sector as a whole may have been placed in jeopardy by the events surrounding CELDA's collapse. CELDA's initial expansion, the conflicts this apparently caused, and the dramatic conclusion represented by its collapse, could easily be interpreted by other players as displaying some of the worst and most vulnerable features of the voluntary sector. One Local Authority regeneration manager referred to the world of LDAs as being like a 'shark-infested' pool, in which LDAs were only 'at the table' fighting each other because the money was there. In this view organisational interests (to ensure survival and keep jobs going, or in Bourdieu's terms, to preserve or gain capital) prevail over the wider concerns of tackling deprivation, regenerating communities and supporting community groups. Separately, the collapse of CELDA could be seen as highlighting the fragility and lack of management capacity of voluntary sector organisations. Members of VSF reported that in the wake of CELDA's collapse they had faced far greater scrutiny from statutory funders over project proposals and management. Insofar as this happened, it may reflect a greater sensitivity to the risk of failure associated with projects in the voluntary sector.

Two points are worth making in relation to this however. Firstly, that descriptions or actions made by other stakeholders cannot, in Bourdieu's framework, be divorced from their own strategic intent and pursuit of their own interest. It is arguable in this view that raising issues of risk, 'turf war' in the voluntary sector and the dominance of organisational interests is part of a strategy played by, for example, some Local Authorities, to preserve or gain their own capital, through undermining the symbolic capital associated with the voluntary sector. As further evidence that this is possible, it was around this time that the proposals for the use of the new Community Empowerment Fund were being issued (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit 2001). This fund, which aims to promote the development of Community Empowerment Networks as a way of supporting community-based input into Local Strategic Partnerships, was intended to be channelled from regional Government Offices directly to the voluntary and community sectors in eligible districts. During the early stages one district-based LDA reported that the local authorities in this area

approached the Government Office to suggest that funding should go through them because the voluntary sector did not have the capacity to manage the funds.

Secondly, the argument that different forms of scarce capital are at stake can also be seen in VSF's overall response to the demise of CELDA. Rather than use the episode as a basis for the development of a case around sustainable and accessible funding for voluntary sector organisations, VSF decided not to pursue the argument. The case was weakened by what VSF members themselves thought were management weaknesses and possible infighting within CELDA. Accordingly, the decision not to pursue it became a strategy of implicit distinction – that *"we are not like CELDA"* in either approach or management capacity.

A final point of interpretation relates to the position of the two community enterprise workers, invited into what may have seemed like some form of 'lion's den'. Arguably they were struggling with what seemed to be their limited symbolic capital, or low credibility, at the VSF. They were perhaps 'outsiders' at this meeting partly because they were guests rather than usual participants, but also because of their purported background in relation to CELDA, and because of their new role in a private sector agency. Based now outside of the voluntary sector network, and so potentially divorced from the 'habitus' associated with the voluntary sector, they were also playing with reduced stocks of social capital. They had become tarred with the brush of CELDA, and so any credibility which they might be able to claim was compromised from the start. From other LDAs there was some suspicion, and scepticism, that they were merely replicating the practices of the former CELDA, and potentially trespassing on the 'turf', and thus potential resources, claimed by existing LDAs. Subsequent efforts by the Community Enterprise Team to work collaboratively with LDAs in the voluntary sector have been somewhat frustrated, on the grounds that they are potential competitors. One discussion between the County-wide Community Enterprise Team, and a district-based LDA over 'boundaries' (of work) was met with a graphic response that the boundary was actually territorial, and that the Community Enterprise Team was not welcome to work in that district.

V. Conclusions

Key relationships in the voluntary and community sector 'field' involve those between local development agencies and community groups, between different local development agencies themselves, especially where there is a potential overlap in services, clients and areas, and between voluntary organisations and statutory authorities. In this chapter we have explored two examples of a more complex field in action. Alongside this, other dynamic relationships between LDAs and community groups, and between LDAs operating at different spatial scales are also being developed, indicating that the field, although a useful framework for exploring some of these relationships can only capture fragments of the complexity of voluntary and community action.

To conclude, it is necessary to draw attention to three potential limitations of the framework developed by Bourdieu. It would be useful to attempt accommodate these criticisms within a fully developed theory applied to a voluntary and community sector context.

Firstly, I think that the framework suffers by being *too economic*. The premium placed on strategy, competition and the pursuit of individual and organisational 'interests' provides only one, albeit illuminative, viewpoint from which to discuss voluntary action. But it cannot exhaust the range of complex relationships between voluntary organisations. If the pursuit or preservation of different forms of capital lies at the heart of these relationships, this does not provide a convincing account of why collaboration between agencies might exist at all. Yet collaboration seems to underlie many of the issues arising in the case study. The very existence of a VSF implies a sense of collaboration, and its current members were acting together in pursuing a strategy around the response to the demise of CELDA. A broader, less instrumental notion of 'strategy' may be preferable, where organisations act to secure their interests, but the ways in which this is possible are many and varied and may include collaboration and activity guided more by a 'logic of appropriateness' than a 'logic of consequence' (March and Olsen 1990). This resonates with Hay's call to understand the 'residual' strategic moment of any action (2002: 132). Similarly, Calhoun suggests that Bourdieu's economism was perhaps a more general approach than that informed by the close strategic calculations implied by rational choice theory, and that his *language* of strategic action may be more problematic than the underlying theory:

Bourdieu was concerned to show that a logic of interest shapes action, even when it is not conscious, and that economies operate in a general sense even in social fields that explicitly deny interest and calculation. "Economies" in this sense mean distributional effects – that social actors enter into interactions with different resources and receive different resources as results of those interactions. That actions cannot be altogether distanced from effects of this kind means, for Bourdieu, that they cannot be removed altogether from interest

(Calhoun 2003: 304).

Related to this is the possibility or otherwise in Bourdieu's framework of 'disinterested judgement' (Sayer 1999). When individuals make judgements about the position, quality of work and role of a voluntary organisation, they are not simply making arbitrary judgements to support their own strategies of advance or preservation. They are implicitly also making judgements about some form of underlying reality, or some view of the right way to act, guided by particular values.

Secondly Bourdieu's field analogy suffers by its deployment of a spatial metaphor (a 'field') without much in the way of a spatial reference (Painter 2000). This means that the spatial dimensions of a field are left ambiguous, and the boundaries of a field undefined. A more general point applies here also, in that the notion of boundaries or edges of fields is ambiguous in other ways. Hence the distinction between one field and another defined in terms of its logic and activities is left unexplored. We will return to this issue in Chapter 9. Likewise the temporal boundaries of a field are also left unanalysed.

This leads to the third critique, where Bourdieu's conception suffers by being *too static*. Although the scene is set for dynamic relationships of competition and struggle, the field metaphor in itself seems like a fixed snapshot of current relationships at fixed points in time. However such a 'snapshot' is inexplicable without some understanding of the recent historical developments in the relationships at hand, as described in the second example. How else for example can we understand the distribution of various forms of capital at any one moment in time without an understanding of where this capital came from. Social fields are complex evolving configurations of relationships between agents. They are dynamic in that they are in constant movement over time, and they operate across space and

at different scales. Not only do the agents change, but so do the relationships between them as well as the issues and 'forms of capital' at stake. This rather obvious point reinforces a general point about the need for a temporal understanding of the voluntary action (Macmillan 2001), adopting a diachronic logic rather than a synchronic snapshot. We look more closely at the implications of this argument in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

Time, change, project and impact

I. Adding temporal depth to the study of community-based voluntary action

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in time and temporality in many academic fields, including sociology and social theory (Adam 1990, 1995), geography (May and Thrift 2001) and in social research methods, such as the use of longitudinal panel surveys (Rose 2000) as well as 'life course' and biographical methods in qualitative research (Chamberlayne *et al* 2000).

However, despite this new interest in a wide variety of fields, analysis of the role and nature of the voluntary sector, and of community-based voluntary action, seems largely to have escaped this temporal perspective. In both academic analyses and in public policy approaches towards the voluntary sector the notion of time assumes a largely background or silent role. Debates are often framed in terms of implicit notions of temporality, particularly when evaluating the contribution made by particular organisations, policies and projects. Time becomes a kind of implicit 'structuring' dimension of social and political life, reflective perhaps of how time operates in everyday conversation. As Adam (1995:5) argues:

time forms such an integral part of our lives that it is rarely thought about. There is no need it seems, to reflect on the matter since daily life, the chores, routines and decisions, the coordination of actions, the deadlines and schedules, the learning, plans and hopes for the future can be achieved without worrying what time might be.

Different notions of temporality lie within all discourses about social life. These may refer to notions of, for example, speed, duration, 'waiting', the 'time expectations' we have of others, and the orientations we may have to the past, the present and the future.

This chapter makes and explores the suggestion that it might be useful to bring some of these temporal notions to the fore in the analysis of the voluntary sector and community-based action. The notion of 'community *development*', for example, implies perhaps a teleological temporality of progression, with an end-point of a 'developed' community. Likewise 'capacity *building*' implies a particular process, this time using a more specific architectural metaphor. In this chapter I will consider in some depth the role of time within community-based projects, looking at both the 'internal' dynamics of projects – how they may have changed over time, and during the course of the research, and at what impacts they might be making.

A framework for exploring the dynamics of community-based voluntary action is displayed in table 8.1 below. The framework might help in 'locating' the scale and dimension of analysis, and operate as a heuristic device for stimulating further conceptual developments.

Table 8.1 A framework for exploring the dynamics of voluntary action

Temporal concepts	
Time: duration and speed	how long, how short
Timing: cycles, rhythms, stages and phases	repetition, progression, evolution, path dependency, succession
Tempo: Speed, pacing, intensity	how fast, how slow
Time scale	
Momentary time	the 'here and now'
Day to day and week to week	the 'everyday'
Annual	annual cycles
Project time	from conception to closure
Biographical time	'life cycles'
Historical time/Glacial time	decades, generations, centuries
Units of analysis	
Sector	the voluntary sector; the 'third sector'; public policy
Segments	different 'industries', e.g. social care, regeneration
Space and scale	national, regional and local
Organisational	networks, partnerships, organisations and projects
Individual	managers, paid/unpaid workers, users/clients

In terms of *temporal concepts*, a distinction between *time* (as in 'duration'), *timing* (as in sequencing and scheduling) and *tempo* (as in pace and intensity) is of use as an analytical framework (Adam 1990). Analysis could operate using ideas related to, inter alia, duration, cycles, stages, speed etc. It could consider 'objective' clock-time and calendar-time of hours, days, weeks, months and years. Here we might sensibly ask how long things have taken or might take, or when they take place. Alternatively it could concentrate on a less specific notion of 'developmental' or 'successional' time. Here ideas of stages, beginnings, endings, processes, progression and evolution come to the fore, without necessarily any explicit reference to 'clock time'.

Timescale can involve anything from a micro-focus on 'moments' of interaction in voluntary sector settings, to day to day rhythms, annual cycles and beyond to long wave notions of historical and/or biographical time. How has the nature of the sector changed over the last 20 or 30 years? Or the last 200 to 300 years? What can be learnt from exploring the nature of paid and unpaid 'career trajectories' in the voluntary and community sectors?

Lastly the *unit of analysis* can vary greatly, from analysis of the sector overall, or different segments of the sector (organisational, 'industrial', large and small), to the dynamics of different organisations and projects, geographical regions and localities, and finally to individual managers, workers, volunteers, participants and users/'clients'. At an organisational level, for example, research strategies could be deployed which seek to understand the origins, development, subsequent evolution and possible ending of projects or organisations. At an individual level the framework might stimulate studies into the differing time perspectives of individual paid workers and volunteers

Looking through temporal eyes can therefore take multiple forms. A sensitivity to time sheds some light on some of the challenges and dilemmas faced by different aspects of the sector: by paid and unpaid voluntary sector workers, by clients or users, by organisations, and by funders and policy-makers. In recent years a number of studies have attempted to describe the size, shape and impact of the sector, at a number of geographical and organisational scales, at fixed moments in time (Jas *et al* 2002). Studies based on more intensive case study methods also tend to freeze time in their attempts to compare a range of themes and issues across a limited number of organisational cases (Alcock *et al* 1999, Scott *et al* 2000). A great deal of insight has come about as a result of these approaches, but there may be merit in seeking to add 'temporal depth' to analysis, through what Hay (2002: 149) calls a 'diachronic' perspective:

If the synchronic approach is analogous to the taking of a photograph at a particular instant and the comparative static approach to the taking of photographs at different points in time, the diachronic approach is the equivalent of a video 'panning' shot which follows the motion of the object in question.

One of the aims in the research described here has been to study the movement of community-based voluntary sector projects. Many things seem to change over a relatively short period of time in the voluntary and community sector. As described in the last chapter, the 'field' is dynamic and turbulent. Not only do the participants (individual workers, managers, activists, etc.) move around and come and go, organisations move position and change shape also. In addition new issues, events and agendas arrive to shape the field: the Compact, policies and programmes around Neighbourhood Renewal, Local Government Modernisation, Local Strategic Partnerships and the Community Empowerment Fund, other funding programmes such as SRB5, SRB6, Objective 2 and emergency issues such as the Foot and Mouth crisis. For many involved in the thick of these developments, initiatives and events, there is a palpable sense of an increasing pace of change, or of 'too much going on', indicating that the flow of these issues and concerns is perhaps greater than the capacity to respond. Attempting to capture a more dynamic picture, may help address some of the limitations of 'snapshot' or 'synchronic' studies.

But if this is a series of questions that relate to the changing dynamics of the field within and beyond projects and organisations, there is a second set of questions relating to time that potentially runs to the heart of what community development is about. Here the concerns are about what community development is seeking to achieve, and whether it can in fact achieve those things. A temporal framework is essential here because evaluating the activities which comprise community development is a task which is likely to involve some consideration over what achievements might be realisable, or have been realised, during the term of a particular *project*. If community development is in part about achieving some kind of change, then it is a moot point to consider *how* that change came about and over *what period*.

II. Project-time, and the 'anatomy' of projects

Despite their apparently growing significance in the voluntary and community sectors, there has been remarkably little reflection about the fundamental features of 'projects', nor much by way of substantive discussion about how they operate and develop over time.

'Projects' feature as part of the conceptual framework of time geography (Hagerstrand 1982), but only as elements of individuals life-plans. In Thrift's (1977: 7) words, *"all human beings have goals. To attain these they must have projects, series of tasks which act as a vehicle for goal attainment and which, when added up, form a project"*. Thrift's definition can readily be translated into an organisational framework ('all organisations have goals....'), but it is mainly in the practical voluntary sector literature that more explicit references to projects can be found (Lawrie 1996: 7). Here a project is something which is unique, time limited, creates change and is goal oriented. Fundamentally a project is about the use of resources on a specified endeavour over a specific period of time.

The rise of projects is associated with specific forms of funding availability. Increasingly, over time, it seems that funding in the voluntary sector is becoming channelled along four main dimensions. Voluntary and community sector organisations seeking to achieve their own objectives often have to utilise resources from elsewhere, and those resources are normally available to:

- do certain things (and not others)
- over certain periods of time (and no longer)
- with certain client groups (and not others)
- in certain places (and not others)

What are the defining features of a project? The four key dimensions of 'projects' are outlined in table 8.2 below.

Table 8.2 The 'anatomy' of projects

<p>Activity ('What?') – a specific thing</p> <p>Projects are invariably established to do something, and usually something quite specific. They are 'task-oriented', with specific aims and objectives. This is arguably the primary defining feature of a project.</p>	<p>Time ('When/How long?') – a specific period</p> <p>Projects have a distinctly organised temporality. They have an end-point and therefore 'take time seriously'. Durations of project funding vary – from one year up to five, but typically cover three years. The implications of fixed duration for the activity in a project, and its effectiveness, is not well known.</p>
<p>Group ('With whom?') – a target population</p> <p>Projects are increasingly focused on a target population of 'beneficiaries', for example disabled people, older people, or pre-school age children and their parents. These may be concentrated in a particular geographical area or dispersed in a wider area.</p>	<p>Space/Scale ('Where?') – a specified area</p> <p>Projects have to operate within defined boundaries (even if loosely defined). In some cases funding is more specifically targeted. Although not new, area-based initiatives and projects have once again become fashionable. Funding is increasingly being directed to, and concentrated in, certain 'deprived' areas, but different notions of scale might be implied.</p>

Individual projects will vary in the extent to which they display each of these features, and in the way each of these features influences the nature of the project. Each of the dimensions reflects a desire to *target resources* and *generate specific outcomes* in line with a wider strategy or purpose. The key generic theme behind all of these dimensions is *targeting* or an increased *intensity* of whatever the project is seeking to do.

Arguably the funding environment has become far more 'conditional'. The argument of this chapter is that this conditionalising of vital resources has significant consequences. Some of these might be considered to be beneficial. There are many arguments used in favour of a project model, including the strong focus on specific objectives, tasks and results. Projects are said to be about 'getting things done', and allow concentrated activity to take place, in part because of their compression in time and space. This is in contrast to the charge of 'spreading resources too thinly'. Furthermore, project-based funding allows available funding to be used flexibly for innovative new ideas. If grant funding does not have an end point the danger is that funding streams 'silt up' as existing organisations continue to receive the available funds on a long term basis. A danger is that a funding stream becomes 'captured' by a voluntary organisation. Lastly projects provide a potentially fruitful 'setting' for particular kinds of interaction, between individuals who might not otherwise meet (Jordan 2000). They might be conceptualised as 'stations' where individual trajectories or 'paths' may intersect (Hagerstrand 1982), or as key nodes in potential networks (Gilchrist 2000). These potential interactions may involve different roles, such as between 'professionals' and 'clients', but could also involve enhancing 'everyday' networks and connections between people regardless of role.

However, given the four characteristics of 'projects' outlined above, it is worth exploring a number of problematic features. The conditional time of projects can have a number of adverse implications:

1. *Expectations* about what a project might achieve are sometimes raised and then dashed. Discontent and loss of morale is frequent amongst community activists as projects 'come and go'. This makes new projects harder to establish themselves in a 'beginnings phase', implying that community capacity, and Do-it-Yourself grassroots activity, might take longer to establish than might otherwise be the case. This issue caused major problems in the East Durham case study, which is detailed further below.

2. Projects also face difficulties in terms of *staff continuity* and recruitment and retention. While projects seem to 'come and go' over time, staff within individual projects can also be somewhat fleeting. A three year project might typically involve 18-24 months of valuable work achieved as staff take time to 'settle in' and then perhaps look elsewhere for employment as the project comes to an end. The quotation below directly addresses this point from the perspective of an individual community development worker in one of the case study projects:

one of the main problems, is that workers haven't been funded for any great length of time.....the first question I was asked when I went to my very first meeting was 'And how long are you going to be here?' And that wasn't meant in a nasty manner, it was just, 'well, you know, workers come, workers go and we're left here, to pick up the pieces. How long are you going to be here?'

3. Towards the end of a project, workers often have to spend time looking for further funding, or looking for another job, or both. This, along with existing monitoring requirements for current funding, can become a significant *distraction* from the work the project is supposed to be doing. Towards the end of a project activity might typically 'tail off' as the emphasis is on tidying up and tying 'loose ends'. This issue has affected all of the case study projects where, under insecure funding, there is a reluctance to initiate new ideas and activities. There is an increasing discrepancy between the amount of funded time remaining and the time it might take to achieve results from new activities.

'Managerialism' is partly implicated in the rise of 'projects'. Funding regimes become conditional packages designed to meet the objectives of funders and policymakers. Arguably these 'principals' are in a stronger position to control and direct 'agents' in so far as there is an endpoint to funding. This is based on a view about incentives in which the possibility that a service could end is seen as a way of improving its performance. However, it is arguable that this provides only weak incentives to 'do well' since 'success' does not guarantee that funding would continue.

Thus far we have considered the usefulness of an explicit focus on the temporal aspects of the voluntary sector and community-based voluntary action. In addition we have explored how this has increasingly become organised on the basis of

'projects'. Here the flow of resources can be characterised as somewhat 'lumpy', or 'punctuated', over time (Hay 2002: 161-3). This can have significant effects on how projects become structured over time.

It is useful to distinguish between internal change and dynamics, that is change within projects, and external change, change within communities or constituencies. Whilst the former is implicated in the concern to study 'process', the latter is more oriented to 'outcomes'. Section III below considers questions of external change in more detail. However, it is useful at this stage to point to some of the internal dynamics which have been evident within the case studies. Table 8.3 below indicates some elements of the stories of development, project formulation and ongoing dynamics in each of the main four case studies. Although simplified, the remarkable feature appears to be the degree of turbulence that has been evident over a short period of time. In the period of around a year where fieldwork was undertaken, two formal projects ended but community action remained in a different format, one new project has started, sponsored by one Local Development Agency, and then by another when the first went into liquidation, and a major national crisis dramatically affected the work of another project. It is interesting to consider the respective roles played by funding regimes, Local Development Agencies, Local Authorities, national policy and regulatory developments and finally by 'events', such as the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease.

There remains an ongoing debate over the relative importance which should be afforded to issues of process (or 'internal dynamics') and outcome ('external change'). For some the emphasis of community development should be placed firmly on outputs and outcomes. The concern here is with achievement of objectives, 'delivery', and the need to maximise impact. In this view an overemphasis on 'process' risks being mere 'navel-gazing' and may lead to a loss of focus over what the activity is there for in the first place. But others will take issue with the over-emphasis on product, outcomes and impact, making the case that the important issues relate to the journeys people take to achieve their ends, what they learnt and how they developed. In this view, process is as important as product, and may lead to 'genuine' capacity building, involving considerations of how groups achieved what they did and how skills learnt in one context can be applied again and elsewhere. Rather than simply 'delivery', it is important to learn something about *how* outcomes and impacts were achieved. For Pawson and Tilley (1997), the

Table 8.3 The 'internal dynamic of case study projects

	Community Development in East Durham	Dales Community Project	Village Community Partnership	Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative
'Before then'....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCP formed Jan 1997 • Funding bids submitted • Oct 98 to Mar 00 - SRB4 scheme • Staff turnover • Project Manager recruited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1994/5 early informal meetings • 1996/7 - Research project • Practical project designed, funding bids submitted • Oct 99 project starts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jul - Dec 98 Appraisal • Mar 99 VCP formed and constituted • Sept 99 CD project starts • Youth Club starts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1996/7 study group starts • May 99 formal registration, open for business • Apr 00 SRB5 bid approved
Oct - Dec 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research access refused - community group unhappy with LDA • Project worker leaves as funding ends • Negotiations to continue CD initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Project Manager resigns • New acting project manager starts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project worker leaves as funding ends • Hands on Health course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions ongoing regarding new project • Training by LDA
Jan - Mar 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CD initiative ends - project worker leaves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting project manager becomes second manager • Foot and Mouth (FMD) outbreak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCC Community Support Unit attends meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New project starts: LDA management • Secretary leaves group
Apr - Jun 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCP dissolves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMD continues - including local outbreak • Problematic negotiations with funders over monitoring and ongoing funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obj2 (re) appraisal discussions begin • District Council officer attends meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New project being established
Jul - Sept 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to community group • Interviews with community members: project largely moribund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMD continues • Further problems with funders • New funding • Discussions begin over charitable status and independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVS funding workers attends meetings • AGM - chair announces intention to resign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One LDA closes • Worker made redundant • New LDA takes over project
'Since then'....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community action continues through individual partnerships • occasional support from Local Authority • Heritage Trail completed • New projects in development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMD 'ends' • Independence from LDA • Funding insecurity followed by successful CF bid • Staffing changes • Royal visit • DCP as model of 'good practice' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-appraisal • Conflict over facilities and future of village • Arts features • Chair resigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Planning meeting • New FSA regulatory regime • Conflict over LDA/worker role • Secretary resigns • Business Plan in development

evaluative focus should be on understanding how outcomes are the result of a complex interaction between a pre-existing context and a range of intervening mechanisms.

The tension between a focus on process, and an emphasis on outcome, can be seen in the way the 'field' of community-based voluntary action may be changing. Crucially, this is becoming a further site upon which agents can compete for forms of capital. Issues of outcomes, delivery and product seem to be becoming more important, to the extent that they have become, certainly in politician's mouths, a new mantra, particularly where public services are concerned. It is important to ask why this might be the case, and how and why this might begin to affect the voluntary sector and community-based voluntary action. Questions of impact are a central part of a renewed debate in recent years over the importance of 'what works' (Davies *et al* 2000). Here close consideration is being given to the role of evidence in policy making and practice. We will return to this issue in the Section IV of this chapter. In any event, an emphasis on delivery over process may signal a shift in the terms of what counts in the field, where advantages accruing to credible claims for delivery from the voluntary sector, or specific voluntary organisations, may increase. Hence there may be a premium attached to workers, groups, projects and organisations that can 'get things done', where this becomes a new source of reputational or symbolic capital. In the next section we will examine in more detail the potential 'external impact' of each of the case study projects.

III. External change in case study projects – the question of impact

What difference can be said to have been made as a result of the activities of community-based projects? What has been the size and character of their 'footprint'? In the discussion which follows only some indications of the potential impact are given. As we shall see this is quite a complex area. In any case, as will become evident, questions of impact and outcomes seem somewhat distant to the concerns of the case studies given the everyday struggles the projects seem to have had in basic monitoring of activities and outputs.

1. Community Development in East Durham - mixed fortunes, 'collateral damage'¹ and assigning blame

Background

Arguably the defining period of the four and a quarter year life of the Federation of Community Partnerships was the 18 month programme of community-based activities funded through a Single Regeneration Budget scheme. The scheme was quite ambitious, in terms of the range of activities (the scheme involved 11 separate projects) and the range of contributing organisations (one managing agent, five other project sponsors and four individual community partnerships), but was particularly ambitious in terms of its expressed aims:

The Scheme brings together, in an integrated package, a range of projects which are designed to overcome some initial inherent barriers to regeneration in the area and to sustain the initiative through the establishment of voluntary sector bodies capable of playing a full part alongside the public and private sectors in the regeneration of the area. The projects are designed to provide local access to new opportunities, build local confidence and develop the foundations from which the community can directly contribute to, and benefit from, wider opportunities in the area....

.....This Scheme will make a difference with the capacity of local communities being built not by bricks and mortar but by people. The process will impact profoundly on the local culture, enabling residents to fulfil more expansive roles and responsibilities. We will foreshorten and then break the cycle of dependency, which has controlled us for so many generations.

(Year One Delivery Plan, June 1998, pp 1 and 3)

Inputs and activities

The scheme was to be managed by DRCC (as the 'accountable body') but overseen by a time-limited partnership board comprising representatives from village community partnerships (seven members, including the chair) and voluntary sector agencies (six members). SRB funding of £154,350 was to be matched from a

¹ I am grateful to Duncan Scott for term 'collateral damage' as a description of this case study

number of additional sources, although not all of this was in place when the programme started. The 11 projects were “*designed to complement each other in order to achieve maximum local impact and involvement*” (ibid p.6). The list below gives an indication of the breadth of the scheme:

Table 8.4 The scope of the Federation of Community Partnership’s regeneration scheme

Project, sponsor, funding	Aims and objectives
Developing the East Durham Villages Federation DRCC, £23,000 (16%)	<i>“to build the capacity of all members to ensure that the Federation continues as the sustainable body post SRB to maintain a community led approach to regeneration in the area.”</i>
Promoting and engaging young people in the future of the area DRCC, £10,000 (7%)	To establish a youth forum across the Federation villages, supported by a youth worker. Sixty young people would ‘benefit from projects to promote personal and social development’.
Establishing learning communities WEA, £12,000 (8%)	To run 8 five-week courses, with an output of 190 people obtaining a qualification.
Development of village-based enterprise trusts/charitable companies DTA, £10,000 (7%)	To establish the Federation as a Development Trust and to run a capacity building programme of courses, mentoring and visits to other projects. Outputs include providing support to 12-14 voluntary organisations, 45-47 community groups and 9 regeneration partnerships.
Community Economic Development	
a. Community Economic Capacity Building DRCC, £28,000 (19%)	Project 5a provided the bulk of the funds for the SRB4 coordinator’s post, whose role, apart from overseeing monitoring and project compliance, was to provide capacity building support.
b. Community Enterprise Fund DRCC, £15,000 (10%)	Project 5b was a dedicated fund used to support community enterprises in the Federation area. A panel drawn from the Federation membership would assess applications and award funds accordingly.
Community Business Health Checks ‘CELDA’, £3,000 (2%)	<i>“The purpose of this project was to promote forward development of community based initiatives in order to sustain (20) community organisations by being viable business enterprises”</i>
Celebrating Mining Heritage NUM, £5,000 (3.5%)	Project involves: archive research on mining history in the area, local people using archives and memorabilia, opening two mining heritage centres.
Training Scheme for Ex-miners welfare service NUM, £5,000 (3.5%)	To train ex-miners as advisors on welfare matters. Project involves recruiting 30 ex-miners to attend 3 welfare advice courses and then carrying out a total of 210 advice sessions.
Development of liaison service between Federation/public sector bodies DRCC, £8,000 (5%)	To liase between the Federation and public sector bodies involving developing a database of contacts and holding a number of seminars with public bodies.
Developing an environmental management group for community spaces/resources in community villages ‘E-LDA’, £18,000 (12%)	To establish an ‘environmental management group’ of volunteers to advance environmental projects throughout the Federation area.
Funding advice service for the sector/area DRCC, £10,000 (7%)	To provide training courses and one-to-one advice surgeries on funding issues. An experienced consultant (training, funding advice) was to work with a local community volunteer paid on a sessional basis to deliver training courses on funding advice and funding advice surgeries.
Scheme wide Projects DRCC	To organise the production of a Federation-wide newsletter and a number of roving roadshows to encourage people to access information available about and within the SRB4 scheme.

Outputs and outcomes

The timescale available to set the scheme up overall and then try to achieve its goals was extremely tight. The scheme was envisaged to run for two years, and all the preparation was undertaken on that basis, including proposed targets and outputs. However, when the funding was agreed, the funding body stressed that the money should be spent by a fixed deadline at the end of a second financial year, meaning that in effect the programme was squeezed into 18 months. The outputs and targets were not renegotiated, and it was only towards the end that some outputs were revised downwards to 'rescue' the scheme.

Overall, the scheme was funded to provide outputs across 29 different categories, including jobs created (10), jobs safeguarded (8), number of individuals involved in voluntary work (200), number of people trained receiving a qualification (250), number of new cultural facilities (3). However, throughout the scheme the task of monitoring and meeting outputs seemed to stretch the capacity of most of those associated with the scheme. From archived documentary evidence it seems that issues around meeting outputs were the source of a major flow of letters, faxes, phone calls and emails between DRCC as the managing agent and the funding body. Part of this seemed to involve an effort to resolve discrepancies between delivery plans and monitoring returns, including basic arithmetical errors. But outputs were also the source of much dispute between the project sponsors and the managing agent, with claims and complaints that outputs were not being met, that they were not negotiated with sponsors in advance and that in several projects they were unrealistic, particularly around employment and accredited training.

A foreseeable problem, relating to staff continuity on short term projects, hit the scheme particularly hard, involving recruitment delays, staff absence through sickness and high staff turnover. The three core part-time coordinating and community development roles were between them occupied by nine different people in the 18 months, with consultants brought in to support other aspects of the work as well. Delays and lack of continuity contributed to problems for the scheme in meeting its outputs. As it got into difficulties in delivering what its 'delivery plan' said it would, managerial concerns around compliance with milestones and targets tended to become the overriding preoccupation for the managing body. In trying to cope with the need to ensure delivery of a complex and poorly performing project, one of DRCC's project managers effectively became a scheme 'police officer' seeking to ensure that separate mini-projects got back on track. Gradually the

representatives from the community partnerships felt excluded and distanced from the ongoing coordination of the scheme, as the discussions between the professional workers over project performance took place outside of the partnership board meetings. The community development worker describes this situation and how this affected perceptions of the impact of the scheme:

there's no doubt about it [the Federation] just felt that they had no control at all.....it was all just going on.....there's all this money being spent and nothing, as far as they were concerned, nothing at all to show for it..... nothing they could see, nothing they could look at. And so to them what's been the point in all of this? 'What have we got from it?'

Since most of the scheme seemed to involve a daily, monthly and quarterly struggle to get activities started and running, the judgements made about success or otherwise seemed to be related to performance against initial expectations. But they also seem to focus on 'process performance', or how smoothly projects were running, rather than a wider concern with outcomes more generally. This makes it quite difficult to assess to what extent the project was able to address questions of disadvantage, in the area, let alone 'break the cycle of dependency'.

The eleven mini-projects were judged by the scheme's community development worker to be a mixture of success and failure. Some projects appeared to run more smoothly, and achieve more things than others. One was described emphatically by one respondent as a 'waste of space', and of the eleven, only the funding advice project seemed to be regarded as a success. The project worker explains how a local resident worked alongside an experienced funding advisor and has gone on to advise others and develop new initiatives:

the idea... was this capacity building: that [Sylvia] would learn from [the consultant] and then be able to impart that advice from the end of the project...[Sylvia] has gained a massive amount of experience, so that she's now a committed community volunteer... she deals now with a lot of organisations that two years ago, when she sat in a meeting with English Partnerships, she felt that she didn't even have a right to say anything. Now she feels that she's an equal, and she knows what she's talking about really

she's now submitting large funding bids for their community centre..... quite some time ago their committee failed in a lottery bid and she came back and said 'well I'm pleased we failed'.....She said 'we're not ready to handle that kind of money yet'. But now they are, because she's their treasurer, and so I think that that's quite an important thing that she identified....because of the training she'd done, that they weren't ready to take [it on]...I still maintain that [she] is the best thing to come out of SRB4.

The project worker goes on to explain how outputs on the scheme overall were in some jeopardy, and only reached at the end:

I mean outputs were achieved....a lot of the outputs were achieved because of the roadshows. Because of the way we ran that. Got loads and loads of people in lots of different community groups involved.... if those roadshows had not gone ahead in that way, I think the project on paper would have definitely failed....I think there would have been a lot of outputs down the drain had it not been for that....I think [the funding body] saw the roadshows as a saving grace....but looking at some of [the projects] in the same way.... Some of them failed in certain ways, but made up in others....and OK even if it wasn't brilliant it achieved its outputs.

Assessing Community Development

The problems associated with staff continuity had repercussions elsewhere in the scheme. The sheer range of mini-projects seemed to amplify the difficulties of trying to secure delivery of intended activities and targets from a number of different project sponsors, and this increased the workload of an already overstretched managing agency. The squeezed timing had the effect of increasing the risk of failure associated with the scheme's operation, since there was less room for manoeuvre, and less time available to adjust and learn in the light of experience.

Towards the end of the scheme, and during its aftermath, discussions between participants focused on who should take the blame for the poor outcomes of the projects. DRCC was heavily criticised by the community activists for its apparent mismanagement of the scheme. Minutes from meetings at the end of the scheme

reveal the depth and intensity of the frustration felt by community activists from the Federation:

[The chair] asked if the scheme had achieved what it set out to achieve. He had thought that the aim was for the Federation to be sustainable and that SRB would have done that.

[The project worker] pointed out that the Scheme had not failed, there had been successes and that £154,000 had been brought into the communities.

[The project worker] pointed out that the Scheme was intended as a stepping stone and it is important to realise that the first steps toward independence are always the most difficult

(SRB4 Board minutes Feb 2000)

Many views were expressed as to the disillusionment felt over the management of the scheme. It was felt there was little to show for the involvement also that there had been little or no consultation with the Federation on many decisions that had been made....the Federation members had been treated by DRCC with arrogance and contempt and that the members would have liked more involvement than they were allowed. It was stated that the idea of the scheme as a capacity building exercise had failed as there were fewer people involved now than before.

[The project co-ordinator] pointed out that whilst the misgivings were realistic there are many positive aspects of the scheme and that whilst not as successful as had been intended the scheme has been a valuable stepping stone.

(Federation minutes, Feb 2000)

There is some credence to the idea of the SRB4 programme as a stepping stone. Although the scheme failed to live up to expectations, struggled to meet its outputs, appeared to become a huge management burden and left a sense of disillusion amongst active community members in the Federation villages, it is possible that the SRB4 scheme set some foundations for future activity. Whilst it may not have clearly made much of an impact on 'disadvantage', it did contribute a continued 'push' for community-based activity in the locality. In addition it enabled a renegotiation of

relationships between community partnerships and DRCC. Although the Federation did not become the sustainable regeneration body as proposed, and was eventually dissolved, individual partnerships appear to be continuing to develop further projects in order to try to regenerate their villages. Community-based activity continues in most of the villages, although this is now at some remove from the support offered by DRCC. It is possible to argue that 'capacity' has been built, although sometimes this appears to have been achieved unintentionally, by default, and at least partly to 'bite back' at the professional organisations which claim to offer support and expertise to community groups.

2. Dales Community Project - a story of success?

Background

Dales Community Project (DCP) was finally established in October 1999 after a lengthy period of preparatory project development work. A base was secured in the local market town, and a project manager plus a number of specialist advisers and community-based workers were recruited. The basic aim of the service was to provide an accessible and practical support service for farmers as a way of relieving some of the stress and isolation associated with livestock farming in a remote upland area. The project was managed, bankrolled and the staff employed by DRCC. It was overseen by a steering group of local people, many of whom had been involved in trying to establish the project at the beginning.

Inputs and activities

Prior to the Foot and Mouth crisis, DCP had been operating on the basis of a two year project funded from the European Agricultural Guidance Guarantee Fund and Single Regeneration Budget (Round 5) funding. Gradually the project was beginning to provide 'back-up' services to local farmers, including information and advice on latest developments, advocacy and liaison with the Ministry of Agriculture, newsletters and briefings, schools activities around farming in the Dale, social events and training courses.

Although it had adopted a low profile for much of its development, DCP's role in the Dale during the Foot and Mouth Crisis forced it to become much more visible. The Foot and Mouth outbreak made a dramatic and tangible difference to DCP's operations. Several of DCP's staff and steering group members were able to provide

a constant presence at the Ministry offices nearby, and were able to provide a two-way flow of information, from farmers to the Ministry, and vice versa, about both the practical problems of livestock farming given FMD-related restrictions, and individual issues, forms and movement licence applications. The office base became a centre for farmers making enquiries and completing forms to move livestock, a hive of latest information and a source of support in difficult times. It became a place where people could air their shared concerns about a situation which was affecting everybody. Recognising that many farmers decided to stay confined to their farms, and the dangers that this might present in terms of isolation and stress, staff at DCP organised a 'ring round' rota. This involved regular phone calls to a list of farming households, ostensibly to update them with information, but primarily intended to demonstrate to some care and thought in a time of crisis.

Outputs and outcomes

In the immediate aftermath of the FMD outbreak a membership survey was undertaken, jointly as part of this research and for the project's own purposes. A simple self-complete questionnaire was posted to DCP's 210 member households, generating a response of 107 replies (51%). The survey asked about the use, usefulness and relative importance of 13 different services provided by DCP, including support with licence applications and official form filling to the agriculture ministry, training courses, briefings and newsletters, computerisation of farm records, faxing and photocopying and social events. In addition, some open questions were posed regarding suggestions for improvements to services, the things members like and the things they would change about DCP.

The results seemed to provide a startling validation of the value of DCP and its different services to the membership. The more practical or 'hands on' services and information were thought to be most useful and important by members, compared to the more 'social' aspects of DCP. For example 'support with licence applications' and 'support with DEFRA form filling' were seen as the most useful and most important services. Statistics of service use and overall membership levels had already provided indications of how valued DCP and its services were by members, and these could be used as important proxy measures of the value of the project. Although the Foot and Mouth crisis effectively brought people in to use the service, it is arguable that they would be unlikely to continue using, or being associated with, a service that was somehow failing to meet their needs. DCP's own monitoring during the Foot and Mouth crisis indicates that the project dealt with a total of 35,117

'presenting issues' from April to the end of December 2001, including handling 1,207 livestock movement licence applications. Although these were the exceptional circumstances at the height of FMD, it still provides an indication of the value the service appeared to be providing. Membership of DCP has grown rapidly also. At a public meeting in September 2001 to establish DCP as a charity it had 226 members. Over the year January to December 2002, membership increased from 270 to 384, a 42% increase, averaging 10 new members per month, making it "*one of, if not the, largest membership registered charities in [the Dale]*", according to a bid for funding to the Community Fund.

Leaving aside such proxy measures, the membership survey also revealed a remarkable degree of attachment to the service from its members, shown in the responses to the open questions on likes and dislikes about DCP. By and large the two things that members liked about DCP were the staff and the service. The staff were described as helpful, friendly, obliging, local, trusted, warm, welcoming, dedicated and knowledgeable. One member wrote that "*the staff are tremendously helpful and also understand the practical aspects of livestock farming.*" The service was typically described as convenient, available, open and approachable, local, having a friendly, easy going atmosphere, providing invaluable advice during Foot and Mouth with useful, clear, up to date information and briefings. Other comments from members included:

Staff are all very nice, very willing to help whatever the problem.....During Foot and Mouth it has been invaluable – no other area has had this help

I would be lost without [DCP]. A friend at the end of a phone, with all the help you need.....Its always the same:- Always friendly, always polite, always efficient, always helpful, always there!

A small number of members offered suggestions for things that could be changed in DCP. Several people commented that although the office is relaxed, informal and friendly, this was possibly achieved at the cost of a loss of privacy. One member wrote that there were "*perhaps too much local staff. When people finished the business they should leave not sit about on the premises*" also, "*You should have a waiting room. It is not private when people come in*". Concerns expressed here

highlight the extreme sensitivity of the services being provided, especially in a close-knit community.

However, the only other notable thing that members of DCP would change was its precarious funding situation (*"Give it a long term future – fund it properly"*). Many people said they would not change anything about DCP and that *"you should not try to mend something that's not broken"*. Partly as a result of positive feedback like this, and favourable assessments made by funders and other key stakeholders, DCP has more recently entered into discussions with key funders about how its 'model' might be replicated elsewhere. This issue is considered in more depth in the Section IV of this chapter.

Assessing Community Development

When assessing the role of community-based voluntary action, it might be useful to consider the extent to which support is provided in 'reaching out', as well as then 'working with', those most vulnerable or disadvantaged people. Comments from DCP members and others indicate that what DCP provides (i.e. 'working with') seems to be highly valued, and may offer the prospect of reducing stress and isolation. But this may imply only a minimal impact if only a few members use the service. One key aspect of DCP's work was somehow to reach the most isolated people within the locality, those thought to be most at risk. Given that its origins lie in dealing with highly sensitive issues of stress and isolation in rural communities, it tried to do this in *indirect* ways. Thus the point of the service overall was to provide *practical* support, with a friendly face, by trusted local people. Mere mention of issues around stress and disadvantage may have made the task even more difficult given the 'goldfish bowl' nature of rural life. Getting to people to get them through the door seems to have been the most difficult task. But this is likely to take some time, and maybe more than the time available under its original funding regime. In the event, this task was boosted by the crisis of FMD, which brought people through the door in greater numbers, including, it seems, people thought least likely to use DCP. The tragic irony of the fact that adverse circumstances effectively proved the value and now apparent success of DCP has not gone unnoticed by members of DCP's steering committee. In effect FMD, and DCP's response, seems to have speeded up the process of attracting people in to use the service.

In order to achieve this there was a need to ensure that the service people would be coming to was appropriate and professional, but also friendly and approachable.

Coming into the office was intended to be as relaxing and as taken for granted for service users as possible. It was intended that the office was 'their space' including being offered tea or coffee and the chance to chat and catch up on news. The possibility of these seemingly minimal interactions was precisely what DCP wanted to encourage, and the attention to detail in ensuring this was remarkable, including decisions about what would be the most appropriate pictures to place on walls.

Meanwhile, outside the office base, the aim was to encourage people to join and come in to the office. But there was some recognition of how conservative many potential service users might be, not trusting a new and unfamiliar service. The strategy adopted by DCP was referred to as 'seepage': using informal networks and connections between people in order to extend 'word of mouth' about what the service aimed to do, what it was like and what it could do. One of the original volunteers encapsulates this approach:

What we were trying to do was to get to the most isolated. And it will be a long time before.....I think Foot and Mouth has brought that a bit nearer, because some of the ones that are most resistant and most isolated have begun to use it.

Its about the 'seepage'. We knew that 'Mr-most-isolated' out there would be the hardest to get in, but its no good going out there trying to drag 'Mr-most-isolated' in, you need the people who have the relationship with him, and using seepage somewhere along the way it gets back to him. Maybe its the son of the family who goes in and says 'that DCP is not bad you know'. Or a friend who says 'I go in to do [my forms] at DCP'. That way rather than to target him to get him to come in.

I would have thought [cites example of isolated farmer – 'Michael'] would have never come in DCP, but because of Foot and Mouth he has. Because I knew him, but would have never got him to, I would have trusted that it would have taken longer.... just in the street saying, 'Michael, we're just gonna have to look after each other, aren't we?'

[But then during FMD] we've got phone contact every other night. I'm saying 'Michael, is there anybody you know who's vulnerable, will you let us know?' knowing he's vulnerable. He feels part of it, and also giving

information too.....He walked in the other day, comfortable enough to ask for something in his own right.

Overall it seems that DCP was in the right place, doing the right things at the right time. One senior manager within R-LDA describes the impact of Foot and Mouth on the project:

I think it was in a transitional phase where it was a young project that was looking to become a more mature project, and evolve into that. And right at that time came Foot and Mouth, and the project was perfectly placed at the heart of the community with the right kind of resources to provide the support that the community needed to respond to Foot and Mouth.....I mean because it has a presence, because it had an existing relationship with the rural and farming community it was able to respond to the needs thrown up by Foot and Mouth. And it was a friendly face to local farmers. It was trusted. So I think, it being there to respond to the needs of Foot and Mouth demonstrates the benefits of being a grassroots, community-led project.

3. Village Community Partnership – struggling to make small gains in a small place

Background

A dedicated part-time community development worker was in post in the village during the 15 month period between September 1999 to November 2000. This was intended to take forward the main issues which arose from a village appraisal undertaken between July and December 1998. In March 1999 the appraisal steering group eventually became a constituted community partnership (VCP) established to address the priorities of residents as identified in the appraisal. The group decided that it needed further support to carry out many of the tasks and so a DRCC fieldworker put a funding package together for a dedicated community development worker, to be employed by DRCC, and funded from European Union Objective 2 funds with a matching contribution from the district council.

Inputs and activities

According to the final report of the project: *"The main duty of the community development worker was to support the [Village Community Partnership] and its work in achieving the aims and priorities identified in the community appraisal"*. The key areas of the work programme included servicing VCP (attending meetings, preparing reports and providing advice and information), developing three specific projects (a quarterly newsletter, a noticeboard and improving the village crossroads), building capacity (identifying training needs and organising training events) and encouraging 10 new community volunteers. All of these tasks were achieved or progressed to some degree during the time of the community development work.

In addition support was provided to establish a youth club as a response to a concern raised in the appraisal about the lack facilities in the village for young people. A club was established to run in the local communal rooms, run by several local women volunteers. The early months were heralded as a great success, and membership quickly grew to 60. However ongoing tensions remained between older residents and younger people over the use of the communal rooms, with the community development worker having to act as a mediator between the two. Preparatory work was also undertaken by the community development worker and another agency to submit a bid for funds from the Local Heritage Initiative, involving a ten week local history course and research, an artistic village feature and some organised community walks to develop a leaflet and other interpretive material. What was not in the workplan, but raised in the appraisal, was the deteriorating condition of the village hall. Here the community development worker's role became one of gradually trying to raise an issue that was the source of potential conflict between the VCP (which wanted to refurbish or rebuild the hall) and the Parish Council (which resisted).

Outputs and outcomes

The community development work continued until November 2000, and the worker left when funding ran out. VCP's experience is perhaps a good example of what might happen to a fledgling community group when a time limited period of relatively 'thin' worker support comes to an end. The research carried on observing activities after the community development project ended. The main issue concerns how sustainable the initiatives might be without worker support. The chair of VCP highlights what was at stake in such a small village:

it will be interesting to see if we can keep it going..... It puts a lot of the onus on these two or three volunteers with time available, who have made time available at the expense of other things in their lives..... how do you get that 2 or 3 to grow into 4 or 5? Spread the actual work around.....I think if we have to go on for another year or two it will become a bit more onerous.

The final report from the community development work mentions that "As the Community Development Project comes to an end it is important for the Partnership to have an exit strategy to ensure that the work continues in the community".

Suggested elements in the exit strategy were a further bid for funds, support from DRCC, the local CVS, as well as the new County Council Community Support Officer, and finally that the chair and secretary would arrange meetings and provide minutes. A continuation funding bid was made to the Coalfield Regeneration Trust, on the grounds that "members of the partnership feel they require further support to help with the regeneration process. If successful, the support already received from the Community Development Worker will continue and will enable members of the community to gain the skills and confidence to carry out the work in the future".

However, the bid was submitted late and continuity was lost. It seems that not only could this have been foreseen, it could have been resolved with better planning, as the chair of VCP describes:

I think it sort of fell down.....I'm not sure the long term commitment was ever there. Because at one stage, I think it was about July she was definitely going. Then August came and she was talking about staying and then September came and she got the extension from DRCC and I was hoping that during that period, or September when she got the extension, she could have done a lot more work on continuing funding. That didn't seem to be a particularly high priority.... I know that the application didn't go in until relatively late. Finally. And when it got there I think it was at the end of a very long pile....

This perhaps reiterates the general issue of work in time limited projects tailing off towards the end of the fixed period. Eventually the bid was refused because the trust's funding was oversubscribed. No further funding bids for a dedicated worker were subsequently submitted.

Following this the partnership continued its activities in much the same way as before, meeting every six weeks or so in the village hall. The chair's stated aim was to keep the meetings as informal as possible, in order to reduce the chances that people would feel intimidated by the process of running meetings. Attendance ebbed and flowed, and rarely rose above ten people. Of those, very few people took an active role, and by default the chair and secretary assumed greater responsibility for arranging the meetings, writing and distributing the minutes, managing the finances, meeting the requirements of funders and producing the newsletter. Occasional frustration was expressed at this situation, and potential 'burn out' and disillusionment did not seem far away.

Alongside this, the youth club waned and came almost to a standstill, for lack of volunteers and declining membership. The newsletter was published several times, although until the last few editions this became the sole responsibility of the secretary in addition to her normal role. Latterly help has been provided by the Chair's partner and others. The Local Heritage Initiative project was started and in progress, organised mainly by the local history club with support to deal with finance and form filling by the chair of the partnership.

In addition, an external consultant was engaged to undertake a community (re)-appraisal for the new round of Objective 2 funding. The (re)-appraisal suffered from low response rates to a questionnaire and open meetings, but generated some interest, and raised some underlying conflicts, around use of facilities in the village, particularly over the condition of the old village hall. Interviews undertaken for the re-appraisal amongst a small sample of residents indicated that most people were aware of some of the things that were established or developed during the community development work, such as the newsletter, the youth club and the efforts to improve the appearance of the village. Similarly most were aware of the current activities being developed. However, few were aware that there was actually a community development worker in place, or who she was. The worker was 'missed' by those who knew what she did. The partnership's work had 'slowed down' somewhat according to one member, and there was some frustration at the situation of seemingly 'going round in circles'. Without the dedicated community development worker there seemed to have been a convoluted process of getting things done, whereas a worker might know what to do and how to go about it straight away.

Assessing Community Development

During the 15 months of community development work there seems to have been a great deal of attention paid to painstaking, time consuming and small-scale support to the youth group, the older people's group and the VCP itself. This represents perhaps very early stages of community development work in a village where not much had previously been undertaken, and where people were not particularly confident about what to do. The chair of the partnership reflected on the importance of the community development worker in these terms:

Having somebody there as a focus was very important in fact. A hub, who people could communicate with and through. You were sort of guaranteed that she'd be there one or two mornings per week, and to be in the right place to see things and talk to people... Plus it would let people know that there was something happening. She was there and she could be seen, otherwise it tends to be if something happens, people don't know what, where or when....A lot of people who are involved now either have work or have a life beyond the village...one of the problems now is that there's nobody guaranteed to be there.....

As well as the practical importance of 'being there' and 'getting things done', the specific expertise and skills brought to the role were also valued:

[She was] the ideal choice. Energy again. It gave us some focus, some momentum. Somebody that could actually do things and keep things going.....I don't think it's a particularly easy role.....you need somebody who is a focus or a champion. Somebody who maybe you can just go and talk to and say 'are we doing the right things?' And one of the roles she tried to develop before she left was this idea of a mentor. Sort of help to lead other people through it....That's probably a major part of what the role demands, apart from the doing is the coaching them and helping these people to learn that its not difficult you've just got to ask the right questions of the right people and here's how you do it, and I will hold your hand.

There is some evidence here that a community development worker brings certain practical, 'how to', skills which might be of use to new and emerging community groups. Knowing something of how the system works, and that there is a 'system' in

the first place, is further evidence that this is a 'field' in operation, in which some agents are more confident, with more capital, and more versed at 'playing the game' than others:

The good things I think were the confidence to network with a lot of people who she might have met or might have heard of. A lot of things to do with her character. Talking to people....interpersonal skills, confidence. You're dealing with people who are dealing with charities. You're talking to them as equals rather than cap-in-hand. And you know when you can have things and how the system works. A lot of local knowledge of systems and structures.

But the existence of these skills in a worker can bring some dilemmas. Apparent in this case study was the value of 'getting things done' against the process of trying to enable and encourage others to 'have a go'. In the short timescale of the community development work there was a need to achieve certain things as a condition of the funding, and in a situation where there are few sufficiently confident people to try to establish things, there might be pressure on the worker to undertake them. This was noted by the external consultant from their interviews with partnership members, where it was thought that some of the work undertaken by the community development worker was 'disempowering', in that it did not encourage others to 'have a go'. The VCP chair reiterates this dilemma. Asked how it would redefine the role of the worker if new funding was available, he stated:

I think we'd re-define the role of the worker a little bit more into more of a mentoring role rather than a doing role. It would be more of a case of trying to manage and coach, coax the available resources rather than trying to plug the gap themselves. But that wouldn't be a huge change..... its got to be clearly defined to everybody that the role is different and what that means in practice.

A final problem was also raised by the community development work. It was widely reported during interviews that there were insufficient people willing and able to get involved in community-based activities, and few people with the confidence and skills to get involved. This has become an ongoing problem for the VCP, to which we will return in Chapter 9. The chair reflects how this might be resolved:

I think the only thing we can do is find something that more people have a real interest in. Something that people can see as being worthwhile. The biggest leverage we've got is the youth club in terms of attracting more adults who can get involved. I think the way forward is to try to give them a better facility. Which is really a large part of the village hall thing. I think people will get involved in fundraising, people will get involved in making decisions.....But beyond that I think there's this air of relatively quiet contentment.....there's no real motivator for people to get out and get involved in doing anything.

Given this situation, it is possible that the community development work was unsuccessful in one very large aspect – its ability to attract a wider range of people into community-based activities. This would not have been easy, given the village's size and composition, and the limited time available for community development work. The worker's two and a half days per week were largely spent in the office base in the communal rooms, meaning that she was primarily involved with its users, and the VCP, just by 'being there', rather than with others in the village. The worker acknowledged that she had not had a high profile in the rest of the village. But by not being 'out and about', it is arguable that the opportunity to encourage wider participation amongst residents, including some of the most disadvantaged and least confident, may have been missed. This has become perhaps more manifest in the period after the community development work finished.

4. Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative – progress takes longer than expected

Background

Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative (DRCFI) became fully operational in May 1999 after more than two years development by its 'study group' of interested volunteers and founding members. Its Board of Directors, additional sub-committees, and weekly 'collection points' are run entirely on a voluntary basis. A part time development worker, funded by SRB5 with a matched contribution from the district council, has been in post since January 2001 to promote and develop DRCFI primarily in the two most deprived villages in the district. The bid was initially prepared by CELDA, which supported the recruitment process and employed the worker until the organisation went into liquidation in July 2001. Eventually DRCC

took over the project as 'managing agent', and so the development worker is now employed and line managed by DRCC.

Inputs and activities

Since being launched DRCFI has opened a small number of weekly local collection points – two in the main market town and district centre, and one in a smaller village nearby. Since the SRB5 development project began, two new collection points have been opened in the two eligible villages. Currently four collection points are operating regularly, for a total of four and a half hours per week. The development worker has given several presentations about the initiative, as well as attempting to prepare publicity materials. In July 2002 a new national regulatory regime finally came into force, and in the months preceding this volunteers spent a great deal of time updating systems and procedures in preparation.

Outputs and outcomes

How can the impact of DRCFI be assessed? Several possibilities emerge, including both quantitative and qualitative factors, such as the number and composition of its members, how is it used or judged as a savings and loans facility, and how members judge its importance. By the end of the 2002 accounting period (30th September 2002) its membership had grown to 130 adult members and 53 junior members, at a rate of nearly 5 new members per month. However, with an eligible population of 24,100 residents in the district area (the 'common bond'), the current membership represents just 0.76% of the eligible population. If this rate of growth were to continue, membership would not reach five per cent of the common bond (i.e. 1205 members) until the year 2019. If it has taken over three years to reach a level at which less than one per cent of the population are members, then it could be suggested that the impact of DRCFI has so far been merely a 'drop in the ocean'. The composition of membership shows some interesting patterns – comprising mainly women (69%) and people aged over 50 (53% with 40% aged over 60).

The geography of membership is an interesting reflection of the initiative's historical development. Membership is over-represented in the main market town (52% of the membership, as against 24% of the district's population overall) which is probably a reflection of where members of the original study group live, as well as it being the largest population centre. Membership is also over-represented in the two most deprived villages (28% of the membership, compared to 15% of the population overall), which perhaps reflects the outcome of the first couple of years of

concentrated development work in the area. Other areas of the district are under-represented, including several larger villages and the upper dale area above the main market town.

DRCFI has targeted potential members on low incomes, partly by default, in being an organisation offering services which might be attractive to people on lower incomes, but also partly by design, through operating in areas considered to be more deprived. Using the 1998 Index of Multiple Deprivation, and applying the 'income deprivation' domain, it is possible to calculate that the three main targeted centres (covering four wards with a population of 8,441) account for approximately 35% of the district's population, but approximately 45% of the 'income deprived' population. This is nearly as close as it is possible to target the district's rather dispersed deprived population on the basis of collection points covering four wards. This is only a notional assessment of how DRCFI might offer a service in areas where larger concentrations of deprived people live. But is DRCFI attracting such potential members in practice? The membership survey provides some indication, showing that just over half of members have an annual net household (unequalised) income of less than £10,000, three quarters less than £15,000 and nearly 90% less than £20,000 per year. For nearly half of members social security benefits are the main source of household income (26% retirement pensions, 22% Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support and Incapacity Benefit). Just over one third of members are in either part time or full time employment, and just over one third are retired. The remaining 30% are otherwise not in employment (through being unemployed, long term sick or disabled, or looking after family or home). From these figures it appears that the membership has quite successfully reached those people who might be thought to find its services useful.

Only 34% of adult members had heard of such initiatives already when they joined DRCFI, and 81% heard about it through knowing an existing member rather than through other sources such as leaflets, news articles and events. This may account for the relatively slow membership growth, where a small membership remains a relatively enclosed circle with only limited means of attracting new members. In the absence of the kind of crisis conditions seen in the DCP's response to FMD, it appears that 'word of mouth' or seepage might remain a sluggish process. In broad terms DRCFI is regarded well by its members, with 88% stating that it had met their expectations. The main reasons cited were around savings, loans and that it is a convenient service in the local community. For example, one member said that it

had met her expectations because *'it is a good way to save money, for future things, and a good way to borrow money without paying too much interest, on the whole it is a good thing for the community'*.

DRCFI is highly valued amongst its members as a mechanism for enabling and encouraging personal savings. Several members stated that it offered a good, easy and convenient way to save money. One member reported: *"it makes me save regularly.....I have saved money I would not have saved"*, while another stated *"It's a good way to save. I would not have saved in a bank or post office"*. Being an accessible savings facility was cited as the reason for joining by 63% of members. Most members save small amounts on a regular basis. Most save weekly (38%) or monthly (34%), and around two thirds save £5 or less per week. Just under half of members use it as their only or main place in which to save money. Fifteen per cent of members do not have a current account and half do not have a savings account. This suggests that DRCFI offers a small-scale facility for people who might not otherwise find it easy to save. By the end of September 2002, DRCFI had accumulated £27,048 in savings amongst its 183 members, averaging £147.80 each.

DRCFI also offers members the opportunity to use the pooled savings for affordable loans. One member indicated that DRCFI is *'a good source of low cost loans for small necessities'*. But it seems that DRCFI's selling point is greater as a route for personal savings than as a source of low cost loans. About 40% of members stated that they joined because DRCFI offers access to low cost loans. By the end of September 2002 a total of £17,635 was out on loan to members, representing 65% of the savings pool. Two thirds of members have taken at least one loan, but very few members had taken more than two. Most loans were for relatively small amounts (50% were for £250 or below). The average (mean) loan was £368 and the highest was £1500. Loans were typically for 'consumption' items (holidays, Christmas, home improvements and household appliances) rather than for 'emergency' items such as bills and debt rescheduling.

The relative informality of DRCFI seems to be prized, as well as the view that this reduces some of the stigma attached to borrowing money. One member reported that:

It is local, run by people known to me who are helpful and don't make me feel embarrassed when needing financial help. Interest is not charged on the whole of amount borrowed as it reduces each month on the remaining balance only - unlike other financial companies....It is better than going to provident etc as you don't pay large interest rates also you don't have them knocking on your door

while another commented

[Its] quite informal - you don't feel under pressure or as if people are looking down their noses at you when you ask to borrow money

Most loan applicants stated that they would have gone without, used savings or saved up rather than borrowed from elsewhere if they did not have the DRCFI loan. However the 'market' for loans seems to be quite limited. One third of members had not had a loan, because they had not yet needed one or would have preferred to use their savings rather than take a loan. Furthermore two thirds of members were not currently planning to take out a loan.

Assessing Community Development

Although DRCFI offers some financial services to people on an individual membership basis, it is a moot point to ask to what extent it contributes to community development in a wider sense. DRCFI is a new mutual service which originated from residents in the locality. The number of volunteers is limited for the amount of work that seems to be required – only 19 of the 130 members (15%) are volunteers. There has long been a danger, recognised by DRCFI's Board of Directors, that key volunteers were in danger of 'burn out'. As an illustration, nine of the currently 19 active volunteers were amongst the first 20 members from over three years ago. The implication is that it has been difficult to recruit new people into active roles. "More volunteers" was a frequently cited aspect that people would like to change about DRCFI. As one longstanding volunteer indicated: "I'd have someone come and take over my job!"

The membership survey indicated that the local and community focus of DRCFI was a prized value. 47% of members stated that they joined to be part of a local community organisation. The convenience of having a presence in the local village seems to be a key selling point for DRCFI, and was referred to by a number of

members in articulating what they liked about it. Allied to this is a view about its informality and how, as indicated above, this might reduce the stigma associated with borrowing money. However there was some comment that DRCFI should offer a wider range of activities for its members, such as trips out for example.

Other members, perhaps relatively more affluent, have joined less with the individual advantages of accessible savings and low-cost loans in mind, but in part also for the wider contribution DRCFI might make to the community, and to those members of the local community on lower incomes. Implied here is a view about the potential financial exclusion which might arise through changes in the banking system, where lower income groups are less attractive to mainstream financial institutions, and where banks and building societies have sought in recent years to reduce the number of branches, particularly in rural areas and deprived neighbourhoods. Two examples of comments made by members demonstrate this:

It attempts to redress the imbalances of financial institutions and supports those most disadvantaged by the system

it helps the local community...I like to think people can save who otherwise would not be able to save in a bank and can also take out a loan without having a large interest to pay. DRCFI is for people and should be supported

Part of its attraction seems therefore to be related to its 'mutuality', in that it offers a way of pooling resources collectively to offer benefits to others:

it's a big benefit to people on low incomes....hopefully it will help people less well off than myself

it is providing a service to local residents who would have struggled with finances and possibly gone elsewhere for financial help ending up paying back much more money due to high rates of interest

However, here DRCFI has to balance some conflicting issues, between informality and professionalism, and between attracting members on lower incomes without being perceived as a 'poor person's bank'. On the former issue, one member wanted to change the "jargon used in booklets explaining about DRCFI. I think it

would be better if it was produced with working class people in mind as some words can baffle people". Regarding perceptions of DRCFI, members of the Board of Directors have suggested that one of the reasons why DRCFI has taken such a long time to become more established is that potential members are somehow put off by the thought that it is only for 'poor people', and therefore not for them if they do not consider themselves poor, or would not want to be considered poor. This seems to point to a need for subtle, indirect methods of attracting people to the initiative – a kind of 'sideways action' in which the prominence of 'tackling poverty' and 'alleviating disadvantage' may be underplayed.

Questions of impact seem to run at different levels, akin to looking through two different ends of a telescope. DRCFI seems to offer benefits to its members and to the localities in which it has so far operated, but progress has been more limited in actually offering those benefits for a larger number of eligible people. It does not have a presence in many places throughout the district, does not have a large presence during the week in any one place and has so far only attracted a relatively small number of members. Growth in membership is steady, but slow. From above, taking a bird's eye view, the impact might be judged to be somewhat limited. According to one of the most active members, *"Its taken longer and been much harder work than I expected"*. This perhaps reinforces the suggestion that questions of impact need, at least in part, to be related to questions of time and of expectations. What do participants and other stakeholders expect to be achieved over a given period of time? Are developments occurring too slowly or too quickly?

On the other hand, at the other end of the telescope, for those people who have joined, it seems well regarded and valued for the reasons already cited. It has made some inroads into attracting people on low incomes, and it is being used regularly by its members for savings and loans. DRCFI seems more valued as a route to build a personal pot of savings than as a basis for accessing loans. There are only indications that it has enabled people to avoid the most pressing financial concerns around debt and credit, although it is likely that in individual cases it will have provided a useful alternative. As a community-based facility, there are some indications that it offers wider community benefits, but as an organisation whose activities are focused on individual membership benefits, its contribution to community development in the district, while important, is perhaps not so visible.

IV. A changing field?

From the descriptions in section III we have seen a complex picture of the development and achievements of these four case study projects. There are several key themes which seem to emerge from the discussion. The role of different funding regimes appears to be very significant, in terms of both the four dimensions of conditionality outlined in section II, as well as the associated compliance conditions specific to each form of funding. Funding becomes one of a set of structuring elements which form the context in which groups and projects attempt to meet their objectives. Linked to funding is the role of support provided by paid workers. Key questions here include how continuous it is, over what term, what resources it may bring, how it relates to the unpaid work of volunteers and activists. The role of unanticipated 'events' and developments have also been quite significant. Lastly it is worth highlighting the attempts projects have made to maintain an informal and accessible approach to meeting their objectives. Here what I have called 'sideways' or indirect action to address issues of disadvantage seems to be significant.

Table 8.5 below represents a simplified description of some elements of good and less than good practice which emerged from the case studies. Overall a mixed picture of success and otherwise emerges in the case study projects. It is hard to make a final judgement of the projects from the observations made during case study fieldwork. Partly this is an issue of assessing achievements against the scale of projects, their financial and professional inputs, timescales and most importantly against wider expectations (of participants, of onlookers and other stakeholders, including researchers). It is not clear whether there is a standard of 'reasonable' progress towards achievements against which to compare project outcomes. However, of the four case studies, only Dales Community Project is currently held up as a model of good practice. The others are either struggling to maintain activities and achieve their objectives (Village Community Partnership, Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative) or have folded and activity has been reformulated (Community Development in East Durham).

Each of the case studies can be represented as a small aspect, or 'corner', of a much larger field of community-based voluntary action. Each has its own dynamics, histories, issues and conflicts. However, it is also relevant to consider each as part of a wider, changing field.

Table 8.5 Some thoughts on ‘what works?’ in case study community-based projects

Project	Origins	What works?	
Community Development in East Durham	1996/7	Mixed fortunes and unintended consequences	The federation of village partnerships was dissolved in April 2001 after an SRB project struggled to meet its objectives. This period in the history of village-based community action was not regarded as a success by community activists, and has not been portrayed as a ‘success’ by R-LDA. The process may have been indirectly empowering for community activists, and activity continues without the federation structure, at individual village level
Dales Community Project	1995/6	A story of success?	After many years in development, this project is now widely regarded as a success, by members, funders and other interested stakeholders. Its success seems to be related to its ability to attract members and users, by doing the right things in the right place at the right time. It is currently being considered as a potential model for similar rural communities nationally.
Village Community Partnership	1998/9	Struggling to make small gains in a small place	This smaller initiative struggles to keep going, but remains a small cohesive group of community activists trying (and sometimes succeeding) to achieve modest improvements for the village. There are doubts about its how inclusive it has managed to be and about its ability to develop bridges into policy developments and initiatives beyond the village.
Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative	1996/7	Progress taking longer than expected	This district based group has struggled to build a membership and separately faced increasing external monitoring and compliance pressures under a new regime of financial regulation. Its success has involved its gradually growing membership, but for some this has taken too long.

Two related issues seem to be apparent here: an increasing emphasis on ‘impact’ as a gauge of the effectiveness of projects, and an intensified interest about evidence-based policy and practice as a pragmatic concern with ‘what works’. In this section these two developments are discussed primarily in relation to DCP - the case study which appears to have been most successful.

1. Outputs and outcomes – the emergence of impact

Much evaluation work attempts to assess the value of projects, organisations, programmes and policies from specific vantage points. For the community-based projects studied here, evaluation appears to have been either a formal and clearly defined aspect of monitoring compliance for funders and regulators, or a much looser, occasional and informal assessment of ‘how we are doing’. Formal monitoring and evaluation seems to have been done for others, rather than for the

sake of the project itself or its users and participants. In various ways formal monitoring for others has been seen as an irrelevant distraction and/or an heavy burden. This has caused some conflict, particularly in East Durham, where the project struggled over many months to meet a range of outputs and milestones, and in the Dales Community Project, where additional funding from statutory sources during the 'emergency' of Foot and Mouth led to greater demands for monitoring information regarding service use. In both cases larger amounts of funding have brought more onerous monitoring requirements. But the smaller projects have also faced difficulties in trying to monitor what they have been doing. Village Community Partnership, for example, had some difficulty recording and accounting for matched volunteer time for one of its mini-projects. DRCFI has had to try to deal with the newer and more demanding regulatory regime introduced from July 2002, in which greater penalties arise if information is not supplied to the regulator within time limits.

In various ways the projects have had to account to others for their activities, but have struggled with basic recording, information gathering and monitoring of activities. Part of this appears to reflect the accountability regime associated with the 'new public management'. Under the guise of efficiency, effectiveness and value for money, 'principals' direct and influence the activities of various 'agents' in order to achieve their own ends.

Interestingly, in one case, this has led a project to avoid the conditions attached to certain funders. Having become independent, DCP can no longer rely on the resources from DRCC to back up short term cashflow deficits. DRCC's reserves became a useful means to cope with the bankrolling requirements of retrospectively funded regimes. Here the work is done, and money spent, before claims are submitted. This regime characterises many government funded and European programmes, and insofar as projects require access to sufficient resources to provide an ongoing cashflow, it has the effect of selecting which community-based projects can and cannot be involved. Accordingly, as part of the process of becoming independent, DCP applied only to what their project manager referred to as 'friendly funders', or those who would pay grants up-front rather than retrospectively, without the need for either matched funding or onerous monitoring demands around the pursuit of outputs. After the emergency of the Foot and Mouth crisis, and a prolonged spell of funding insecurity, DCP was successful in an application to the Community Fund. A total of nearly £200,000 for the next three

years has secured the project for the time being. But, as part of this bid the organisation had to indicate what it was attempting to achieve in terms of outputs and outcomes. By doing so DCP was entering a field in which the terms of judgement and success are beginning to change.

In recent years several major grant funders have begun to explore their grant-making in terms of what it achieves overall (Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales 2001, Carrington 2002). Within the voluntary sector itself there are moves towards developing tools to measure and demonstrate effectiveness and the impact of projects (Wainwright 2002, 2003). At least part of this relates to a longstanding dissatisfaction with the narrowness of output-related targets and funding. Outputs are often thought of as merely 'tick-box' exercises, there to ensure compliance by grant recipient 'agents' for funding 'principals'. For any project deemed successful because it met its outputs, it is always a moot question to ask the 'impact question', that is, to what extent did this actually make a difference on the ground? But the thinking and practice regarding the impact and outcomes of projects seems to be far less well developed in Britain than in either the United States (Carrington 2002, Wainwright 2002), or in the work of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in less developed countries (Oakley *et al* 1998, Roche 1999).

As well as the significant change implied for the grant-making process itself, in terms of how grant decisions are made, a shift towards measuring outcomes is likely to have major implications for how grant recipients think about their work, and most importantly seek to demonstrate the impact of their work (SYFAB 2002). This is unlikely to be straightforward, and problematic issues remain regarding complexity (how can 'impact' or outcomes be recognised), additionality and deadweight (how can the role played by a particular intervention, group or grant be identified over and above what might otherwise have happened) and attribution (how can the specific contribution made by a group or grant be identified and credited).

As part of its funding package, DCP had to negotiate and agree the following outputs and outcomes:

Outputs:

200 people (including 50 young people) will receive training each year

250 people will receive practical advice and support on a range of matters each year

Outreach services will be provided from the DCP offices, from 20 organisations by the third year

Outcomes:

The number of people in the area suffering from rural stress will decline from over 600 to less than 300

(Dales Community Project, Community Fund award letter, 2002)

Whilst the agreed outputs seem realistic and achievable, the agreed outcomes have begun to create a few furrowed brows. DCP is currently thinking through, with some difficulty, how it might actually demonstrate what wider impact its project, and the grant from the Community Fund, will make. The difficulties of impact monitoring and evaluation have come to the fore here. The phenomenon of 'rural stress' is highly complex, and likely to defy straightforward measurement, at least in part because stigma effects may lead to significant under-reporting. But further, while measuring a baseline, and subsequent decline, in 'rural stress' poses a considerable methodological challenge in itself, identifying the potentially causal role of DCP's activities would seem to be even more problematic. What would have been the movement in 'rural stress', or any proxy indicators, without the work of DCP? Yet this would seem to be necessary to make a credible claim for attribution. DCP's experience here suggests that new ideas around 'impact' may be becoming more significant as evaluative tools in the 'field' of community-based voluntary action. However, it is unclear as yet how this may develop, and to what extent it becomes a new site for conflicts over different forms of capital.

2. 'What works?' and how does 'what works' work?

One of the themes of the Labour government elected in 1997 has been around 'modernising government' (Cabinet Office 1999, Newman 2001: 69-72, Finlayson 2003: 66-101) which, amongst other things, includes a pragmatic, 'evidence-based' approach to policy development and implementation. As Secretary of State for Education in 2000, David Blunkett referred to the *"lack of good, well-founded research evidence into some of the key policy issues facing [the Government]; for example...how to build capacity within local communities – what are the key levers...."* (Blunkett 2000: 2). He also laid a challenge to social scientists: *"of finding how we can ensure that data are used by communities as part of their renewal and capacity building"* (Blunkett 2000: 3). This emphasis on research evidence and

pragmatism in policy and practice development has been guided by the oft-repeated phrase that 'what counts is what works' (Davies *et al* 2000).

Rather than trying to reach some final conclusion regarding the success or otherwise of the community-based projects, over and above what has already been claimed, this section highlights an example of how the agenda of 'what works' itself seems to work. The argument is that the debate about 'what works', conducted primarily at policy making and strategic level, may increasingly becoming part of the 'field'. What works becomes another element of what is at stake in the field, characterised as it is by a seemingly constant 'noise' of judgements and evaluations (however reached, and however well or otherwise informed) about other participants, other organisations and other projects. Being effective (and efficient, trustworthy, reliable, professional, imaginative and innovative) are just some of the judgements which might make up elements of 'best practice' and things that are regarded as 'success stories'.

During the Foot and Mouth crisis DCP's role was widely acknowledged both within the Dale and beyond, and led to numerous commendations. A letter from one regional funding organisation in 2001 stated that:

*Obviously the organisation has gained an excellent reputation for itself and has played a significant role during the foot and mouth crisis.....A big congratulations to all your staff, volunteers and yourself. You are obviously managing to make people much more aware of your service and how it is delivered. I do hope that as a result you obtain the necessary funds to support your project in the future. It is an example of a community project that **should be replicated throughout the UK** (emphasis added)*

Dales Community Project has been hailed as a successful initiative which has gained some attention both nationally and in 'high places' (following a Royal visit). As we have seen this is partly about being in the right place at the right time doing the right things, given its role during the Foot and Mouth Crisis in 2001. Following this and visits from funders and other influential stakeholders, DCP is currently in discussion with funders about writing its experience up as a 'model' of good practice which might be transferable to other rural communities experiencing similar issues. A series of meetings has already taken place in which funders have committed

funds to resource a research project which aims to (a) investigate the feasibility of 'rolling out' the model to other rural communities – to see if there is a need or interest, and (b) explore the basis of the model itself – to write it up as a case study which could be used as a training pack for other communities.

This process seems to provide a useful illustration of how 'what works' actually works in practice in the voluntary and community sector. Relevant questions here concern how a project becomes labelled as a success story, how this might get translated as a 'model', and what different understandings are brought to bear on the transferability of the model to different contexts. Given the emphasis in this chapter on the significance of time as a framework for analysis, a further question arises as to 'what time is what works?', that is, what are the different temporal perspectives implied by the salience of 'what works?' as a policy discourse.

During a series of observations of the process, a series of divergences emerged between those associated with the development of DCP, and those primarily interested in taking the 'model' forward. Table 8.6 highlights some of the main points of divergence.

Three other issues are worth raising from the observations and discussions here. These are all elements which highlight the nature of the contested field at work. Firstly it is important to note the *power asymmetries* evident between participants in the field. DCP, despite what might otherwise appear to be its apparent 'capacity', did not feel able to resist the process of developing a model for roll-out elsewhere, nor to specific aspects of the process over which they were less than happy, such as the implications for the project manager's time. Although some debate has taken place over whether to participate or not, DCP members have suggested that they could not say 'no' because future funding from these funders might be jeopardised. Concern was mentioned over how funders talk to each other in a variety of forums and if DCP did not take part their position was vulnerable. That powerful stakeholders were also interested in the potential 'roll out' added to the risks of non-participation. Secondly there is a sense of *ambiguity about 'best practice models'*. To have a potential success story is something over which to tread with care. On the one hand it may lead to enhanced symbolic capital (i.e. status and credibility – 'look at us, we have a model of good practice'), which might subsequently be exchanged for social and financial capital at a later date. Not only could DCP capitalise directly

Table 8.6 Negotiating 'what works' in a community-based project

Differing interpretations over....	Funders and other stakeholders	Dales Community Project
.....what were the central elements which account for the success of DCP	Concern to find the essential 'ingredients' and key causal factors behind DCP's success (e.g. was it to do with having one relatively supportive landowner, or the small size and remoteness/enclosed-ness of the Dale)	Concern to highlight the long process of 'seepage' involving committed volunteers, research, gradual (if over-prolonged) project development, low profile, accessibility ('cups of tea' etc), non-stigmatising and sensitivity to issues of rural stress in goldfish bowl communities. Essential ingredients seemed like a familiar 'ticky-box', or a simplistic cookery book approach
....the appropriate timescales involved	References were made to how long it took to develop DCP (i.e. too long) and emphasised the need to 'short circuit' the process as much as possible	Whilst agreeing that it had taken too long, wondered if it was possible to short circuit, suggesting that the success of DCP may have been related to the length of time, and the slow build-up (i.e. the length of time needed to gain and secure 'confidence' in the community in being able to approach the service without stigma).
....how easy it might be to 'replicate' the model elsewhere	Implied that replication might be a straightforward process of raising interest, finding supportive community development expertise and then using the developed DCP 'model'	Initial doubt about how transferable the 'model' might be out of the Dales area, given the specific combination of contingent aspects in DCP's own 'story'. The 'model' might be specific to its place and time.
.....to what extent the success of DCP was facilitated, or not, by LDAs and other sources of professional expertise	Keen to discuss how the role of RCCs and CVSs might be important for a potential 'roll-out' of the DCP model	Some members of DCP expressed reservations about the role of external agencies versus the commitment and involvement of a group of local people.
.....the process and benefits of 'rolling out' the model	Funders and others wanted to stress both that the process should not impinge upon or divert DCP's current work (hence their willingness to fund a research/development project, including compensation for DCP staff time and resources used to support the project), and also that the eventual 'model' might provide an income stream for DCP (through selling the 'model' as a developed resource, or through providing training courses to other groups)	Concern expressed that the core work of DCP, and the pressed time of the project manager might be distracted/diverted by the new project. Separately, concern was expressed about whether other communities should or could be reasonably be expected to pay for the 'model' to help develop their specific projects. For one DCP member this disrupted notions of altruism and sharing which should characterise this kind of work, and it was also thought that if DCP had had to purchase a model of this nature it may not have been able to progress this far.

from the income stream associated with a 'roll out' model, but could do likewise on the enhanced reputation and status associated with its higher profile. However, on the other hand the 'model' as developed in other areas may then lead to a 'crowded' field for funding of this kind of project. Other communities developing similar projects may become competitors for limited funding, and DCP members were anxious that

its own position for funding might be jeopardised. This might indicate a potential limit on the capacity to share 'good ideas' elsewhere, insofar as pre-existing stocks of capital held by existing participants may be threatened by future participants. In response one DCP member said that this would not be an issue for at least another two to three years, by which time DCP would have 'moved on' and developed further - an example of 'first mover' advantage, or 'specialised assets' (Coulson 1998: 25). Thirdly key stakeholders, other than DCP itself, may themselves gain some '*credit*' for *finding and promoting a good practice model*. Commenting on this, one participant put the issue in blunt terms:

I don't think its anything to do with what we do, or how many people come through the door, or how much money we've brought in for farmers. I think its sexy, and I think there are a lot of people involved who stand to gain.....

It is also instructive to ask in a wider sense why 'what works' is an increasingly important part of the field. Seemingly the policy debate prizes 'what works' because it informs the efficient use of scarce resources. Why, in a rational policy making world, should resources be channelled towards projects, initiatives and programmes which do not work? Why should community-based projects struggle to reinvent the wheel when neighbouring initiatives may have been through similar problems and come up with useful solutions. Alongside this, it is possible that success is so hard to find, and rather unlikely given the context of limited resources attempting to solve, reduce or ameliorate intractable problems, that anything that seems reasonably effective is seized upon by policymakers and practitioners.

Two elements are important here – the 'bounded rationality' associated with community-based action and regeneration, and the improbability of success. Bounded rationality refers to a mode of decision making in which rational decisions are still taken, but in the context of limited information and partial understandings (Simon 1982). Here the argument is that an appreciation of the complexity of interacting causal factors that affect the establishment, operation and outcomes achieved by community-based projects makes the task of understanding how *best* to proceed in the design and establishment of projects increasingly difficult. Stoker has argued that, in relation to the new world of governance, and particularly local governance,

Each policy area is one of high bounded rationality. It is difficult to know what to do and gaining understanding is time consuming and demanding. Defining the problem, let alone designing appropriate solutions, is a difficult and daunting task .

(Stoker 2000: 2)

If this is a reasonably accurate description of the field, then it is hardly surprising that successful stories become prized assets and ripe for being 'taken up' and promoted. One aspect of bounded rationality is the limited possibility of success. In this vein Jessop (2000b) has argued that all governing mechanisms (the 'anarchy' of the market, the 'hierarchy' of bureaucracy and the 'heterarchy' of networks and partnerships) are prone, for a variety of reasons, to weakness and failure. Jessop (2000b: 31) suggests that participants adopt realistic strategies, including a 'satisficing' approach, which involves: "*a self-reflexive irony, in the sense that participants must recognise the likelihood of failure but proceed as if success were possible*". In this situation 'good enough' projects and programmes may be acceptable, rather than the continuing emphasis on optimising and 'best practice'. However, it is likely that, if 'success' is so unlikely, anything that seems moderately successful is likely to gain some promotion as a 'model'.

A further aspect of the field is worth noting here though. In addition to bounded rationality and the improbability of success, as argued in Chapter 7 the field is essentially a competitive field, characterised by scarce forms of capital. There are only limited supplies of economic capital (e.g. insufficient and unsustainable funding), social capital (e.g. capacity limits to personal and inter-organisational network connections) and symbolic capital (e.g. 'status' and 'credit' may only be positional goods whose value declines the wider they are distributed). This being the case, things that seem to 'work' in a context of bounded rationality, improbable success and scarce forms of capital in a competitive field, themselves gain the status of prized assets.

Regarding the timescales involved in formulating and implementing government policy, Jessop (2001) suggests that, in response to accelerating global capitalism, states become committed to 'fast policy' by compressing their own decision-making cycles so that they can make more timely and appropriate interventions. Peck and Tickell (2002) argue along similar lines, this time with specific reference to labour market policy and the New Deal, noting how 'fast policy transfer' (in this case

between US and UK) has become an increasingly common aspect of institutional change.

There is suggestive evidence that policy cycles – the elapsed time between the (re)specification of policy 'problems', the mobilisation of reform movements, and the selection and implementation of strategies, is being deliberately shortened in the context of a growing propensity to adopt 'off the shelf', imported solutions in the place of the (usually slower) process of in situ policy development.....[this occurs] along channels lubricated by technocratic elites, think tanks, opinion formers, consultants and policy networks

(Peck and Tickell 2002: 398)

Perhaps far removed from the fast world of global capitalism, and away from the immediate politico-electoral cycles marked by an increasing emphasis on 'delivery', it is possible that discussions and debates involving the roll-out of an apparently successful model of community-based voluntary action reflects at least some of the same dynamics. In particular there is the apparent need to 'fast-track' the transfer of success stories to other places and contexts. The push to replicate best practice 'models' across different social and geographical contexts arguably involves both a 'fast' rhythm and a 'top-down' style of policy-making. Yet, as the experience of DCP indicates, this might be at odds with the slower and contingent process of developing project ideas, which might subsequently become feted as best practice 'models'.

V. Conclusions

This chapter has considered the temporality associated with the development, organisation and operation of community-based projects, linked to questions of project time frames, continuity of activity and impact of projects. By way of conclusion, several key points are worth highlighting from the description of possible impacts of the four case study projects in Section III and the discussion of the changing field in Section IV of this chapter.

Firstly judgements of impact have to be made with a temporal dimension. Impact is fundamentally about change, and it takes time to achieve certain ends. Looking

back, where a project 'is' reflects in some non-trivial sense where it has 'come from'. Assessments of impact must be made in the shadow of the events, developments, and twists and turns which make up the biography of projects or organisations. For many of the case studies here, as for many other organisations and projects, issues of funding and staff continuity form a central element of these biographies. In a related manner, and looking ahead, judgements of impact are connected to initial expectations. How a project is faring becomes a judgement made in the light of the perspectives of a range of different stakeholders, including funders and policymakers, participants, users and 'ordinary people'. Thirdly, outcomes and impact are usually thought of as positive benefits or changes, whereas in fact any subsequent set of circumstances (judged as favourable or unfavourable) produced from an earlier set of circumstances or actions, whether intended or unintended, counts equally as impact and outcomes. Fourthly, impact and outcomes are very difficult to identify clearly. 'Impact' is the complex outcome of a large range of interacting contributory factors, operating over a range of different time and spatial scales. As well as being hard to identify individual factors, it is also difficult to attribute outcomes to individual factors, people or organisations. Fifthly, and linked to the last reason, the voluntary and community sector seems only just about able to cope with basic monitoring of activities and outputs, and is some way off addressing wider questions of impact. The tools and techniques which might enable groups and projects to assess this wider sense of effectiveness are only just being developed. Finally impact, and claims for impact, are deeply contested - the fact that assessments of impact are always positioned, and claimed cannot be escaped. The credibility of claiming credit for impact and the visibility of contributory factors in any 'credit' that might be available are essential aspects of the field. These are some of the things 'at stake' in the field, and as competition for scarce resources intensifies, impact may become a new site of conflict between different field participants.

Chapter 9

Scale and proximity: community development in a rural context

This chapter takes a third analytical look at the community case study projects, and seeks to examine some of the consequences of the fact that they are studies of projects, which seek to achieve certain ends, in a variety of *rural contexts*. The chapter proceeds by exploring first what might be different about community-based action in rural settings, before looking more closely at issues of scale and proximity. As we will see, the notions of scale, and of 'outside-ness' and 'inside-ness' are central to a full understanding of community development in rural areas.

I. Rural context

As earlier chapters have indicated, the empirical research reported here has taken place in a largely rural setting, in County Durham. It has not involved an urban/rural comparison, but the literature on community development and community-based voluntary action suggests that a rural context might make some difference to how community development practice is organised (see, for example, Francis and Henderson 1992: 5-12, Henderson and Francis 1993, Francis *et al* 2001: 2-9).

A rural context for community development and community-based voluntary action may be significant in a number of closely intertwined ways, relating to the consequences of low population density, access to services, rural social life, the nature, experience, distribution and visibility of disadvantage in rural areas, and the relative lack of resources for rural areas.

Population sparsity

Smaller total populations dispersed over relatively large geographical areas may imply certain difficulties in organising community-based action, activities or projects. Low population density is often argued to have significant effects for levels of service provision, mobility and the character of everyday social life. For community development this implies there may be fewer available participants, potential

volunteers and members of groups, and there is likely to be more travelling involved, for workers and participants. The sheer physical effort required to coordinate and achieve certain tasks brings considerable challenges for rural community development. In addition, questions of viability imply that projects may have to 'cover' larger geographical areas in order to attract a sufficient catchment population. We will return to this issue later in this chapter.

Access to services

Lower population densities in rural areas typically imply more limited access to services relative to urban areas (Harrop 2000). In terms of being able to accomplish some of the basic tasks of 'everyday life', such as going to work or school, visiting friends, accessing services and shopping, rural life is likely to involve a need to travel greater distances. Because service provision is often lower, or rudimentary, accessing services is likely to involve some form of travel, over larger distances than might pertain in an urban area. Accessing services, or employment perhaps, is likely to involve more time, more expense and more physical coordination in rural areas than in urban areas. Community-based projects are likely to be run on the basis of much greater travelling, by both active members, providers and volunteers, and by service users or participants. Volunteer expenses and worker mileage rates may be higher than in urban settings, and many of these additional costs may not be fully compensated. Logistical and mobility problems caused by the need to travel may affect participation rates, on both the 'supply' and 'demand' side. In the former, it is possible that participation may be adversely affected by other pressures relating to time, such as work or caring for children and relatives. Shucksmith (2001) argues that the strength of the voluntary sector in rural areas may be compromised in so far as increasing pressure to work takes women in particular away from voluntary and community activity. Travelling distances to get involved or stay involved in community-based voluntary action may further compromise the situation. On the demand side, people might not be able or willing to travel more for basic services. Take-up of services, including claims for means-tested welfare benefits, may become problematic. Services might be perceived to be more distant, as well as actually being more distant, because they are coordinated or organised from elsewhere, and this may additionally affect take up rates.

Idylls and ideologies

Rural social life is said to be particularly open to a particular constructed representation as an idyllic imaginary space, of the good life untainted by the

problems and pressures of urban life (Cloke and Milbourne 1992, Milbourne 1997, Simmons 1997, Woodward 1996). There is some evidence that rural communities are becoming slowly more exclusive (Shucksmith 2000b), as simultaneously wealthier households migrate from cities and towns and are able to 'buy in' to a perceived idyllic lifestyle, including a close knit and safe community, while less wealthy households migrate to urban areas in search of affordable housing and employment. Alongside traditional values of 'close communities' associated with rural areas, the new idylls for wealthier incomers may affect how rural community development is organised and practised. On the one hand, there may be greater scope for people to 'get involved' in their community, seeing participation as an integral part of rural life. In this sense the 'warm' associations attached both to 'rural', and 'community' may amount to a 'double idyll', upon which community development may be able to capitalise. However, on the other hand, it has been argued that rural community-based action may struggle to address challenging issues such as exclusion and deprivation. It may, for example, be restricted to relatively conservative concerns, including strengthening traditional rural activities and events, and maintaining the appearance of villages (Scott *et al* 1991).

Goldfish bowls

In small villages, and remote areas, people are more likely to know or hear about other people's lives compared to the relative anonymity assumed to be characteristic of urban areas. This is prone to some exaggeration, but researchers have typically referred to social life in rural areas as like life inside a 'goldfish bowl' (Scott *et al* 1991: 20). Of particular relevance here is the danger of high *visibility* at a local level of users and participants who are involved in community-based action. This may exacerbate feelings of stigma in some circumstances, and insofar as a project or a group may be seeking to provide a service which is trying to address sensitive or stigmatising issues, it is possible that the greater local visibility of deprivation will add to low take-up and non-participation.

Deprivation

If deprivation and disadvantage might be considered as highly visible within rural communities, they are likely for several reasons to become 'hidden' beyond them. As we saw in Chapter 2, deprivation experienced in rural areas becomes overlooked in several ways (Milbourne 1997: 94-6), including being physically hidden across dispersed settlements, being less likely to be subjectively identified as 'deprivation' and finally being hidden beneath cultural constructions of the rural as idyllic in which

problems of poverty, deprivation or other social issues are downplayed, ignored or denied. If this is so, key gatekeepers may obstruct the development of key local services because they might be felt not to be needed in a particular area.

Limited availability of resources

One consequence of lower population density, alongside less evident and less concentrated forms of deprivation, is that the resources which might be available for community-based voluntary action and basic service provision are likely to be less than those for urban areas. Although there is some debate about, and acknowledgement of, a need for a rural or sparsity premium in public service funding allocations (Rural Development Commission 1996), targeted resources to address social exclusion and deprivation are usually channelled to urban areas. Urban deprivation tends to gain more media and political attention than rural deprivation, which tends to affect fewer people, and perhaps in less visible ways. Hence most of the larger regeneration programmes of recent years, such as the New Deal for Communities and the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (Social Exclusion Unit 2001a, Wallace 2001) have been addressed primarily, though not exclusively, to urban areas. For community development in rural areas this presents a challenge, as there is a need to develop approaches sensitive enough to encompass specific rural issues, in a context of limited resources. There is a sense in which resources literally have to be 'stretched' further.

These aspects of the rural context for community-based action (and other forms of collective activity, such as private and public sector service provision), have important consequences for two key dimensions of community based activity. Crucially, as will be seen from the case studies, these work in opposite directions, and create a range of additional tensions as a result. The first dimension is the question of *scale*, linked to the idea of a 'threshold' or critical mass of population for a service, a project, or sometimes even a village, to be seen as viable. This can be considered from both a 'supply' (volunteers, activists, supporting infrastructure) and a 'demand' (potential participants and users) side. The second is the connected idea of *proximity*, by which is meant the extent to which a service, project or organisation is seen as somehow 'near to', or 'far from' (on a range of criteria, not just geographic), its core constituency of users, clients, members, participants or residents.

II. Scale

Questions of scale have stimulated a steadily expanding research agenda over the last few years (for reviews, see Marston 2000, Howitt 2003, Herod 2003), particularly from within human geography. Amplified by debates surrounding globalisation, the purported demise of the 'nation state' and the reduced significance of the 'national' scale as a site of policy intervention (Jessop 2002), researchers have commented on how 'scale' is a socially constructed, and therefore contested, rather than pre-given, aspect of social and economic life (Cox 1998). Within the recent literature much has been made of the restructuring of governing and regulatory apparatus, involving the rise of an apparent new localism and new regionalism (Deas and Ward 1999, Jones and MacLeod 1999) with new responsibilities being devolved to regional and local authorities and partnerships. The new terms to describe these features include, from different theoretical perspectives, 'the hollowing out of the state' (Jessop 2002), a shift from government to governance (Rhodes 1996), and the idea of 'multi-level governance' (Pierre and Stoker 2000).

Much of the discussion in this literature, however, concerns the political articulation of different scales, for example, through governments seeking to devolve responsibility to local and regional agents. Not much appears to have been written regarding the scale of activities implied by community-based voluntary action, although this might seem important in terms of its suggested 'capacity' for effecting social change and addressing deprivation. Arguably 'big' and deeply entrenched problems like social exclusion, related to big and widespread factors such as global economic restructuring and its uneven (class and spatial) consequences, might suggest solutions at a sufficiently large scale to be able to meet the challenge. But the focus of much government policy has been to concentrate on local, 'neighbourhood' (Kearns and Parkinson 2001, Wallace 2001) and 'community' (Taylor 2003) levels as sites of policy intervention to tackle the local manifestations of deprivation. This 'paradox of scale' in relation to deprivation is worth exploring further.

Two distinctions need to be made in order to clarify the discussion below: firstly between spatial scale and organisational scale; and secondly between what I have called here 'actual scale' and 'scale aspirations'.

- *Spatial* scale involves the seemingly commonsense notion of extent and coverage, or level, where 'local' is seen as somehow smaller, and distinct, from 'regional', national or global. *Organisational* scale involves a more conventional notion of organisational magnitude, measured in terms of human resources (staff, volunteers) and financial resources (income, expenditure and assets), but may also involve considerations of the scope of activities undertaken.
- For *organisations and projects* a difference may be seen between scale *aspirations* - at/over what organisational and geographic scales an organisation/project might *aim to operate* and why; and *actual* scale: at/over what organisational and spatial scales an organisation/project *actually operates* and why.

A wide range of stakeholders may have different interests and perspectives on the geographic and organisational scales of a project or organisation. At an aspirational scale there are notional limits; fixed boundaries beyond which an organisation or project tends not to tread. For community-based projects, and other voluntary organisations, this may be referred to in, and governed by, a constitution or similar governing document. For example, charities are registered to operate in an 'area of benefit', the implication being that activities undertaken outside this area are in breach of the constitution. Credit unions with a geographical 'common bond' can only admit members who live (and more recently live or work) in a defined geographical area (Fuller 1998). A project or organisation may operate anywhere up or down to these limits, but it is an open question as to whether an organisation or group can operate fully and comprehensively throughout its scale of aspirations. Insofar as it does not, the project is perhaps hindered by constraints on its capacity. It is also possible that organisations may claim to be able to reach more (stretching capacity) or less (reserving capacity) than is actually the case, for a variety of strategic reasons.

It is possible to think of parts of the voluntary sector infrastructure in simple scale terms. Hence the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has a *national* (English) spatial scale, with equivalents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In the last few years *regional* voluntary sector network organisations have been established, to coincide with the establishment and consolidation of other regional bodies. Councils for Voluntary Service typically operate at a Local Authority

district or borough level. Some infrastructure organisations operate at *county* level, and for rural community councils, such as DRCC, a complicated picture emerges in which a county-wide focus also involves a particular emphasis on rural areas and issues. Given the broad nature of its work DRCC actually operates at multiple scales, leading to a number of questions:

1. Is it a county-wide organisation or a 'rural' (i.e. implying not all of the county) organisation? Or both? What are its scales of aspiration – County, or 'rural' aspects of the county?
2. At what scales are the different roles (e.g. strategic, services, projects) played by DRCC organised?
3. What scales do its *projects* cover? – examples of recent projects include those operating at county, district and sub-district levels, as well as projects operating in a single village or group of villages.
4. At what scale should its projects operate, and why?

In relation to community based projects, and supporting infrastructure, a number of 'scale' related questions arise:

- what is the actual spatial and organisational scale of a project, how has this been determined, and how does this relate to its spatial and organisational scales of aspiration?
- what are the dynamics of a project's scale, and what factors affect this dynamic?
- what are the consequences of the scale and its dynamic?
- to what extent, and in what ways, does 'scale' become a contested issue between different participants in the 'field', as outlined in Chapter 7?

These questions will be explored through issues arising from the case study projects in Section IV below.

III. Proximity

Questions of scale are closely connected to the idea of 'proximity'. For the purposes of the research here this term is being used to describe the closeness/remoteness of a worker, group or organisation to either a local area, a community or 'client base'. Proximity is partly a geographical question of miles on a map, which has obvious significance in a rural context, given the points made in section I above. But

the importance of using 'proximity' as a descriptor is at least partly due to the fact that a spatial conception is also intertwined with a social 'something else'. Here proximity also refers to the extent to which a project or service has the sense of being accessible or grassroots-based. In terms of public policy, service provision and the role of community-based voluntary action in rural areas, 'proximity' is as much a 'social' concept as it is spatial.

In this context it is interesting to reflect upon the enduring attraction, to policy makers, funders and local community activists, of things that are somehow seen as 'local' or 'grassroots' or from the 'bottom up'. Ideas around a new localism or a 'local turn' in public policy are seemingly based on *"the discursive appeal to the local"* (Daly 2003: 123). This involves considerations of how public policy interventions need to be decentralised (Burns *et al* 1994), so that they may somehow be 'closer to the people affected', responsive to people's complex and changing circumstances, more welcoming and accessible, both physically and socially, sensitive to local knowledge and circumstances, and somehow 'in touch' (rather than 'out of touch') with people's lived experiences and everyday lives. It is of course arguable whether these factors are the 'real' or main reasons why there is so much emphasis on devolving and decentralising, but these notions seem to be widespread in everyday debate about services and policies, and given this it is perhaps not so surprising that the 'local' seems so appealing.

The notion of proximity also refers to an added contrast - between the sense of being inside or 'from here' as opposed to outside or 'from elsewhere'. This leads to perhaps a more nebulous idea of distance, relating to things like the way groups have started and developed, where they are based, and what connections they have beyond this 'base', how they operate and their typical relationships to other groups, users, funders and policy makers. As well as physical distances, therefore, there are also important 'social' differences, relating to different ways of working, expectations, degrees of professionalism, use of language etc. Referring back to the ideas around field, capital and strategy introduced in Chapter 7, social distances may arise from evidently different degrees of capital held by different individuals and groups. For example, one distance may arise because the staff of a Local Development Agency such as DRCC perhaps know, or claim to know, more about 'how to play the game' than many smaller or emerging groups. This may be reflected in their ability to grasp and use the latest jargon or specialised language

associated with, for example, 'capacity building', 'holistic government' and 'social exclusion'.

Infrastructure bodies are in an interesting position here. They are 'second tier' or 'backroom' specialist providers of services and support to 'front line' organisations and groups (Osborne 1999). The notions of 'backroom' and 'frontline' themselves indicate issues of position and distance which may be significant. But as specialist providers, they are expected to be expert resources for the voluntary and community sector, by funders, policy makers and local groups alike. One possible consequence is that a 'social' distance may emerge between a larger (organisational scale), professionalised body and newer, smaller, less experienced groups.

But this 'social' distance, relating to roles, ethos and background, sometimes gets overplayed with spatial distances. Because they work at larger spatial scales, they have to be 'based' somewhere, and cannot realistically be everywhere at once, or be seen as local to all areas and groups within their constituency. Although outreach and 'patch' workers help to break down some of these distances, such workers and bodies must be prepared to be positioned as 'outsiders' by 'insiders'. Although there is a general premium on being local and grassroots and 'from round here', there are also advantages in being at one remove. For example a worker may be able to provide an independent perspective, and to be at one remove from fierce rivalries (and sometimes feuds) between individuals and groups in local 'fields'. In any case, it is possible that 'outsiders' can overcome any disadvantages of being 'from elsewhere', and can become more accepted. However, this requires frequent contact or near permanent presence. When relationships between groups and development agencies have taken a turn for the worse, for whatever reason, as happened in different ways in all the main case studies investigated in this thesis, outside bodies seem somehow to be rendered more 'remote'. Patching up those relationships involves immense amounts of time, skill and regular presence. The difficulties maintaining such presences given the way resources are channelled over time, as above, mean that this is an exceptional challenge. The negative connotations associated with the frequently used term 'parachuting' are an example of the salience of this issue.

It is worth noting that in a rural context, questions of geographic scale and proximity are closely linked, and become significant precisely because considerations of viability usually imply larger populations of users, participants and volunteers. The

physical coverage of a project, and an infrastructure body - its proposed catchment - is likely to be larger than might be found in an equivalent urban setting. This is because the resources are unlikely to be available to work in a focused way in all small settlements in a particular area (Francis and Henderson 1992). But this in itself may lead, other things being equal, to a greater sense of 'distance' between a project and its constituents, since it has to cover a larger area and cannot be in all places at once. The dilemma between scale and proximity in a rural context is a pertinent issue and can be seen in each of the case studies.

IV. Issues of scale and proximity in community-based projects

Our considerations of scale and proximity as potentially significant factors in community development in rural areas has suggested the usefulness of examining case study material from a number of separate vantage points. Firstly, projects may be considered in terms of the following three questions about their *current* scale of activities:

1. what is the actual spatial and organisational scale of a project?
2. how does this relate to its spatial and organisational scales of aspiration?
3. how have these been determined?

Regarding projects, those selected as case studies here operate at different scales, which was at least part of the motivation behind their initial selection. Table 9.1 below indicates how the case studies appear from this perspective. The boundaries and scales of aspiration of the projects seem to follow, with the exception of the Dales Community Project, political and administrative lines rather than any sense of natural or 'organic' areas. Projects cover mainly wards, groups of wards and districts. In part this reflects the nature of available funding regimes, particularly in targeted area-based programmes such as the Single Regeneration Budget and European funding, which seek to delineate between inside eligibility and outside ineligibility, but also do so at ward or group-ward level. But it may also reflect local points of political power, where community groups may seek or need to orientate themselves to particular political allies organised along electoral ward lines. If the role of funding and local political arrangements have such a causal power in determining the boundaries and scale of projects, then this may add a further nuance to the argument that the geography of charitable formation reflects historical geographies of wealth and associated philanthropy (Bryson *et al* 2000). Dales

Table 9.1 Spatial and organisational scales in community-based case study projects

Federation of Community Partnerships (Community Development in East Durham)	
Spatial scale – Aspirational	Sub-district: Aims to cover an aggregate population of approx.12,000 residents of six neighbouring villages in five electoral wards. This links the activity of four existing community partnerships (one of which covers three villages)
Spatial scale – Actual	Although all villages were represented in the Federation through the individual village partnerships, some partnership members were more involved and more influential than others. Likewise the programme of activities funded through SRB was mainly functional through the larger villages rather than the smallest. After the Federation dissolved activity continues primarily through individual partnerships, with some network connections between and beyond each village, including participation in a district wide Community Empowerment Network.
Organisational scale – Aspirational	On the strength of the capacity building programme undertaken as part of the SRB scheme, the Federation aimed to become an independent and sustainable body to take forward regeneration initiatives in the area. The implication is of organisational growth as new projects are implemented.
Organisational scale – Actual	After the patchy outcomes of the SRB scheme and its successor, eventually the Federation dissolved.
Dales Community Project	
Spatial scale – Aspirational	Sub-district: Project develops as a service for the sub-district area of the upper dale, centred on a market town and extending to the dale head, consisting of parish boundaries rather than wards. Not clear where 'upper dale' begins
Spatial scale – Actual	Offers a service to all enquirers (i.e. would not turn people from outside the area away), but mainly focused on membership by farmers in the immediate upper dale area
Organisational scale – Aspirational	Initial plan had to be scaled down because funding was only available for a smaller project. Struggled to meet demand during the Foot and Mouth crisis. Now hoping to expand on success with new projects and premises
Organisational scale – Actual	After a precarious period of survival during the Foot and Mouth epidemic, the project had to limit some services for a short while due to funding limitations. New funding has enabled a more comprehensive service to develop
Village Community Partnership	
Spatial scale – Aspirational	Ward/Settlement: VCP covers one electoral ward, consisting of one small village and several isolated rows. Wanted to ensure that all parts of the ward are included in discussions and projects.
Spatial scale – Actual	Most of the focus has been on the village itself, and then only involving certain parts. Isolated rows have more connection to nearer villages.
Organisational scale – Aspirational	Decided at an early stage that any growth would be over a long term, through new projects, as the capacity of the group increased.
Organisational scale – Actual	VCP largely retained the same focus. More activity was taking place when a community worker was involved
Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative	
Spatial scale – Aspirational	District: DRCFI's common bond covers all of its district, with a population of 24,000 people as potential members. DRCFI wishes to have collection point access throughout the district.
Spatial scale – Actual	Slow progress means that DRCFI has only really developed in the main market town and more latterly in two markedly deprived villages. Otherwise members are scattered throughout the district.
Organisational scale – Aspirational	Aims to grow in terms of members, volunteers, assets and loans, in order to be able to survive in a new, more onerous, regulatory regime
Organisational scale – Actual	Membership and volunteer involvement remain limited, and growing quite slowly, which affects the extent to which new collection points can be developed.

Community Project has more of an 'organic' conception of its area of benefit. It seeks to provide a service to cover the 'upper dale', although the boundaries of this area seem a little indistinct.

For the Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative the boundary is an administrative one, but with an explicit implication of common interests shared between residents within this 'common bond' (Fuller 1998). This operates at district level, which is an interesting development in community finance initiatives which traditionally operated at housing estate, neighbourhood or (less frequently) village level. A longstanding debate about the development of these initiatives has largely been won by those who have advocated larger common bonds (Jones 1999), which has more recently influenced government policy in this area.

If the scales of community-based projects are largely determined, or at least heavily influenced, by politico-administrative boundaries, and reinforced by funding regimes, a further series of questions asks more about the existence of a dynamic, and its consequences, within issues of scale and proximity. As has been suggested scale is never settled, but is a focus of a range of perspectives and political strategies. Existing scales may reflect original developments, ideas and opportunities for community-based projects, but they are always subject to negotiation and change. Questions here include:

1. what are the dynamics of a project's scale? – is scale changing?
2. what factors affect this dynamic? – what causes change?
3. what are the consequences of the scale and its dynamic?
4. to what extent, and in what ways, does 'scale' become a contested issue between different participants in the 'field' outlined in Chapter 7?

Whilst not pretending to offer an exhaustive consideration of these issues for community-based voluntary action, the following issues and examples from case study projects provide some indication of the issues at stake. Four issues are examined here, which have arisen in all four of the case study projects. The first two concern 'existing scales':

1. The problem of being 'too' small
2. The challenge of providing comprehensive coverage throughout an area

This is followed by a discussion of two issues of 'changing scales'

3. The challenge of linking activities and projects across several small villages

4. The prospects for resisting scale dynamics

The problem of being 'too' small

We have argued above that in a rural context considerations of viability seem to underlie many decisions about the shape, scope and scale of community-based projects. When external resources are required to establish groups and projects, funding considerations of both project viability (i.e. will it involve sufficient numbers of people?) and value for money (i.e. is it a valuable use of limited funding resources compared to other potential uses?) come to the fore. Scale in this sense can be viewed separately as a spatial or an organisational matter, but frequently the issues become elided. However other issues are at stake as well, and it may be difficult to disentangle them. The question is, of course, about being too small 'for what?'

In addition to questions of the viability of services and facilities, there is also the potential 'political' weight which might be attached to organising and mobilising at community level. Local decision makers, in funding bodies, local authorities and other statutory bodies, may be forced to take notice, or have some regard for a group in so far as it has become established and plays some part in the 'field'. From the arguments in Chapter 7, its ability to attract attention may be a consequence of its use and stocks of various forms of capital. This may be a function of its significance to policy makers, its track record and the connections and capital provided by key members. More importantly here though, there may be an additional perception (however valid or otherwise) that capital in the form of 'political weight' may be a function of the population theoretically covered, and potentially represented, by a group. How 'big' a group or service is perceived to be may have important political consequences. Two examples are presented here, from the community development work to establish the Village Community Partnership and from the Federation of Community Partnerships in East Durham.

In *Village Community Partnership* (VCP) a small group of residents has been meeting since approximately mid-1998. The village has a very small population. The electoral ward, which consists primarily of the village alongside a couple of isolated rows of houses and farms, has a population of just over 500 people. It is located on a hill on the rural western edge of a primarily urban district, and is the smallest ward in the area.

Being 'small' has had several consequences for VCP. Two of its major preoccupations over the last few years have been the need to develop a youth club and to 'do something' about a gradually deteriorating village hall. Scale and viability issues have featured heavily as a backdrop to these concerns. A youth club was established with the support of the community development worker, and for a while this continued weekly activities. But by approximately 18 months later it was almost moribund. Having been run on an entirely voluntary basis for this time the group of three or four volunteers had become primarily one woman seeking to run the club on several nights each week. Health and employment related changes in her circumstances meant that she no longer wished to be involved as the sole volunteer responsible for the club and it declined. At least part of the story behind this episode is the simple lack of bodies available to help out with the club. It is not difficult to imagine that a larger village or neighbourhood may have been able to involve a greater 'supply' of potential volunteers to run the club, although involving or mobilising them is also an issue. In the VCP area though, this difficulty is amplified because there are fewer potential volunteers to mobilise.

The village hall has been the source of much anxiety, frustration and conflict in the village. It is falling into disrepair and disuse, and the Parish Council, currently responsible for its upkeep, tends to receive much of the blame for what one resident described as its 'embarrassing' condition. The issue is complex, involving the Parish Council's nominal responsibility (transferred from a Miners' Welfare Committee) to run the hall 'for the community', its ability or otherwise to raise funds, its limited Council Tax precept, and finally its concern that any resource spent on the hall's refurbishment might be a waste of money if the youth club damaged the hall through its activities. Alongside this, however, and contributing to the inertia on the issue, the District Councillor (who is also the Parish Clerk) has argued that a refurbishment or replacement programme for the hall may not be viable given the village's population. It is not clear whether there would be enough demand from local people and groups to use the hall in such a way that it would make a going concern. Not only is the village quite small, but some residents, suggesting that there is not much community activity 'going on', claim that it is a 'sit-back' village. The Parish Council has also argued that existing facilities, including some communal rooms associated with a housing development, seem to be adequate.

For VCP much of this is acknowledged, but the argument is made that the poor current condition of the hall itself contributes to its lack of use, which is then used by

the Parish Council as a reason for not spending money on refurbishment. A new or newly refurbished hall would in this view attract people back to use it, using the argument that (quality) 'supply creates its own demand'. If this has some resonance, then the hall currently seems to be in a reinforcing vicious circle (of declining use, disrepair, declining use). An alternative 'virtuous circle', where a new facility itself becomes a foundation for more vibrant community-based activity in the village, is not difficult to imagine. A neighbouring village (which is slightly larger, but similarly deprived and on the edge of the next district) was a case in point, where an old Miners Welfare Hall (the 'hut') was demolished and a brand new facility built. This is now held to be an exemplar in the planning, management and operation of community buildings in the County. However, in VCP's case, the issue became stuck on the difficulty, and for some, the impossibility, of moving from the 'vicious' to a putative 'virtuous' circle. Part of this difficulty was the perceived intransigence of the Parish Council, but underlying this is a question about whether the village population is 'too small', and community activity too limited, to justify the risk involved in funding and developing a new or refurbished facility. Would funders be prepared to consider devoting resources to such a project, and how would such a judgement be made? In this issue concerns regarding scale and viability become intricately entwined with other issues and the immediate politics of community-based voluntary action. The dispute between the Parish Council and VCP, only occasionally openly acrimonious, remains, but scale and viability become sites on which some of these conflicts are played out. Given the inertia and poor condition of the hall, residents in the village who might wish to get involved in community activity face the choice of using existing facilities, not bothering, or travelling to other facilities and groups in neighbouring places. There is some evidence of the latter from interviews undertaken as part of a community appraisal.

The issue of being involved in groups and projects in other places, and thereby potentially extending and pooling catchment areas, raises a further issue of the potential 'added weight' of villages, through village partnerships and other groups, linking together to compensate for their small size and relative political insignificance. The two issues of viability and political strength become closely linked here. Members of VCP thought that because the village is so small, it becomes largely 'forgotten' and invisible to the local authority and other key decision makers. However, it has not made strong efforts to build networks and alliances with other village partnerships nearby.

Organising across ward and village boundaries to gain added voice features as a key narrative in the case of the *Federation of community partnerships* (the 'Federation') which was part of the 'Community Development in East Durham' case study. Emerging village-based community partnerships, developed during 1996/7 on the basis of community appraisals and action plans, joined up as a single federation. An early Business Plan attempts to represent how this happened:

The idea to join forces as a Federation came about because of the many shared issues and common bond that exist between the local partnerships. Joint training sessions around funding opportunities had led to initial sharing of ideas, and in January 1997 the villages regeneration Federation was formed

(Federation of Community Partnerships
Business Plan April 1998 – March 2000, p5)

Letter headed paper for the Federation around this time proudly seems to proclaim the approach:

*The communities of **ALL** with one proud, common mining heritage; **EACH** with a unique identity. Building **AS ONE** with visions of an improving tomorrow, for us all.*

The Community Development Worker employed to oversee the federation's work and projects described its origins thus:

Part of the reason for forming the Federation was that....the District is quite large, and it seemed as though all of the money was going to the east of the district, and still is. And it seems to be divided: this side of the A19 and that side of the A19... so all of the projects that were coming along were directed over there.... And there was that absolute resentment of 'what about us?' It was felt at that time that everybody did have to get together to wave that flag and say 'what about us?'....the ethos really behind it is one village working on its own, trying to raise its own profile, was having very little impact in the district. So it was then decided to bring in other partnerships so that they were all speaking from the same voice so they could speak together against.. or together to the district.....just so that they could be heard, and also funders

would look more favourably on partnerships and that they would stand a better chance of being funded if they worked together.

In this description, the emphasis is placed on the political need for a larger voice to represent claims on local decision makers, and to prevent these villages being 'forgotten' or overlooked in key regeneration strategies. The bigger projects and resources for regeneration had been directed at four or five larger mining villages more recently affected by pit closures, as part of a strategy of coalfield regeneration. It was suggested that community activists and influential local councillors in these settlements had been able to make stronger claims for support and resources in part because of the larger populations affected by the closure programme. Members of fledgling community partnerships in the smaller villages elsewhere in the district thought that working together could add to their voice in local claims as a political counterweight to the perceived power of the other side of the same local authority area.

However, in addition to a 'politics of scale' in relation to resource allocations within the Local Authority, there is a second story of the emergence of the Federation. This is only hinted at towards the end of the community development worker's comments, when it is suggested that the constituent partnerships considered that they stood a better chance of gaining external resources to the extent that they worked together.

Hence different agendas seemed to combine to produce the push to develop the Federation connecting several villages. Linking these stories is some notion of 'critical mass', which became translated as a political strategy and as a funding imperative. Additionally, it was argued that the Local Development Agency had emphasised the need to deploy dedicated community development support across a small number of settlements, thus approximating the model of 'focused, indirect community work' in rural areas (Francis and Henderson 1992: 59). Funders had stressed the idea of linking the villages as a way of enabling realistic levels of funding to be awarded to an area, given the need to prioritise where and how resources are deployed. This was suggested directly by civil servants in response to earlier funding proposals. The individual partnerships had been developing their own action plans and proposals at more or less the same time, and were in a position to seek funding to implement them. But funding directed to a combined group of six neighbouring villages would potentially result in projects covering a larger aggregate

population. With a larger catchment, projects could benefit from 'economies of scale', could reduce duplication and were more likely to be viable across a larger population of potential participants. In the context of limited resources 'joining up' partnerships and projects seemed to be an essential step if a programme of community-based activity was to proceed.

Ironically, the initial 'Delivery Plan' for the Federation's SRB funded programme of work refers to the targeted area as comprising six villages, covering five wards, approximating 20 square miles, "*with a population of just over 24,000 people – approx ¼ of the district's population*". Actually the population covered is just over 12,000 people, but this mistake seems to have been replicated in official documents and reports thereafter. It seems that this was never noticed or questioned by the funding body despite its intense monitoring of quantitative outputs and targets throughout the scheme. It is not known whether the error was a knowing 'sleight of hand' designed to make the catchment seem viable enough to be a 'critical mass' or more probably just a simple mistake.

The Federation's political project was one of gaining attention and making the case for its constituent villages. The Community Development Worker cites an example, which is worth quoting at length, of how the Federation sought to make these claims in practice:

I have seen the Federation stand up.... and really give them what for. And then it's a case of people in a position of power having to back down to some degree.....There was a conference.....last year...to look at what was the way forward for the district.....Now at that conference there was a report [which] was actually quite damning against a lot of the village partnerships. So the Federation made sure that they had adequate representation at this conference...now this is an excellent example of where the Federation does work. They stood up in unison, united at this conference, and said

"no we object to this report.....we vehemently object to this report because what you're saying is this and that is wrong. What you're saying is that our villages...we don't have any aspirations, or have low aspirations, that isn't true. We have realistic aspirations. Just because we don't have the aspirations that you think we ought to have...we have village action plans, appraisals and...we

feel very strongly that you cannot tell us where we've got to go.....we know where we want to be and you have to start and listen to us".

And this was quite effective because from that conference it was agreed that there would be a working party and again the Federation stood up and said "that's fine to have a working party but we want to ensure when we leave here today, that the local partnerships will have adequate representation on that working party", and that was agreed.....The strength of the Federation is that...its like uniting against a common enemy. That is when you find that people work together most effectively. That's when you get this atmosphere of co-operation.

These two examples illustrate some of the complexity involved in organising community-based action in rural areas. Underlying the efforts of activists, volunteers, development workers, funders and statutory authorities is a notion of a 'critical mass' against the problem of being 'too small'. Sparse populations and small villages can create great challenges for the viability of projects, on both the demand and supply sides. But critical mass can also be perceived to be an indicator of political weight, clout or significance. In VCP's case it is thought to be a weakness, although it has not yet attempted to address it through 'joining up' with neighbouring villages. Such a strategy was attempted in the East Durham example of the Federation, but attempts to 'jump scales' in this way do not come without consequences. These are explored further below.

The challenge of providing comprehensive coverage throughout an area

The distinction introduced earlier between scales of aspiration and actual scales, considered as a spatial or an organisational matter, invites a question as to how to account for any differences between the two. If actual scale is somehow less than a scale of aspiration, this may indicate difficulties for a project or organisation in meeting its objectives. But it could also be related to an intermediate position on a planned trajectory to meet such objectives. For example, an organisation on a growth path may consider that it intends to reach out to all aspects of its catchment (or scale of aspiration) but is unable to until resources are secured. The need to gain increased resources in order to meet sufficiently the spatial requirements of a catchment area indicates that issues of organisational scale and spatial scale often overlap. An example of this overlap and its consequences is provided below.

The scale of aspiration of the *Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative* (DRCFI) is bounded by the Dales local authority area, a large remote rural district in the west of County Durham. This is its 'common bond' which permits membership to anyone residing within the district. As we saw in Chapter 8, although this is approximately 24,000 people, only 0.76% of the eligible population, or 183 people were members by September 2002, three and a half years after it started. Members of the group acknowledge that they have so far only 'scratched the surface' and have stressed how difficult it has been to develop. The aim of this, and many other similar finance initiatives has been to increase membership and turnover of savings and loans, or in the terms of this chapter, to expand organisational scale. DRCFI also operates in a national context where the legislative and regulatory onus, as well as the currently available advice on 'best practice', suggests that in order to survive and flourish, community finance initiatives have to be more ambitious about their growth potential, more business-like and should pursue a different, expansionary model of development (Jones 1999, 2001). In the last two years the Financial Services Authority has taken responsibility for their regulation, and there is some pressure for smaller and perhaps more fragile finance initiatives to expand, close or merge with others. Here national developments are helping to create new organisational and spatial scales of activity.

Although DRCFI is resistant to the emphasis of the new model, because it is considered to be at odds with its community-based origins and community development ethos, it does aim to expand its membership. As a mutual organisation DRCFI pays an annual dividend to members if there is a surplus after essential fees and running costs have been paid, and because access to grant funding is limited, the aim is to generate its own income through loans to members as a way of reaching self-sufficiency. To do this it needs to encourage more people to join, save and borrow. The national regulatory context has also been changing, and this is forcing DRCFI to change also. At a strategic planning day in October 2001, in advance of the new regulatory framework, key members of DRCFI spent a whole day in an otherwise quiet community centre analysing the seemingly stark choices facing the initiative. The conclusion drawn was that unless the initiative changed to attract new members and volunteers it would fold within 12 to 18 months.

But as we saw in Chapter 8, attracting new members seems to be an immensely difficult process, and the volunteer effort in keeping the organisation going on a day to day basis has prevented its further expansion. But its spatial scale is also

implicated by these difficulties, since DRCFI originated largely amongst a few residents of the main market town in the district and has had great difficulty in achieving its aim of operating in other parts of its large catchment area. Although it operates a collection point in the market town, which is a relatively central shopping and transport hub for many people in the district, DRCFI wishes to open collection points in other villages in order to improve access and membership, on the assumption that potential members would not necessarily be able or willing to travel to a collection point. The aim here is to be more accessible by being closer to its potential members. This issue for rural finance initiatives, of providing adequate service for a dispersed membership has been widely recognised (Jones 2001), though finding solutions to these challenges is less straightforward, since operating dispersed collection points makes heavy demands on volunteers.

Thus for DRCFI it is nominally described by its scale of aspiration – it is '*Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative*'. But there is an issue to what extent it is really anything other than a small group with a membership based primarily in one market town in the district. DRCFI's current strategy is therefore to expand its organisational scale by trying to reach out to other areas of its catchment, i.e. by 'deepening' its operations in its existing spatial scale. It has been hindered in this partly by a lack of human resources. Targeted SRB5 funding has enabled a dedicated development worker to open operations in the two most deprived villages in the district, with some success in terms of increasing membership. But other factors come into play also. The usual route to opening a collection point would be through use of existing community buildings, secured via contacts with key community activists in the village. But in one village efforts to begin discussions on opening a collection point resulted in a rebuttal, on the grounds that 'this sort of thing wouldn't be needed around here'. Hence community activists can become important gatekeepers, refusing or facilitating entry to groups and projects perceived to be from outside.

Given the difficulties of the strategy of deepening within the existing scale of aspiration, a new discussion is emerging, over the possibility of DRCFI working more closely with a new community finance initiative in a neighbouring district. This could involve an eventual merger, with the possibility of expanding the spatial scale of aspiration as a means to resolve the difficulties of small membership, low 'penetration' and small core of active members, which it currently faces. Merging with another community finance initiative could create some economies of scale, where resources to cover essential day to day tasks could be pooled and shared

over a larger group of volunteers. But it would also create a larger eligible population for membership, or a larger 'critical mass'. Although market 'penetration' rates might remain static and low, absolute numbers in membership could increase, which would increase income generation faster than associated costs. Hence for DRCFI, struggling with its need to expand its organisational scale in a rural context, the strategies available have been to expand its spatial scale, first within its existing boundaries, but where this might prove insufficient, it is contemplating expansion 'outside its spatial boundaries.

The challenge of linking activities and projects across several small villages

If there appear to be certain pressures which might lead community groups in rural areas to consider expanding their spatial scale, then it is appropriate to ask to what extent this can successfully be achieved. Often rural communities are considered to be sites of fierce loyalties and identities, such that bridging divides between neighbouring villages, in order to gain 'scale', may bring conflicts and difficulties. Pressure to expand spatial scales potentially runs against the strength of existing territorial attachments and loyalties.

In all of the case studies the issue of connections between and beyond individual villages, and of people linking up or 'travelling' beyond their locality was raised as a problem. In the Dales area, an SRB5 programme was initially targeted at the two most deprived wards in the district. These two villages stand out markedly compared to the rest of what is considered to be a relatively affluent area, and the intensity of deprivation is demonstrated in the Index of Multiple Deprivation statistics. Socially and economically the two villages have been described by some respondents as a 'world apart' from the rest of the dale, given their mining history and perceived continuing orientation of their residents more to the larger town in the next district than to the seemingly affluent market town in the Dale.

The SRB5 programme is coordinated by a local partnership involving the District Council and residents and activists from the two villages. *Dales Community Project* (DCP) also receives some SRB5 funding to provide training in the upper dale area. But this has caused some difficulty in the two targeted villages, where concern has been expressed at the leakage of 'their' funding to the upper dale. Whilst the training is provided in the immediate area of benefit of DCP, it offers a service to potential members throughout the dale. To resolve the issue, specific monitoring of the use of the services by members from the two wards had to be compiled. DCP was in a

powerful position though, because it provided the bulk of the matched funding for the whole SRB5 programme in the district. If it was asked to withdraw, the whole programme could have been jeopardised.

This issue indicates that part of a place-based loyalty may involve, in the 'field' of community based voluntary action, concerns about the appropriate use of targeted funding. It provides an illustration of the tensions and positions that may form on either side of a spatially bounded funding regime. The competition to *capture* area based funding also involves competition to *retain* it in an area, 'for us'. DCP, from elsewhere, should not in this view be receiving these funds. The 'club' of SRB5 membership in the dale did not wish to admit a group perceived to be from elsewhere, although its matched funding contribution may have helped.

Problems associated with 'travelling beyond' a village were also evident in two youth projects. In the VCP area young people from the village were reluctant to join a minibus to take them down to the larger youth centre in the nearby town, because the minibus would be travelling and picking people up from a number of neighbouring villages. A mini-project in the East Durham initiative (*'Promoting and engaging young people in the future of the area'*) was run with the aim of developing a youth forum to input into the regeneration scheme, involving young people from all six villages. The project plan describes how this would be achieved:

A group would be initiated within each village approx 7-8 young people. The focus of the groups would be to share ideas and to discuss how they could be involved in the regeneration process. In addition to young people working together as a group, they would also be given the opportunity to come together with the other villages so that they would form a Federation villages young people's regeneration group

The plan was to work with one established village youth group and then begin to build in connections with young people in the other villages. In the quotation below the Community Development Worker explains what happened when the youth worker tried to explain the plan:

they would then mix with other groups and eventually they would have two or three from each village that would be on a forum..... But they stated categorically that they did not want to work with people from other

villages. They were here first, therefore they should have all of the best parts of whatever there was to offer and they did not want to have to put their names in a hat...So then after quite a few months [she] had to start again.....but by this time there was no way could that project develop a youth forum.

The idea of setting up a cross-village youth forum was set back, and was never eventually achieved, as it seemed to founder on the difficulties of trying to build relationships between young people of different villages. The minutes of a meeting midway through the project seem to reveal quite clearly the issues at stake:

there were problems with the way in which young people perceived and assumed territories and boundaries. Even though young people throughout the villages had the same perceptions about the problems of their communities – no jobs, a sense of isolation, etc – they found it difficult to cross the boundary into a neighbouring village. And they wanted their problems to be dealt with immediately.

A further example illuminates the challenge of working across settlement boundaries where sometimes strong loyalties and identities are formed on either side. Issues of territory and boundaries are not just the concern of young people. Two issues arise here. Firstly that commitments to an individual community group may be so great that insufficient attention is given to building the connections between groups in different villages, and secondly that such commitments lead to a competitive barrier between groups from different villages, militating against joint working and links 'across borders'.

Part of the aim of the *Federation of Community Partnerships* was to work together to regenerate a number of communities which, although different, shared a common history associated with the 1960s coalmining rationalisation programme. Perhaps in part because of this shared legacy there were similar problems experienced in each of the villages. Such factors may bring community activists together, particularly when, as we have seen, there is a common 'enemy' as a counterpoint. But commonalities do not always overcome individual loyalties and interests, and it seems that the success and sustainability of the Federation was tempered by individual community partnership interests overriding any 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham 1996) which might otherwise have been developed. Such interests may

take over where individual loyalties are strong, when available resources are scarce, and when there are marked perceived power inequalities between participants. This seemed to be the case in the Federation. The Community Development Worker illustrates the issue with the analogy of the European Union:

it's a bit like the European Union. We see the sense in it, we see the sense in all working together..... There's this benefit in working together and against the other continents we can become a force to be reckoned with.... but then there is this absolute need, or this fear that we will lose our own sovereignty, our own control, and initially and ultimately we are British and that has to come first. And there's this fear that the more we give up the less authority we have for ourselves. So you can actually equate that [with the Federation]. That is actually a perfect analogy... now I've discovered that everybody else, I don't think, really wanted to be part of it. They were part of it because in the same way as a lot of countries are part of the European Union. They're afraid not to be.

This suggests that the stakes in village-based community activity for these partnerships were such that they felt they had to be part of an emerging Federation. Not to be was potentially to lose out on important opportunities, resources and information about 'what was going on' in neighbouring villages and the district as a whole. Three main weaknesses were diagnosed by the worker – the individual self-interest of member partnerships, the consequent time spent on activities elsewhere, and lastly the power imbalances between members. The strong commitment to the improvement of each individual village meant that the main interest remained with each individual village partnership working on behalf of their village, over and above what might be gained and what might be contributed to the Federation. Ultimately, the individual interests of partnerships meant that time spent by activists and volunteers on Federation activities was limited, and the main responsibility for the work increasingly became focused on the paid worker:

partnerships have their own self-interest, and individual members spread themselves so widely that they become ineffective.they still work for their individual partnerships and ultimately because everybody's so involved in their own partnerships, because you will find that you will always have the same community activists on so many different committees that they don't have time to do anything else, and they

spread themselves so thinly that they become ineffective. So when you ask anyone to do anything, it is the case that 'I can't do that because I'm at such and such a committee' or 'I've got a meeting, I've got a conference'. They are becoming professional meeting attenders [that] nobody has any time to do anything..... So I'm not sure, other than making some decisions, I'm not quite sure what it is that people are bringing to the Federation. That is just because they have a worker [who] is paid and therefore that worker does all of the work. Sometimes I feel that 'I am the Federation'.....

As well as some doubts over what individual partnerships contributed, there was also some doubt about 'what was in it' for individual partnerships, other than reduced fear as alluded to above:

I actually, if I'm very honest, don't see what it is that the partnerships get out of the Federation. And therefore, if you don't get anything out of it, what's the point in giving your time etc to it. So I don't see any real value in it for them.

Eventually the Federation was dissolved just over four years after it started. The Community Development Worker argued that in the end there was not enough in it for them. It is arguable, however, that the Federation served a useful broader capacity building purpose in its time, building some confidence and assertiveness across individual village boundaries which benefited each individual village. The push to work together as a Federation came from various sources at a time when the individual partnerships were emergent, and perhaps less powerful, but wished to assert the case for attention and resources for their common area. When the Federation dissolved, activity within most of the individual partnerships was ongoing, with new projects, re-appraisals and new groups being developed.

An ironic conclusion to this example demonstrates the continuing salience of competition, for resources and credibility, between village partnerships, echoing the arguments made in Chapter 7. Although informal connections between village partnership activists are continuing, the sense of individual interest, commitment and competition between village partnerships remains. At one recent Annual General Meeting of an individual partnership, the secretary said that he had recently been to the AGM of the neighbouring village partnership, where they had been 'bragging'

that they had gained almost £1 million for their village in recent years. He was pleased to report the success of *his* village partnership in bringing in over £1.25 million over the last three years. The issue has involved rival press releases championing the achievements of separate partnerships, and the latest newsletter of one of them continues the theme, with the news that "*research indicates that we are the most positive and successful regeneration group in the area*".

In these examples some of the minutiae of connections, issues, personalities, challenges and tensions have seemingly come to the fore. But it is worthwhile remembering that these occur in and through a 'scaled' context, involving community-based activity at village and ward level as well as the rationales, efforts and challenges in moving beyond this spatial scale. This perhaps illustrates some of the dynamics of 'scale', where, in this last example, a pressure to 'join up' to create a critical mass may have been more appropriate at one time as a counter to the perceived weakness of individual partnerships, and to force a claim for influence on local decision makers. Having to some extent achieved this, it is possible that individual partnerships feel a need to work together far less than previously.

The prospects for resisting scale dynamics

Thus far we have discussed how scale issues, combining both spatial and organisational aspects, can become strategic dilemmas for projects, groups and organisations in the face of certain scaling imperatives. Is there any scope to resist the pressure to expand spatial scale? The following example from the case studies indicates where this did occur, in an issue which caused a great deal of tension in the *Dales Community Project*. It was funded initially through MAFF and European monies to provide a support service to farmers in the upper dale, although there was some doubt about exactly where the 'upper' dale began. Surrounding the dale the project was enclosed by local authority boundaries to the north, south and west.

But the advent of the Foot and Mouth crisis nationally from February 2001, and much more locally in April 2001, changed the whole focus of the project. Almost overnight Dales Community Project seemed to go onto 'emergency footing', and at one stage was practically a 24 hour advice and support service. Additional temporary staff were employed to operate a help line. Whereas most of its enquiries and support work came from the dale, it also endeavoured to take enquiries from elsewhere. To resource the expanded service the project received further funding from the Health Authority, from Social Services and from a number of charitable

foundations. Throughout this time DCP staff were employed on very limited extensions to contracts due to an increasingly precarious funding situation. However, at the same time, the Health Authority and Social Services department, as part of their response to the Foot and Mouth crisis wanted to monitor demand for the service quite closely. But DCP found it extremely difficult, at a time of crisis, when demand for the service was so great, to meet the demands for monitoring information, and the pressure was visible. At one point two volunteers took a set of phone message books home for the weekend to tally up types of enquiry as part of the service monitoring, as a way of accounting for the time spent by DCP. The burden seemed heavy, but one quipped that one of the categories for accounting for time should be 'time spent accounting for time'.

The issues of emergency status, precarious funding and what DCP committee members considered were insensitive demands for monitoring information, form part of the fraught context for an issue which revolved around scale. The Social Services department, on the strength of its funding input, exerted some pressure for DCP's service to expand and to be offered to a neighbouring area outside its existing spatial focus. A letter from a senior manager in the social services department to DRCC as the sponsoring LDA, whose managers had become more directly involved in trying to resolve the problem, reports a meeting between them:

We discussed my concerns about the relatively narrow scope of the project limited as it is to farmers in the Upper [Dale] area at a time when a wider service to [neighbouring areas] is required in the wake of the foot and mouth epidemic. I am concerned that there are other occupational groups in [the Dale] who require support and help towards economic recovery including those groups and individuals affected by the reduction in tourism over the last few months. I agreed to discuss these issues with [the regeneration manager] to ensure that the DCP is properly integrated into this wider network of organisations striving to assist the Dales area in its economic recovery

Three concerns seem bound together - firstly that DCP is spatially bounded, and is thus not offering a service to neighbouring areas, which are also in great need, and also fall under the *county-wide* remit of the Social Services department; secondly that DCP's work focus is narrowly conceived, as a project offering a support service to farmers rather than other groups, and lastly that its orientation is too narrow, and

needs to be 'integrated' with other organisations in a wider recovery programme. DRCC, which had been bankrolling the project, and employing the workers, tried to mediate between the concerns of the Social Services department and those of the project. In doing so it became embroiled in a further set of dilemmas and effectively became positioned by DCP committee members as one amongst several outside, professionalised and bureaucratic agencies, including Social Services and the Health Authority, who were failing to understand the pressures and demands of trying to run and overstretched emergency service with very little security. The manager of DRCC referred to the difficulties of being 'stuck in the middle', but the project manager, employed by the same organisation, but reporting partly to the DCP steering committee and partly to the DRCC manager, also described herself as being 'piggy in the middle'.

The request to consider extending DCP's service elsewhere was made as part of an offer of further funding, which seemed to intensify the discussions given the precarious funding situation. But despite this pressure to comply, as well as the encouragement from the RCC, the committee resisted. After a series of extended, awkward and often emotionally charged committee meetings in late Summer 2001, the project committee decided to comply with the information requirements associated with funding *already* received from Social Services, but declined the offer of further funding for the current financial year. This allowed it to escape the pressure to extending the remit and spatial scale of the service. The decision was based around the capacity of the project to cope with the extra demands of potential users, when it had been on an emergency footing for nearly 6 months. This decision was enabled by successful funding bids to charitable foundations which offered a lifeline to the project to keep operating without having to take the funding from Social Services, and without the same degree of information monitoring. This funding also enabled the project to consider pursuing charitable status, finally gained in February 2002, and independence from DRCC, which was finalised in May 2002. Its 'area of benefit', described by its constitution, became formally inscribed as "*the rural area of Upper [Dale]*", reflecting its origins several years before.

This brief example highlights that issues of scale can become a site for power relations, pressure and conflict between different stakeholders. For the Social Services department, DCP was an immensely valuable resource which needed to be utilised as much as possible in a time of immense difficulty. Arguably DCP was able to respond quickly and effectively to a crisis on its doorstep, and was able to

provide trusted support and advice to a core constituency in difficulty, and not accustomed to using official 'helping' services. At least part of this may be because of DCP's close proximity to its membership, both physically – where it was located, and organisationally – how it emerged, who was involved and how it sought to address concerns brought by its expanding membership. As a trusted local resource, it was in the perfect position to respond to the crisis, and potentially to form a response beyond its existing spatial scale. The Social Services department, perhaps more remote, less trusted and less able to provide an equivalent service, sought to engage the resources which were there 'on the ground' in the voluntary sector. DRCC supported the idea, but wanted to dampen expectations that another service of the same type could be developed quickly. DCP resisted because it was only just able, and at considerable emotional cost, to keep its own service going through the crisis. Here scale issues became bound up with wider political issues regarding the inter-dependent relations between funders and projects, and between Local Development Agencies and their sponsored projects. Scale also becomes implicated in issues regarding proximity and remoteness, as well as strategic coordination and the seemingly narrow (or, more favourably, 'focused') work of a community-based project.

As an interesting aftermath to the case study example portrayed here, DCP has emerged from the Foot and Mouth Crisis in a relatively more secure financial and organisational position. As outlined in Chapter 8, because it has been regarded as a success story, it is being hailed as a 'model' of good practice. It is now embarking on a process of examining whether its 'model' can be transported elsewhere. On the basis of its apparent success, it faces the possibility of expanding its scale beyond the confines of the upper dale, a conclusion it could not contemplate previously.

V. Concluding comments

In this chapter we have explored the related issues of scale and the proximity of community-based projects in rural areas. Examples from the case studies illustrate how scale and the rural context become key sites for decisions, strategies and conflicts. The idea of 'critical mass' has been used as a means to explore the dilemmas faced by case study projects in their efforts to achieve certain objectives. However, in all but the Dales Community Project, issues of scale are represented as potential organisational problems to resolve. In East Durham the Federation of

Community Partnerships was formed out of a view that it could gain political strength over and above the sum of its parts as well as improve its chances of gaining resources if it could reach a 'critical mass' of activists as well as a potential catchment population of users and participants. In mid-Durham, the single village partnership of VCP was struggling with the consequences of being 'small', demonstrated by its apparent lack of involvement in wider issues, the difficulty of maintaining its activities given the great demands on a limited number of volunteers and the difficulties making the case for refurbished or new facilities which may be insufficiently used. In the Dales area the DRCFI was similarly struggling to survive and was working out strategies for expanding scales as a result. Here expanding its spatial scale was seen as a means to facilitate the expansion, and so security, of its organisational scale.

In all three cases expansion is seen as a potential resolution of the particular problem of critical mass and low and dispersed populations. If community development draws strength from its ability to facilitate and nurture greater community involvement and participation (in, for example, local projects, decision making and planning), then it may be weakened, or faces particular challenges, if that participation is narrow in scope, limited in magnitude, or in decline. The stakes over participation seem to have become higher in recent years given the emphasis on community involvement in public policy (Taylor 2003). The potential for '*participation failure*' (to run alongside 'state', 'market' and 'governance' failures (Jessop 2000b)), that is, where requisite numbers of users, participants and volunteers cannot be mobilised, is perhaps a challenge facing all localities, services and agencies in the voluntary and community sector. But in rural areas the challenge is likely to be more acute insofar as critical mass issues intervene. If there are insufficient people involved or available to be involved, then it seems that one means of getting round this is by developing a range of *scalar strategies* intended to build a viable catchment, or otherwise increase political significance in a local 'field'.

All of the projects face pressures to expand spatial, and by implication organisational, scale, but for Dales Community Project this pressure came from its apparent success. For the other three it relates to sometimes externally offered, and sometimes internally constructed, 'solutions' to scale issues. In the Dales Community Project the problem became one of successfully resisting the pressure to expand scale until the circumstances became a little more fortuitous.

But expanding spatial scales runs against notions of proximity which seem to be so salient generally, but perhaps particularly so in the 'small worlds' of some rural areas. We have seen from the case studies that attempts by projects to jump out of, and work across, existing boundaries can cause some difficulties. On the supply side workers, activists and volunteers may be suspicious of the potential 'in-roads' which might be made by 'outsiders'. Additionally the task of securing collaborative advantage across organisational and geographical boundaries may be undermined by continuing competition between groups, as well as the lack of input given to collaborative ventures. On the demand side potential users, members and participants may be suspicious or wary of services which are somehow not from 'round here'. This is not necessarily the case, given what we have already described as the highly visible 'goldfish bowl' which many may perceive as a fundamental characteristic of village life. In these circumstances potential users and participants may prefer to 'go elsewhere' (if they can), or use outreach services provided by more impersonal external agencies. The demands on projects to gain a 'critical mass' will often imply providing services over larger catchment areas, but potential participants or users may not be prepared or able to travel to services provided over larger catchment areas, and in other places. The dilemma for many projects therefore is how to draw down the resources to engage in proximate activities or provide proximate services, whilst gaining sufficient 'critical mass' in order to make a credible claim for resources in the first place.

We have seen in earlier chapters how the public policy emphasis, in the aftermath of the New Public Management, retains, even in its evolution towards a possible 'Third Way', a focus on maximising the gain from constrained resources. There is 'much to do', but only scarce resources with which to do things. This applies to resources available for community-based voluntary action and the voluntary sector as much as it does to public agencies generally. Three overarching strategies are implied by this situation:

1. *efficiency strategies*: a continuing emphasis on efficiency, targets, outputs and accountability for the use of resources
2. *integration*: strategies to 'join-up' policy making and services and 'pool resources' across sectoral, organisational, scalar and geographical boundaries, as emphasised in the ongoing emphasis given to 'partnership' working
3. *changing the scales of resource allocation*: a renewed emphasis on locality and neighbourhood level policy intervention in the most deprived areas. In

some (primarily urban) localities area-based initiatives and zonal policies act as a complement to mainstream social and economic policies.

It is possible that the third strategy however, of changing scales of resource allocation, may have different implications for urban and rural areas, precisely because of issues of 'critical mass' and the distribution of population.

On the one hand (and particularly in rural areas) there might be a pressure (from internal and external stakeholders) on projects to *upscale* activity (both geographically and organisationally). On the other hand, resources are increasingly being concentrated on particular, *smaller scale*, geographic areas. This means that there is not only more scope for boundary conflict (about the implications of being inside or outside a particular eligibility boundary, included or excluded from the 'funding club'), but also that certain geographic scales are being produced by funding regimes and programmes. Crucially, the stress here is one of *concentration*, following the nature and distribution of patterns of deprivation, so as to avoid 'spreading resources too thinly'. In recent years funding has increasingly become targeted on specific wards, neighbourhoods and seemingly elusive 'pockets' of deprivation.

There seem therefore to be two shifts taking place: one to upscale activity to ensure viability, the other to deepen and focus activity on a smaller scale. It is possible that a single project may face both pressures at once, but it is also possible that different geographical areas may face different strategies. So, for example, urban neighbourhoods have become the focus of more closely targeted and concentrated resources (of more resource per person), to avoid spreading resources too thinly and to create sufficient resources to make a difference.

But rural areas may face the opposite challenge. Funders may find it hard to justify expenditure where there are likely to be relatively fewer beneficiaries, and therefore want to raise the 'critical mass'. But raising the critical mass of a project involves the creation of a larger (geographic) scale of operations and a dilution of resources. Projects in this situation face an environment in which resources would be spread *more* thinly.

The result of the twin strategies of targeting/concentration (urban) and dilution/critical mass (rural) would be a relative convergence of funding levels per

capita between urban and rural areas. But the geographic scales implied would involve an exacerbation of scale differences between similar projects. Rural projects would continue to face the challenge of establishing, organising and coordinating projects over larger scales. This may exacerbate the challenges faced by rural projects, services and intermediary organisations for effective community involvement. In so far as a 'participation failure' might result, it also has implications for successfully reaching out to dispersed disadvantaged populations in rural areas.

Chapter 10

Conclusions and implications

This thesis has reported some of the findings and theoretical conclusions drawn from a research study undertaken over a four year period. In this final chapter we will reflect upon this in a more general sense, by discussing firstly the process of undertaking the research and the thesis argument in the light of the research questions under consideration, followed by a discussion of some of the main implications for practice and policy and finally an outline of some of the implications for further research and theoretical development.

1. Undertaking the research study and revisiting the research questions

In the opening Chapter of this thesis a number of overarching research questions were posed which informed the subsequent design, structure and implementation of the study. How the research was actually designed, and the specific methodology adopted, was described in Chapter 5. It is worth pausing for a moment to reflect on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the methodology in terms of the research aims and questions.

As outlined in Chapter 5, the study overall adopted an *intensive* research strategy, involving a detailed 'quasi-longitudinal' investigation of a small number of concrete research objects; in this case of five community-based voluntary sector projects. However, within each case, a range of research methods was used, both intensive and extensive, including interviews, observations and surveys. These were combined to form rich pictures of case study projects. In so far as the research aimed to add to our understanding of *how* community-based voluntary action is organised and operates, and how it generates an 'impact', an intensive strategy is clearly appropriate. This approximates most closely to what Sayer (1992: 236-7; 2000: 145) refers to as a 'realist concrete study', involving the investigation of how, in a concrete setting and a causal context, empirical outcomes are generated. This approach is, however, less amenable to assessing the contribution made by

community-based voluntary action overall in tackling disadvantage in rural areas. Arguably this question requires greater breadth in research design than that adopted here, although it might usefully draw upon the insights generated in this study.

Almost by way of auto-critique, however, the effectiveness of the methodology might be more open to question. In this kind of intensive research, there is a risk that what is intended to be a set of theoretically informed concrete case studies ends up as a series of under-theorised, and uncritical descriptions of project activities and stories. Largely through the analytical interplay between theoretical reflection and empirical data described in Chapter 5, it is hoped that this study has overcome this danger. However, it is worth noting that here theoretical reflection first informed, and only later drove the subsequent analysis. With the benefit of hindsight, the earlier stages of the research design, and the fieldwork itself, might productively have been driven by greater theoretical clarity, which would perhaps have sharpened the questions raised in the case studies. However, there is of course a balance to be struck here. A sharpened theoretical perspective must not be allowed to obscure or obstruct the possibility that surprising results and insights 'surfaced' through the case studies themselves, might disrupt the original theoretical focus .

Research questions, developed through a growing theoretical understanding of the research topic, provide the framework through which the study is conducted. The two main sets of research questions in this study raised were around *process* (i.e. how community-based voluntary activity is organised and operates), and *outcome* (i.e. what impacts it might have). Research questions relating to process were relatively more straightforward to investigate than questions relating to outcomes. Again with the benefit of hindsight, the earlier stages of what proved to be an ambitious research design might fruitfully have considered questions of outcome in more depth, from the perspectives of both community project participants *and* non-participants. In practice, the questions relating to process proved so compelling that more research and theoretical attention was placed here. We shall dwell with process and outcome questions in more detail here, beginning with the latter.

Questions of impact and outcome

It was argued in Chapter 8 that the development of tools and methodologies through which to explore questions of impact and outcomes, particularly given the complex, interdependent and rapidly changing world of community-based voluntary action, were so far at only a very early stage of development. Case study projects, in their

differing ways, were barely able to manage the demands of basic input and output monitoring, let alone think through the implications of outcome assessment. Nevertheless, in our discussion of community development we began to make some provisional judgements of the impacts and achievements of projects.

However, impact can be considered in both macro and micro senses, and it is important to distinguish between the two. On the one hand each project undoubtedly makes an impact in the sense that its existence makes the world a marginally *different* place. The institutional structure of opportunities, relationships, services and developments is somewhat different as a result of the projects considered here, to a greater or lesser extent. In this view, perhaps against the odds, projects can point to specific accomplishments at a micro level, in their own terms and in their own contexts. Importantly they have all managed to generate some 'movement', or 'distance travelled' in their own worlds since their participants and members began meeting. In this sense therefore the projects could be said to have 'moved mountains' in generating change from their specific conjunctions of context and processes. In this perspective judgements about the impact of projects have to be made in a context-specific manner because to do otherwise runs the risk of overlooking significant differences between projects.

Comparative analysis across cases leads to the application of an alternative perspective. This looks at aggregate or macro questions of what impacts projects may have on the totality of, in this case, disadvantage in rural areas. It matters less 'where projects have come from', what challenges they may or may not have faced in getting there, and more what difference they have actually made to people's circumstances and life chances. In this frame of reference project impacts, as judged by the case studies examined here, appear as little more than marginal, or fleeting. Given the totality of social and economic forces which make for the complex distribution of life-chances of individuals and households, sometimes captured, as in Chapter 2 and 4, in increasingly sophisticated statistical profiles of areas, individual community-based projects seem in this view to be mere 'drops in the ocean'. It is unlikely that the activities of a single project by itself will register in a movement of such statistics.

It is important to recognise that these two perspectives, despite appearances, are not necessarily incompatible. Rather it is more appropriate to consider them as different viewpoints, operating at different resolutions, one telescopic, the other

microscopic. Hence in the debate about what difference the community-based voluntary sector might make to people's lives, it is possible to argue that it is both a 'drop in the ocean' and simultaneously 'moves mountains'. Contributors to this debate rarely seem to consider the possibility that it might be both at the same time, depending on the assumptions around the 'resolution' at which projects are being considered.

Questions of process

If these are issues around the *impact* of projects, what can we say in answer to questions of the processes of community-based organising? How is community-based voluntary activity organised? The last three chapters have explored three different, but inter-related, qualitative dimensions of the voluntary sector and community-based voluntary activity. In Chapter 7 we considered an overarching framework of fields and capital, developed from the social theory associated with Bourdieu, in order to understand some of the dynamic processes through which community-based voluntary action is organised and operates. Fundamentally this suggested that community-based projects and supporting organisations use existing stocks of capital as resources in order to pursue strategies of advance or preservation. The 'field' of voluntary action is characterised by scarce forms of capital and a range of resource-dependent organisational entities (Benson 1975).

Although it is often claimed that, in contrast to private sector organisations, there is no 'bottom line' for voluntary organisations, because they do not have a profit maximisation motive or incentive structure, the argument here is that organisational survival represents some form of a bottom line in the voluntary and community sector. This has also been suggested by recent Charity Commission research which found that very few charities considered merger for reasons other than a resolution of financial or other crises (Charity Commission 2003). The result is that in many areas and over many issues the sector comes to resemble a 'crowded field' of similarly placed groups and organisations. From this view resource dependency heavily shapes organisational and individual strategies and interactions. This forms the basis for subtle forms of inter-personal, inter-organisational, inter-sectoral and inter-area competition with agents not only positioned in terms of the distribution of different forms of capital, but also in terms of the strategies which might be most appropriately suited to pursue new forms of capital. In this sense the field has what Jessop and Hay termed 'strategic selectivity' (Jessop 1990, 2002, Hay 2002). Competition between participants and organisations is subtle because it is interlaced

with a strong emphasis on, and occasional commitment to, collaborative working and shared practices.

In Chapter 8 we explored the temporality of community-based voluntary activity, considering in turn 'project time', internal dynamics and external change/impact. We examined each case study project in terms of its activities, 'outputs' and outcomes, concluding that evidence for sustainable and successful activity was hard to find. However, this must be placed in the context alluded to above, that questions of impact have reached only a very preliminary stage on the agenda of the voluntary sector, alongside the complexities involved in identifying impacts, and the difficulties of attribution. We also considered an emerging agenda of developing interest in questions of impact, outcomes and of replication, evidence-based policy and practice and 'what works'. All of these issues of external change relate to questions of temporality in that assessments of impact are fundamentally about what *change* occurs over what *time span*.

Finally in Chapter 9 we explored questions of scale and proximity in the organisation of community-based projects, with particular reference to community-based voluntary activity in a rural context. All community-based voluntary activity is scaled, both geographically and organisationally, but it seems rare that this comes under scrutiny. We have tried to apply a spotlight to some of these questions here. However, notions of scale are intricately related to the issue of 'proximity' or the degree of 'closeness' or 'remoteness' by which an organisation or project might be perceived, or might legitimately claim for itself. In rural areas, questions of sparsely distributed populations lead to issues of 'critical mass' in terms of attracting external funding and enhancing political 'weight'. However this tends to run against the importance given to the idea of locally proximate services, delivered and originating from 'round here'.

The three dimensions – field, time and scale – are fundamentally inter-related. None prevails or is more significant than the others, and each adds some depth to the others. We have, however, chosen to place the framework provided by the 'field' more in the foreground, because its logic of competition over scarce resources emerges in both of the other two dimensions. But this is not to downplay the acknowledgement that field-type relationships occur through a temporal and a scaled context.

Fields, like other social structures, are inevitably 'timed'. They have a temporal composition, which in the case of community-based voluntary action has a lumpy, project-time character. But fields change shape through their operation, as their component projects, organisations and individuals also change. In this thesis it has been argued that the voluntary and community sector field is changing in important ways. Applying a longer term historical frame, it can be suggested that the sector as a whole has moved somewhat closer to government in the last ten to fifteen years. A new 'partnership' between state and communities is being encouraged (Deakin 2001), which represents a shift away from the post-1945 model of the sector as 'junior partner' in what was the primarily state-oriented Keynesian National Welfare State (Jessop 2000a, 2002). This has arguably intensified following the publication of the report of the 'Deakin commission' on the future of the voluntary sector (Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector 1996) and the election of the New Labour government, leading to what Kendall (2000) has referred to as the 'mainstreaming' of the third sector. New strategies, reviews and compacts have emerged which have given explicit endorsement to the enhanced role which could be played by the sector in a range of policy fields (Cabinet Office 2002, HM Treasury 2002b, Home Office 1998, 2003c). In practice what this means is that the dynamic operations of community-based voluntary sector projects, and supporting organisations which form part of the infrastructure, are fundamentally affected by developments elsewhere. Thus local project 'corners' of fields are not isolated from larger developments elsewhere, irrespective of how knowledgeable or aware they are of them. If the legitimacy of the sector, or its 'symbolic capital' in public policy is being raised, this may begin to affect the distribution of other forms of capital between sectors. New forms of inter-sectoral competition are likely to arise where, using the example seen in Chapter 7, local councils may perceive voluntary organisations as a threat to their territory, and a claim on their capital associated with leadership, decision making powers and autonomy. Other aspects of the field which appear to be achieving enhanced salience include the new emphasis on applying quality systems, the promotion of entrepreneurialism and specifically, social enterprise, with the associated debate around the grant 'dependency' of voluntary organisations, continued debates around impact and outcome assessment and also the pressure to learn about 'what works' with a view to fast-track replication into other settings and contexts. The importance of the changing context re-emphasises the importance of adding a temporal dimension to Bourdieu's analysis of the field, as suggested in the conclusion to Chapter 7. This point is explored further below.

Issues of scale and proximity also add a further dimension to the framework offered by the field perspective. In the last chapter we saw how the scale of a project was a constructed, and occasionally contested matter, rather than being something obvious or even 'natural'. Creating a scale can be a matter of more or less explicit political strategy, as a way of making a wider political claim for resources or influence (as in the East Durham example) or part of a pressure to overcome problems of being 'too small'. Hence a position in a field, and the variety of resources which could be put to use, is partly a matter of the organisational and geographical scale of a project. A project may be in a weaker position in so far as it is perceived to be small, emergent and fragile, and to the extent that it covers a smaller population and geographical area. It may be perceived to be in a stronger position in so far as it can muster a greater scale. This arises where the project or organisation itself is the participant in a wider field. However, the problems associated with scale can also become strategic arguments used by individual participants and members within projects and organisations. This has been most clearly seen in the Village Community Partnership and in the Dales Community Project cases.

Here the relationships and connections between field, time and scale-proximity have been highlighted. However, it is appropriate to return briefly to the conclusion to Chapter 7, where it was noted that Bourdieu's social theory encompassing fields, strategy, capital and habitus, suffered from its under-developed sense of both temporality and space. In the first instance, the field appears to be a relatively static model of relationships, positions and power. Bourdieu's concern to develop a theory of practice implies that in the main his theoretical focus is a present tense preoccupation with the 'here and now', rather than with a diachronic understanding of change and emergence. Secondly, it was suggested that Bourdieu's social theory did not have an adequate conceptualisation of space or scale. It is not clear what the boundaries of a field may be, how permeable they might be, or indeed if there are any boundaries at all. The idea of 'peripheral' and 'central' participants in a field may suggest a spatial configuration of some kind, but it would be worth exploring the extent to which perceived positions in a field relate to geographical reach, how this affects distributions of different types of capital and how different strategies might be developed in response.

Whereas in this study the idea of a field is an abstract conceptualisation derived from a range of individual (though related) community-based voluntary sector

projects, there may be merit in an examination of a voluntary and community sector field in its own right. This would allow greater attention to be played to both its temporal and spatial aspects. A consideration of the extent and manner in which it might change over time, and how strategies are formulated in the midst of changing circumstances (Hay 2002: 131-4) could be combined with an exploration of the different (and changing) spatial and scalar reaches of its organisational and individual elements, including the geographical distribution of different forms of capital. This might benefit from a critical engagement with the debate between those approaches which tend to prioritise scale and territory (in which a field would be conceived largely as a geographically bounded and proximate entity) and those which tend to prioritise networks, flow or movement and extended connections across perforated boundaries (Urry 2000, Amin 2002).

II. Implications for practice and policy

Having reviewed the main theoretical and empirical arguments of the thesis, it is appropriate to consider some of its implications, for community development practice, for policy towards the voluntary and community sector and for methodological and substantive questions of research. In this section some implications for practice and policy will be outlined, although the distinction between these two areas is more schematic than real.

Implications for practice

Firstly, while not perhaps inevitable, conflict between participants, groups and agencies is a likely, foreseeable and formative aspect of community development and community-based activity. Given the context provided by what we have called the 'community turn', there is a lot at stake in the organisation of, and the putative accomplishments of, community-based projects. In the terms of this thesis, community-based projects have been considered in terms of their contribution to tackling deep-seated and intractable problems of disadvantage. Alongside this we might add accounts and expectations that community-based organising will help renew civil society, overcome an increasing democratic deficit and add to the responsiveness of public services. Given that so much is invested in it, by politicians and policy-makers, professionals, including researchers, consultants and policy analysts, and by active participants and ordinary residents, expectations often run quite high, and may be prone to frustration. In this context, and in a field

characterised by insecurely resourced participants, groups and organisations, people are likely to be 'watching their backs' (or, in the terms of Chapter 7, their symbolic capital of reputation, status and credibility), and looking for things or people to blame when things do not go according to the plan established in the sometimes slick and professional strategies, project proposals and delivery plans. Added to the conflict arising from things diverging from plans and expectations, different participants will also be bringing different interests, stocks of capital and expectations to the field, which in itself becomes fruitful ground for conflict. The likelihood of conflict and limited success against expectations (Jessop 2000b: 31) implies a need for a careful, painstaking management style for community development agencies and workers, which seeks to channel, rather than avoid or resolve conflict, and which is careful not to fuel excessive expectations.

A second, and related, implication arises over the sometimes problematic role played by Local Development Agencies (LDAs) acting in intermediary roles between policy makers and funders on the one hand, and community-based groups and participants on the other. At various points in the case study projects examined here, LDAs come under sustained criticism for their role, the apparent pursuit of their own agendas and how they often fail to match expectations in terms of project management and delivery. Here we have chosen to interpret this broadly in terms of the 'field' framework, acknowledging the different positions, capital stocks and strategies available to different participants. Much of the criticism of LDAs arises because they are perhaps the most immediate and visible bodies responsible for organising and managing a programme of work. Where this fails to meet expectations, as evident in the East Durham case study, the LDA receives much of the blame. But LDAs typically assume responsibility (or are held responsible) for activities in contexts where they do not have a great deal of power, and are not in control of all the factors which might make for a 'successful' project. They operate in funding and policy regimes where the parameters (timescale, level of resources, conditions and the role of outputs and milestones) are determined elsewhere and which defy resistance. As a consequence an LDA can become squeezed in the middle, blamed when things go wrong by both the community groups on one side and the funding sponsors on the other. The implication here is that some way perhaps needs to be found to break down the organisational barriers and perceptions between community groups and voluntary sector intermediary agencies. Too often they appear to operate from different dynamics and logics. This could involve mechanisms whereby community groups are enabled to develop a greater

understanding of the role, structure, plans, scale and resources available within an LDA.

If the two implications drawn above relate to the management, organisation and support for community-based activity, it is important also to draw implications from the research in relation to the task of tackling disadvantage in rural areas. From the relatively positive experience of 'seepage' and informal networks in the Dales Community Project, the main conclusion to be drawn from the research here is that informal strategies are likely to have most success in 'reaching out' to those at most disadvantage. Discussions and fledgling approaches in operation and development in Village Community Partnership and Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative seem to represent attempts to approximate a similar objective, as a way of overcoming potential 'participation failure'. 'Seepage' represents an 'everyday life' strategy, of making accessible approaches to people in their own terms, and in a way which makes sense in their own lives, rather than through the operation of formal programmes designed to 'tackle social exclusion' in express terms. In a practical sense, therefore, it maybe appropriate to pursue what we have called '*sideways action*' in efforts to address social exclusion. This is indirect community development work, and could, from one perspective, amount to a gross deception, since projects, workers and active participants seem to be representing involvement in a project in certain ways, without mentioning the potentially alienating and stigmatising terms of disadvantage, exclusion, poverty, and, in Dales Community Project's case, stress and isolation. Despite the possibility of manipulation, such an approach has some potential. We saw from the arguments in Chapter 2 that stigma and shame are recurring features of studies of rural disadvantage and deprivation, and from this community-based voluntary action and community development *could*, if suitably and reflexively designed, become an opportunity for non-stigmatising intervention to address disadvantage.

The main drawbacks to this approach are two-fold. Firstly that '*sideways action*' represents a loss of focus and, insofar as it becomes less targeted on those facing most disadvantage, may be considered less effective than more conventional approaches. 'Seepage' is also likely to take some time, and potentially more time than important stakeholders are able or prepared to wait, a point to which we return in the final words of this chapter. Secondly, use of informal networks amongst active participants may serve only to restrict participation to a relatively small group of people who tend to know each other or who are part of similar networks. Following

the principle of 'homophily' in studies of 'social capital', this represents the conclusion that we tend to associate more with people 'like us', where "*social interactions tend to take place among individuals with similar lifestyles and socio-economic characteristics*" (Lin 2001: 39). In as much as the homophily principle has some resonance, participation in community-based projects may become mainly the preserve of a more or less exclusive 'club' of people. This point is discussed in more depth below as an aspect for further research, but in practical terms, it perhaps places a premium on innovative and inclusive community development methods which can break out of the circle of insiders to encourage the participation of the '*unusual suspects*'.

That community-based voluntary action in rural areas may be a 'field' restricted only to a select few raises another practical implication of the research described here. There needs to be a serious recognition that finding and/or building a critical mass of 'involved' people in rural areas is likely to present a major challenge. Low population thresholds distributed over larger geographical areas means that there are likely to be only a modest number of people willing and able to devote the time, energy and (sometimes) money, which is often required for active participation. Of practical significance here though is a familiar consequence which might follow from this situation, namely of people wearing 'multiple hats' and being involved in many different projects, networks and organisations. As seen from the case studies researched here, this may itself become a barrier to wider involvement, as potential participants are put off by the formidable presence of the 'usual suspects'.

Implications for policy

Many of the practical issues discussed above have policy implications. Additionally however, five further policy implications are drawn out here. Firstly, it would seem to be important for policymakers to appreciate more fully that groups and organisations in the voluntary and community sector operate as resource-dependent entities in a resource-constrained environment. Resources here are being used in the broader sense described in Chapter 7, as various (yet still scarce, and sometimes positional) forms of capital. Referring primarily to economic resources, however, there may simply not be enough funding to support either the number of projects, groups and organisations that exist or are in development, or the amount of work needed to address entrenched social problems. This situation fuels the inter-personal, inter-organisational, inter-sectoral and inter-area competition for funding and status which characterises the 'field'. Resources and policy effort to improve the co-ordination of

the voluntary and community sector would be a welcome development to reshape a congested field, and movement in this area seems likely following the Treasury 'Cross-cutting review' (HM Treasury 2002b) and the publication of the 'Capacity Building and Infrastructure' strategy (Home Office 2003c). However, given the characteristics of the field described in this thesis, it is important not to underestimate how difficult reducing mutually defeating competition between similarly placed agencies and groups is likely to be.

Secondly, we have argued that participants in the field who learn how to 'play the game' are likely to be able to take early advantage of the twists and turns of 'policy world', in which new ideas, concepts and technical terminology come into circulation. However, this is likely to be followed by other participants creating a 'crowded field', as we saw in Chapter 7. One area where this seems to have occurred to a dramatic extent in recent years is over the interest in 'capacity building'. All sorts of agencies have been able to claim that they are involved in this kind of work², implying also that there are clearly identified groups and individuals whose *lack* of capacity requires attention. We saw from the East Durham case study how the capacity of participating community groups appeared to be built in unintentional ways, to the extent that they were able to 'bite back' at supposedly supporting agencies. Although we have not dwelt on this issue to a great extent, it may be worth reconsidering 'capacity building' as just this kind of uncomfortable 'awkwardness'. Capacity may therefore be additionally understood as the ability to appreciate and bear the consequences of resisting the both the latest trendy twists in the policy conversation and the latest initiatives backed by significant resources. In this sense LDAs such as DRCC also face questions about their capacity to think and act more strategically in relation to new funding and development opportunities.

Insecure funding forms part of the complex context behind congestion in the field. Thirdly, therefore, longer term funding would not only facilitate a reduction in competition, it might also help, as we argued in Chapter 8, to generate more impressive returns in terms of impact. We have already seen how short-term funding has a range of consequences which may compromise the efforts to address different aspects of disadvantage. That work which may just be starting to generate valuable outcomes so often faces the 'Sword of Damocles' of project funding coming

² For an argument in County Durham around several agencies competing over claims to be carrying out capacity building work, see One Voice Network 2000.

to an end reinforces a suspicion that tackling disadvantage and learning about 'what works' is likely to be a lower priority than the managerial concerns of ensuring project spend and accountability. Alongside this, the case studies have illustrated in various ways the difficulties faced by groups in managing the compliance and accountability conditions of funding. The community development work attempted in East Durham, for example, indicated how under a heavy monitoring and output-led regime, the requirements of accountability towards funding bodies took priority over any accountability to community groups and ordinary residents. A regular frustration expressed by community groups and supporting community development workers relates to the inappropriately detailed and disproportionate demands for monitoring and compliance information. When placed in aggregate terms, the transactions costs of delivering projects involving relatively small sums seem to be extraordinarily high.

A fourth policy implication relates directly to the task of tackling disadvantage in rural areas through community-based voluntary action. Those people at most disadvantage who live in remote areas or small places, effectively face a double challenge. On the one hand, *for society overall problems associated with disadvantage in rural areas cost less*, in that there are fewer people overall, of whom slightly lower proportions experience different forms of disadvantage, and these involve manifestations of poverty which are perhaps less evident and less well understood. Consequently, because of this lack of critical mass, there is not much political weight (electorally or otherwise) on governments to do something. On the other hand, *purported solutions to disadvantage in rural areas cost more*, given the lack of economies of scale and additional transport costs. This is perhaps one of the reasons why community-based voluntary action in rural areas is seen as a way of making a vital contribution to service provision locally. However, community-based voluntary action, as we have seen in Chapter 9, faces all these problems associated with critical mass, scale and cost as well. Yet it is not clear to what extent this is reflected in funding allocations between areas and projects. Although debates over a 'rural premium' have long focused on the difficulties of providing basic public services in rural areas, the relative costs of supporting the rural voluntary and community sector would seem to require further policy and practical attention.

A final implication relates to what can reasonably be expected of community-based voluntary activity. At various points in the thesis it has been suggested that the expectations placed on the voluntary and community sector seem to be increasing

as part of the 'community turn' in public policy. This is not least the case in relation to work around tackling disadvantage and social exclusion, despite the fact that the causes of disadvantage are multiple, complex and arguably related to deep-seated structural aspects of unequal societies dominated by market processes. Alongside this, a new public policy focus on welfare as in need of substantial reform, as discussed in Chapter 3, has involved a rhetorical and discursive transformation such that 'welfare' is part of the old, passive and out-dated welfare state. In contradistinction, an active, 'positive' welfare state (Giddens 1994, 1998) provides resources which enable people to pull themselves out of situations of disadvantage, by increasing 'employability', 'resilience' and 'capacity'. However, the goods and services supplied by the voluntary and community sector remain primarily, though not exclusively, resources devoted to 'getting by' and amelioration of the experience of disadvantage, rather than resources designed to enable people to 'get on' or 'get ahead'. This has largely been the experience demonstrated by the case study projects in this thesis. However, if the new focus on welfare is about providing different forms of capital to 'get ahead', it is not yet clear how the voluntary and community sector will be encouraged or incentivised to provide such resources, and with what consequences. Linked to this is another open question for community development policy and practice, namely the implications of viewing poverty and disadvantage not as fixed states but as multiple, dynamic and changeable situations, as demonstrated in newly emerging longitudinal research discussed in Chapter 2. How should community development, and community-based voluntary action, which claims typically to be oriented towards tackling poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion, respond to these more recent perspectives and findings? Does it need to adapt so that it is organised, developed and practised differently? It is not yet clear whether policy and practical debates have started on these important issues.

III. Implications for research

Having considered some of the practice and policy implications arising from the work detailed in this thesis, it is also appropriate to consider what implications and further directions for research might emerge. The research has explicitly sought to adopt an approach of 'getting close' to its case study research objects and associated respondents. Arguably this was facilitated by the extended collaboration with the Durham Rural Community Council. An intensive research strategy,

deploying primarily qualitative methods such as ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews and informal discussions, and analysis of project documentation, allowed a closer attention to the detailed dynamics of the operation of community-based projects. What resulted was hopefully a fuller, richer and more fine-grained sensitivity to the challenges, dilemmas and conflicts which occur in these contested 'fields'. Not all of these have been reported here, but those that have perhaps suggest the importance of detailed, dynamic stories of community-based projects rather than simple snapshot pictures which are so often used in research and policy papers to illustrate or make an argument, but which rarely describe anything beyond the barest essentials of case study projects or organisations. This highlights the value of longer term, quasi-longitudinal qualitative research, using intensive research methods, as a means to deepen our understanding of community-based voluntary action.

But if the benefits of intensive case study work are apparent from the above arguments, there may also be drawbacks. As discussed in Chapter 5, it is possible to argue that the findings from such research are so specific and context dependent that they run the risk of being considered idiosyncratic. This is a familiar criticism of case study research, and has social scientific roots which go way back at least to the 'Methodenstreit' in political economy in the late 19th century, where a methodological divide opened up between those wishing to explore a finely grained historical-institutional, or 'idiographic' analysis of political economy, and those who wished to develop an abstract, universal, or 'nomothetic' model of economic and social explanation (Gamble 1995: 518-20). In defence against the charge of idiosyncrasy, several points may be made. Firstly we have examined a number of different cases and contexts of community-based voluntary sector activity, rather than relying on a single case (Bryman 1988: 88). Secondly, the aims of the research were never to pursue a kind of statistical representativeness, but to explore the generalisability of the theoretical accounts of process which have been developed (Bryman 1988: 90).

This leads to the third point, in that the theoretical framework used here, and summarised above, has a much wider application than the contexts specifically studied here. Community-based voluntary activity takes place within a wider framework of contextual economic, social and cultural rules and resources (Layder 1997). The arguments presented in this thesis around field, time and scale are intended to have wider application than just the singular projects studies in depth

here. The detail of their applicability elsewhere (and, no less importantly, at different times) is likely to differ, but it is suggested that their wider relevance should hold in different contexts. One task for future work might be to apply the framework in such a way that specific differences between projects, areas and time periods could be explored further in order to refine the arguments. In particular two areas seem to offer particularly fruitful avenues for further research:

1. The suggestion that community-based voluntary action may display important 'club'-like characteristics, and the implications which might flow from this idea.
2. The suggestion, derived from the arguments around a temporal perspective presented in Chapter 8, that community-based voluntary action might fruitfully be understood as a longer term historical set of processes, with community involvement, and community development interventions more generally, acting as successive 'rounds of investment'.

These two areas are outlined briefly below.

System, Field and Club – towards a political economy of community-based voluntary action?

This thesis began with a caricatured distinction between 'policy world' and 'everyday life'. This could be seen as reflecting an earlier, perhaps more theoretically informed, distinction from Habermas between a 'system' and a 'lifeworld' (Habermas 1986, Layder 1994: 186-206). Later chapters of the thesis have explored the idea of community-based voluntary activity as one of a number of inter-related but semi-autonomous 'fields' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Jessop has recently consolidated an argument along similar lines, albeit from different theoretical premises in political economy (Jessop 2002: 8, see also 11, 277):

It is worth considering several other potentially self-organising (or autopoietic) systems with major significance for social order in modern societies. These include the legal system, the political system, science, the educational system, religion and art. Each has its own operational code, organizational principles, institutional dynamics, institutional rationalities and logics of appropriateness. Together they form a self-organising ecology of instituted systems that develops through the

interaction between their respective operational autonomies and material interdependencies.....

Alongside the system domain there exists a rich and complex lifeworld (sometimes inadequately described as 'civil society'), which is irreducible to such systems and their logics. It provides multiple sites of resistance to these logics as well as constituting a major sphere in its own right for conflicts and struggles as well as mutual recognition and solidarities.

For Jessop's autopoietic systems one might substitute Bourdieu's fields. Arguably the voluntary and community sector constitutes a relatively self-enclosed system (of values, relationships and discourses), as argued in Chapter 7. However, it is also important to recognise the 'lifeworld' or 'everyday life' elements of the voluntary and community sector. Many of the current debates and issues (such as the 'turf wars' and other field disputes reported in earlier chapters, or the ongoing debate about the consequences of closer 'partnership' with the state (Dahrendorf 2001, Taylor *et al* 2002)) arise as a result of the often uneasy and awkward intermediate position of the sector between these two worlds with their different operational logics and demands.

At various points in the empirical analysis undertaken for this thesis it has been suggested that fields involving community-based voluntary action may have a tendency to operate as collaborative 'clubs'. By 'clubbing together' individuals and groups may pool resources, create 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham 1996) and generate the kind of inter-personal and inter-organisational trust which could lower the transactions costs of collective action (Coulson 1998). However it is arguable that the degree to which such collaborative efforts can do this depends upon the exclusion of those which might disrupt, or otherwise compromise, such activity (Jordan 1996, Fraser 2002). Thus a 'club' becomes a relatively coherent (and sometimes cosy) group of insiders, or members, which, by a variety of formal and informal means serves to exclude those whose participation might threaten the stability and success of existing insider relationships.

There are good reasons for suggesting that the field of community-based voluntary action, and the voluntary and community sector more generally, might experience pressures which lead to more 'club-like' structures. In the first place there is, as we have seen from the developing 'community turn' discussed in Chapter 3, so much

practical and policy emphasis being placed on community activity and participation. But secondly, if the voluntary and community sector can reasonably be represented as a crowded field of competitive relationships, in which a capacity to 'deliver' a project, or meet the output requirements of a programme, take some priority, then groups, networks and organisations may seek to encourage the participation of potential and actual members possessing particular skills, experience and reserves of 'capital'. Simultaneously, they may face pressure to manage, and sometimes perhaps actively discourage, the participation of those with fewer resources, skills and capabilities. The potential contribution which might be made by current and prospective members of groups becomes increasingly important. The emphasis, both within groups, and through formal community development interventions, might be to encourage and work with those people who show most promise or potential in terms of developing capacity, delivering projects and meeting targets. Those volunteers, activists and workers with more capital, and knowledge of the game may become prized assets to groups, to the neglect of those with less personal, social and financial resources.

If this is true, it is possible that community-based voluntary action might be facing increasing pressure to operate in a 'club-like' manner, despite the strength of prevailing discourses around inclusion and participation. Whilst this is an abstract case around the possible tendency for fields to operate as clubs, it has yet to be thoroughly tested or explored in the voluntary and community sector, and here we have only made suggested theoretical connections. However, if the government remains serious about the potential role of 'the community' in tackling social exclusion, and if 'community participation' retains its higher policy profile, then this issue might merit further attention.

What emerges from the combination of these ideas is a possible 'political economy' of community-based voluntary action based on three 'domains' or levels of analysis: system, field and club. This draws on different theoretical traditions, from the more structurally oriented analyses of Jessop and Habermas, from Bourdieu's attempts to move beyond structure-agency dualisms and from Jordan's attempt to use public choice perspectives as a way of throwing light on the operation of collective action. The combination of these three perspectives, which have not previously been drawn together, provides a potentially fruitful avenue of further research.

Community-based voluntary action as long term investment

Given the theoretical emphasis placed in this thesis around issues of temporality, it is apposite to consider a further implication of the research and analyses undertaken here. In the policies, practice and reflection upon the processes and outcomes of community development, it is instructive to draw a contrast between the everyday concerns of the 'here and now', or an unfolding present, on the one hand, and the longer term reflections of 'how we got here' and 'where we are going' on the other. A difficulty for community development workers and managers is that the 'present' seems too crowded to permit much in the way of considered reflection of longer term developments. This may simply be a reflection of increasingly 'time-stretched' times, or a tendency towards what Putnam calls a pervasive 'busyness' (Putnam 2000: 189-203). It may also be a reflection of the restlessness with which new projects, programmes and initiatives emerge from central government, sub-central agencies and from within diverse local development agencies such as DRCC. As an example, at the height of the seemingly frantic (and largely unpaid) developmental work undertaken by Councils for Voluntary Service in the autumn, winter and spring of 2001-2002 to establish Community Empowerment Networks in the 88 most deprived Local Authority districts (Macmillan 2002a, Pearson and Morgan 2001), this quotation from one Chief Officer illustrates the pressures at stake:

I always work every night. I go home and I do the things that for one reason or another I haven't managed to do. All my Neighbourhood Renewal documents are wrinkled from being read in the bath. My middle name is 'dull'!

I have to work at home otherwise I can't get it done. It's a super job. It's great. There's loads of things going on. It's very diverse and you're involved in an awful lot of things. I haven't enough staff so it's just one of those things. Have to do it. Great. But I can't do it all in a working week. And sometimes you get to....It's usually Thursday and panic sets in. It can't be Thursday! I haven't done anything that I was going to do this week. It can't be Thursday yet!

If this suggests an ongoing time pressure, in order to 'keep up' with latest developments, it may also prevent a realistic understanding of the processes and trajectories which come to create a particular present (Archer 1995). In the present, there might simply be insufficient 'thinking space' to consider the recent past.

However, projecting forwards, the work undertaken in and around a particular project or initiative is unlikely to reap instant rewards, despite the frequent interest in raising confidence and in credibility-enhancing 'quick wins'. Community development, as countless respondents in this study have mentioned, takes time. The results of all this work can only realistically be judged at a later date. However, paradoxically, it is at a later date that earlier community development work tends to be forgotten. This could be because, as indicated above, the present is too 'crowded' to think of the past (i.e. we've already 'pushed on' to somewhere else) and/or because it is too difficult (i.e. assessing the enduring impact of community development activities is complex when judged against the ongoing everyday 'swirl' of social and economic life). Community development therefore becomes an earlier footprint, a memory trace from an earlier time (Amin and Thrift 2002: 22-23), now perhaps largely forgotten, and often overlooked in any causal analysis of the *present* state of community activity. Indeed, as argued in Chapter 8, in much analysis of the voluntary sector and community development, the concerns are very much ones of providing synchronic snapshots, or the 'configurational dimension' of current performance or condition, to the neglect of the temporal, diachronic 'episodic dimension' (Sayer 2000: 143) of development and trajectory.

However, the case studies discussed in this thesis, particularly in East and West Durham, seem to bear testimony to the fact that the recent past, in community development terms, quite strongly sets a context in which the 'here and now' can take place. The 'Dales Community Project' and the 'Federation of Community Partnerships' were both shaped by earlier community development activity, much of it organised through or involving DRCC. Arguably, the fragility displayed by the mid-Durham 'Village Community Partnership' and the 'Dales Rural Community Finance Initiative' indicates at least in part the thin and fleeting form of earlier community development involvement. Insofar as this perspective has merit, it suggests that community development might be more explicitly conceptualised as a form of temporal investment. An analogy may be drawn with a longstanding and controversial debate in Britain over economic and industrial 'restructuring' (Massey 1978, 1979), the 'spatial division of labour' (Massey 1995) and its differential impact on 'localities' (Cooke 1989). Massey's original theory, which sparked the debate, centred on the role played by successive 'rounds' of capitalist accumulation which subsequently affected class and gender relations in different ways in different regions and localities. This was often presented as a geological metaphor where rounds of accumulation were successive 'layers' of sedimented economic

investment, with different geographical outcomes depending on the pattern of previous investment³.

A recent reference to this in relation to the geography of charity formation has been published by Bryson *et al* (2002). This is worth quoting in full, since it gives a good flavour of the argument in use, although arguably it takes a challengeable interpretation Massey's framework:

For charities, geography matters, or more importantly precise local geographies matter, as these are one of the barriers imposed by founders on the community involved in a charity's area of giving. For charity, it matters on which side of a street one lives or whether a house was to the left or right of an oak tree that existed in the seventeenth century.

*The geography of almshouse charity is closely related to the historical and localised accumulation of capital. Almshouses were founded by wealthy individuals and their location mirrors former geographies of private wealth. In some respects, the uneven distribution of charitable organisations in the UK reflects **Massey's (1984) well-known geological metaphor** of historical accumulation of layers of capital investment. The distribution of charities reflects previous rounds of capital investment as well as forms of patronage ranging from old established families to royalty*

(Bryson *et al* 2002: 52, emphasis added)

This perspective begs a question regarding how far back we should or could go in analysing the effects of the past. The difficult part here though (conceptually and methodologically) is to identify the mechanisms which link community development in the past with the 'capacity' of ongoing community activity in the 'here and now'. What things about community development and capacity building tend to 'stick' such that their impact is more enduring? Of course the 'here and now' of community action is not just based on community development support or professional input.

³ In a response to Warde's (1985) critique of the theory, Massey is at some pains to deny that it was ever framed in terms of distinct, as opposed to interacting, geological layers and is somewhat frustrated that it became known as 'Massey's geological metaphor' (1995: 321).

Every day, in all kinds of places, a number of people get involved in a variety of activities that we might call 'community activity'. Some of this is paid, much of it is unpaid (Glen *et al* forthcoming). The here and now activity identifiable in a place is not just the potential outcome of a previous or current initiative; it also reflects the everyday and ongoing decisions of lots of people to 'get involved', 'be involved' and contribute in various ways to community-based action. Given the turbulence and dynamism of the field of community-based voluntary action, where projects, workers and organisations are seen to come and go, quite often the most enduring features of community development are the unpaid volunteers who stay involved in a project or organisation over many years.

The paradox between our ability to examine the effects of an intervention ('things take time....'), and our ability to remember it ('we've moved on now, that was ages ago.....') seems to be absolutely central to debates about impact. In a more analytical sense, there may be merit in using the ideas of capital formation (from Bourdieu and Chapter 7) as investments over time (from Massey), as a way of exploring the role of community development in building the collective and individual resources to tackle exclusion and disadvantage. This might involve the development of a theoretical conversation between two recent models which seem to have been proposed in isolation. On the one hand, Burchardt *et al* (2002a: 9, see also Figure 2.1, page 27) developed their complex, diachronic and capital-based framework for understanding social exclusion without including much of a contribution of policy responses, including community development. On the other hand, Taylor's (2003: 178) multi-level 'empowerment tree' helpfully facilitates an examination of the different roles which could be played by community development and community-based voluntary activity, from individual and collective empowerment journeys at Levels One and Two, to a stronger notion of communities with greater control over their futures, resources and facilities in a putative Level Three. Although Taylor discusses this model in terms of a 'progression' through the respective levels (*ibid*: 179), the model still appears somewhat cross-sectional or static. In a discussion of real trajectories of individuals, groups and communities, it might be useful to develop a framework with a more temporal dimension, as suggested in the argument presented in this thesis. Thus Burchardt *et al* (2002a: 8) also argue that:

[It] may be useful to distinguish between past and present influences on outcomes. The influence of the past is represented by the amount of capital accrued, whether of the individual or the community. As far as

social exclusion is concerned, bygones are not bygones but represent the starting point for the present.

The combination of these separate contributions could make for a productive theoretical exchange over the potential role of community development in addressing issues of social and economic outcomes over time. However, in practice we do not know much about the recent historical development of communities as the 'starting points' for their current state of health⁴, the present distribution of social and economic opportunities or the development of new programmes, projects and interventions. Empirical examination of real cases in these terms might help develop the theoretical conversation further. A hint of a practical application of this idea is presented below as a final word to this thesis.

IV. A final word....

A major difficulty for those field-participants who are concerned to promote community-based solutions to problems such as disadvantage and social exclusion, is that the respective temporalities of the problem (social and economic processes generating and reinforcing disadvantage), and the proposed solution (the combined paid and unpaid policy and practical 'effort' involved in developing community-based projects, networks and organisations) do not tend to coincide (Macmillan 2001). On the one hand it is arguable that the processes which can lead to situations of disadvantage happen extremely rapidly. The structure of opportunities and flow of 'capital' available to people can alter dramatically, and often as a result of a complex interplay of events and forces at some distance. The rapid shifts in, for example, private sector financial and economic investments in pursuit of profit maximisation, or cost minimisation, can have almost immediate effects on some people and some areas. County Durham, for example, has long been somewhat vulnerable to the investment decisions taken by major employers. This can be seen in the post-war economic strategies of key heavy nationalised industries (Hudson 1989), the various waves of pit closure programmes, and more recently the decisions by major firms to close or reduce the scale of operations of manufacturing branch plants in the County. Public economic strategies have tended to stress the importance of

⁴ The 'health' and 'strength' of communities is currently receiving a great deal of practical and policy attention. See, for example, Audit Commission (2002), Skinner and Wilson (2002), Chanan (2002).

diversifying the economic base in response (County Durham Economic Partnership 2002). However, the point here is that the 'landscape' of opportunities facing people can change in an extremely short space of time. If major job losses are sustained from such decisions, the aggregate income of an area can decline rapidly and wider forms of disadvantage may follow in its wake. Likewise the crisis over Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001 illustrated just how quickly a livestock disease problem can rapidly become one which affected the whole economy in some localities.

As we have seen in this thesis the 'community turn' now means that the voluntary and community sector is increasingly assuming a role in terms of 'picking up the pieces'. But, the process of community-based voluntary action can take a great deal of time. Creating new projects, organisations and opportunities for people and places otherwise abandoned by markets, and often ill-served by public services under pressure, can require extraordinary amounts of unpaid and paid time and effort, over a number of years. This is compounded by the difficulties sustaining involvement, and building different forms of 'capital' and capacity given the turbulence and turnover in participation. The difficulty, as we have argued, is finding things which will 'stick' around. The work in East Durham, now reaping some rewards in particular villages, and in the Dales area, receiving some national recognition, is often presented to the wider world stripped of its temporal context (see Wilding *et al* 2002: 10-12 and Local Government Association 2003: 42-3, for two examples of this tendency with reference to the Dales area). There is little sense of the struggle and development over time required in order to reach the stage at which a project or initiative can be held in such regard that it merits a mention as a case study in publications with national relevance. For some this might mean that community-based voluntary action is an inappropriate response to disadvantage and social exclusion, not just for the usual reason that it is too small scale, but also because it can rarely respond quickly enough. The final pit closures in East Durham occurred in the space of less than two years in the early 1990s. Community-based voluntary action which has subsequently developed has taken up to ten years to reach a stage where, in some places, it is regarded positively and is perhaps making some impact, although being somewhat fragile and on a small scale. In the Dales area, the Dales Community Project could only play its vital role during the crisis of Foot and Mouth Disease precisely because of the decade or so of institution building which had taken place prior to the outbreak. The area was fortunate enough that earlier and ongoing investment in community-based voluntary action and community

development, ostensibly for other reasons, was able to respond quickly to the crisis emerging on its doorstep.

This perhaps emphasises the argument that community development, and community-based projects, are necessary, but rarely sufficient policy and practical responses to poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion. An enhanced role for community-based voluntary activity, and a recognition of its importance, although perhaps welcome, needs to be placed within a wider anti-poverty or 'social inclusion' strategy (New Policy Institute/Fabian Society 2001, Darton *et al* 2003, Darton and Strelitz 2003) involving the whole range of public, private, third and informal sector resources, deployed to cover multiple issues of disadvantage in the whole range of urban and rural contexts.

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