Purcell, R. (2005) *Understanding perspectives: organising for change.* In: Purcell, R. (ed.) Working in the Community: Perspectives for Change [2nd rev.ed.]. Rod Purcell, pp. 186-216. ISBN 9781411651388

http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/88304/

Deposited on: 09 December 2013

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Underlying Perspectives:
Organising for Change

"Not to be on the side of the poor and oppressed, is not to be neutral, but to be on the side of the rich and powerful" Paulo Freire

"I know of no safer depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves". Thomas Jefferson

Aims of this chapter

The chapter starts with a discussion towards developing a revised model of community work practice that encompasses ideas from the forgoing chapters. We then consider the use of participatory methods, organisational strategies and power, to build powerful community organisations. And in the light of this reflect on capacity building, social capital and leadership

Towards a new community work model

We need to do better in the communities in which we work. We need to improve our understanding of the diverse threads of globalisation and capitalism and think through what this means for practice. It is time for a revised flexible community work model. Such a model can only be produced by analysis and discussion amongst workers themselves. All I attempt here is to make some tentative drawing together of ideas and suggest some possible ways forward.

During 1996 Sheela Patel Director of SPARC a NGO in Mumbai, India made a study tour of the UK. Her report (Patel 1997) is a synthesis of Indian and UK experience. In particular she identifies a number of problematic practice areas. In her view the bid culture has come to dominate. Community projects are driven by short term funding regimes at the expense of developing a long term strategy. More importantly, the objectives of community organisations are shaped by where funding is available rather than local needs. I am sure most community workers will, if they are honest, agree with this analysis. Patel made a number of specific points:

- Funding goes to the worst areas. There is therefore a disincentive for communities to break out of the worst levels of deprivation. Success leads to the loss of funding; a reworking of the classic poverty trap.
- Community development needs to move beyond service delivery. Real changes only come through changing the ways things are and not simply plugging the gaps.
- The emphasis on delivering service ratter than enabling individuals and communities lead to increasing dependency.
- Community representation and leadership is often limited, under resourced, untrained and marginalised.
- Value for money could be improved from the more direct involvement and employment of local people rather than increased employment of professionals.
- The issues around volunteerism need to be explored. How can exploitation of volunteers be prevented? How can more men and young people be encouraged to participate?
- The safety net of the welfare state has created a dependency mind set; the feeling that the solution to problems will come from elsewhere rather than from personal responsibility and action.

Patel goes on to suggest a new model for sustaining community development. This suggested revision of practice she calls 'A New Focus' and contrasts it with the 'traditional approach'.

	Traditional Approach	A New Focus
1. Mode	Service delivery	Solution oriented
2. Time Scale	Short term (3 to 5 years)	Long term (10 years +)
3. Style	Pragmatic and opportunistic	Strategic
4. Characteristics	Relief via projects	Regeneration via processes
5. Key Partners	Government and NGO's	NGO's and the local community
6. Project Design	Vertical	Horizontal
7. Project Bias	Pro-professional	Pro-poor

(from Patel 1997 p8)

As a model of a possible way forward this has a lot to commend it. The SRB's and Social Inclusion Partnerships have, for example, taken in the longer time scale required for fundamental change to take place in communities. However, the thrust of regeneration work in the UK is still towards improved service delivery with local groups responding pragmatically according to funding criteria. The process of rebuilding and genuinely empowering the community is largely ignored. Local and national government agencies are still dominant, power resides at the top and the whole process is effective run by professionals.

For community work practice to more effective it needs to adopt the 'New Focus' and become more centred on strategic work with communities. It has to help identify and respond to needs and rights driven agendas developed at the local level. In doing so it has to shift the balance of concern from the social planning agenda to that of the poor. More importance must be placed on the process of the work without losing site of the product. The difficulties of doing this should not be underestimated while community work continues to be under the hegemony of the state. The old community work debates on how to work against the state whilst being funded by it are still pertinent. However, the shift of community work towards better responding to local needs has to be accomplished. This does not necessarily mean continued opposition to government funded

agencies or the rejection of partnership. Rather, it is about community workers developing some freedom of manoeuvre in order to be able to respond to local needs and issues.

We may also add to the 'New Focus' the insight from Routledge (1997) about the levels in which campaigning and development activity takes place. Traditionally community development work has had a local focus between community based groups and usually the local state. Even large scale national campaigning, for example against the Poll Tax used traditional forms of protest developed from trade union activity to oppose national government policy.

The new developments concern campaigning that exists primarily in 'media space'. Routledge is correct to see this as an aspect of postmodern politics. It is an activity that Naomi Klein discusses in a global context in her books No Logo and Fences and Windows where campaigns are run through the Internet, using web sites to promote and discuss the issue. Email, telephone, video and use of the news media are the main vehicle for promoting the campaign. The traditional tactics of putting people on the street to protest becomes an adjunct to using the media, rather than as the prime form of activity in itself. Routledge quotes the following to illustrate the point:

> *"The more we get on TV the better. Were trying to use TV as a media to get people off their arses, to get them angry, and get them involved"* Jake, Pollok Free State

> *"A two minute take is what the public perceives the struggle to be about, so for those two minutes it is important to manipulate reality as you wish to see it represented"* Lindsay, Earth First

These techniques have been pioneered by many in the environmental movement and have now taken on global significance: for example the recent Live 8 campaign against international debt. Used properly, campaigning in media space can have an impact far beyond that possible by traditional means.

Community work is essentially about promoting a process committed to community empowerment. It is true that empowerment is a much contested concept and that its vagueness has led to many

practitioners abandoning it all together. This is a mistake. Forrest (1999) provides a useful discussion on empowerment and argues for:

> *"an understanding of the contest taking place over empowerment and how the consciousness of control, participation, a shared vision, self organised leadership and ownership can become elements of a liberatory empowerment process will underpin praxis. This is conscientised empowerment"*

In Monitoring and Evaluation of Community Development in Northern Ireland (Barr, Hashagen, Purcell 1996) we defined the promotion of community empowerment as the core process of community development. Empowerment, in our view, comprises four *key dimensions*. To these a fifth dimension has been added (Purcell 2004)

1. Personal empowerment
2. Positive action
3. Development of community organisations
4. Power relationships and participation.
5. Leadership

These five dimensions can be sub divided to give a clearer identity to the purpose of the community development process. Whilst wishing to avoid crude reductionism, it is possible to use the criteria in appendix 5 as a checklist for practice. This checklist provides a mechanism for ensuring that the core perspectives are included in our work. Furthermore, this close definition of what our work is trying to achieve enables us to ensure that we have clarity of purpose and direction and that we are committed to specific outcomes.

Implemented properly this empowerment process also leads to real outcomes in terms of more confident, knowledgeable and skilled individuals, raised awareness of critical issues, the development of powerful community organisations with some political clout.

But this is not the sole purpose of development. The fundamental aim is to improve the quality of life within the community on a sustainable basis. Far too many community projects

are dependent upon the continued presence of paid workers and external funding. Sustainability of the work has to be an integral in most situations.

The NGO Habitat II conference further defined quality of life in terms of sustainability:

- Social sustainability
- Sustainable economics
- Sustainable livelihood
- Physical sustainability
- Sustainable culture

Such improvements therefore can take many forms depending upon local circumstances but are likely to include:

- Economic gains – around employment, extra resources spent in the community and anti poverty strategies
- Social gains – improved quality and access to education, health care, housing and welfare services
- Environmental improvements
- Safer community

The diagram in appendix 1 provides an overview of the community development process. Inputs to the process of empowerment may come from agencies outside the community and / or from agencies and local organisations which are part of the community themselves. It is important to remember that inputs include the activities of local people, paid and unpaid, as well as the use of physical resources and money.

The *underpinning perspectives* informs *how* the work is to be done (e.g.: with respect to a feminist analysis, identification of local needs, social and economic context, rights and values, etc).

The *process* of community development is the key part of promoting empowerment. The *5 key dimensions* providing the check list of activities which helps identify *what* is to be done (e.g.: activities to promote personal empowerment, positive action etc.). Essential to the successful development of the empowerment process is basing the work on the Freirian reflection – vision – planning – action cycle and understanding that community development work is

fundamentally and educational activity both for the individuals concerned and the community organisation as a whole.

The outputs and outcomes help us to decide what we are trying to produce as a result of our work. Outputs are things over which we have direct control and may be split into two categories: *specific outputs* such as new buildings and activities, and *capital outputs* such as human, economic and social capital.

Outcomes are larger scale results over which we, as community workers may have some influence but not control; for example women gaining qualifications and employment as a result of an information service. By constantly checking the results of our work against our planned outputs and outcomes we know how well the working is going and whether we need to change our approach.

Making participation work

Participation is another of the key words of community development that is seldom defined and often misused. The concept of participation is ideologically based and related to the use and/or distribution of power.

All mainstream political parties the libertarian and new right factions favour participation. Indeed the whole partnership approach is based on a stated commitment to community participation. Arguments in favour of participation include the belief that free individuals have the 'right' to be actively involved in decisions and processes that affect their lives. This is the key point. Participation is a right it is not a favour to be granted by council or government officials. Furthermore, decisions made by the people concerned are often more realistic and effective than those made by bureaucrats. And that personal growth takes place from the experience of being involved in participative processes.

The alternative, hard left view (see for example, Coit 1978) is that participation creates a myth that we live in a classless society. In doing so it diverts potential militant action into negotiation. This results in watering down of demands and possible gains for working class communities. In addition the community 'representatives' who sit on participative bodies either form another elite group above the local community, or leads to the siphoning off of working class

leadership. Other left writers, for example Cockburn (1997) accept the dangers of co-option through participation strategies but point out real gains for working class communities that can be made this way.

Participation by members of the community is essential to community development. The common view is that the degree of active participation is in decline. This is often attributed to people being apathetic. However, blaming people for being apathetic by failing to do what the community worker wants them to do is at best naïve, at worst arrogant. We need a more analytical understanding of why people do or do not participate in community affairs.

Ohio State University have identified reason why citizens may become involved in community activity. This is when people:

- See positive benefits to be gained from the activity
- Have an appropriate organisational structure available to them for expressing their interests
- See some aspect of their way of life threatened
- Feel committed to be supportive of the activity
- Have better knowledge of an issue or situation
- Feel comfortable in the group

People will become involved if the community work job is being done properly. Often people do not participate, not due to apathy, but due to the workers misidentifying the issues or even trying to tie local people into the worker or agency's own agenda. Knowledge is also important and this is best developed through reflective discussion. People need to make the link between the issue and their own situation. Freire gives us ways of enabling these connections to be made. Simply distributing leaflets and expecting people to respond is nothing more than lazy practice. If you want people involved you have to talk with them.

The Ohio documents also suggest ways in which participation can be increased:

- Stressing the benefits of participation
- Organising or identifying appropriate groups receptive to citizen input
- Helping citizens find positive ways to respond to threatening situations

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- Stressing obligations each of us have towards community improvement
- Providing citizens with better knowledge on issues and opportunities
- Helping participants feel comfortable within the development group.

Some of this simply comes down to good groupwork practice which will be discussed below.

There is no doubt that participative bodies themselves have often failed to contribute much more than a public relations gloss. However, properly understood and used, participation is the cornerstone of development activities. The Community Workers Co-operative (1997) has outlined what participation is and is not:

Participation is	Participation is not
• A process which empowers people	• Giving information and assuming it is enough
• Active involvement of people	• Asking people what they think and then disregarding it
• Process which enables people to develop skills, confidence and knowledge	• Deciding what is 'good' for people
• Process which is deliberately chosen and resources	• A cheaper and quicker alternative to centralised planning
• Process which requires effort and time	• Involving people in planning but excluding then from implementation and monitoring
• Process which targets those who are marginalised and excluded	• Involving people in activities without prior involvement in planning
• Promotes active involvement of end beneficiaries and users	• Just contact the visible mainstream groups without targeting the marginalised and excluded
• Power sharing and negotiation between stakeholders	
• Based on the articulation of interests	
• Underpinned by a commitment to eliminating exclusion and inequality	

The classic text on participation comes from Arnstein (1969). She saw a wide range of activities being carried out under the

name of participation. In Arnstein's views the goal was for citizen participation. She defined this as:

> *"the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programmes are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parcelled out. In short it is the means by which they can induce significant reform which enables them to share in the benefits of an affluent society"*

Arnstein identified 8 hierarchical steps on a ladder of participation.

Level	Type of Participation	Nature of the Experience
8	**Citizen Control**	Degrees of Citizen Power
7	**Delegated Power**	"
6	**Partnership**	"
5	**Placation**	Degrees of Tokenism
4	**Consultation**	"
3	**Informing**	"
2	**Therapy**	Non Participation
1	**Manipulation**	"

Whatever it may be called activities at levels 1 and 2 are clearly not participation. These levels are characterised by attempts at public relations to gain support, through leaflets and the media, for decisions that already have been made. Levels 3, 4 and 5 involve a greater degree of citizen involvement but the purpose of the exercise is mostly to inform citizens through leaflets and public meetings, rather than effectively engage then in a real debate about decision making. At levels 6, 7 and 8 citizens have either equal power with government bodies (level 6) or have decisions delegated to then

(level 7). At the top level citizens have taken absolute control over the service or resources in question.

Petty (1994) quoted in Blackburn and Holland has developed a useful typology of participation from perspective of local people. He sees participation as operating at 7 levels:

Level	Attributes
7.Self mobilisation	People take the initiative themselves – this may or may not challenge existing distributions of power
6. Interactive participation	People participate in the formation of joint plans which lead to action. Some control involved over local services and resources
5. Functional participation	People form groups to meet objectives predetermined by others e.g. forming a steering group for a project planned and funded by an outside agency
4. Participation by material incentive	People participate by contributing resources e.g. undertaking a local survey, expecting in return material improvements. Usually, results do not meet local expectations.
3. Participation by consultation	External people discuss proposals with the community, but the decision on how to proceed is taken externally
2. Participation in information giving	Participation is based on answering questions but do not have an opportunity to discuss or check the findings
1. Passive participation	People being told what is going to happen, or has happened. Information being shared is owned by officials

(adapted from Petty 1994)

Levels 1 to 3 are clearly just tokenism and should be avoided by all development workers. Sadly, levels 4 and 5 are reflected in much current community work practice where the agenda for development lies with external agencies. Level 6 reflects the current model for much regeneration and social inclusion work. The critical question here is how far local people are equals in the process. Level 7 is the goal which is often shied away from by community workers.

Wilcox (1995) takes the opposite perspective and writes from the viewpoint of social planners. He identifies five levels or participation. This is based on Arnstein but is more concerned with current modes of working in the UK. His five levels include the tokenistic levels of *Information* and *Consultation*. He then identifies levels of partnership as - *Deciding Together* – *Acting Together* – *Supporting Independent Community Initiatives.* This is a useful subdivision of Arnstein's partnership level. There are crucial differences between partners who are only involved in deciding on a course of action, to those involved in implementing action. The failure to be clear about this difference can lead to confusion and mistrust in partnerships. However, it requires an understanding of the balance of power within the partnership to be an effective model. For example, do we all decide together equally or do some have more influence in decision making than others?

These typologies raise a number of crucial points. There is a difference between having a formal place on a board or organisation and having the skills, knowledge and resources to be able to effectively use the place. If we are serious about making participation work then it is essential to give the time, resources and support to community representatives so they are equipped to do the job. A further dimension is the importance of ensuring that marginalised groups are included in participatory processes. It is easy to 'give' places to established representatives from well known community groups. It is less easy, but essential, to ensure that women, Black and ethnic minorities, young people, etc are effectively involved. The location and timing of meetings, provision of crèche facilities and travelling expenses are all basic factors that have to be taken into account to support meaningful participation.

Even if full participation cannot be achieved there may be merit in supporting limited participation – as long as this is the basis of further developmental work and not simply justifying tokenism. Smith (1998) argues that in developing countries limited participation does assist communities. He identifies five forms of benefit, which he terms utilisation, contributions, enlistment, co-operation and consultation.

Utilisation concerns the improved take up of services. This argues Smith, contributes to empowerment as people may become materially better off or start using resources that can be the basis for future development. Contribution is the other side of utilisation

where local resources (often mostly labour power) are used to run or create a new service. Such a development can lead to the provision of a resource that otherwise would not be available to the community and perhaps the community management of services.

Enlistment is the training of volunteers to work in the community as lay professionals. Community health services are the usual example for the developing world. Although in the west credit and money advice may be a better example. The mobilisation of local unpaid workers can have a 'knock on' effect through shaping services to local needs and providing role models for others to become active in their community.

Co-operation is the acknowledgement that for many projects success is unlikely without at least the passive support of the local community. Gaining such support can be the first step to greater involvement and influence by the community. The next step is consultation. Although low on Arnstein's ladder, consultation provides an opening for the community to make an impact of services to their community.

For community workers the basic questions to be considered for promoting participation are:

- Who participates – from which constituencies
- How do we ensure marginalised groups are included
- In what processes
- How de we ensure all stakeholders support the agreed process
- What are the support requirements – time, resources, access to information, crèche etc.
- Through which organisational forms
- With what degree of power (where on Arnsteins ladder is this, where does the community want it to be?)

Organising for community work

Every worker and community leader prides themselves on their ability to make things happen and to organise activity. However, this is often a one dimensional activity. Case studies show workers repeating methods of organising regardless of the situation. Just

because an approach has worked before does not mean that it will work in every situation. To be effective workers need to have an adaptable theory of organisation, a tool kit of methods and a professional approach to supporting community organisations and promoting change. As Alinsky points out a social problem becomes an issue to be won *only* when there is an organisation capable of fighting it. A community that is not organised is simply a community suffering. Building an organisation is more than printing leaflets, calling meetings and creating steering committees. It is hard work and depends upon the application of theory according to the local situation.

Gramsci argues through his writing on hegemony *that all aspects of social reality are dominated by or supportive of a single class* (quoted in Mayo 1999). He goes on to argue that people working for social transformation have to engage in what he calls a 'war of position' relating to social organisations and cultural influence. Unless community organisations are prepared, when required, to resort to campaigning and conflict there is little chance for effective shifts of power at the local level and sustainable increases in the level of community empowerment.

The realpolitik of community work means that the 'war of position' has to be developed thoughtfully and creatively. In many instances communities have to promote constructive engagement with other power holders. As Saul Alinsky said *"compromise always puts you ahead of where you started"*. Deprived communities are usually in a very weak position and direct confrontation with government agencies is often unlikely to be successful. Working from a position of continuing opposition therefore will only alienate possible allies and lead to a culture of continual defeat for the community. To quote from Sun Tzu's Art of War, *"to win without fighting is best"* and the resort to confrontational strategies should be a considered last resort.

Some Marxists oppose the idea of constructive engagement on the basis that it diverts attention and energy away from the real structural issues affecting society. However, the idea of constructive engagement is based on the idea of the community identifying its own needs and building its organisational strength. It accepts the need for joint working with government and compromise and that proposed change has to be realistic, but allows for range of tactics including confrontation when required. Other Marxists and

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postmodernist radicals tend to support constructive engagement as its helps to build a 'culture of opposition' from which further gains and social change can be built.

In the context of constructive engagement, Barry Checkoway (1995) identifies six strategies of community change. He defines them as:

- Mass Mobilisation around key emotive issues. This was the strategy employed by Ghandi and Martin Luther King
- Social Action through building powerful organisations at the community level as described by Saul Alinsky
- Citizen Participation through involving local communities with social planning and service delivery organisations
- Public Advocacy through using the systems of representative democracy
- Popular Education, based on the work of Paulo Freire which seeks to help people to develop a critical consciousness by reflecting on their current situation
- Local Service Development where communities take control of and provide their own local services.

The implementation of any of these strategies requires the building of an organisation. One way to assist us with developing an effective organisation is to adapt from management theory a 'natural organisation' approach. Generally, natural organisations have three components:

1. they serve a clearly defined purpose
2. they are based on the collection and interpretation of information which provides the basis for action and
3. they are totally flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances

The purpose of community work has been outlined above. The community worker and community organisation should be able to clearly express what they are trying to specifically achieve. This needs to be in terms of specific outputs and outcomes and not vague

generalisations like 'more facilities for children' or 'a better environment'.

The struggle for success is largely based upon changing the perception, opinions and actions by politicians, local government and other agency officials of; the local community, its needs, the power and validity of its organisations, an often vague sense of social justice as well as personal self interest. Community work wins or loses on its ability to change the perceptions of these people to coincide with the interests of the local community. Foucault's adage that *'knowledge is power'* could be developed to *'those who have knowledge of their opponents and who control the nature and flow of information have power'.*

At this point many readers may object to the idea of controlling information. Is this manipulation if not censorship? The answer to this is that information is not neutral and you need to promote information that supports your position and be less open with information that undermines it.

For example, a residents group may be campaigning for local environmental improvements. In doing so the group will deploy arguments about why the environment needs to be improved, why money should be spent on this area, claim that needs are greater in this community than elsewhere, that the residents group have the support of the local community in arguing this position and that in general the group know what they are talking about.

The residents group are not going to point out that their AGM was yet again poorly attended, that the management committee has vacancies, that the office bearers have been unchanged for years, that their playscheme grant has not yet been accounted for and that Christmas social programme for the elderly was a catalogue of organisational errors.

As Alinsky reminds us most situations are in reality 52:48 for and against and nobody is going to commit themselves to a position for the sake of 4%. If you want to win you have to make your position 100:0.

Success is based upon gathering, interpreting and using information to identify and exploit the weaknesses of the opposition whilst manoeuvring away from their strengths. We should consider everything before taking action. There is no substitute for effective analysis and planning. Case studies show that this is also true of effective community work practice. Although, many case studies

also show communities based campaigns marching into action with plans based on little information, or in some cases in direct contradiction to the information at hand.

Case studies on community activity also suggest that much of the high failure rate in community work is due to inflexible approaches. This rigidity is partly due to insufficient information and understanding of what the alternative options might be as well as insecurity of trying new approaches.

Modern management theory sees an effective organisation as a fluid entity committed to a process of continuous change to continually improve its performance. Organisations must be able to adapt according to changes in circumstances. Potentially, community based organisations are ideally suited to respond in this way. However, the traditional approach to community work in Britain is based upon a committee system with regular meetings very much like that of a local government body. For small community based organisations to work this way is not only unnecessary but also counterproductive. The advantages of being is small is the ability to be flexible. Yet the majority of community organisations, in Britain at least, throw away this advantage.

Success depends upon the application of a number of factors:

You are in competition. This is not about competition for the sake of it. It means that community workers and leaders need to recognise they are in competition for scarce resources. The reality is that for your community to win some other community will miss out. You should not embark on campaigns for poorly thought out projects or for resources you do not really need. Neither should you act out of emotion – the estate down the road has a new community centre so we want one too, or we don't like the nearby traveller's camp so we want it out – these are not reason for taking action.

Leadership determines success. What is leadership in the context of community organisations? Many community workers and community organisations reject the notion of leadership. To them it implies being dictatorial and hierarchical. Indeed we all have the memories of organisations who have been 'led' ineffectively and aggressively by a single individual for many years. It is weakness in leadership that leads to failure. This is defined as; recklessness, timidity, emotionalism, egoism and courting popularity.

The dictionary definition of leadership is *the position or office of a leader*, but more meaningfully it is also talks about the *capacity or ability to lead*, that leadership can be based on a *group of leaders,* and that it involves both *guidance and direction of activities.* Community leadership therefore is not about individual power; rather it is an (often small) group of people with the knowledge and skills to take an organisation forward. Without effective leadership an organisation has no future. Like most skills, leadership has to be learnt through reflection on experience. It is one of the roles of a community worker to develop effective leadership within community organisations.

What then are the characteristics of good leadership? It can include; self discipline, a sense of purpose, commitment to meeting the needs of the community, owning personal actions and decisions, constantly improving knowledge and learning from experience, working co-operatively with other and leading by example.

Be effective. The only point of being involved in the community is to promote personal and collective change. Achieving change is built upon effective planning. This in turn is based upon acquiring and assessing accurate information. Taking action follows the planning stage. We can contrast this with 'mindless activism' where people are very busy rushing from one meeting to the next, but without any sense of purpose or objectives. Effectiveness is based on the quality and purpose of your action not the quantity of activity.

Prepare for the worst. Murphy's Law says that if it can go wrong, it will! This is something to be always kept in mind. To avoid things going wrong it is best to keep plans and actions simple, do not be over ambitious and do not tackle projects where you do not have the capacity or resources to succeed.

There are many community work campaigns that have been run against impossible odds on matters of principle. Community based campaigns against new laws, or by small groups against large local authorities are examples. Sometimes these campaigns can be won, the Poll Tax in Scotland is an example, but usually this is due to mass political pressure rather than simply through local community action. With some of the community groups I have worked with, it appears that they go into battle expecting defeat as if to prove how unjust the world is and how strong their principles are. This is nothing more than empty posturing and does the local

community a great disservice. If you are not confident of achieving your goals then do not start the campaign.

Take your opportunities. Speed and innovation are the keys to success. Most organisations the community tries to organise against are large, bureaucratic and slow. The community's advantage is smallness and the potential to respond quickly to opportunities. Do not throw this away by waiting for the next monthly meeting to make a decision.

Make people commit themselves. It is important to know who supports you and who does not. People and organisations are either committed to your side or not. There should be no grey areas here. People are motivated by a number of factors; the importance of the issue (this depends on how you present it), expectation that you will win, personal interest (or family, community, career), enjoyment and fun. This is legitimate; the idea that community activity must involve personal suffering, boredom and only be hard work is another practice myth. If we treat people with respect and train them well the success will come our way.

Be creative. When campaigning think and act creatively. Nothing fails more quickly than doing the same old things in predictable ways. Creativity does not require genius. It is based on learning from experience, doing simple things better trying new ideas and approaches and aiming to improve all the time.

Train for action. When reviewing case studies of community organisations, it is astounding to see how local people are expected to manage resources, develop services, undertake campaigns and constantly put themselves in challenging situations with little or no preparation. It is to the credit of community leaders that they constantly subject themselves to these pressures with little real support. However, without adequate preparation it is hardly surprising therefore that so much community activity is unproductive.

In my experience many local leaders place a low value on training. This is usually the result of their poor experience of schooling and previous courses. Training is often boring and irrelevant. How often is it said that the best part of the training course was the informal conversation in the coffee breaks! There is also often a difference between effective training and local capacity building programmes. Many of these programmes are driven by a top down analysis of what local people need to know in order to fit into

the local partnership structure. Sometimes capacity programmes ask people what they want to learn, but unless this is linked to a reflective process of identifying community needs it is unlikely to be meaningful.

Effective training is about helping people acquire knowledge and skills to undertake tasks, which they have defined as important. To be successful training needs to be focused, well structured, participative and appropriate for the audience. Most of all it has to be an enjoyable experience.

Create surprise. Sun Tzu in the Art of War said *"what does it matter if the enemy has greater resources? If I control the situation, he cannot use them"*. In essence this sums up effective organisation; analyse the situation, see the opportunity, plan for action, respond with the unexpected, do it well.

Understanding and using power

It is impossible to effectively practice community work without understanding power. But what do we mean by power? In one sense it is simply the *motivation and capacity to act, to make changes and to influence the actions of others.* Foucault explains how power is related to knowledge and ideas. Power comes from knowing what you want and how to achieve it. Many community workers think that having power is a bad thing. However, power in itself is neither good nor bad, it is what people do with power that is the problem. Power can be indeed be destructive. However, used differently it can also be productive. It can also be integrative, that is used to create organisations, inspire loyalty and commitment to a cause. Community workers need to understand the nature of power, who has it, how it is used and how might it be used for the benefit of the community. This latter point takes us back to the principles of openness and accountability.

Foucault argues that power is not, as many people think, just the use of physical force. Power is the dynamic that determines the relationship between people. This is an obvious point. How often are we physically made to do something? The majority of the time we do things because we accept the authority (power) of somebody else. Thus we voluntarily limit our actions because we either accept

the power of another person or because we ascribe power to them. Freire describes these as boundary situations where we control ourselves because of our conditioning by outside forces.

Sometimes power is used directly say, between a policeman and a speeding motorist. Other times it operates through hegemony. As know from Gramsci the state and the dominant social groups in society maintain their power through the education system and the media who promote a message of what is to be seen as normal and acceptable. Hegemony also operates at a local level and within communities. Although hegemony works because people accept the status quo, coercive power (the use of force) is often applied when this acceptance by the populace starts to collapse. The miners strike is the classic example in the UK.

Power may be used formally via rank or title, such as policeman. Or it may be based upon informal relationships. In the community setting it is essential to know who the real power holders are. As Alinsky pointed out those with powerful titles might not really be the ones who operate power. For example, the leader of the local council is theoretically the most powerful person in the council structure. However, it may be senior managers who are seldom seen and who are unknown to the general public who hold and exert the real power in the council.

In the community many people have the potential for power, in that they can control resources (volunteers, community activists and their activities). The role of the community worker is to identify who are, and who may become, powerful leaders in the community and work with them to this end. In doing so it is necessary to take account of divisions within the community based on area of residence, age, gender, religion and ethnicity. Community leaders often have their power limited by setting. For example an individual may be leader in terms of housing issues but his views are not respected on other community matters. Community workers need to understand the reality of these situations and not simply ascribe power in the community beyond its real boundaries. Whilst it is preferable to unite a community this may only happen when each part of the community is united and can join together as equals. Sometimes the existing leadership in the community may be a barrier, perhaps due to inefficiency or deference to the local council.

There are a number of well tried methods for understanding power. Firstly, the *'positional method'* is based upon

analysing who holds the key positions in formal situations. However, it is important to be clear which people actually use their power and those who are simply figureheads. Secondly, the *'reputational method'* identifies people who have power in a more informal sense. Usually, their power is based upon their knowledge and the acceptance of others rather than a formal position or title. Thirdly, the *'decisional method'* can be used to see who actually made the key decision on a key issue. Fourthly, the *'social participation method'* can be used to identify who is seen to hold power informally within the community.

Finally, the use of power seldom leads to a confrontation. Usually it is about convincing power holders to do something else in the interests of the community. This may be achieved through direct persuasion or through the use of the media and public events. Sometimes it comes from giving the illusion that the community is powerful and will take action if its demands are not met. Alinsky points out that the threat of taking action is often more powerful than the action itself. Ultimately, conflict may arise but the community needs to make a very careful judgment on the relative power relationships before this happens. There is no point engaging in a conflict that you are going to loose. There is no such thing as a glorious defeat.

If you find yourself in a confrontation then Alinsky is the prime source of inspiration on how to respond. Like the section above on organisation, the use of tactics is the key to success in dealing with power. Alinsky said *"tactics means doing what you can with what you have ... tactics is the art of how to take and how to give."* He developed and proved thirteen tactical rules for use against opponents vastly superior in power and wealth ...

1. "Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.
2. Never go outside the experience of your people.
3. Wherever possible go outside of the experience of the enemy.
4. Make the enemy live up to their own book of rules.
5. Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.
6. A good tactic is one that your people enjoy.
7. A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.
8. Keep the pressure on.

9. The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.
10. Major premise for tactics is development of operations that will maintain constant pressure upon the opposition.
11. If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside.
12. The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.
13. Pick the target, freeze it, personalise it, and polarise it.

Alinsky was hated and defamed by powerful enemies, proof that his tactics worked. His simple formula for success ...

Agitate + Aggravate + Educate + Organize

Capacity building, social capital and community leadership

We have argued that successful community work requires an empowerment process that is built upon participatory approaches, an understanding of power and effective organising strategies. This leads to changes in the ability of the community, through the development of personal skills and knowledge and stronger local organisations. Such changes are defined in terms of capacity building, social capital and leadership.

Community Capacity Building

The UNDP (1997) commented that

> *"capacity development is becoming the central purpose of technical co-operation .. the past four decades practices of delivering foreign aid are being called into question for poor achievements in sustainable impact, national ownership and appropriate technologies ..new global factors such as globalisation, the information revolution, the growth in*

*international markets .. and decentralisation of national
authority are causing UNDP and other international
development organisations reassess their roles and
competencies... Capacity development with its emphasis on
capacities to be developed in support of long term self
management, shifts the focus."*

The term 'capacity building' like much of the UK's social
policy comes from the USA. Originally, capacity building was linked
to economic development as promoted by the USA Community
Investment Act. Recently the idea has been broadened out to include
the social dimension of development. Undertaken properly it is more
than simply training and includes developing structures to better
promote and manage change within a community. Sadly, what passes
for capacity building in the UK is often limited in cope and concept.
The UNDP notes that:

*"The role of public institutions in development is now
changing. Conventional ideas about organizational
engineering are being supplemented by broader notions on
promoting learning, empowerment, social capital and an
enabling environment. Attention is being given to the culture,
values and power relations that influence organizations and
individuals. Donors are using different intervention points
into capacity systems. The informal patterns of personal and
societal behaviour-the rules of the game-are now better
understood. And there is more appreciation of the need to
complement, not replace, indigenous habits and practices.
All of these are slowly forming into a body of concepts called
capacity development"*. (UNDP 1997)

In detail, capacity building means the promotion of a number
of activities, for economic and social purposes, relating to building
both individual capacity and the capacity of community
organisations to meet local needs. In doing so it is about *building on
existing activities* within the community in the following ways
(Skinner 1997, UNDP 1997):

- Agreeing **objectives** between the community and local agencies that provide a common purpose for planned development activity.
- **Prioritisation of key themes.** In the UNDP case these are poverty eradication, position of women, sustainable livelihoods and management of the environment.
- Creating an **environment** in which partners can work together in an open and honest way to collectively defined objectives.
- Providing **educational opportunities**, ranging from individual training for work to skills development for community organisations
- Creating **structures** with clear systems to support individual and community organisations to achieve their goals
- Establishing **partnerships** between supporting agencies and community organisations to ensure needs are met and services and funding opportunities are co-ordinated
- Participatory **monitoring and evaluation** to ensure objectives are being achieved

There is a tension within capacity building programmes. On the one hand it seeks to better equip the community to identify and, in part, meet its own needs based upon the norms and values of that community. On the other hand, it assumes that this can always be undertaken in partnership with service and government organisations. Like most UK social policy and the New Labour vision of social inclusion it derives from the idea that everyone can reach a consensus on objectives and processes. Inequalities of power are either thought to be irrelevant or it is assumed that power holders will always act in the interest of communities.

The UNDP document recognises the need for an attitude and policy shift by agencies to give more primacy to community organisations. There is little evidence of this happening in the UK where the tradition of simply linking the community into local government agendas, albeit with increased token representation, appears to continue. The key questions of: *capacity building for whom, for what purpose, and how to do it,* need to be asked.

Social Capital

Tony Blair in his speech on the Active Community in 1999 said:

> *"Too often in the past government programmes damaged social capital – sending in the experts but ignoring community organisations, investing in bricks and mortar but not in people. In the future we need to invest in social capital as surely as we invest in skills and buildings"*

Superficially, social capital is similar to concept of capacity building, as both are concerned with processes within the community. Often the two terms are confused or integrated so that a capacity building programme becomes social capital building. However, social capital is actually a wider, more robust and controversial idea, which poses some fundamental questions about the nature of, and changes within, society. The current interest in social capital comes as part of the same trends that sees education and social policy as a servant of the economy, the marketisation of social welfare and the respectability and transference of economic ideas and concepts to the social sector. Social capital is therefore an attempt to apply the idea of 'capital' from the economic to the social sphere. In effect linking the disciplines of economics and sociology, to improve the potential for development.

There are various definitions of social capital. It can be summarised *as 'the institutions, relationships, knowledge, attitudes and values that affect interrelationships between people and their contribution to economic and social development'*. This definition is not just concerned with relationships, but also the quality of how they work and the degree of effective participation, networking, reciprocity and trust to create what is called 'civic society'. A limited view of social capital is concerned only with horizontal relationships. That is the nature and strength of relationships within a given community. This can be through the *bonding* of an existing social group or through the building of *bridging* relationships between local groups. A wider definition also includes *linking* social capital through vertical relationships to external agencies and thereby includes consideration of the distribution and use of power to social

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ends. This vertical relationship can be just between a community and the institutions that have a direct effect upon it or include a wider social analysis.

Tom Schuller (in Baron et al 2000) explores the nature of social capital compared to human capital and cultural capital. He defines human capital as a purely economic concept that sees individuals acquiring skills and knowledge, which in turn enables them to increase their income, and by aggregation community income. Bourdieu (1985) explores the relationship between social and cultural capital to explain how power structures are maintained.

An example of using social capital to analyse social problems is Putnam (1996), concerning the decline in the numbers of people engaged in community clubs and organisations (down 50% since 1965) and informal socialising (down 25% since 1965). As in many instances the UK exhibits similar trends to North America, Often this is simply put down to apathy, which just says people are not active without providing any explanation for why this may be so. Putnam set out to provide an explanation for this dramatic reduction of civic life in the USA. Putnam's view was the decline in social interaction was also a decline in social capital. As capital declines so does the resources and potential for a community to undertake activities for itself. As social networks decline the potential for dysfunctional behaviour (crime) increases as the glue that holds community together comes apart.

Having surveyed what he calls the 'usual suspects' of mobility, pressures on time, changing role of women and the family and the disempowering effects of welfare agencies, Putnam concludes the decline is social capital is due to television. If this is correct, then Putnam provides useful evidence that lone parents and working women are not in themselves negative developments. It also enables us to ask how we might make community activity more appealing if the alternative is primarily watching TV.

The argument here is that for development to take place a community needs to build its social capital. Building social capital means developing genuine participation and enabling as many people as possible to develop skills, knowledge and confidence to take action both for themselves and for their community. Community workers should therefore explore with local groups how social capital can be increased in the community and work towards that end. Dhesi (2000) notes that "*when formal and informal institutions*

are in conflict, social capital gets weakened and community action becomes difficult. Before development can be initiated, an attitude reorientation towards accepting change may be required". This attitude change is often required by power holders as much as local people. Institutions and agencies operating in local communities can be analysed in terms of how they contribute to, or negate, the development of local social capital.

Community Leadership

It not clear from the UK policy documents exactly what the government means by this. Is it another form of social entrepreneurship, the community representation on partnership boards, the leadership of autonomous community organisations or an amalgam of all three?

Traditionally, many community workers have been opposed to the concept of leadership. It is seen as representing individualism, opposed to the collectivisation of issues and anti democratic. This is naïve and is based on a vague notion of collective working and confuses the leadership role with decision making. Leadership can be authoritarian and unrepresentative, but it can also, and should, be transparent and democratic. Leadership can also be collective.

The African revolutionary leader Amical Cabral said *"to lead collectively is not and cannot be, as some suppose, to give all and everyone the right to uncontrolled views and initiatives, to create disorders, empty arguments, a passion for meetings without results"* (quoted in Hope and Timmel 1995). Many community workers and community groups could benefit from understanding the nature and importance of leadership. Too many groups meet for an undefined purpose, discuss randomly in an unstructured fashion and decide little. To paraphrase Alinsky, a community problem only becomes an issue you can tackle when you have an organisation to fight it. And an organisation without leadership is a rabble.

Cabral went on to say *"collective leadership must strengthen the leadership capability of all and create specific circumstances where full use is made of all members.... To lead collectively, in a group, is to:*

- Study questions jointly
- Find their best solutions
- Take decisions jointly
- Benefit from the experience and intelligence of each person

To lead collectively is to:

- Give the opportunity of thinking and acting
- Demand that people take responsibility within their competence
- Require that people take initiative
- Co-ordinate the thought and action of those who from the group

Hope and Timmel develop this theme and identify three types of leadership: authoritarian, consultative and enabling. *Authoritarian leadership* is where the leader makes the decision and presents it to the group. Discussion may be invited but only in the knowledge that the decision will stand regardless of what is said. *Consultative leadership* is based on the group discussing options and recommending courses of action. However, the leader(ship) have the final say on what is to be done. In community development only *enabling leadership* is acceptable where the group has the power to make the final decision. Here the role of the leadership is to facilitate the discussion and ensure that an informed decision is reached.

We can also learn from business models, in particular the VCM leadership model. This sees leadership as having three essential components: vision, commitment and management skills. Ideally, leaders or a collective leadership will have a balance of all three components. The benefits of collective leadership are that it is more likely to find these three skills within a group than in any single individual.

In North America where community leadership is highly valued, experience shows that quality leadership does improve the performance of community groups. The role of community leadership therefore, is to help drive the vision of change, support individuals, enable the development of skills and knowledge within an organisation and be at the front when the going is difficult. The role of community work, as Alinsky pointed out, is to identify

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existing and potential community leadership and nurture it so that the community can run itself without the need for external community workers.

Summary

In this chapter we have explored the following points

- We need to link or theory to practice and develop community work practice models that meets the needs of communities
- Traditional models of practice needs to be substantially revised in the age of globalisation
- New campaigning methods and strategies have to adopted to build on the potential of new technology and media interest
- The process of community work should be based on empowering individuals and communities
- The product of community work is to improve the quality of life in communities on a sustainable basis
- Participation is key to successful community work
- Participation needs to clearly defined and implemented at the highest possible level
- For change to happen the community needs to be well organised and appropriate strategies adopted and properly implemented
- The goal of organising is to obtain more power for the community
- Power is often based on acquiescence rather than the direct application of force – that is ▯ egemonic power
- It is necessary to understand where power lies and how it can be influenced
- Community work strategies need to help build community capacity and social capital
- Leadership within the community needs to be better supported and valued

- All the above factors need to held in mind by community workers *if they are to effectively analyse the needs of* communities and possible responses

Further Reading

Patel discusses her views on development in **From the slums of Bombay to the housing estates of Britain**, CIVA,

Classic texts on organisation and power are Sun Tzu **Art of War** online at www.sonshi.com and Green R_**The 48 Laws of Power**, London, Profile Books. Whilst the classic text on community organising is Saul Alinsky **Rules for Radicals,** New York, Random House

Community capacity is discussed in Steve Skinners **Building Community Strengths,** London, CDF. See also Debra Eade **Capacity Building: an approach to people centered development** Oxford, Oxfam.

Social capital is explored in **Social Capital: critical perspectives**, Oxford, Oxford University Press by Baron S, Field J, Schuller T. See also the article by Dhesi **Social Capital and Community Development,** Community Development Journal Vol 35 No 3. John Field's **Social Capital,** London, Routledge also provides a comprehensive overview of the subject