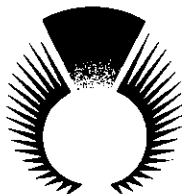# THE ARKLETON TRUST

SUPPORTING AND ANIMATING COMMUNITY-BASED RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE – SOME LESSONS FOR SCOTLAND?

Report of a seminar held in Scotland from 23 to 26 October 1989

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THE ARKLETON TRUST was established in 1976 to study new approaches to rural development and education and to improve communication and education between policy makers, academics and practitioners. Its activities include the award of a number of fellowships for rural development workers in both Europe and the Third World, the running of high level international seminars on rural policy issues, and the stimulation of research and interchange between practitioners. It has three affiliated organisations, **THE ARKLETON TRUST (RESEARCH) LTD,** which specialises in inter-disciplinary and comparative research on economic and social issues in rural areas, especially in Europe, **THE ARKLETON TRUST (RURTEL) LTD,** which provides computer conferencing and electronic mail services to rural organisations, to researchers, to advisory, educational and support organisations, and **ARKLETON TRAINING,** which specialises in the training of rural development agents and animateurs, and in the researching of training needs, using participatory methods. The Trust and its affiliates are registered charities in the UK.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The idea for this seminar came from a study which The Arkleton Trust (Research) Ltd[1] undertook for the Scottish Development Agency in 1988-89 on the experience in designing, supporting, and stimulating ('animating') locally based development projects and programmes in rural areas[2]. The intention of this study was not to provide 'off-the shelf' models for locally based development initiatives, but rather to try to identify the different types of intervention, the role of public authorities, intermediate agencies, and local organisations in them, and the key factors relating to their design, support, funding and mode of operation which seemed to influence their 'success' or 'failure.' The report drew upon some 27 case studies from 12 countries.

A particular focus of the study was the work of locally based 'animateurs,' or 'development agents,' and their organisations which have served as catalysts and enablers of local initiatives aimed at employment creation and economic development.

The report of this study, and the not inconsiderable practical experience of seminar participants in various aspects of initiating, managing, supporting and financing local development projects and programmes, formed the basic material for the seminar.

The interest in locally based and locally initiated programmes or projects has grown steadily since the 1960's, and is reflected in a very wide range of policy initiatives which rely on a rhetoric which crosses traditional political barriers. In short, we can find such initiatives arising from the right, and the left, of the political spectrum. Real social processes, and real learning from the past mistakes of heavily centralised programmes, have been very influential. The experience of the so-called 'Third World' has been important. Yet it is the case that serious, independent evaluations of such programmes and projects, which could provide further lessons on which to build better programmes and initiatives, are rare indeed.

During the course of 1988 and 1989 it was clear that Scotland was moving rapidly towards a kind of institutional reform of its development agencies, which greater emphasis being placed on locally based agencies, 'gateways' or 'one-stop-shops'

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[1] The Arkleton Trust (Research) Ltd is a not-for-profit research company, limited by Guarantee, established in 1985 by The Arkleton Trust to undertake research and studies in the field of rural development, education and training. It specialises in comparative studies, mainly in Europe, and works regularly with other Research Institutes, Universities, and independent researchers in 12 countries. It is a charity registered with the UK Charity Commissioners.

[2] Factors in the Design of Community Based Rural Development Initiatives in Europe. Some lessons from European experience of locally based development interventions aimed at stimulating economic regeneration in peripheral rural areas. Chris Hawker and Niall MacKinnon with John Bryden, May Johnston and Alison Parkes. Arkleton Research with The Scottish Development Agency. March 1989.

to public bodies supporting local development and training, networks of agencies and development workers, integration and coordination. Some work in this area had indeed been pioneered by the HIDB, SDA, Local Authorities and Rural Forum (Scotland). One can think of the HIDB's Community Cooperative Programme started in 1976, or the local enterprise companies supported by the SDA, or the Community Businesses (predominantly urban) initiated by Local Authorities and others during the 1980's. However, often this tended to be fragmentary, aimed at special situations, or taking advantage of special schemes (training schemes of the then Manpower Services Commission, for example), rather than genuinely 'locally based and initiated.' It thus seemed important to draw upon experience from elsewhere in Europe as well as that within Scotland and elsewhere in the UK to try to inform the emerging processes of institutional change in Scotland.

The SDA thus agreed to sponsor this Arkleton Trust seminar to examine in greater depth the issues arising from the study, focusing on 'supporting and animating community-based rural development.' The seminar was designed to bring together policy makers, researchers, administrators of rural programs, and 'animateurs' or development workers. Most of the participants were from Scotland, but six other European 'countries' were represented. As with all Arkleton seminars, presentation of papers was avoided and participation was maximised. John Bryden, Programme Director of the Trust, chaired the seminar. May Johnstone and Frank Rennie, 'animated' it when required, and assisted with workshops and record keeping. Fiona Douglas acted as seminar secretary. Stimulating introductions to sessions were given by Mark Quoidbach (Fondation Rural de Wallonie), Kieran O'Donohue (Connemara West), John Watt (Highlands and Islands Development Board). But all the participants *participated*, and in many cases acted as chairpersons or rapporteurs of working groups. All felt they had learned something of value to their own work in rural areas from the other participants and from the discussions and analysis 'on the hoof.' That is the measure of the seminar's success.

This report cannot wholly capture the flavour and content of the discussion and analysis which took place. Nevertheless, we think it important to try to summarise the main points discussed and the main conclusions reached, with particular reference to the current debates, and changes, in Scotland. Frank Rennie was largely responsible for 'capturing' the discussions on tape and on paper, and translating this into the present report. John Bryden and May Johnstone helped with the conclusions and minor editing. Some participants also gave us helpful comments on a draft of the report. We on the Trust are grateful to the participants for their contributions (in many cases also financial!), to the MacRobert Trusts for providing us with excellent accommodation and facilities for the seminar, and to the SDA for their financial contribution, without which the seminar would not have been possible.

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2. RAISING THE ISSUES

A collective attempt was made to establish, within a broad framework, the main issues relevant to the rural community development. This resulted in identification of 16 commonly recognised components. This list is not exhaustive and many of the points are closely inter-related.

2.1 How do we define the limits of a community?

2.2 Why are we specifically interested in rural communities?

2.3 Should we approach rural development primarily from a local perspective?

2.4 What is the nature and scale of rural development?

2.5 Is self-sustaining development possible at a community level?

2.6 What sort of organisational structures are required to support the development of rural communities?

2.7 To what degree should community groups (the local agency) be representative and accountable to wider community interests?

2.8 How does the local agency establish its legitimacy in the eyes of the community it desires to represent (both to the community itself and to external agencies)?

2.9 How do we overcome the inertia which works against active community participation in development issues?

2.10 How should the State and local government respond to community-led development initiatives?

2.11 What styles and methods of rural community development are being used?

2.12 What are the core skills required by animateurs to stimulate rural community development?

2.13 How do we measure investment returns on community-led development?

2.14 What is the extent of the need for co-operative organisations and co-operation between organisations?

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2.15 How do we achieve ongoing co-operation?

2.16 How can communities prioritise development issues which concern them?

2.17 How do communities themselves evaluate the effectiveness of their rural development programmes?

3. KEY LESSONS FROM CASE STUDIES

3.1   A mechanism is required for organising as a community unit.

There needs to be some explicit mechanism by which the community is able to clearly identify and organise as a community. It is most important that the community group itself should decide upon the boundaries of their community, rather than have these imposed upon them by external circumstances. The boundaries may be geographical, such as a particular village, county, or area, or in terms of a community of interest groups. In reality, the community of involvement may be a combination of these two main categories e.g. ACE-HI (The Association of Community Enterprises in the Highlands and Islands).

3.2   Two tiers of organisational recognition are required.

There are two levels of organisation relevant to the definition of a community. These are:

   3.2.1   Internal, in terms of its recognition of itself as a community.

   3.2.2   External, or its recognition by the wider community as an identifiable interest group. Both of these tiers are important for the level of legitimacy which the community group is perceived to have.

3.3   A two-way legitimacy at both national and local level.

The mechanics of community organisation, and the structure(s) it produces must serve to reinforce the community's belief in itself. This is more than just confidence building, though this may be a major part of the process, and will normally involve the establishment of the level of accountablity of the leading participants (community activists), and the degree to which their views/actions are representative of the wider community whom they seek to serve. Regional and National agencies generally seek to assure themselves that committees and/or articulate individuals have a broad-based support within the community, and that funding will not simply be channelled to sustain vested interests. The Welsh case of the Taf and Cleddau Rural Initiative (TRCI) is a good example of deliberate institution building to achieve these goals, with each of 20 community organisations sending delegates to a Consultative Committee which includes public agencies, and having rights to elected representatives to a Board of this Committee.

3.4   Community evaluation of proposed development action plans.

A particularly important factor in helping to confirm the practicalities of proposed development initiatives and their general acceptance to the community concerned, is through an organised process of community self-assessment. In the Welsh example, the local community is involved from the start in this process, whereas

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in the Austrian case this takes place after the detailed formulation of the development plan, and before commencement of its implementation. This serves three main functions:

3.4.1 Modification and alteration of the plan in the light of new knowledge and/or experience.

3.4.2 It obtains a measure of the commitment of the whole community to the plan, and thus contributes to its legitimacy as a community perspective.

3.4.3 By involvement in the whole process of planning and evaluation, a sense of community ownership is fostered which can contribute significantly to encouraging community participation throughout the implementation phase of the action plan.

3.5 Creation of a local forum for discussion of development issues.

It has frequently been found that the creation of a very local (community-based) development agency has provided a focal point not only for increased inter-action between the community and external agencies, but also between agencies. In some circumstances it is recognised that the forum has also enabled greater intra-departmental contacts within individual agencies. The sectoral approach at the higher levels of planning in many organisations means that overlapping areas of interest are seldom shared in terms of responsibility or finance. Consequently, any involvement of departments/agencies other than the main responsible body is frequently ignored, or not even recognised as a legitimate interest. The local agency provides a very good forum for bringing all these disparate interests together to concentrate on locally relevant development issues.

3.6 How representative should the local agency be?

It must be recognised that it is usually difficult to motivate an entire community all at one time, or for any length of time. As a result many community organisations centre around the activities of a relatively small number of community activists. This may sometimes create difficulties, real or apparent, for funding or policy-making agencies. They frequently need to establish a definite legal structure and/or framework for dialogue which demonstrates the accountability of these community activists and the extent to which their views are representative of the community as a whole. It is imperative to appreciate that it is frequently more important to assure a reasonably broad-based grouping of people, interested in working for change, and able to tackle local constraints, than it is to demand an idealised platform of representation. Relevant questions in seeking this assurance may revolve around:

3.6.1 Whether the local agency is perceived as being able to mobilise local resources.

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3.6.2　To what extent they have the ability to identify and deal with local constraints.

3.6.3　To what extent thay can recognise and take advantage of local opportunities.

3.6.4　Whether they have goals which go beyond self interest and are prepared to recognise the need to negotiate with the local community.

3.7　How can participatory involvement be encouraged?

Concern has frequently been expressed that adequate methods should be employed to ensure the continuation of support within the community for its own initiatives, and for the active participation in these initiatives by as broad a spectrum of the community as possible. There are three main areas of concern in this field:

3.7.1　The lack of locally available skills.

In small rural communities, especially those with a historical and/or continuing problem of depopulation, there might be difficulties in finding locally available technical and/or functional skills which are appropriate. This prompts consideration as to whether the required skills should be imported from outwith the community (short-term), or cultivated locally (long-term/sustainable). Irish experience suggests that if the duration of a local development project is three years or less, then if an outsider is used s/he may leave at the end of the project, sometimes with disastrous results.

3.7.2　That disadvantaged sections of the community do not fully participate.

Even in communities which may appear to be energetic and vigorous in some aspects, there frequently exists a section of the population who do not participate in any aspect of the development initiatives. This may constitute a large part of the population. Though 'apathy' is a commonly applied description to this situation, it has often been found that many people do not fully understand the nature of the development initiatives, do not feel that the events have anything to do with themselves, and do not feel empowered to change (or even express virus upon) these events in any other way.

3.7.3　The need for a process to continually involve new people.

The dangers of leaving the responsibilities for community representation and initiation of development to any small group of people are self evident. Without adequate mechanisms for feedback to the client community and endorsement by them, the local agency, or group of community activists, risks progressive alienation from the needs and aspirations of the community it seeks to serve. This is coupled with a necessity to spread the load involved in community development work in order to bring in new talents, and to strengthen the community's pool of experience in social and technical management.

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3.8   The need for education/training of the management group.

There can be no doubt that education/training of the management committee of the local agency must be an ongoing priority in the overall development process. This is generally under-recognised by public agencies and funding bodies, but it is central both to the empowerment process of the development initiative, and to maintaining the momentum of the initiative through development of the human potential of the community. This point is closely related to the recognition and development of skills within the local community, and to retaining these resources beyond the immediate future of the development project.

3.9   The danger of projects and organisations being funding led.

It is necessary for the local development agency, and through them the wider community, to have a clear and articulated picture of their development goals. In planning this, a prime consideration must be the imperative of having a holistic approach to rural development. The dangers of ignoring this approach, are that, as well as being primarily reactive and piecemeal, the contemporary availability of funding resources from external sources can tend to dominate the motivation and direction of project activities. The local development plan becomes controlled by the priorities and constraints of agencies with funds rather than by a cohesive philosophy articulated by local needs.

3.10   The scale of the development initiative is critical.

In most of the examples studies, the relatively small size of the community is critical in its success. The Welsh case illustrated the use of local consultative committees grouping together through a Federation to enable public agencies to deal effectively with small communities. The Irish example suggested that an individual animateur should work with communities of less than 2000 people. The example from Wallonia indicated a similar scale, which in their case represented between 5 and 15 individual small villages.

3.11   The independent position of the animateur is important.

In both the Belgian and Austrian cases the post of 'animateur' is provided by an independent organisation, intermediate between the community and national levels of interest. In Belgium it is represented by the Foundation Rurale de Wallonie and in Austria by the OEAR, an intermediary, private, non-profit organisation, wholly funded by the State and the Regions to provide support and animation services to local initiatives.

3.12 The degree of pro-active local involvement varies between communities.

It was generally assumed that most cases would involve a situation in which the local community, responding to some (internal or external) influence or perceived threat, had indicated a wish to better its position by taking some positive action. Most public agencies generally acknowledge that this position, in which they are required to react to specific need(s), is the most typical. There is an inherent danger in this method however that the most well organised, articulate, or simply the noisiest communities get the greatest share of any action. This ignores the more prevalent situation in rural community development in which internal stimulation to action is absent, weak, disorganised, or conflicting in its response to the need for change. Here there is clearly a need for a local development agent (animateur) to catalyze action to meet needs, overcome restraints, and help local leadership attain development opportunities. The roles and skills of the animateur in this proactive development environment should be sensitivity; responsiveness; and flexibility.

4. THE PROCESS OF ANIMATION AND THE ROLE OF THE ANIMATEUR

4.1 What is an animateur?

4.1.1 Though it is generally recognised that there is probably no-one in Scotland currently specifically employed as 'an animateur,' many of the attributes which an ideal candidate for this role would possess can be identified and are in fact shared/fulfilled/attempted by many of the key actors in rural development. Some of these actors are agency staff for whom rural development is only a part of their job.

4.1.2 The animateur is a person who works with the community but is perceived as fulfilling a neutral role in the relationship between the community and the development agencies.

4.1.3 S/he should take a pro-active stance in development, that is be prepared to initiate and nurture certain issues and act as a catalyst in stimulating local people to become active participants in the development process.

4.1.4 The animateur can operate over a large or a relatively small area but should be seen to operate with a measure of independence of community interests. This latter point is important in establishing the clear role dividing the animateur from the community activist.

4.1.5 There must also be a holistic approach to development in which financial, social, cultural, and technical improvement are considered together rather than as separate, sectoral interests.

4.1.6 A danger for the animateur however is to be encouraged into thinking s/he is all-knowing, and to manipulate the community by taking decisions/actions for them rather than with their involvement.

4.1.7 The issues of whether the animateur should/should not be a local person, and should/should not live in the community s/he is working with were debated, but no firm conclusion was reached. There is a case to be made for each of these situations and the reality is very dependent on the expected role of the animateur in any given situation.

4.1.8 It was recognised that in certain cases an animateur could be 'external' to the community e.g. a desk-officer within an agency who, while not actually working directly with a community group is particularly sensitive to their concerns.

4.2 The roles of an animateur.

4.2.1 The animateur should help to identify local leaders, talents (frequently hidden talents and skills), and leadership potential.

4.2.2   S/he should help to raise awareness within the community of how the community got to where it currently is. This may entail the use of oral and/or local history in raising consciousness and in helping to project this image of the community to those outwith its confines. This process also helps to define the community in its historical context, and also to establish its own sense of identity.

4.2.3   The animateur should help to raise awareness about possible future scenarios which the community might need to consider as possible development options.

4.2.4   The process of development education which the animateur must foster and service, should empower the community to deal effectively with contacts and influences which are outwith the immediate community, e.g. Local Government, Regional Development Agency etc.

4.2.5   The animateur must be a sounding block, and a 'devil's advocate' for the community in order to help synthesise and clarify the issues, concerns, and solutions posed by the community.

4.2.6   There is also a technical role for the animateur, though this may lie mainly in the ability to recognise the community's need for input of specialist skills, to identify relevant providers who would be sympathetic to community needs, and to facilitate contact between the two.

4.2.7   The role of the animateur is both to stimulate and service the community at large. This effectively is a method of counselling which diminishes in its public profile through the progressive stages of animation as the community is empowered to take a lead in controlling its own development. For example, the animateur's role may diminish to that of a consultant on marketing matters. In the earlier stages of development animation there is often a tendency for the agencies to animate their own agendas, though this usually leads to later problems and is in the long term less effective than ensuring adequate organisation of local community groups.

4.3   Key skills of an animateur.

The ideal 'animateur' will probably have, or acquire, the following attributes and skills: —

4.3.1   Empathy with the community. This can be expressed in a variety of ways, common language, manner of dress, social behaviour etc. and is particularly important in establishing a rapport with the community. Yet this must be a natural rather than an affected or artificial empathy. The community must feel that the animateur is one of themselves, or at least that s/he is their agent in any dealing with outside agencies not simply the representative of someone else in their midst.

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4.3.2 Ability to communicate, both with individuals/groups within the community, and with external agencies. Both of these sectors must feel confident in the ability of the animateur to conduct a meaningful dialogue, and to convey their respective stand-point to the other if/when necessary.

4.3.3 Ability to work with individuals and groups is essential, and this is often a more complicated role than would at first appear. By necessity the animateur needs to have the confidence to work alone, frequently with minimal thanks or reaction, and yet be sensitive and responsive to local needs. Human nature frequently ensures that there is a range of contrasting, or contradictory, opinion even within small community groups, and this is when the ability of the animateur is needed to discern the legitimacy and representativeness of opposing cases.

4.3.4 Ability to access relevant technical information and expertise is more important than actually being able to deliver the services personally. The animateur should be familiar with a broad field of technical and advisory expertise consistent with a multi-sectoral approach.

4.3.5 Honesty and open-ness are essential prerequisites in dealing with community development and emergent leadership. It would be extremely counter-productive to raise false expectations or to encourage over-ambitious schemes, and realism in project planning as well as personnel management is indispensable.

4.3.6 Linked to the above, the animateur must have a clear understanding of what is available (specialist advice, grant assistance, basic resources), and what the possibilities are for development. Furthermore, in developing and empowering community leadership to manage development initiatives it is necessary to be able to help the community to articulate these effectively.

4.3.7 Concern has been expressed that although it seems to require a long time to train an animateur, at community level they are generally poorly paid, with no formal structure, and little or no career education/training provision.

4.3.8 In view of the fact that many animateurs work alone, or in isolations support is need for them to interact with, and learn from others in similar situations. This is under-recognised by development agencies and funding bodies.

It is important to stress that this is a sketched profile, rather than a comprehensive list of prerequisite skills and attributes.

4.4 A model for animation.

Although it is not the intention to nominate a single model for the animation of community development, the following framework based on the Austrian experience was described to encourage discussion.

4.4.1 EXPLORATION of development possibilities by a team including an animateur and relevant specialists in consultation with the community. This should ideally take between six months and three years working with one animateur and a minimum of two people for technical back-up. The animateur should work within communities of a scale which allows him/her to comprehend the social, political, and business networks which will be essential to effective working at these levels. This will normally be communities comprising 5-15 villages, with a total population of less than 2000 people.

4.4.2 A PLAN is prepared by the team and presented to the whole of the community and to all levels of government. Further modifications to the plan may be made at this stage until such time as an agreed plan has general acceptance.

4.4.3 An AGREEMENT, perhaps in the nature of CONTRACT, is then signed by the community and all levels of government as an indication of commitment towards fulfilling the aims of the agreed development plan. At this stage in particular it is necessary to be aware of the clear differentiation of the responsibilities of the community and the animateur. The community as a whole, though their representatives and local activists, are the agency charged with the responsibility of overseeing the execution of the development plan. The animateur is a development consultant with counselling and advisory roles who services the community, catalyzing action to meet needs, overcoming constraints, and realising opportunities.

4.4.4 IMPLEMENTATION of the action plan by the development team (animateur plus technical back-up) as a service to the community, then is initiated. This phase should take 3-5 years, depending on the extent and complexity of the development plan, as well as other extraneous factors, e.g. regional government funding priorities. At any stage during, or upon completion, of the development plan the opportunity exists to return to the exploratory phase to clarify or re-define any aspects of the plan.

4.5 What motivates a community?

4.5.1 A bias is normally created in favour of the more forceful and more articulate community groups, and this is especially true in situations in which the role of central and/or regional development agencies is essentially reactive, rather than pro-active.

4.5.2   The difficulties of maintaining the motivation of a wide-based community group working progressively towards improvement are recognised to be substantial in most cases.

4.5.3   In communities which have articulated at some level a general wish for betterment, an understanding of the motivations of the community is vital in the exploration and preparation of the development plan.

4.5.4   Motivation can be seen in both positive and negative terms, though in each particular situation the value these attributes may change. Examples of negative influences may include an external threat to the community, a specific local issue (such as unemployment, out-migration/in-migration), or desperation/frustration with lack of amenities (closure of school/post-office/local shop).

4.5.5   Positive stimulations to community development can include an initial successful achievement as a community (getting a sign put up, recognition of a community decision), the decision by an individual to become more involved in community affairs, and/or a financial stimulus (internal or external) directed towards encouraging developing.

5. APPROACHES TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1   Establishing expectations of development initiatives.

Three basic questions were consistently raised during the course of the seminar.

5.1.1   Why do we think that local development is necessary/desirable in rural areas?

5.1.2   What would be the impact of non-intervention in local development by external agencies, or even withdrawal of all existing support structures?

5.1.3   Given that further stimulus to local development is necessary/desirable, what types of models are most suitable for achieving this?

Groups were set up to consider the options from the Community viewpoint, and from the perspectives of external Agencies, and the State.

5.2   The Local Viewpoint

5.2.1   It was assumed that there was a wish for some form of betterment within the community, either expressed by individuals, groups of local people, or through popular support for the idea of progressive change.

5.2.2   The 'do-nothing' option, expressed either by freezing or withdrawing existing support structures was not considered to be a realistic option. In support ot this, several examples were given of the social function of community economic development which frequently run on a minimal profit and/or fulfil a social service within the community which a private entrepreneur generally would/could not support.

5.2.3   In the first place, local community groups and activists commonly need help to recognise their own needs and realistically articulate them. The animateur is a key agent in this exploration.

5.2.4   With collective identification and prioritisation of these recognised needs, help will generally be required in devising development programmes to meet these needs.

5.2.5   It is of central importance that animateurs, (and through them the external development agencies), should not raise an expectation of support which cannot be delivered. It would be extremely counterproductive to the process of community confidence building, structural organisation, and motivation, if the local agency is encouraged to believe in the impossible, or if even very modest requests cannot be satisfied. This is part of the process of establishing the legitimacy of the animateur and the good faith of the external agencies.

5.2.6 The community needs to be able to sustain its development initiative. It should therefore have clearly articulated aims and goals to work towards. The development needs may be modest, or may lead in step-wise progression to larger, less local initiatives, but the local development agency should not be afraid to recognise the fulfilment of its initial objectives and to disband, reform, or otherwise re-structure itself to consider future development initiatives.

5.2.7 A major, but generally understated part of any community develop-ment programme should be a detailed self-evaluation by the local community on the progress/success of the initiative. This may be at the culmination of the project, or after completion of separate stages of the project, or, perhaps best of all, on an on-going basis. The evaluation may result in the completion of the development initiative, or it may re-define the aims and priorities. This may lead to the modification of the original community action plan, or to the pre-paration of a subsequent initiative building upon this initial success. In this respect the evaluation should not be viewed as an end-point, but rather an integral part of the cyclic development model leading back to community exploration of the local development issues. External inputs can help such self-evaluation, and this should be one of the functions of support agencies.

5.2.8 Once the community group has formulated its development plan, they should establish all practical options on how to proceed with its implementation. The community, through its local agency, can agree a contract between a private organisation, an external supporting agency, the local (Regional) authority, or can opt to retain some of the development implementation within the community structure. In reality the local agency may use a combination of these options in response to specific local requirements. In the case of the contract being retained within the community structure, this may serve to re-define and/or reinforce the sense of community identity, and also has a cyclic position in the development process, leading back to the collective exploration of community needs and aspirations. The term 'self-defined base-level local authority' was given to this model of local community development.

5.3 The Agency Viewpoint.

5.3.1 The 'agency level' for the purpose of this exercise was defined as any organisation lying between the people and their organisations at community level and the State. In the Scottish case many such agencies are Governmental, either directly (Government Agencies) or indirectly (funded, predominantly, by Government). They may also be local Government, or even not-for-profit organisations and 'Non-Governmental Organisations.'

5.3.2 It was suggested that a focus upon 'community' programmes relied too heavily on a concept of community which was no longer part of today's reality in most rural areas. Programmes should thus be based on the concept of an area exhibiting a scope for change and having the potential for a range of actions which could be called a 'rural development programme.'

5.3.3 Three types of agencies were identified corresponding to Local Authorities (elected), QUANGO's[3] (appointed), and an Intermediary form such as Trusts, not-for-profit companies etc. which are genuinely independent but may be funded from State/Local Authority/Private sources.

5.3.4 The group whose role it was to assess the Agency viewpoint thought that the 'do-nothing' option was not a serious alternative for consideration. To simply maintain the status quo would open the agency to public criticism and would allow other agencies an opportunity to expand into developing gaps. The static approach would lose any opportunities to gain acknowledgment for positive actions and would result in loss of credibility, influence, and relevance to both local authorities and the wider community. In all of these respects, such an approach would serve to inhibit rather than encourage co-operation between State, Agencies and Rural People. To withdraw existing support structures would be tantamount to institutional suicide. The resulting portrayal as being uncaring would expose the agency to national and political criticism and undermine its own existence.

5.3.5 From the perspective of the Local Authority the benefits of operating the development plan itself are considerable. The Local Authority would directly gain any credit from successful initiatives. The change in emphasis of the role of the Local Authority may lead to increased resources and influence. The strong emphasis on community-based and people-orientated development would reinforce their role of the Local Authority as a democratic intermediary between individual communities and the State. Co-ordination between the development plan and other functions of the Local Authority would be relatively easy to co-ordinate.

5.3.6 The negative aspects of the Local Authorities undertaking implementation of the development plan by themselves however include the difficulties of shifting resources within budget headings, and the competing needs of these resources, especially manpower. There may also be substantial problem with obtaining the necessary skills and experience for animating and implementing global rural development on a small scale. A major difficult for sustained development lies in

[3]Quasi Autonomous Non-Government Organisations, usually State-funded.

short political time-scales which Local Authorities are subject to, (Council elections, Central Government Budgetary allocations etc.).

5.3.7   There is a very considerable scope for the Local Authority to act as an intermediary between State/QUANGO and the local community, particularly as an adviser on local conditions, and in assisting monitoring and evaluation.

5.3.8   In a situation where the Local Authority acts through an independent intermediary body there may be a loss of direct control, and subsequently of at least some political credit, but it also limits the direct responsibility of the Local Authority. This situation could be used effectively to overcome resource allocations, management (personnel and time-scale) problems and shortage of specialist skills. Additional advantages to the Local Authority of working through an independent intermediary are that outside experiences can be utilised within the community, that a network rather than a hierarchical communications structure can be developed, and that elected members and officials can also consult the intermediary agency. There is a danger however for both the Local Authority and the intermediate agency that they appear to be manipulated by the other.

5.3.9   The intermediary agency seeking to work directly with community groups faces difficulties in establishing good local contacts and relevant local information. Independent agencies may also have considerable difficulty in establishing their credibility with other actors in the development plan at State, Local Authority, and Community level who may be unsure of their competence and/or commitment.

5.3.10 An ideal development role from the Local Authority perspective would seem to be in the formation of a partnership approach between Local Authority/QUANGO/Community interests. The Local Authority would employ the consultant to implement the development plan, though this assumes that the objectives have been set, that finance is available, and that there is a co-ordinated external focus for the plan. It only provides a mechanism for delivery and does not advocate in favour of either the 'Top-down' or 'Bottom-up' development models.

5.4   The State Viewpoint.

5.4.1   There is a general assumption that the State is favourably disposed towards rural development, and though this might not always be the case, the combination of inherited legislation, a large number of high profile pressure groups, and the sensitivity of politicians towards vote-catching issues, makes this a reasonably safe starting point in much of Western Europe today.

5.4.2 Benefits to the State of working through an independent intermediary are that it strengthens the 'one-door' approach, and while the State gets its share of the political credit, the intermediary is required to shoulder the burden of administrative responsibility.

5.4.3 If the intermediary is a national body with an area network (which is something the State does not necessarily have), then it may be able to promote local development through this network. While existing national schemes and delivery mechanisms may continue to be utilised, both these and the network itself should be revised if gaps are shown up at a later date. Although there would be an element of financial cost, the development structures would not require to be demand-led, and such a mechanism would offer the potential for bureaucratic and technical streamlining, and for a multi-disciplinary approach.

5.4.4 As with the other perspectives considered, the 'do-nothing' option is considered largely in a negative context, with potential loss of initiative to other public and/or political sectors. Though it could be suggested that existing measures are sufficient to encourage rural development initiatives it is realised that this would possibly concentrate greater demands on existing schemes without allaying pressures for change and/or co-ordination of development.

5.4.5 Benefits to the State of working through the Local Authority are that the networks already exist to make this possible, that the Local Authority has a much better knowledge of local situations than the State, and therefore can be designated the responsibility to ensure the success of the schemes. It may in some circumstances, and for some functions, be the Local Authorities rather than the State which has the statutory duty to act locally.

5.4.6 Disadvantages which must be considered in this approach are that the State loses political control and any subsequent credit. The fact that a Local Authority may have conflicting interests and that competition between Local Authorities may result in the domination of local interests, is also a concern.

5.4.7 The need for the co-ordination of any local development scheme by the State mediating between the relative responsibilities of the different tiers of Local Authority, State Departments and Intermediary Organisations, as well as the overall financial implications, would require a commitment from the State.

5.4.8 In any national scheme operated by the State through either Local Authorities or any independent intermediaries, there could be a requirement by the State for the 'animating agency' to define specific actions areas and to ensure local participation in the ownership of development initiatives.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The following main conclusion were reached with respect to future action in Scotland at the level of the **Community**, the **Intermediary Agencies**, and **The State.**

6.1 Action at Community level.

  6.1.1 Community action should be encouraged through animation and agency schemes. Animation is needed to help communities to: become aware of development possibilities, articulate their needs, and make demands on the system. Community Education should play a role in this animation process.

  6.1.2 In Scotland, in general, there is an absence of community-level democratic organisations which are needed to give legitimacy to community action. Community Councils may provide a basic framework, but their powers and resources are limited in comparison with community organisations in other countries. In the long run the strengthening of Community Councils could be an important and even essential part of the process of locally-based development in rural areas. Meanwhile, locally based development groups seeking external support, and the funders of such initiatives, should be conscious of the need to establish their credentials with different interests in the local community.

  6.1.3 The local community should have greater access to and control over resources for local development, rather than these resources always being used to support intermediary agencies, who then have the power to decide what is provided or delivered at local level, and how. By providing resources to community organisations, they would be in a better position to choose who/what organisations they employ to assist with local development. In other words, a **market** in advisory and support services would be created which might give better signals as to what was really needed at local level.

  6.1.4 This process of giving control of resources to grassroots level is happening in other sectors, e.g. when tenants of public sector housing are given resources and a list of contractors for house improvements.

  6.1.5 The proposed devolution of resources to community groups is also consistent with the current political philosophy of 'self-help' and 'enterprise.'

  6.1.6 Finally, this process creates a kind of 'market' for intermediary agencies providing advice and support which helps to ensure the quality and effectiveness of that support.

6.2   Action at Intermediary level.

    6.2.1   Intermediary agencies are needed to act between the State and community levels in facilitating and supporting local development in rural areas. Existing intermediaries, such as SAC, ACE-HI, WEA, Crofters Union, HIDB etc. are carrying out this role to some extent, but mainly on a sectoral basis.

    6.2.2   Local rural development requires a holistic approach incorporating all sectors. This could be achieved by co-ordinating the activities of these intermediary bodies, and Rural Forum might be one appropriate organisation to do this.

    6.2.3   Aware of the proliferation of existing intermediaries co-ordination should take place through existing organisations, and new organisation should not be formed.

    6.2.4   Local Enterprise Companies, to be formed through Scottish and Highland Enterprise, will be new agencies at intermediary level with training and development finance functions and responsibilities. At the time of discussion, it was unclear what form they will take, and how they will function. Their role in rural development will have to be encouraged and developed.

6.3   Action at State level.

    6.3.1   A political statement on rural development at government level was considered desirable by many participants. 'New Life for Urban Scotland' might provide a model for reviewing rural development, with the aim of providing a framework for action in rural areas.

    6.3.2   Because of the decline in agriculture such a framework will need to look at rural development in a different way from that which has prevailed up until now, which has tended to emphasise traditional agricultural issues. For example it should address rural housing, industrial and service sector opportunities, jobs, greater co-ordination of existing support schemes, and new ways of delivering and producing services arising from new computer-based communications technologies, as well as environmental issues.

APPENDIX 1

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APPENDIX 2

The following contribution was made by Keiran O'Donohue, and widely valued by the seminar participants.

BUILDING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

1. Who are animateurs?

Many enterprise workers are paid to carry out tasks such as setting up community enterprises or provide training, but not to animate. Animation is a process rather than a post. State Agencies are uneasy about funding this process since it is difficult to measure in terms of tasks and outcomes.

The term 'development worker' is more useful than 'animateur.'

2. Local development workers

It is better if they are employed by a local organisation, rather than a local authority or quango, so they are directly accountable to the local community.

It takes time for an insider from the community to become effective in local development. On the other hand an outsider is likely to leave within three years. For a long project a mixture of insiders and outsiders is ideal.

The key tasks of local development workers are to help the community to express preferences and make decisions which incorporate those preferences. Development workers also need to stimulate the community's economic, social and cultural dimensions because of their close inter-connection. And they should have a key role to play in distilling the lessons being learned from practice and experience and ensuring policy makers and/or funders are made aware of them.

So, an effective development worker will be engaged at the same time in working within the community and outside it with regional and national structures.

3. Issues of context

In a small community it is easier to understand the networks of communication.

Most projects are expected to be completed within too short a timeframe, and there is often a problem in securing long term commitment from agencies.

It is unrealistic to expect new rural development projects/sets of activities to achieve much in less than four to five years. Agencies which fund one and two-year projects in an ad-hoc fashion and without a commitment, even a provisional one, to further development should not expect much of a return on the investment. The process is a slow one because of the necessity to establish and nurture effective local structures.

The usual size of the development team is one or two people which can have the advantage of being flexible and responsive but run the risk of lacking the required range of skills and expertise.

The degree of institutional support available from local/regional agencies to a local development worker can be a big asset. This could, at minimum, be non-material support e.g. regular interest in project, flow of information to worker, contracts, sponsorship for attendance at meetings/seminars, advice on setting up and developing networks in the agencies etc.

4. The Process of Building Local Development Projects

The building of projects on the ground involves a number of key processes. Here I identify seven main elements and they are not necessarily set out in order of importance. The amount of weight given to each of them will be influenced strongly by issues of context, the philosophy of the project, the exigencies of the local community and the personal strengths and weaknesses of the development worker.

Trust and confidence

Development workers external to the community can provide help easily and quickly, but they will have to establish credibility. They need to establish quickly their ability to provide concrete assistance locally.

Internal workers, such as the priest or teacher, can either legitimise or block the development process. They have the advantage that they understand and use networks; they know who the key people in the community are; and they know who will welcome change. It is important to establish who wants to see change and therefore who will assist the process.

The development worker must define his/her role and communicate it clearly to the community.

Standards of work

The development worker must let people know, informally, that s/he has the ability to do the job. For example in the case of meetings, rather than informal discussion groups, help the chair to run the meeting efficiently.

The worker will communicate a lot to people about himself/herself by the work practices and standards adopted. being a community/development worker should not be an excuse for being disorganised and directionless.

Systems of participation

We don't have a culture of participation, so this has to be facilitated. To assist this process, it is important to understand how the community defines itself e.g. progressive or backward, confident or demoralised. One must also establish how and especially who promotes the community's image of itself.

What do people want in the way of participation? What is the community's sense of itself? How does it describe itself? People who are not involved in community activities are often involved in other activities, and may have relevant skills which might be accessed.

It will take time to set up a participation system.

There are many different ways in which people can participate – people should feel free to become involved at a level they are comfortable with.

Needs, opportunities and resources

Establish a community profile to identify networks of communication/influence, who has legitimacy, and what the boundaries of these networks are.

Carry out an organisational analysis to find out who runs the networks, how they are financed, determine overlaps, and identify political alliances.

Research public policies which are likely to help or block development, e.g. agricultural policies etc.

Research resources – what resources might it be possible to develop; and what financial sources might be able to assist?

Planning and evaluation

There is a general fear of evaluation, so it may be best to make it explicit at the beginning of the project, and to use an independent evaluator.

However it must be clear from the outset what the project aims to achieve, how it will be achieved, and what stages are involved. This is part of the management process.

People should be encouraged to see evaluation as an essential tool to learning from experience and therefore enabling the project to tell its story as well as to manage itself better.

Training and use of consultancy skills

In training the development team it is not helpful to discuss the performance of individuals outside the context of the work of the project and its objectives. A well thought out project should have an in-built commitment to ongoing training for its staff and management committee.

It will sometimes be necessary to buy in specialist or technical skills on a once-off consultancy basis. Unclear briefs to consultants can cause problems, so they need to be specific and unambiguous. It's a good idea for the group, rather than the development worker, to write the brief. Consultants who are sympathetic to the aims of the project will be most helpful.

Appropriate structures

There is a tendency to assume that all projects will end up as a formal entity such as a limited company. However in some cases it may be more appropriate for the project to disband once it has achieved its aims.

Regardless of the structure chosen, it is most important that it meets basic criteria of accountability, representativeness and commitment to bringing about change by involving people.

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5. Development worker roles

The development worker can be said to occupy at times different roles. At any one time, one of these three roles is likely to dominate depending on the stage of development of the group or community.

Facilitator; catalyst; team person

The development worker should enable people to form new images of themselves.

S/he needs to recognise sources of conflict and deal with them. This is a difficult task, particularly in cultures where conflict is perceived to be negative.

S/he needs to help people to learn to work with others in teams.

Broker

The development worker has a role in attracting and securing resources. S/he must give the funder and the funded a sense that something worthwhile is being done, and mediate between the funder and the group.

Analyst; planner; manager

The development worker must draw lessons from experience, and have the confidence to follow through decisions.

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