"Community - arianism"

Chapter Two: Community involvement and community policy

There is a long history, and vast literature about the relationship of the state and local communities, which could be dealt with under the heading of community involvement or community development. It is a history in which the conflicting interests of local people and the state, national and local often come into the foreground, while at other times shared interests lead to dialogue, partnership and collaborating effort for local improvements (Craig & Mayo 1995). In this chapter the aim is to present a brief review of the key literature, to look by way of illustration at some of the policies and programmes in contemporary Britain, and draw out some key themes and dilemmas in the field.

Even in the Thatcher/Reagan decade where individualism was rampant, the language and practice of community was far from dead (Willmott & Thomas 1984, Donnison 1989). British government statements included references to the importance of mediating structures between individuals and the state, and praised the little platoons of community groups that make up civil society. It is possible to read this contradiction as an unresolved debate of the Right, between those who were true disciples of free market liberalism and those who held on to an older tradition of civic conservatism. The alternative reading is that the Right cynically exploited the feelgood factor in the word, to mask their attempts to dismantle the welfare state and remove power from locally elected politicians, who tended to be drawn from opposition parties. The full explanation probably is a synthesis of the different readings, combined with pressures arising from long term social change (Butcher 1993). These would include the growing numbers of elderly people, and increased long term unemployment which makes cradle to grave public welfare provision less sustainable. Finally some community policies rest merely on a pragmatic problem solving approach, and result from the desperate search to discover something that works better than earlier failed centralised or bureaucratic policies and the contemporary failure of "trickle down" free market economics. Bespoke local policies, developed in consultation with local people may be a particularly appropriate response to the postmodern process of social fragmentation. This of course brings us back to the concerns of the communitarians, and their moral imperative for citizen participation and responsibility,

Whichever explanation is preferred, initiatives in community policy have proliferated in recent years on both sides of the Atlantic. Health and social services provision are increasingly being delivered by community practitioners. Local authorities are becoming enablers, and drawing up community development and partnership strategies which link bodies in the public, private and voluntary sectors (Wilcox 1994, Blackman 1995). "Community Capacity Building" is now an essential feature of funding bids for urban regeneration projects. At arm's length from the state, the churches and voluntary sector have sponsored numerous community development and community projects, especially in urban areas (Farnell et al 1994b). Even in the 1990's several thousand full time community workers are employed by statutory and voluntary agencies across the UK and several "how to do it" manuals are widely available. (ACW 1994; Community Links 1995; Twelvetrees 1991, Croft & Beresford 1993, Henderson and Thomas (1987) Grundy 1995). Before considering examples of policy and practice in a number of important fields it will be helpful to examine some of the sources and streams which have fed into an approach which seems to inform most of these initiatives, starting with the tradition of Community development. For an introduction to key themes in community development see Taylor (1992) and for a review of contemporary issues the collection edited by Jacobs & Popple (1994).

The roots and routes of community development

One of the oldest streams feeding into the present day practice of community development is the Victorian tradition of philanthropy. Sometimes the wealthy recognized their self interest in their efforts to provide decent housing, education and other facilities for the workers in their factories. One thinks for example of the mill village built by Titus Salt just outside Bradford or of the Cadburys in Bournville and Rowntree in York. Such philanthropy often carried moralistic baggage, contained no small element of social control and made distinctions between the deserving and undeserving poor. The achievement, however was considerable in terms of housing, public health, local democracy, and the provision of facilities such as parks, libraries, youth clubs and the settlement movement. The most forward looking of the philanthropists realized that attacking symptoms of poverty was not enough. One thinks of the early campaigns of Wilberforce and Shaftesbury against slavery and industrial exploitation of child labour, of the statistics and lobbying of Booth and Rowntree, and of the role of the settlement movement in the intellectual formation of politicians such as Clement Attlee. Charitable Trusts directly descended from these pioneers continue to fund community work and voluntary organisations in Britain today. Their continued emphasis on poverty alleviation is one factor which helps explain the concentration of community work in deprived urban neighbourhoods.

Alongside the philanthropic institutions a grass roots pattern of community organisation also emerged. The co-operative movement in Britain developed above all as a consumer organisation, with numerous Co-operative retailing societies, and became politically affiliated to the Labour movement. Productive co-operatives in agriculture and industry also came into being, although they are probably more significant in Europe and the Two Thirds world than in the English speaking world. An immense range of other groups had been born before 1900, for example, trade unions, building societies, tenants associations, self help educational groups, funeral clubs, drama groups and sports associations, (Green 1993). It is hard to ascertain whether the voluntary and community sector at the end of the twentieth century retains its earlier vitality, but without a doubt it is still there, and forms the very soil in which community development as a process can take root. Attempts at measuring the broad voluntary / charitable sector in the UK reported by the Charities Aid Foundation suggest it employed in 1990 nearly a million people and had a total income of some 11.5 billion pounds (Saxon-Harold & Kendall eds. 1995).

A third strand in Community development is its colonial and neo-colonial roots. The British Empire like

many others before it, found it wise to rule its vast domains with a degree of local consent, and was therefore keen to co-opt local power structures into the mainstream. Anthropologists, schoolteachers and missionaries played a role alongside soldiers and merchants in the business of Empire. As colonies moved through to independence the watchword was political and economic modernisation. Agricultural extension officers in remote villages, health education workers and many other professionals developed techniques which were recognizably those of community development. Non-governmental aid and development agencies (NGOs) such as Oxfam, Save the Children and Christian Aid soon discovered that community participation was vital to the success of their programmes. Slogans such as "give a man a fish you feed him for a day, teach him to fish you feed him for life" became popular. Local ownership of projects, cultural sensitivity, drawing on local skills, knowledge and wisdom were found to be important in developing sustainable agriculture and industry, while imported Western expertise was seen to fail. Non-directive leadership, listening to people identifying their own needs and encouraging them to co-operative and creative action were found to be more effective strategies. Lessons learned overseas have been applied by community developers in Europe and North America, though obviously some adaptations are needed. In some cases community development sponsored by the State in deprived neighbourhoods can be perceived as manipulation, and it is tempting to apply the notion of internal colonialism to describe what is going on as local groups are subtly co-opted to the agendas of the powerful.

However community development also has radical and Left wing proponents and has almost as often been seen as subversive to the interests of the state. In the UK since the 1960's the dominant ideology among community workers has been socialist in emphasis although radical Liberals, Christians, and Greens have also been involved. The mode of operation in which groups are mobilised in struggle over local issues can be labeled community action as opposed to community development, although the two strategies are often employed side by side in a single setting. The socio-political context of the time in which the importance of class and workplace struggles was diminishing allowed concerns around neighbourhood, ethnicity, disability and women's issues to emerge as the major focus, particularly of local politics. . In many cities in the 1970's activists on the Left found themselves in conflict with Labour controlled local councils, who claimed to represent local working class communities, but whose power base was largely among white working class male trade unionists, and whose values and policies were by and large conservative. The story of the Community Development Projects, instituted as part of the Urban Programme of the Labour Government is very instructive. Their analysis of the ills of deprived neighbourhoods highlighted structural and economic factors which could not be dealt with by piecemeal reformist measures, and the Marxist tone of their reports was enough to ensure their abolition in the late 1970's (Higgins 1983, Loney; 1983). It was only with the rise to power of a new type of urban Labour Party activist in the 1980's that some of the community issues were addressed by local government. But this change came at a time when the hegemony of the right meant that the power base of local government was itself being eroded, and funding on a scale to do anything significant was extremely scarce.

Community action and empowerment

While community development can easily be seen as a constructive and consensus model of working it is often the arena in which conflict and campaigning emerges. Political action in communities is a transnational phenomenon and two influential streams of theory and practice deserve a mention. From the USA comes the package of techniques generally referred to as community organising, most clearly defined in the work of Saul Alinsky, who operated in Chicago in the middle of the twentieth century, and in the continuing work in several cities of the Industrial Areas Foundation. (Alinsky 1972). The key strategies of this movement are political mobilisation of large numbers of people, through building coalitions of existing groups (among whom religious congregations have a key role), direct actions in which power holders are personally held to account, and building confidence within the organisation by

concentrating in the early stages in tackling only popular and winnable issues. In recent years there has been some interest in Alinsky style community organising in Britain with initiatives, funded by the Church Urban fund in Bristol and Liverpool. Their achievements are critically reviewed by Farnell et al (1994a).

The second influential tradition of community action comes from Latin America and is most commonly associated with the work of Paolo Freire, a community educator from Brazil (1972). In situations of great poverty and oppression he developed the method of "conscientisation" by which ordinary uneducated people carried out their own social analysis of the causes of their suffering. This process empowered communities to challenge and confront their oppressors, sometimes at great cost in closed political systems. Closely allied to the conscientisation movements in Latin America and other Roman Catholic countries was the growth of liberation theologies and radical pastoral practices. In particular base Christian Communities, of which there are some 100,000 in Brazil alone, became the focal point of community action. Liturgy, Bible study, theological reflection and social analysis were linked with practical community development and political action in a never ending pastoral cycle of action - reflection -action (Boff; 1986). The Sandanista revolution in Nicaragua in 1979 was probably the high-point of the movement, bringing inspiration to many liberation struggles across the world. Freire's ideas are certainly much talked about in community work circles in Europe and America but in so far as they are put into practice in the West seem to have limited success. This is perhaps because of the absence of a culture in which groups on the base community pattern can flourish. Furthermore when translated to other settings Freire's terminology can easily be co-opted in the interests of the powerful, so that only pseudo-Freirian techniques remain and liberation is not achieved.

One of the key concepts deriving from Freire's work is that of empowerment. By engaging in social analysis and combining in social and political action local communities, even and especially those of the marginalised and oppressed can struggle and in measure achieve a transformation of their conditions. At the very least engagement in the process shows that they are not mere passive victims of circumstances; as human beings in relationship with each other they are, potentially at least, agents for change. However, in the Western world in the 1990's the concept of empowerment has become common in political discourse, and is a keynote term in many social programmes (Bulmer 1989). In the process it has been co-opted and transformed to conform to the ideology of capitalism and the state. One common usage, perhaps especially evident in urban North America, and in US influenced African-Caribbean communities in the UK is that of economic empowerment. The emphasis here is on individual empowerment through education, training and success in the job market, and on the formation of small businesses. The second usage, typified in Britain by John Major's idea of the Citizen's Charter, is consumer empowerment. In this, through the clear setting of measurable standards, backed up by rigorous monitoring, information processing and an accessible complaints procedure leading to refunds, the consumer or user of a service is empowered to demand satisfaction. The obvious comment on both these usages are that they are by nature individualistic and that they are beholden to market forces, in which power is inexorably taken away from the weak and poor to be concentrated in the hands of the rich and powerful. Thus much of the discourse of empowerment has nothing to do with community in any collective sense, and provides little hope for powerless people to take more control over their own lives.

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Community policy and practice

Having considered community development and community action models it is important now to look at the increasing emphasis on community in government policy. One would agree with Butcher (p20 in his introductory chapter of Butcher et al; 1993)) that there is no such thing as "community policy" in itself, "rather it is a mode of policy making and implementation .... utilised within a range of substantive policy

areas". However his assertions that such policies necessarily relate to "recipients as members of a community", that "it implies that the policy will embrace community values (solidarity, participation, coherence)", that it "involves working in partnership with groups and organisations active at the community level", may be harder to substantiate. That such emphases are desirable is not seriously contested, that they are put into practice in all cases is clearly untrue. And while empirically it may be the case that "community policies" usually address the situation of disadvantaged people it would not appear that this is an essential part of the philosophy behind them.

Decentralisation and neighbourhood democracy

Since local politicians are elected to represent residents of a ward, local government has an interest in delivering services at the neighbourhood level. In order to counter familiar criticisms about the remoteness of City Hall many local authorities on both sides of the Atlantic have decentralised (Burns, Hambleton & Hoggett 1994). For example in the London Borough of Newham there are a dozen or so neighbourhood housing offices where Council tenants can, within walking distance of their homes pay their rent, demand repairs or (as they commonly do) seek a transfer to better accommodation. Other local authorities have gone further with local "one-stop" shops where residents can access almost any service local government offers. The limitation which is usually recognised is that certain services such as transport and strategic planning need to be undertaken at a scale greater than the neighbourhood, and there are other economies of scale which are better achieved by a centralised approach.

The most radical forms of decentralisation have involved devolving responsibility and budgets for all local services to neighbourhood authorities, as for example in Tower Hamlets under Liberal administrations of the 1980s (Keith 1995). Here neighbourhood decisions were taken by about ten Councillors elected for the neighbourhood, rather than the full Council of about 60 members. In theory such small local decision making bodies could be more responsive to local communities, and representatives of grass roots groups could be allowed to participate in meetings. However there is little evidence to suggest that, in a climate where political participation is uncommon, accountability to the community was significantly increased. Many proposals for fully elected neighbourhood councils have been put forward but have rarely been implemented at least in urban Britain. Costs and the difficulty of legislating change in an unwritten constitution have usually been the barriers. In the USA the diversity of local constitutional arrangements has allowed a number of neighbourhood democratic structures to develop. (Hallman 1984).

Community social work

During the 1970's in Britain there was a fashion in the social work profession to establish community practice in social work. At the lowest level this meant locating social work offices within deprived neighbourhoods and making them accessible to the public at least during office hours. At its most innovatory level social workers engaged in community development work and saw there interventions as preventing the personal crises of clients and potential clients which they traditionally ameliorated or tidied up. Family centres were one important model where parents of vulnerable children could drop in during the day to receive child care, emotional and practical support in group settings, individual counselling and welfare rights advice. However the panic in social work resulting from a number of well publicised tragic cases of child abuse, where social workers were clearly at fault, coupled with the lessening of resources in

face of increased needs has reduced dramatically the range of community social work. Family centres where they continue to exist are much more likely to be in the voluntary sector with community and social workers employed by agencies such as Barnardos or the Children's Society.

However British social work has expanded its community policies and practices in another direction as the provisions of Care in the Community legislation came into force in 1993. The philosophy which has been around since the 1960s is that vulnerable people by and large prefer to stay in their own homes to being in institutions, that there is good chance for them to lead an independent life in the community and that quality care can be provided at no greater cost. (Bornat et al 1993). Indeed care can be provided much more cheaply if the patient or client can be looked after by family, friends and neighbours on an unpaid basis, even if higher social security benefits are paid. Feminist writers have made the powerful critique that the vast majority of the burden of care falls upon women as wives, mothers, daughters, daughters-in law or sisters, many of whom are also struggling to hold down a paid job at the same time. But because community is such a good thing in the discourse of both Left and Right it becomes heretical to criticise the basic philosophy behind community care. The more frequently voiced critique is that the whole programme of care in the community is massively under-resourced.

Community care has already had its spectacular failures, particularly in the care of people with mental health problems. There have been several cases where a schizophrenic has killed an innocent bystander, as in the case of the death of Jonathan Zito at the hands of Christopher Clunis in 1992. The investigation centred on failures in the system of medical and social services, on poor communication between professionals, and in the underfunding of mental health services in London (Ritchie et al 1994). While all these factors are relevant and faults in the system do need to be remedied, it is rare to hear voices asking a more fundamental question (Clarke 1982 and Bulmer 1987 are exceptions). Is there in fact an entity worthy of the name "community" in places like inner London, and if so would it ever be capable of, or interested in, offering genuine care and support to patients discharged from mental hospitals. Ironically it is plausible that even if community solidarity was strong, that very strength would tend to exclude, rather than care for, marginalised and vulnerable people. Indeed there are many occasions when local neighbourhood communities become mobilised in order to oppose proposals to locate hostels or centres for homeless, disabled or mentally ill people in their own back yard. Much of the community care legislation seems to rest on a rosy nostalgia for a probably never existing community, in which everyone had plenty of kin, neighbours and friends, each with time and goodwill to support and care for them in times of sickness and need. Some research findings bearing on this issue will be covered in chapter 6 and others are reviewed in Robbins ed. (1993).

One keystone of care in the community policies on both sides of the Atlantic is the growing emphasis on for the state to offer contracts for welfare services to independent agencies. Some private sector agencies are able to offer these services and through good management, paying low wages and reducing care standards to the minimum specification may make a handsome profit. But voluntary sector and not for profit agencies are in a very competitive position, as they can often cut costs by making use of volunteer labour and exploiting existing capital resources such as church halls at low rent. Furthermore locally based community groups can often provide a more appropriate service to particular groups of local, service users; for example the Asian elders group based two hundred yards from my own home can offer a service where workers speak Gujerati and Punjabi, and where food is prepared according to the taste and religion of their Hindu and Muslim members. However, when grass roots community groups do become engaged in the contract culture they often lose a certain amount of freedom, in that their members and staff have little time to devote to community development processes, and less room to become involved in radical community action campaigns, especially if the powerful enemy is the arm of the state which funds their community care work.

Community health

The boundaries between care in the community provided by social services agencies and medical services provided in Britain by the National Health Service is an increasingly fuzzy one, as evidenced by the arrangements for joint funding of programmes and disputes over cases where it is not clear if the client has a medical or social need. e.g. home bathing assistance for a patient with back problems. The medical profession has recognised for many years that certain services are best delivered in the community, which often means little more than home visits. The role of health visitors in preventive medicine for babies and young children and of district nurses providing services for patients at home is a well established feature of British health care. In recent times more proactive measures in community medicine have developed for example health education programmes with outreach workers contacting community groups, and health advocates and interpreters for people who speak little English. Policies which allow the funding of community groups to develop health initiatives are also in place. For example the East London Health Authority has funded a voluntary sector project which aims to make home child safety items and other baby and toddler equipment available at low cost to families on low income.

There are other signs of the community being taken seriously in medicine. Public Health researchers have long recognised the link between deprivation and ill health and are engaged in studies to disentangle the effects of locality, ethnicity and individual poverty on mortality and morbidity. Initiatives such as Health for the Nation, Health for All and Healthy Cities have led to a reinvigoration of public health departments since the mid 1980's. (Blackman 1995, Macintyre et al 1993). Training for practitioners, especially community nurses, midwives, health visitors and physiotherapists increasingly includes units dealing with community sociology. In some cases this extends to courses for trainee doctors and dentists. (Wykurz 1994) However, it would still be true to say that for most medical professionals "community" as a concept means little more than the opposite of hospital (in-patient) or institutional service delivery.

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Community education

Community policies in education can cover a wide range of services and initiatives around the schooling of children and continuing education for adults. The focus could be on a community school which sees its role as providing facilities, including a building for the benefit of the whole community. It may well sponsor the work of a community Association, produce a newsletter for the whole neighbourhood and put on events which are designed to bring local residents into contact with each other as a basis for community development. Or community education may be focussed on allowing access to learning for all local residents, so that adults as well as teenagers may sit in the same classroom studying for qualifications in French or computer studies. A community school may seek to involve parents in self help activities, or encourage them to take part in classroom activities such as reading stories to their children (Nisbet et al; 1980). A more politicised community strategy in education is the development of local management of schools, where governing bodies, composed of representatives nominated or elected by parents, teachers and other stakeholders in the local community, take responsibility for seven figure budgets. Alongside this, standardised assessment of pupils' performance, league tables and market forces allegedly allow parents to exercise choice in their children's schooling, and compel the school to be more efficient and responsive to the educational aspirations of the local community.

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Community housing management

Public sector housing is yet another part of the British Welfare state which has suffered the onslaught of the New Right and has needed to develop new "community" strategies in order to continue. There has long been a voluntary sector involvement in housing from the early building societies, through squatting movements of the immediate post war years to self build housing co-operatives. A century ago charitable trusts like Peabody were involved in building homes for the poor, and their tradition of social housing to an extent continues in the Housing Association movement. With limited capital investment in social housing being directed through Housing Associations rather than to local Councils, they have become little more than an arm's length agency of the state, and most have lost their former grass roots involvement with communities. However community policy in housing management has been developing apace, with slogans like tenants choice being backed by incentives such as the promise of refurbishement for estates whose tenants wish to take responsibility from their municipal landlords. The Priority Estates Programme, according to the account by Power (1995) has already notched up some fine achievements, although it can be argued that without a huge input of resources and training tenants choice is no real choice and brings more grief than joy to local communities.

Community policing

By the mid 1980's it was clear that investment in police salaries, and the introduction of high-tech rapid response equipment was an ineffective response to high crime rates. In addition street disturbances, in Britain's Inner cities, which like the riots in the USA a decade or two, were portrayed as the uprising of criminal elements who tended to be young, poor and black, showed that insensitive policing could be counter productive. In response to the Scarman enquiry on the Brixton disturbances of 1981 new strategies of community policing were introduced. (Scarman 1981; Weatheritt 1993; Solomos & Benyon eds. 1987, Willmott 1989). These included the establishment of consultative groups between the police and the community, the commitment to put "more bobbies back on the beat", some racial awareness training for police officers and the creation of Neighbourhood Watch schemes in many areas. The latter was an American invention in which local residents banded together to keep an eye out on each other's property, and to receive crime prevention advice from local police. Although these schemes were often successful in affluent neighbourhoods they were notoriously hard to establish in deprived estates, or in ethnic neighbourhoods. In the UK a subsequent programmes including the Safer Cities initiative tackle crime reduction and community safety by funding a range of community initiatives, from better street lights to car maintenance projects for young people who are seen as potential offenders (Henderson & Del Tufo 1991, Foster 1993). A key aspect of the programme in any district is a profile of local crime patterns and consultation with all sections of the community as to possible responses.

Community planning

Urban planning as a discipline had reached its zenith in the UK in the immediate post war decades with the New Town and slum clearance programme in major cities. Community as an ideal was a keystone of the project. (Heraud 1975). The resulting urban wasteland, with its unpopular tower blocks, sink estates, developments lacking community facilities and urban motorways which carved through neighbourhoods, helped planning as a profession to lose any credibility it once had with the general public. The collapse of Ronan Point, an East London Tower block in 1968 became the symbol of the crumbling of post war hopes. Planners in response have made a serious commitment to public consultation as a vital stage in

their work, yet it has to be said that many community activists regard this as mere tokenism. Land use battles continue to be a major focus for community action, especially when a development arouses the NIMBY (not in my back yard) passions. The emergence of environmentalism as a global social movement has made a deep impact, yet for every convinced Green, there are hundreds of local residents who have a personal interest in preventing "them" from building a motorway or a sewage incinerator in their neighbourhood. Architecture has also responded to the community imperative and many professionals regard consultation with local communities as an essential step in their work. (Willmott 1989; Turner. unpublished)

Thus Community planning for the most part is an oppositional activity. Independent radical groups offer advice to local residents on the technical issues behind planning decisions. In London Docklands in the early 1980's community groups produced the Peoples Plan which took account of local residents needs and aspirations. The establishment of the London Docklands Development Corporation in 1981, with the removal of planning powers from local councils took such hopes away. Minimal planning regulations, financial incentives and tax breaks for developers unleashed market forces which brought windfall profits to property speculators and a changed skyline but little else to local residents. The London Docklands experience is a prime example of a non-community policy in urban planning and economic regeneration. (Introduction to Keith & Pile eds. (1992), DCC 1992)

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Community economic regeneration

The last half century of counter-urbanisation based on improved transportation and the rural dream has meant that homes, then industries and most recently retail and leisure facilities have relocated away from city centres. Older inner city areas have experienced economic decline, loss of local jobs, a crumbling infrastructure and an increasing concentration of disadvantaged residents who are dependent on welfare or low paid casual work. Some similar patterns can be seen in peripheral rural areas. Governments and local authorities have recognised that there is a need for regeneration of local economies and even the business sector has come to see their long term interest is well served by investing in training, regeneration, creating crime free neighbourhoods and increasing the circulation of money in local economies. Unleashing market forces as in London Docklands has failed to deliver the anticipated trickle down effect which it was hoped would raise the poor out of dependency. More recent regeneration policy has therefore introduced a community element, and serious attempts to build partnerships between government, local councils, the private sector and community groups have been made.

The elements in this include training for job skills appropriate to the changed local economy, small business development, investment in infrastructure and the empowerment of local people and community groups to play a more active part in both the economic and social life of the locality. In Britain many local Councils have set up Economic Development Units, other areas have Community Investment / Development Trusts or formal development Partnerships and everywhere the employment training programme has been put in the hands of business led Training and Enterprise Councils (Blackman 1995). Models such as these are already familiar in North America. State money has been directed to such projects through the City Challenge Programme, the new Single Regeneration Budget regime and from European Union budgets. However it should be pointed out that almost all government funding requires matched funding from local, charitable or industrial sources, that it is usually seen as short term seed money used to lever further investment and that money for special regeneration projects is far outweighed by general cutbacks in public sector resources for local economies. (Thake & Staubach (1993); Henderson ed. 1991, Lynn 1993)

It is also the case that while genuine attempts have been made to involve local communities in

regeneration they are almost by definition the junior partner. Their interest is usually either to protest against proposals which would harm their existing amenities or as community groups to seek funding for small scale projects meeting specific needs of their members and users. However, there are opportunities for a range of grass roots community businesses to emerge and flourish. Generally such businesses are not for personal profit, but would plough back any surpluses into the local community (Pearce 1993, DOE 1990). Often such businesses are organised as co-operatives with a degree of common ownership and worker participation in management. Usually they seek to employ local people and to provide goods or services in the neighbourhood, often filling a gap which no commercial firm would find profitable. Thus for example in estates far removed from supermarkets and where all the local shops are closed a community food co-operative might be set up. In a neighbourhood with no banks local credit unions have an opportunity to develop. Many other examples of community enterprises could be cited; the underlying question for them all is whether they can ever become profitable and viable on a long term basis without continued subsidy, or the exploitation of voluntary or low paid labour, in communities where the economic base is permanently weak.

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Other community initiatives

Every conceivable sphere of life can be given a "community" label and many other types of community initiative could be catalogued. Community arts seeks to develop locally connected creative skills and appreciation of the arts by a local public who are often excluded from highbrow culture. Community Youth work encourages the participation of young people in devising programmes to meet their needs. Community Advice services offer consumer or welfare rights advice to individuals and groups. Community media such as very local radio stations, video production centres and community newspapers seek to enhance local channels of communication.

While most of the community practices described above are top down initiatives originating in the state or in the professions, the most numerous and possible most significant sphere of community activity is that of independent community associations and self help groups. Under this heading come a wide range of organisations and informal networks ranging from tenants association to scout groups, baby sitting circles, campaigning groups, and support groups for people with every conceivable disability or medical condition. A recent European study suggested an average of three (mostly small) community groups in existence per 1000 population, with up to a third of local residents in membership, nearly half who were users, and around 5% who could be described as activists. (Chanan & Voos 1990, Chanan 1992). Newham's 821 voluntary sector groups in a population of around 220,000 is in line with this estimate though a membership / involvement rate estimated at 15% or less appears lower (Smith 1992). Some such groups have resulted from initial activities by professionals, or are branches of wider organisations such as churches or national voluntary agencies but others have emerged spontaneously from friendship or neighbourhood networks. The European study found role of this sector is especially important in deprived neighbourhoods, but recognised that some of the most vulnerable residents tended to be excluded. It recommended better resourcing of the sector and its infra structure, a more complete mapping and networking of it at the local level and strategies which extend its outreach to socially excluded people. Self help or mutual aid groups are likely to have an increasing role in health and welfare policy in coming years (Wann 1995).

Public buildings are a key resource for community activity, especially in deprived neighbourhoods where homes are often too small to hold meetings, and where private venues are not always culturally acceptable to local people. Community centres and churches can simply offer space and facilities for groups such as sporting activities, support groups, political parties, play groups and religious groups with no premises of their own. They often will have a coffee bar where anyone can drop in and socialise informally. Effective

community policy demands that such centres are available, and also benefits from the funding of community infrastructure, such as umbrella and resource agencies, (Councils for Voluntary Service in the UK), where community groups can find cheap photocopying or computing facilities, accountancy services and advice on funding applications. Indeed funding in terms of both quantity and quality, is arguably THE crucial issue for every area of community policy and practice which we will now consider.

Resourcing community activity

The funding of "community" policy and activity is inevitably vigorously contested in both national and local debates. It is not clear that Etzioni's type of communitarianism can offer much help other than the general notions that some communal goods are worth paying for our of a common national purse, and that democratic debate is the best way of taking decisions about them. At least this is a step forward from the minimalist interventionism of free marketeers keen to reduce taxation. Despite continuing political conflicts about inequality and redistribution, taxation and welfare, a consensus does seem to be emerging in Britain in the 1990's that investing in local economies is a useful and necessary policy, and that the preferred model of investment is a partnership between Government and its arm's length agencies, Local Authorities, the private sector and the voluntary sector. Finance can thus be raised from taxes which are redistributed as grants, from speculative investment of capital, from voluntary charitable donations managed by charitable trusts, the major churches, the National Lottery Boards, or the charitable departments of major corporations, and finally from small scale fundraising by local residents. Given this resource base four comments about its allocation are apposite.

Firstly resources for community development and urban regeneration are increasingly focussed on the economy. Projects are only approved if they can be shown to enhance the local economy, usually in terms of jobs created or saved. The projects favoured tend to be small business development or employment training measures. They tend to be evaluated in terms devised by accountants such as inputs and outputs, which demand a new level of bureaucratic skills from community activists, who often find them boring, irrelevant or antithetical to their basic value systems. Many are willing to play the game for the sake of the funding, but the approach to the funders is suffused with cynicism, frustration, lies or hidden contempt.

Secondly for any funding of community initiatives one needs to ask if more money is actually being taken out of a locality than put in. A massive government grant to an inner city estate is not necessarily an overall resource gain if at the same time other services are being cut, increasing tax burdens are falling on the residents and social security payments are being squeezed. A private sector contribution of several millions is not necessarily a net gain if the same firm has recently made 1000 workers redundant or is investing in a new supermarket which will destroy the local high street shops and only offer low paid part time jobs. A 5000 annual grant from the National Lottery to the local play group is no real gain if each of the fifty families who use it are spending more than 2 each week on lottery tickets.

Thirdly in measuring the resource inputs to community policies and projects the time inputs of volunteers and activists are not usually costed. This point is now well established in relation to the unpaid inputs mainly of women in the areas of child care and community care of the elderly and disabled. It is not however so well appreciated in community work as a whole. Chanan (1992) has suggested that costing the fifty hours a week of voluntary work which an average local group might contribute at 5 an hour adds 12,500 a year to its budget, the equivalent of a salary for a half time post. Nor is it likely that anyone has every costed all the time and effort put into the process of acquiring funds and recruiting staff for a modest community project by paid and unpaid workers, not only of the local community group but also of the funding bureaucracies. One suspects that in many cases, when added to the costs incurred in processing the many unsuccessful applications that the costs would exceed the value of the grant received.

When evaluating an anti poverty programme it certainly becomes worth posing the question as to whether converting the whole budget into used banknotes and scattering them from a hot air balloon over the neighbourhood would have produced greater benefits to local people.

Finally the model of outside funding of any community initiative raises the questions of dependency and autonomy. It is almost impossible, and rarely thought desirable, that funding should be given with no strings attached. At the very least grants are made for a limited period, usually no more than two or three years and are often designated as pump priming. This rarely allows continuity or long term planning and can lead to wasted capital investment, such as new community centres which have to close when running costs are not covered. Above all it ensures that much time is spent in the final year in a desperate search for renewed or alternative funds. Funders vary in the degree of managerial or political control they maintain over the community group and in their demands for financial and other accountability. However, few funded groups are willing to risk radical activities which could upset or threaten the interests of their funders. It is inevitable that as soon as community groups receive outside funding some of their critical independence, innovatory style and informality will be lost. It is very easy to be co-opted into the agendas of the funders. Contracts and service level agreements for the voluntary sector may increase professionalism, but professionalisation in the community sector is rarely empowering for the powerless.

In consequence of these problems it can be argued that funding for the community sector should be based on rather different principles than at present. In the first place it should be massively increased especially in so far as it can be directed towards localities and communities which suffer deprivation and have been accustomed to resources being taken out of them. Capital investment in local economic regeneration, and in developing skills of local residents is important, but should be made accountable, for example by a rigorous social and environmental audit process, conducted with the fullest participation of local communities. Health and Welfare funding should be allocated on a consciously equalising basis, rather than merely as some compensatory or safety net provision for those judged to be in extreme need (on the basis of standardised statistical indexes). It remains to be proved that there is a valid role for voluntary sector groups to compete for contract funding from the state. Larger not for profit groups seem little different from commercial providers of care, except that sometimes charitable effort and volunteering can provide cheap labour and finance. A more fruitful investment of all the time and effort devoted to the institutional voluntary sector would be to direct it to the local community sector. Furthermore to do so would be more communitarian in ethos. As Knight (1994) argues such a split in the voluntary sector appears to be emerging anyway.

How then should the local grass roots community sector be resourced? It is possible to argue not at all; it should be purely self financing. This argument falls however, in face of the reality of local deprivation; the localities which are in greatest need of community action are the ones with the least resources to sustain it. Funding ought to be empowering, unbureaucratic in procedures, and offered to local groups with few strings attached other than checks on financial probity. For this to happen, it would be wise for funders to spread their resources thinly in numerous small grants. No revenue grant to a community group should exceed a single half time salary. It is not empowering and indeed unfair to ask a management group made up of low paid workers and benefit claimants to employ a professional community worker on a salary scale which is sometimes twice the local average income. It might be better in terms of local empowerment to use the money to pay volunteer expenses, casual wages for creche helpers, or to send volunteers on training courses in computing, accountancy, welfare rights work or community development, providing of course that all the legal restrictions of tax, benefits and the Children Act could be circumvented. Even so many local community groups might be well advised to keep complete independence by not accepting any outside moneys. There is however one function where resources should be deployed strategically in employing professionals for the benefit of community groups. Each district should have its own well resourced umbrella body and resource centre, providing free or low cost services to groups, such as accountancy, community development, legal services, research and information, training, networking and conference facilities. This sadly is one part of the voluntary sector in the UK which remains chronically undervalued and under resourced.

Summary and questions

To summarise the ground covered in this chapter we reproduce here Glen's typology of (in his terms) three forms of community practice) (1993 p 39)

	Community Development	Community Action	Community Services Approach
Aims	Promoting community	Campaigning for community interests and community policies	Developing community oriented organisations and services
Participants	Community defining and meeting own needs	Structurally oppressed groups organising for power	Organisations./service users as partners
Methods	Creative and co-operative processes	Campaign tactics on concrete issues	Maximising community/user involvement and inter agency links
Roles	Professionals working in a non directive way	Activists/organisers mobilising for politcal action	Service managers restructuring transactions with users

Some questions remain about the nature of community policy overall. They can also be applied to the notions of community development and community action. First of all can there be a coherent account of Community policy when it is so diverse, and rests on unclear and contested, if sometimes rosy and romantic views of the concept of community? Secondly can community policies which are territorially defined, as most still are, respond to the realities of community life which is often extended along lines of communication linking ethnic or special interest groups over a wide are? Thirdly can community policy initiatives originating in a top-down manner from the state ever genuinely engage with the concerns of local communities who have long been excluded from prosperity and decision making? Can it overcome the reality that the bulk of the money invested in community goes to pay professionals from outside while locals are often expected to give their time for free? Can community policy defend itself from the accusation that it is an ideological con-trick masking public sector spending cuts? Finally can any community policy make an impact on underlying structural issues of economic and political power, which increasingly operate at a global level?

Many of the community initiatives outlined above are to be welcomed on the basis of communitarian values of participation and mutual help, and perhaps also on pragmatic grounds that they provide more efficient, responsive and user friendly services. However they can hardly be regarded as a panacea for all our social ills, as long as they fail to give satisfactory answers to these crucial questions.

Key books for Chapter 2

Butcher et al eds. (1993) "Community and Public Policy" London, Pluto Press.

Willmott P. (1989) Community Initiatives, London PSI