Local Community Involvement
*A Handbook for Good Practice*
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The question of how to facilitate people's active involvement in their local communities is a key issue for Europe. Underlying many of the high-profile concerns of public policy is the practical dilemma of how residents can create the best forms of local life, exercise their citizenship in a full sense, invigorate democracy and join voluntarily with neighbours, friends, family or others to meet those needs of life and society that are never fully met by government and commerce alone. Community activity is the basis of social life: sometimes a complement, sometimes a corrective, to those better-defined sectors, but always a necessity.

Since the word ‘community’ is used widely with varying meanings, it is important to stress that in this context it implies activity and organisations which are under the direct control of their own members, most of whom contribute effort without payment, and are not controlled by public authorities or other official or centralised agencies. Community organisations may, however, receive support or assistance from official bodies or agree to work in partnership with them.

The subject of this handbook is one of the most pressing areas where better community involvement is needed, namely in schemes to develop or regenerate disadvantaged localities. The gradual evolution of a European element in socio-economic policy over the past 20 years has shown the usefulness of having a common thread unifying the different national and regional approaches to local regeneration. For example, as a major new period of the Structural Funds approaches, behind the debate about the distribution of the Funds is a sense of the need to identify universal factors underlying the diversity of local experiment. A strong role for the local community is one of these factors.

This handbook focuses on the practical question of how to increase and improve community involvement in a local development scheme. In a sense, however, this is looking at the question
through the wrong end of the telescope. The community exists first; the development scheme is an intervention in it. From local residents’ point of view, therefore, the question would be how to get the development scheme to be involved in the community. However, development schemes are mostly devised from the outside in rather than from the inside out, so the question of involvement initially presents itself from the perspective of intervention.

The dilemma of community involvement usually begins, for such a scheme, with questions like: how can we get credible and effective resident representatives to sit on our board? How can we get local voluntary organisations to carry out parts of our programme? How can we get the most excluded people in the locality to take advantage of our efforts? How can we make sure that specific groupings facing particular obstacles, such as ethnic minorities, women, disabled people, homeless people, elderly or young people, are included? How can we ensure that the local population as a whole feels that it has benefited and that the life of the locality has been permanently improved?

The text is designed to serve policy makers, planners and practitioners, including organisations belonging to the local community itself. The content is limited to principles and lessons which apply to some degree or another across all Member States, with some illustrations from policy statements and research. Local practice is extremely varied, and it would be foolish to propose a single model for all countries and regions. However, the process of defining and stimulating community involvement that has emerged from EU-wide practice over the past 10 years confirms a common core to this experience. To achieve practical usefulness without lengthy detail it is necessary to risk certain simplifications. Where these are found to be inappropriate they may at least have the virtue of provoking alternative models. Not least important is to make visible to policy makers, budget holders and local developers an aspect of development which has often been badly neglected, weakening local development as a whole; and to show that this aspect is as objective, measurable and amenable to planned improvement as the more familiar agenda. Based on extensive European research, this handbook shows how community involvement can be planned into local development schemes. The main sources drawn upon are detailed together at the end.
The meaning of community involvement

Community involvement in local development means that a large proportion of local residents:

• are involved in their own local organisations, networks and initiatives;
• know what is being planned for their locality by the authorities and have mechanisms for influencing this and for being represented in decision making;
• are confident that development budgets are being used to best effect and that the population of the locality as a whole will benefit;
• cooperate actively with official schemes, investing their own voluntary labour, and adapting their organisations or taking new initiatives of their own to add value;
• feel ownership of what is achieved by development schemes and therefore preserve and enhance it.

Local development schemes which have community involvement are far more likely to be successful. Many schemes, however, lack such involvement. In disadvantaged areas many residents feel alienated from their surroundings and remote from decision making. Authorities or partnerships which run development schemes may implement plans on the assumption that they know what is needed, ignoring the feelings and inside knowledge of people who live in the area. Enterprising local individuals and groups may feel that the authorities are unaware of their efforts and neglect their potential. In some localities, regeneration schemes have come and gone without leaving much permanent effect because actions were not embedded in the commitment and advancement of local residents.
Scale

Community involvement is most feasible where the area being developed is one that people can identify as ‘the place I live in’. Geographical areas of disadvantage are usually defined by boundaries that are fairly easily recognisable both to local authorities and inhabitants. Most development schemes are targeted at such areas. Whilst it is impossible to prescribe the ‘correct’ size for a local scheme, the discussion in this handbook assumes a focus on a locality of about 10,000-20,000 people (though this may be within a much larger area of development or administration).

Regional, subregional and city schemes start, of course, with a much wider map, but it is essential for community involvement – as indeed for most other purposes – that objectives should be brought down to local level. Community involvement is also possible at much smaller levels than 10,000 but it should not be assumed that it has to take place only at the level of the immediate neighbourhood. Where people are sufficiently mobile, they may choose their activities at some distance. They may also identify with communities of different sizes for different purposes – for example, a close neighbourhood for organising children’s play, a wide district for campaigning for a better environment or transport, and a selective network across several parts of a city for sport, religious or ethnic associations.

Whilst official schemes usually define a certain territorial basis, and should take account of all community activity which takes place within that boundary, it must not be assumed that community activities themselves always conform to that boundary. Some occupy only a small part of it, some are selective within it, some link with interests well outside it.

The cornerstone for representation of residents’ views is the established democratic structure, that is to say through the role of local councillors in running the local authority. To bring about active involvement, however, the overall democratic framework needs to be supplemented by many informal or semi-formal channels which give opportunities for various groups and sections in the locality to extend communication and exercise influence. Much of this activity serves some sectional public need without recourse to authority – running sports clubs, social events, mutual-aid groups, ethnic, religious or cultural associations. Others relate more closely to public services, and here the aim may be to supplement or influence the authorities’ role – for example, parents’ associations, health groups, campaigns for better local amenities or for recognition and support for sections of the community that have been neglected.

Whatever their overt purpose, local community groups and organisations also tend to knit some part of the local population together by spontaneously carrying out elementary social functions in a low profile way. For example, they tend to:

• spread information and maintain collective memory;
• enable people to make friends and take part in joint activities;
• give young people models for how to grow up to be responsible and caring;
• make people feel safe in the locality and willing to contribute to its improvement;
• give people a recognised role amongst their neighbours and the opportunity to learn new skills.

Plans for improvement of disadvantaged localities therefore need to ensure good community involvement in order to:

• facilitate the indigenous constructive efforts of local people;
• benefit from residents’ inside knowledge of local problems and opportunities;
• add the power and goodwill of voluntary effort to public investment;
• generate long-term local skills and resources to sustain improvements when an initiative ends.

Involving individuals and groups

Long-term development of residents’ activities and organisations will gradually draw in more and more people. It is therefore justifiable for strategy to focus primarily on groups, without ever forgetting to pay attention to the relationship between groups and individuals, and the opportunities for individuals to participate in their own right. Some people prefer to act individually, do not have access to the right kind of group or are restricted due to age, infirmity or family responsibilities. Methods of consultation and involvement must allow for this. Nevertheless, on the whole it is the growth of group activity and networks which builds ‘social capital’ and sustains long-term involvement by large numbers of people.

Figure 1. Community sector and local population
Sympathetic but unspecific

Social policy, including that of the EU, has been moving towards a more local focus during the 1990s. Many local schemes rightly focus on unemployment, physical renewal and public services, but forget to look also at the role of local society itself. This is short-sighted: material, institutional and economic gains will be sustained only if they are accompanied by broad human development amongst the whole population of the disadvantaged locality.

Because community involvement is essentially a local phenomenon, development policies at national and European level are rarely specific about it. Whilst this reticence is respectful of local autonomy, it tends to leave local communities in a weak position in relation to development schemes. There has been a gradual increase in recognition in European and national policies over the last five years that specifically local factors in development are critical for success, just as specifically local factors heavily influence levels of disadvantage and social disintegration. Nevertheless, the advent of the new millennium is likely to see many policies still ambivalent as to whether community involvement is merely a desirable background factor or a specific objective of development. The onus for ensuring strong community involvement therefore lies with the ‘cascade’ of policy makers, administrators and practitioners at national, regional and local levels who must transform policies into concrete programmes and schemes.

Finding the policy ‘hooks’

Those who are responsible for delivering local schemes would therefore be well advised to clarify the particular policy context in which they are working, and highlight those parts of it which justify or encourage community involvement. Since most local schemes work through both
‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ partnerships (‘vertical’ meaning local/regional/national/European; ‘horizontal’ meaning all the relevant agencies active in the locality), the policy context is also a combination of requirements from many different partners.

In the present climate it is likely that many of the policies affecting a scheme will make some reference to the desirability of community involvement or active citizenship. However, it is equally likely that most of these references will be vague about what is meant by these phrases and what is expected of them. A knowledge of the relevant ‘hooks’ in policy is a useful starting point for ensuring that all parties to the local scheme develop a constructive common understanding of the issue. The potential for making community involvement a real part of development is likely to depend on the initiative and ingenuity of the local partnership itself.

The Structural Funds

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<td>March 1998: European Commission publishes proposed new regulation</td>
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<td>By December 1998: Governments, MEPs and advisory committees comment</td>
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<td>By March 1999: Commission prepares guidance re national plans</td>
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<td>March 1999: Council of Ministers agrees final version of regulation</td>
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<td>March 1999: Commission publishes the regulation and guidance</td>
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As far as the European element is concerned, the Structural Funds are a key policy source. There is much in the proposed regulation for the new period of the Funds (due to start in January 2000) which is encouraging in this respect, but it is their particular adaptation to each country and region, under subsidiarity, which will determine the specific policy context for a given scheme. The plans for assisted regions and categories of people in each country are published as ‘Community Support Frameworks’ (Objective 1 areas) and ‘Single Programming Documents’ (Objective 2 areas and Objective 3 categories). Local, regional and national interests may have been able to influence these during 1998 and 1999, but even after their publication the interpretation and effectiveness of community involvement still depends on the inventiveness and commitment of local partnerships.

In the case of the Structural Funds there are four levels of policy:

1. the central regulation;
2. guidance from the European Commission regarding national and regional plans;
Whereas the central regulation does not lay down detailed expectations of local schemes, the guidance published in parallel with the regulation will contain more specific advice. For example, the guidance will include advice on how to focus programmes at city level, including the necessity to involve local communities.

The national and regional plans are negotiated individually between each country and the Commission, and therefore may vary considerably across countries and regions. How far they lay down specific requirements or expectations about community involvement therefore depends on the relevant government authorities, the consultations they should have held, and their dialogue with the Commission. Following is an example of a community-oriented programme within the Structural Funds that was achieved by negotiation at a regional level.

**Participative Regeneration Objectives**

- To enable local people to identify and articulate needs and concerns
- To enable local people to participate in social, economic, educational, cultural and environmental regeneration
- To increase the skills and confidence of local people to engage in actions to help themselves
- To develop a sustainable local economy
- To maximise social and cultural assets
- To improve the image and self-image of the locality
- To create sustainable public/community/voluntary/private partnerships

*Source: South Wales Objective 2 Single Programming Document 97-9.*

Associated with the urban theme which has lately emerged as a strong focus at the level of central guidance, the European Commission is piloting new ways of collecting comparative statistics for cities throughout the Member States. It is to be hoped that these will include measures of community involvement.

**The employment connection**

A critical factor in interpreting the scope of development policies for stimulating community involvement is the objective of creating employment. Nearly all local development schemes put employment high on their agenda, since a concentration of unemployment is one of the most universal indicators of a disadvantaged locality. However, a high priority attached to employment objectives has sometimes inadvertently held back community involvement, for these reasons:

- even in a disadvantaged area the unemployed are a minority of the population;
- employment often absorbs a large proportion of the local development budget, employment creation is expensive, and development schemes can rarely create jobs for more than a minority of the unemployed people in a given locality;
• broad improvement of disadvantaged localities needs the involvement of a cross-section of the local population – the unemployed are in a very weak position to lead local development;
• policy makers often assume that creating jobs automatically improves all other local factors, whilst administrators and evaluators have tended to measure ‘social and economic cohesion’ primarily by employment and training figures, not by looking at how the whole economy of a disadvantaged area works.

A re-examination of the relation between community involvement and employment will be greatly assisted by the new European policy on employment. Separate from the Structural Funds, but intended to work with them, the 1998 Employment Guidelines commit Member States to adopt parallel policies to boost employment, within their own national resources. These conform to a common framework of 19 guidelines monitored annually by the European Commission. Even though they do not mention community involvement, five aspects of the guidelines are potentially important for this field.

• Guideline 10 specifies the importance of job creation at local level in the social economy.
• Guideline 17 commits the signatories to efforts to reconcile work and family life, particularly by raising levels of access to care services.
• Guidelines 16 and 19 urge measures to achieve equal opportunities regarding gender and people with disabilities (equal opportunities for ethnic minorities are not mentioned – an omission which ought to be rectified).
• Several of the guidelines are devoted to increasing the flexibility of labour. In reality this is likely to stimulate further increases in part-time jobs, a factor which may not always be desirable but which is ultimately likely to highlight the importance of making up the deficiencies of income by achieving better conditions in the local community.
• Perhaps most important of all, the guidelines make clear that the aim of employment policy is not only to overcome unemployment but to increase the employment rate. This means increasing the proportion of people of working age who are in the labour market – that is to say working or looking for work. At present only 60% of people between the ages of 16 and 64 across Europe are in the labour market. The unemployment figure is a proportion of this 60%, not of the whole adult population. Making it clear that employment policy is concerned with the non-employed as well as the unemployed enormously widens the section of the local population being targeted, and thus increases the potential for a more effective symbiosis between employment policy and community involvement.

The links between community involvement and economic value are further discussed in Chapter 9.

**Coordination and infrastructure**

Community involvement is now increasingly mentioned as a desirable instrument to assist policies in employment, housing, health, education, culture and environment. Yet it is hardly ever addressed as a policy field in its own right. Emphasis is usually on the need to consult local
In the search for more coordinated policies, it must sooner or later be realised that it is the same community that is being asked to involve itself in all these different spheres, and that it is the underlying strength of the community which affects the outcome in all of them. This should lead to policies which look at how to build up the **infrastructure** of the sector – the local support and umbrella bodies, networks and forums which facilitate groups, organise cooperation amongst them, build up long-term assets and endowments in the sector and conduct dialogue between the sector and the authorities. The more substantial community organisations tend to take on aspects of this role, either by design or in response to need, and some policies are beginning to recognise the need to support this overall framework. However, a strategic approach to the development of the community sector is as yet rare. New local development schemes present an opportunity to make important advances at this level.
The basis for involvement

Examples of community involvement in local development schemes include:

• residents responding widely and enthusiastically to consultation about new developments;
• residents serving on the board of a scheme to ensure that its decisions fit well with the wishes of the local population;
• local community and voluntary organisations carrying out parts of the development scheme or other compatible initiatives of their own;
• residents developing additional or alternative forms of economic activity.

The starting point for effective community involvement is to recognise that involvement in an official scheme is the visible peak of a much deeper and wider phenomenon, namely community activity in general. The examples of involvement mentioned above are advanced forms. Behind each of them lies a period of development, either through the spontaneous actions of local residents or through sympathetic public policies in the locality. For example:

‘residents responding widely and enthusiastically to consultation’ does not usually happen simply as a result of a one-off consultation process: it is most likely to happen if there is a spread of community organisations aware of current developments, generating discussion about them amongst many networks in the local population;

‘residents serving on the board of a scheme’ can only be effective if there is some form of communication and accountability between the residents’ representatives and other residents, whether through elections, public meetings or a network of voluntary organisations;

‘local community and voluntary organisations carrying out parts of the scheme’ implies a number of mature community organisations with skilled participants and a track record of effective provision;
‘residents developing additional or alternative forms of economic activity’ implies a number of people in the locality with the imagination, experience and connections to become ‘social entrepreneurs’, introducing innovative or unconventional forms of wealth-creation.

These factors – a wide spread of community organisations, skilled participants, well-informed representatives, enterprising community leaders – constitute a healthy community sector. In most disadvantaged areas, and even in many fairly well-off areas, the community sector is often underdeveloped, though there is always some basis for its existence. It is therefore essential that the development scheme should adopt a specific objective of strengthening the community sector alongside its physical, economic and environmental objectives. This is not only a help to the other objectives. It is an authentic objective in its own right. ‘Development' should mean the development of local people and their organisations and networks as well as the development of better physical and economic conditions. To try to develop the physical and economic factors without developing the human capacities is like a business taking on new technology and products without retraining its workforce. In an effective dynamic, the scheme both improves services to residents directly and supports the community sector. Boosted by this support, the sector in turn delivers a double output: more constructive activity and social cohesion amongst the population, and mobilisation of the population’s creative energies in support of the scheme (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Scheme/population/community sector
The underlying level of community activity

Advanced and vigorous forms of participation depend on a large floor of low-profile activities. A regeneration scheme therefore needs to ask first what is the state of general community awareness and activity in the locality. It may be relatively easy to find a small number of exceptional residents willing to get involved purely as individuals, but this may have little impact on the population as a whole. Involvement on a broad scale, reflecting the needs and channelling the input of the bulk of inhabitants, depends on an underlying level of community activity such as:

- a wide variety of formal and informal networks carrying information and opinion about current local affairs;
- a wide variety of independent local residents’ organisations;
- a considerable number of residents who are experienced in mobilising opinion, representing residents’ views and understanding how public authorities work;
- a formal or informal structure which links individuals and households with organisations, networks and influential individuals;
- creative individuals and groups forging new ideas for productive activity ‘from below’.

Much community activity, whether individual or collective, is unseen except by the people immediately involved, but it all adds up to helping a locality to function. Indeed, this ferment of activity is the unseen basis of social life. The constant, background buzz of activity is the underlying basis for all ‘higher’ or more formal types of involvement.

In Spain almost every locality has its own festivities, sports teams, gastronomic specialities, linguistic expressions, specific historical memories and cultural heritage. This brings about a multiplicity of partnerships. One person can be in more than one association or committee playing different representative roles, and it is possible that a committee created with a given aim ends up accomplishing a completely different function. An example among many others: a committee for a village’s feasts gathers the local forces (women, youngsters, craftspeople, restorers, artists, the town council, etc.), creates a number of subcommittees, sets up a calendar, organises festive and sports events as well as their financing, and after a good meal ends by using any surplus to help the most disadvantaged in the locality or to contribute to collective equipment ... Two of the most significant phenomena of Spanish society, which are also to be found in other European countries, are the continuing vitality of the primary social networks (family, neighbours, etc.) and the innovative role which voluntary organisations are recently playing as new interlocutors of the public sector, defending general interests whilst progressively adopting formulas of business management and entering the field of the social economy ... Local activism should be incorporated into the building of Europe. This does not mean going backwards to a parochial spirit, to old poor laws or provincial chauvinism but defending the fact that unity is founded on particular identities and dialogue, not on a single discourse.

Active citizenship may take innumerable forms. Some of the most common are:

- discussing matters with friends and neighbours;
- helping family, friends or neighbours with a problem;

taking part in a voluntary, charitable or campaigning activity;
starting up a new local activity, organisation or economic initiative;
voting in elections or serving on the local council;
responding to surveys, going to meetings about public issues or writing to the press;
serving on a committee of residents representing an interest group in an official forum or scheme.

Activities may be undertaken by people either as individuals or as members of groups, networks or organisations. Whilst some people will make the effort to participate individually and regularly, most are more likely to participate if they are stimulated by others around them undertaking similar activities. Indeed, the people who are most active in groups are often also the ones who are most active individually: their group involvement provides stimulus and information which makes it easier to act individually, and their experience as individuals adds effectiveness to the group.

The residents’ organisations (or community groups) form a sector which may be in a strong or weak condition. The condition of the community sector at the starting point may be found broadly at one of three levels:

- **weak**: not many visible groups; not much communication between the groups that do exist; most of the local population not aware of the existing groups or of the possibility of starting new ones;
- **moderate**: a fairly wide spread of groups, but over half the population not involved in any; still large sections of the population not connected; no collective voice for the community sector; only some of the major issues tackled;
- **strong**: wide spread of groups; all major issues tackled by at least a few groups; majority of the population involved in at least one; many individuals skilled in organising; well respected forums; umbrella groups; good dialogue taking place with public authorities.

**Strategy for improvement**

How can community activity be increased and improved? The answer is to apply a multi-level approach:

- firstly, to assess the present level of activity, discover those groups and individuals who are participation-ready and initiate dialogue with them;
- secondly, to set in train long-term plans to identify and boost the less developed but probably more widespread groups and networks and build up their capacity;
- thirdly, to support and stimulate greater coordination between community organisations and the setting up or strengthening of a community sector ‘infrastructure’ – support bodies, representative forums, cooperative networks, endowment trusts;
- fourthly, to work with excluded individuals and sections of the population, build up their personal development and help them to start activities and groups of their own or to link into existing networks;
- fifthly, to work with the authorities and professional agencies to help them:
– become more aware of the way their services impact on each other at the point of delivery in the community;
– become more aware and supportive of community activity and assist in its development;
– adapt their methods of decision making and service delivery to make them more receptive to community involvement.

A development scheme therefore needs to have an objective concept of the community sector as a factor in its plans. A key research study illuminating the nature of the community sector is summarised below.

**What is the community sector?**

A household survey in a comparable disadvantaged urban locality in seven countries found that residents had a wide range of common concerns: environment, physical conditions, transport, housing, education, health, employment and crime. On average about a quarter of inhabitants had been active in some way on a local problem within the past year. It became clear that sustained participation requires semi-permanent vehicles, in the form of voluntary associations or community groups. A profile of all participative groups and organisations in the localities showed that:

- there were an average of three groups or organisations per 1000 people
- with local and national variations, there was a strong underlying similarity in the origins, functions and problems of such groups
- most groups reached only a small proportion of the local population, whilst altogether about half the population was reached by one or other group.

The main functions of such groups were:

- organising mutual aid and providing social and recreational activities
- carrying out or campaigning for improvements to the locality
- liaising with the authorities on behalf of residents
- providing information, advice or assistance on a particular social issue
- providing local communications such as a community newspaper or radio.

In addition, groups often found themselves carrying out a range of crucial low-profile social functions:

- enabling people to make friends and overcome isolation
- providing personal support to people in distress
- spreading information about local developments and opportunities
- enabling people to develop new skills by taking on tasks for the group.

However, there were also important limitations to what groups could do:

- their role was often not widely understood, either by citizens or authorities
- they were often held back by lack of funding or policy support
- they were often too small to reach more than a fraction of those in need of their services.
Whilst individual groups came and went from time to time, the sector as a whole was a permanent feature of local life. The community sector was found to be larger, longer-lasting and more influential in the life of the locality than was realised either by policy makers or by the public themselves. However, it was often fragile. Whilst most people only knew the few groups that they were in direct touch with, larger groups often helped the smaller in an ‘organic’ way. The research concluded that local community action was of universal importance:

- it is relied on in unseen ways to enable society to function but is often neglected or misunderstood;
- it has a particular importance in disadvantaged localities;
- its achievements are often forgotten or attributed to public authorities.

Whether the sector has coherence, a public voice and momentum of development depends on its degree of cohesion and consciousness. These are critically affected by whether there are local umbrella groups or projects which purposefully help to develop and coordinate the sector.

It became clear that policy makers and project designers need to focus more on certain local realities:

- firstly, that some people in every locality are already trying to improve their conditions;
- secondly, that the effort to improve things brings people together in a wide range of groups;
- thirdly, that the sector formed by these groups is the natural vehicle for participation by residents in the development of the locality.

Core team and dispersed influence

It is now clear that fostering community involvement in a particular locality is a substantial task. It is therefore necessary to ask about resources for it, and who is to do the job.

Fostering community involvement as a deliberate intervention requires two types of resource: firstly, a dedicated team of workers for whom this is the primary task; secondly, assistance from many of the professionals and specialists who are already working in the locality on social issues, whether for the local authority or other agencies. The private sector too – locally based companies, shops and small businesses – can all play their part. The job of the dedicated community involvement team is a combination of direct work with residents and indirect work through providing the guidance needed by other professionals and agencies.

Community involvement has to grow all the way through a scheme – it is not something that can simply be secured at the beginning as a preparatory element. The extent of community involvement must not become fixed at the level of those people who were easy to contact for the first consultation, which could mean that the majority of the local population never become involved. The aim of building up the capacity of the majority of the local population to become involved should be a primary purpose of the scheme, not just a side issue. Building up the strength of the community sector is building up a major productive force in the locality, through a variety of small initiatives and organisations. The totality of these microdevelopments, whether all independent or linked under some umbrella, constitutes a major product of the scheme, comparable to better housing, better amenities or better jobs, and having a mutually beneficial effect on these other areas.
Many existing development schemes have put into effect only fragments of community involvement. To mobilise involvement across the sector also requires a change in style of the work of existing agencies and professionals. Whilst this would involve some scores of personnel in a locality of 10,000 to 20,000 people, most of it would not require new financial resources. Teachers, doctors, health workers, housing officers, religious leaders, businesspeople and charity workers can all contribute by fostering autonomous local organisations wherever relevant to their work and by linking up with other agencies to create a more cooperative, holistic approach to local area problems. Many professions already have their own trend in this direction, because community involvement is an essential complement to most public services just as it is to local development schemes. However, the presence of a specialist community involvement team in the locality which can guide them will greatly enhance the combined effect of these contributions.

**Development and inclusion**

Regarding the most excluded residents, these will be facing not one particular difficulty but several, for example lack of educational qualifications, unemployment, homelessness and disability. They are likely to need help as individuals first and foremost, in gaining new confidence, social contacts, financial resources and skills. It is therefore not possible to prescribe which form of help is the most important – any form of help might be a foothold to general improvement, but almost certainly they are going to need help of several different kinds. ‘Involvement’ for them therefore firstly means creating basic social contacts. A variety of different types of agency are likely to be needed here: statutory agencies for help on such factors as health and housing, professional voluntary organisations for advice and training, local community groups for confidence-building and social skills.

Many projects set out to improve conditions in a disadvantaged locality by working with the most disadvantaged people in the locality but find, to their disappointment, that they have to adjust their goal of collective action down to the immediate survival needs of the disadvantaged people, postponing strategic local goals. It is essential to build into planning the realisation that even disadvantaged localities contain a wide range of people with different skills and abilities, and that the improvement of the locality as a whole demands the talents of the most able as well as the aspirations of the most excluded. At a time when more resources, across Europe, are potentially

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**Participation was one of the key ideas in the European Poverty programme ...** Some of its exponents emphasised participation as a basic human right, others stressed that participation could increase confidence and enhance self-esteem, and others again held that the skills learned through participation in small-scale projects enabled the participants to act more effectively within the wider society ... It is not easy to say how far projects ensured participation by the poor ... Many of the projects were dealing with a wide range of the population, not all of whom were poor. Such projects are faced with difficult choices in regard to participation by different groups of the population: on the one hand the young people, leaders and persons who have the professional and vocational skills which the project needs; on the other hand, the most disadvantaged and marginalised people.

available for local development, it is important to broaden implementation strategies and show how the whole of the local population can be engaged, and to provide a sufficiently large and skilled team to work across the whole spectrum of local inhabitants, supporting individuals where necessary but also devoting resources to working with the groups who are most capable of making an impact on local development.

Simultaneous development at several levels

The measures needed for human development in the locality are mutually reinforcing.

- Individuals need a variety of pathways and activities available for their development. Some of these pathways need to be provided directly by public services; others need to be provided by the local community sector.

Aalborg East (in Denmark) was a district of planned growth in the 1960s, intended to expand from a few villages to a new part of the city with 20,000 inhabitants. The recession of the 1970s and 1980s, however, meant that substantial parts of the facilities never materialised. Conditions became worse than in any other part of the city.

The staff of the regeneration project judged that it would be impossible to overcome the social exclusion of the area by working only with the most excluded individuals. Their strategy had two components: a forum for local activity that would secure improvements for the district as a whole, and specific activities carried out for the most excluded.

For changing the image and possibilities of the locality, the strongest individuals within the area were mobilised. Working with the stronger elements, a range of new opportunities were created. Subsequently the more disadvantaged individuals would also benefit from this improved range of opportunities.

The project helped to build up the new Aalborg East Joint Council, with subcommittees, open to any citizen, dealing with such issues as:

- the functioning of the local library
- sport and leisure
- public transport
- recreational space
- an annual fair for commerce and local organisations.

Separately, the project put on intensive courses and a variety of sporting and cultural activities aimed at unemployed people, benefit recipients, single parents and old age pensioners.

Some form of dual approach was evident in many other case studies. In Bremen a neighbourhood committee participated in overall planning whilst the more detailed problems of single tower blocks were dealt with by smaller groups. In Rome the needs of the most disadvantaged were addressed by the professionally staffed project whilst the residents’ committee articulated general public service needs. In Glasgow and Dublin community sector umbrella bodies dealt with strategic issues and negotiated with the authorities, whilst member associations dealt with the needs of specific sub-groups in the population.

• To play their part in providing these expanding pathways, local groups and organisations need to improve their practice and increase their resources.
• To improve practice and increase resources, groups and organisations need the help of networks; umbrella groups; grants and endowments; and professional agencies.
• Networks in turn need more effective member groups and individuals in order to be able to facilitate lateral development and speak for the local sector.

The development of effective community involvement therefore has to tackle several different levels of need and potential at the same time.

The specialist team

A programme of this breadth requires a team of workers with high-level social and technical development skills. It will not be sufficient to develop only one or two of the types of activity identified above: they are interactive. To bring residents together to start new activities and groups will not have much effect unless existing groups can advance. For the community sector as a whole to contribute more to regeneration objectives also requires that the public agencies become more community-oriented. Once socially excluded people have begun to find footholds in local society, their further progress will depend on whether the locality as a whole is developing.

Following the principle ‘for the residents - with the residents’ it became the objective of the renewal programme in Kreuzberg, Berlin, in the late 1980s to be oriented towards the needs of the residents and users, and to be planned and carried out in cooperation with them. Residents were approached and provided with comprehensive information and advice. Structures for participation in the decision-making process were developed and self-help projects supported ... A new infrastructure of neighbourhood democracy developed.

– A tenants’ advisory service independent of the owners was established ... Renewal and modernisation would not be carried out against the needs and interests of tenants.

– Neighbourhood committees were established ... to discuss decisions and formulate recommendations which were recognised as neighbourhood votes.

– Voluntary organisations based on environmental, educational, cultural, social and economic needs grew out of the tenants’ movement and became a strong partner in the process of participation ... strengthening the position of local people and giving them ownership of the development of their neighbourhoods.

Since 1989 the district of Kreuzberg SO36 has been confronted with new challenges. It has been significantly affected by the fall of the Wall. New problems have developed: the district is back in a central position of Berlin, attracts business, rents are rising tremendously, social projects from the days of the urban renewal programme are at risk ... The needed regeneration in the new city of Berlin will show if integrated community development is put into action.

There are tried and tested techniques for developing community involvement – but there is also a
need for intuition, inspiration and understanding of the specific local and cultural context. The
basic kinds of skill include:

• ability to talk sympathetically and non-directively to people about their concerns;
• ability to encourage people to take on new challenges and work together;
• ability to understand and explain how public services, local authorities and local development
  schemes work;
• ability to provide organisational development and technical assistance at appropriate levels to
  small and new organisations and to mature and substantial organisations;
• ability to sensitise public services and professional agencies to the role and potential of
  residents’ organisations.

A locality of 10,000 residents has a potential for generating several scores of small local
organisations and initiatives, each needing help with development and effectiveness. A team of at
least four to six full-time workers would be required to engender major advances in involvement
over a period of three to five years. A rule of thumb figure for the proportion of a scheme’s total
resources that should be allocated to the community involvement task would be about 10%. This
would be needed firstly to pay for the team of specialist workers and secondly to provide grants
and assistance direct to the local community organisations. Development schemes frequently
allocate millions of ecu to renovation of buildings, construction of roads or subsidising of jobs
without making a proportional investment in the development of human resources at the
community sector level. A significant allocation of resources dedicated to increasing community
involvement is essential both in its own right and to ensure the maximum benefit from the
physical, economic and environmental investments.
The previous sections have urged the necessity for taking a broad view of involvement, looking at the many different forms in which it is available to the whole population. In other words, community involvement is to be seen as including all forms of local voluntary activity, not just those which fit the agenda of a particular scheme. The potential for finding community representatives who can contribute effectively to an official scheme depends on sources of communication and experience within local inhabitants’ own organisations and networks. At the same time, these pre-existing forms of activity are authentic forms of development which the new scheme should support alongside its own agenda. Indeed, if the scheme has been well prepared, it will already have taken account of indigenous efforts and is likely to uncover more as it proceeds.

The danger of over-simplification

One reason why many previous schemes have failed to engage local community involvement is that they have tried to jump to advanced forms of involvement without situating their purposes in the context of underlying community activity and conditions. A too-simple view of involvement sees a development scheme as an entity in itself, not based in a particular context. Community involvement is seen as drawing a few ‘typical’ local people into the project.

Schemes based on the oversimplified notion of involvement are often described as if they were self-sufficient programmes. Participation by local people is taken to mean participation of a few residents directly in the scheme. However, participation at this level is in reality a very advanced form of involvement which only a limited number of the more skilled and confident residents are likely to be able to perform; and even such residents as these cannot participate meaningfully unless there is some structure linking them to the mass of residents.
In the oversimplified model it is also difficult to identify the intended effects of the scheme on community involvement because they cannot be distinguished from the processes. It is particularly difficult to say what improvements should remain when the scheme ends.

**An accurate concept of intervention leads to clear objectives**

A more accurate image (Figure 3) sees the scheme as a temporary sphere of activity located between two permanent fields: (a) the full range of the local public services and (b) the realm of independent community activity.

Figure 3: *Involvement in its context*

In this more objective model, residents’ involvement in the scheme is manifestly the tip of the iceberg of general community activity, with a two-way traffic of information, stimulus and accountability back into the daily lives of residents. Most of the daily activity is not directed specifically towards the scheme but to the **internal dynamism of the community**. The results would rightly be located **outside** the scheme, in the contexts in which it intervenes. Locating the intended results of the scheme well outside the scheme itself permits a clear view of achievements. Targeted outcomes might include:

- community organisations are strengthened;
- more people participate at various levels in community organisations;
- excluded people have more footholds in local society;
- the local community sector has more influence on public affairs;
- public authorities take more account of community needs;
- innovative local economic initiatives are flourishing;
- community representatives on official schemes have clearer legitimacy and lines of communication with local people.
Relation to public services

Similarly, the scheme should have a clear view of how the public services – the other main contextual factor – expect to be enhanced by community involvement. The reciprocal benefits to the community and the public services will be too multifaceted to plan in full but it may clarify the relationship and help to mobilise resources in kind to distinguish:

(i) the added value that community involvement can offer to achieving the objectives of the main agencies and departments;

(ii) the value that the agencies and departments can add to the development of the community;

and to agree on certain specific reciprocal actions.

In relation to a housing authority, for example, community involvement could assist tenants’ organisations to be more representative and effective and to negotiate with the housing department; help spread pride and a sense of commitment to the local surroundings and reduce vandalism. ‘In return’, the authority could expedite repairs, provide flats or houses for use by community organisations, and agree to meet tenants’ representatives regularly.

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**Ten building blocks for community development**

We divide community development into ten ‘building blocks’. The first four of these are about community empowerment, whose aim is to encourage communities to be better able to cope with, challenge or change their situation. The other six... depend on the policies and decisions of investors and authorities outside the community itself. Progress on the quality of life thus depends partly on what a community can do for itself and partly on how far the community can influence the decisions of investors and policy-makers.

1. **A learning community**: where people and groups gain knowledge, skills and confidence through community activity.
2. **A fair and just community**, which is concerned about civic rights, equality of opportunity, and which recognises the differences between cultures.
3. **An active and organised community**, where people are fully involved and which has a good range of strong local organisations.
4. **An influential community**, which is consulted and has a strong voice in decisions which affect its interests.
5. **A commonwealth** – a community which has a strong economic base, which creates opportunities for work and which retains as much of its wealth as possible.
6. **A caring community**, aware of the needs of all its members, and in which services and supports are of good quality and meet these needs.
7. **A green community**, which has a healthy and pleasant environment, conserves resources and encourages awareness of environmental responsibilities.
8. **A safe community**, where people do not fear crime, violence or other hazards.
9. **A good place to live** – one which people like, feel happy about and do not wish to leave.
10. **A lasting community** – one which is well established and likely to survive.

*Source: Voluntary Activity Unit, Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services, 'Measuring Community Development', 1996.*
In relation to a health authority, community involvement could foster mutual aid groups for people with specific illnesses, whilst the authority could ‘in return’ provide funding for project support workers.

In relation to an education authority, community involvement could provide informal adult education, whilst the authority could provide free use of schools’ computers or sporting equipment for local organisations.

Such developments also serve to build trust between people and authorities, and provide some of the local inhabitants with important experience of representation and negotiation.
It is necessary to assess activity levels at the start of a scheme. This serves several purposes. Firstly, it provides a map of starting points for intervention – both existing organisations which may be ready to cooperate with the development plan, and gaps in activity, such as neighbourhoods or population categories with very little activity which require new stimulus. Secondly, the process of assessing activity, for example contacting organisations and interviewing residents, may serve to make inhabitants more aware of the potential for greater activity. Thirdly, the initial assessment stands as a baseline against which to measure later progress in increasing the extent and effectiveness of activity, i.e. for evaluation (see Chapter 10). For evaluation purposes it will be necessary to repeat the assessment periodically during the scheme, say once a year, and it should be designed with this in mind.

Activity levels should be gauged through the following four instruments which will also serve to stimulate interest. The results of these investigations should also be fed back to the community and its organisations to help them become more conscious of themselves as a sector and more aware of their options for development.

**Open invitation to consultation**

Through household leaflets, public meetings, notices in the press and publicity events the local population at large should be invited to register its interest about the proposed developments, request more information and make its views known. Many local authorities are sceptical about such open invitations because they often achieve only limited results. Carrying them out more imaginatively can produce better results. For example, authorities could:
• use colourful leaflets written in day-to-day language, and with translations for ethnic minorities, not leaflets which look like official documents and are couched in administrative jargon;
• hold meetings in places where people gather for local entertainment and relaxation, not in official premises which they associate with authority and taxes;
• hold meetings at evenings and weekends, not during the working day, and set out the chairs in an informal, semi-circular style, not a lecture style with a raised top table;
• ensure that meetings move quickly to open discussion, not that they consist of long technical or political speeches.

However, even with such improvements, open consultations will still only engage those people who are more aware and active. It must always be remembered that many people in all areas, but especially in disadvantaged areas, do not yet feel themselves to be part of an active, decision-making collectivity regarding the future of the locality, but need to be drawn in by stages. Assessment should therefore never be limited to open invitation but should also include the methods below.

Profile of local groups and organisations

A list of all known local community organisations should be compiled by consulting the following:

• any local community or voluntary sector umbrella groups or support projects which may exist;
• lists of those which are receiving grants from, or are used in any way by, the public authorities (approach each department and agency separately – there is rarely a comprehensive picture of these contacts);
• lists of others which have applied for grants but not received any;
• notices and articles in the local papers;
• national organisations which may have branches in the locality;
• schools, churches, mosques, social centres and community centres, especially any which have premises that are hired out to other local clubs;
• local press, libraries, notices in shop windows, pubs or cafés;
• professionals working in the locality.

All the organisations should be contacted and asked about their activities, purposes and problems. There may be few or many such organisations – this alone will as yet say little about the overall picture. There may be many groups which are mostly very small; or few groups but with large memberships and networks. The groups and organisations should be told about the scheme that is coming up and invited to consider how they might contribute and how they might benefit. They should also be asked if they know of other local organisations not already noted; how far they cooperate with other organisations, and whether they participate in any collective forums or networks.
It may be worth selecting for more in-depth investigation and dialogue a few of the largest or most important community organisations, which might be capable of playing a leading role in local development over the coming few years.

**Household survey**

A door-to-door survey of a sample of households (preferably at least 250) should be asked what their interests or concerns are, what they think of life in this locality, what groups they have heard of or participated in and whether they would like more community activity.

This part of the survey is particularly vital: it will give feedback from ‘non-joiners’ as well as ‘joiners’; will tell how big a gap there is between the perspectives of the active groups and well-informed residents and the average citizens or excluded individuals; not least, it will also start to get local people thinking about the benefits of engaging in more community activity.

This is a relatively expensive exercise but the information which it yields is fundamental. Costs may be reduced by ‘piggy-backing’ on other household surveys being carried out by the local authorities or market research companies, so it is advisable to find out what other surveys may be taking place before organising a separate one.

A survey of 400 households to help prepare a new local authority plan in a disadvantaged part of a London borough in 1997 found that residents were particularly concerned about feeling unsafe, poor facilities for youth, rubbish and mess in the streets and public spaces, few play facilities for children, poor facilities for the elderly, damage to property and the volume and speed of traffic. People felt that the public services were not interested in their views and needs, and a third of the residents did not feel settled in the area. There was a low level of existing community activity. However, once asked, 45% of people said they would like to be more involved in improving local conditions. In order to do so, they suggested better information about local activities, better facilities for local people to meet and socialise, and a dialogue about development between local people and public services.


**Dialogue with professionals working on social issues in the locality**

Professionals working in the locality in the local authority, health authority, housing department, schools, places of worship and any other relevant agencies should be asked what the current policies of their agencies are; how these affect the local community; what their assessment is of the level of local activity, its potential for growth and the difficulties it faces, and what could be done by public agencies to assist its development.

If these ideas are quite new to the agencies, they might be asked to start considering them at a policy level, and offered assistance in devising those policies.
Combining the results

From these four sources, a profile of the level of local community activity should be drawn up, in terms of:

• the main issues that concern local people and how these relate to the aims of the development scheme;
• what local organisations are trying to tackle those issues, and what other community activities are taking place;
• what proportion of local people participate in at least one activity or local organisation;
• what sort of help excluded people need in order to be able to link in to activity;
• how far the organisations cooperate with each other, and what support bodies, umbrella groups, forums or foundations, if any, are assisting community activity;
• how far the public services relate to community needs and activities.

The next two chapters suggest what kinds of target and programme of action would follow this diagnosis.
Using the information from the survey of existing activity, a local scheme should set targets for concurrent development on each important factor. For example:

- increase in help available to residents to get together to tackle local problems and interests;
- increase in number of activities and groups of any kind available to local people;
- growth in ability of excluded individuals to access groups and activities;
- strengthening of groups willing to deal with issues highlighted by residents and agencies;
- establishment of better networks, umbrella bodies or representative forums for the sector;
- growth in public services’ ability to involve residents in decision making.

The scheme then needs to take action to meet these targets, through such means as grant regimes, deployment of community development staff, provision of facilities, publicity, information, contracting out of tasks to the community and voluntary sector, changes in practice amongst public services and drawing in support from the private sector.

The following six areas of action are fundamental, though by no means exhaustive.

1. **Spreading a culture of active citizenship in the locality**

   This means raising people’s expectations and understanding of the kinds of activity open to them. Methods would include publicity for the local community sector, encouragement through schools, community centres, religious institutions, local media and local meeting places. In the example on page 31, a local council carried out a survey which included asking people if they would like more community activity and what would help them to engage in it. As in a number of other surveys of this kind, there was a very positive response, influenced by the fact that the survey had given many people the idea of being active in their community for the first time.
2. Creating the right physical conditions

The physical conditions of a locality can have a big effect on how easy or difficult it is for activity to take place. Making it feel safe and easy for people to move around, with good street lighting, frequent and cheap transport, and pleasant, accessible natural meeting places, all easily usable by people with disabilities as well as others, makes a big contribution. Fear of crime is one of the commonest concerns of people in disadvantaged areas, and this includes fear of racial or sexual harassment. All this makes it difficult for people to move about and associate freely. An atmosphere of trust and safety in public places has to be created if people are going to associate freely and willingly. This is a classic chicken and egg situation: more community activity will help to create the trust and confidence to tackle local conditions and issues, but local conditions also have to be improved by other means in order to make more community activity possible.

3. Strengthening and extending existing groups

No community group or organisation is too small to be important for the locality. Even a group of four or five people means four or five individuals with the imagination and determination to do something new and different in the locality. Many such groups will be quite unaware that they form part of a larger picture of local development, and some may prefer to remain small and limited in their aims, which is of course a matter for their own judgement. Others, however, will leap at the chance to widen their role and their activities, whilst well-established groups may already have plans for growth which they are trying to fulfil.

Existing organisations, whether large or small, will need a variety of forms of organisational development and training. Some of these, in areas such as trading, publicity, accounting, will be similar to those required by small businesses; others, such as managing volunteers, negotiating with local authorities or dealing with charity law, will be special to this sector. However, overall, these forms of technical aid will be taking place in a very different ethos from that of the private or public sector. Primarily it must be remembered that most of the participants are taking part entirely in their own time and without payment. The atmosphere and the relationships amongst the participants have to reflect this major difference in motivation.

4. Starting new groups

In order to involve excluded or inexperienced people, or people with a particular need, it may sometimes be more feasible to start a new group than to try to guide them towards an existing one. This also depends on what groups are already functioning in the locality, and how open they are to new members. At the most basic level, it may be necessary to go around talking to people on their doorsteps or in their natural meeting places, helping them to realise the commonality of their problems and guiding them step by step in taking some action. The focus that would motivate them may be making friends, pursuing an interest or getting something done. The creation of a functioning group, i.e. an autonomous micro-organisation, may seem to be merely a by-product, but once people have got together for some joint activity their effect on each other is of as much importance for life in the locality as is the activity itself. At this early stage, the role of the
specialist is to pass on to the group, or to the most active individuals, the basic organisational skills that will make it possible for them to function on their own, and to open pathways for them to access other forms of help and recognition.

5. Grants

Financial grants for local community organisations are a basic necessity to help the sector develop. The locality in question may or may not already have such a regime in place. Almost certainly the amounts of money involved are likely to be very small compared to other parts of the public budget, in line with the traditional underestimation of the importance of this sector. The advent of a new scheme may be a good opportunity to review what grants are available to local community and voluntary organisations, with a view to boosting them. There may also be scope for encouraging the private sector in the locality to allocate financial assistance to such groups, and the specialist team should also acquire and spread information about other sources of financial assistance which may be relevant, such as regional, national or European grants or grants from trusts and charities.

6. Building up networks and infrastructure

Here the role is to assist groups and organisations, and the key individuals who emerge within them, to cooperate across the locality and to build up a corporate sense of the sector. This can never supersede the primacy of the individual groups and organisations, and so in most cases it is unlikely to be a formalised hierarchical structure, which is usually inimical to the nature of the community and voluntary sector. It therefore requires, again, the building up of trust and voluntary cooperation, and the development of common positions and key issues to which the whole sector can subscribe, and which therefore empower the leading representatives to negotiate with public authorities and others for improvements affecting the whole locality.
Chapter 8

Extending ‘Vertical’ Participation

Multi-level strategy

The previous sections have proposed approaching participation as a multilevel phenomenon. This means that different people will gain different benefits from participation according to their starting point. For excluded and disadvantaged individuals participation in a small, very local mutual aid group is an important stepping-stone to making new friendships and building a sense of common purpose and interest in the life of the locality, and working towards employability if relevant. For average residents, taking an active role in a voluntary organisation can be a way of widening acquaintanceship, gaining new skills and finding out more about how the life of the locality is managed. For young people, taking part in sports, arts, social clubs or issue groups can be a way of developing a sense of responsibility and gaining recognition of talent. For skilled and experienced people, taking part in local organisations can be a way of developing and exercising leadership and influencing the development of the locality.

Schemes therefore need to follow a multi-level strategy consisting of:

• involving the most organised part of the community from the start;
• stimulating new or better activity amongst the majority;
• providing special assistance to particularly excluded people and to organisations active amongst them;
• widening consultation and involvement by stages as the community becomes more active;
• ensuring that the relationship between the ‘advanced’ elements and the expanding base is mutually enhancing and reflects the growing involvement of local people.
The participation pyramid

Participation could be conceived as a pyramid (Figure 4) in which all residents have at least one potential entry-point. The ‘higher’ levels, such as representing the community in a scheme, rest on the ‘lower’ levels, such as cooperation between organisations. Some individuals will progress ‘up’ the pyramid to more complex roles, others – probably the majority – will settle into a function at another level. The aim is to maximise participation at every level.

Figure 4. The participation pyramid

The responsibility of those at the top includes advocating for the development of the whole local community sector (not just the sectional interest which may have brought them ‘up’ the pyramid). These dynamic individuals therefore need to maintain and expand their communication with the rest of the sector as more people and more initiatives are activated. In order to perform this function they may need more advanced training and a good map of their sector. They will need to be able to demonstrate to agencies and professionals that the sector is much wider and more important than it may at first appear. Spokespeople for the sector also need to be able to bring forward ideas from the grassroots on what support the sector needs for its own development.

Thus action should be taken at the five levels at which different individuals may be involved in organisations or groups.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Type of support and development needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership role</td>
<td>Technical assistance in negotiating with authorities and other power-holders; helping to shape the overall development of the locality and its population, and strategies for maintaining dialogue with the other levels in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks</td>
<td>Development to establish or improve umbrella groups, forums and networks; service to their members; cohesion of the community and voluntary sector, and relationships with other sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established organisations</td>
<td>Strategic planning; volunteers’ skills; staff skills (if the organisation has any staff); effective delivery; widening of social or geographical catchment; better interaction with networks and forums, and new opportunities for local people to become involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal or excluded groups</td>
<td>Assistance in group formation; basic organisational skills; development of trust and confidence; clarification of joint objectives; establishment of group identity; getting help from established organisations or umbrella groups; establishing status in local society, and opening up to more local people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and new or fragile organisations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>Stimulus to get involved in activities and organisations; assistance where needed in overcoming exclusion; making social contacts; building up confidence; establishing a personal development pathway, and participation in a new or established group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vertical growth is growth in the mutually beneficial interactions between the different levels. Ultimately, the way in which local people as a whole are involved in the development scheme is by means of the two-way traffic passing through each level. The different levels which form a pyramid of involvement for development can also be seen as a developmental structure with reciprocal outcomes at the different levels (Figure 5). Each of the five levels has implicit objectives for the levels above and below it as well as for its own level. Thus for example:

- Objectives of leadership roles would include improving the efficiency of the public services by communicating the needs of local communities (‘above’) and to ensure that the authorities provide the best conditions for the growth of the sector at all levels (‘below’).
- Objectives of the infrastructure level (networks, forums, etc.) would include informing and mandating community leaders on issues and positions for negotiation with power-holders (‘above’) and mobilising support and assistance to both new and established organisations (‘below’).
- Objectives of the established organisations would include contributing to networks and forums (‘above’) and assisting in the growth of smaller organisations (‘below’).
- Objectives of excluded groups and new organisations would include widening the networks of established organisations (‘above’) and giving opportunities to excluded individuals (‘below’).
- Objectives for individuals would include getting both new and established organisations to be more open to new members and users (‘above’), and giving a helping hand to other people not yet involved (‘below’).
The ordering of levels of objectives is also helpful in establishing some idea of the proportion of the local population likely to be involved in the different levels. Leadership roles will directly involve very few, but the effectiveness with which these roles are fulfilled will affect the whole locality, as well as providing intensive personal development for the individuals concerned. Infrastructure roles will occupy a larger but still small segment of local people, including, part of the time, people representing established organisations. The established and new organisations, which should be growing in number and effectiveness over the development period, may ultimately involve, in aggregate, most of the local population.

Inside each organisation there will again be a number of different levels of involvement, which can be imagined as concentric circles of intensity, with small numbers of organisers at the centre, encircled by volunteers and helpers, in turn encircled by users and ordinary members.

In a specific population group, say the residents of a difficult estate, there may be one or two per cent of people who are both able and willing to rise rapidly up the pyramid and become genuine spokespeople. It is often not predictable who these individuals are, and the rapidity of their development often takes the individuals themselves by surprise. These are the ones who end up saying ‘I never imagined this would happen to me – it has changed my life’. To combine the skill of leadership with the commitment that comes from identification with the issues, they need to still feel close to, and part of, the situation in question – and be felt to be so by others. They may lose this intimate connection over a period of time – that is just part of the cycle of development.
A holistic view of the economy

In received economic thinking, enshrined in the dominance of concepts like GDP, only cash transactions are ‘economic’. In holistic thinking (and in the commonsense calculations that people make in their household affairs and local communities) there are three parts to the economy:

• a trading part (the private sector);
• a distributive part (the public sector);
• a directly productive part (the community sector – households, mutual aid, community activity).

All three are essential to life and all three are forms of wealth (or poverty). Policies to increase cohesion and reduce disparities – and ensure prosperity in general – therefore need to address all three, applying appropriate criteria of effectiveness for each.

Community involvement can be summarised as a natural phenomenon with three main types of impact, each of which has economic as well as social value:

1. Impact on democracy (participation in local decision-making)
2. Intrinsic impact (community activity, mutual aid)
3. Impact on employability (with some intermediate employment).

Once the equal status of these areas is acknowledged, how they can contribute to each other can also be examined.
Most development schemes supported by European policy give high priority to economic outputs such as:

- job creation;
- help for SMEs;
- attraction of inward investment;
- improvement of the infrastructure for trade – for example, transport, communications, promotion, business premises;
- training and ‘pathways’ for unemployed people.

Community involvement has a particular contribution to make to these. However, it also challenges the assumption that these measures alone constitute local development or that they are necessarily the right starting points for a development plan. This section firstly looks at how the job creation element can be widened and then at the further widening of the approach to the local economy as a whole.

From 1994 to 1997 the Australian Department of Social Security ran the Community Research project, a series of 72 small-scale local initiatives to improve the living standards of people on low incomes. The approach emphasised the value of facilitating greater social participation in locally-managed community-based initiatives. It also adopted a multi-dimensional concept of living standards, including both cash and non-cash elements, such as quality of family relationships, social and political participation, reduced costs, personal wellbeing, access to information, and participation in the formal and informal labour markets. Forty projects reported substantial gains and 19 reported moderate gains in living standards. Characteristics of the most successful projects included:

- they adapted activities to meet the changing needs of participants
- they aimed for ‘here and now’ tangible outcomes
- they employed staff with high level community development skills
- they focused on social participation as a major component of project activity
- they encouraged participants to take on the role of producer-participant
- they established strong links with other agencies.

Barry Smith and Jeff Herbert, Community-Based Initiatives, Gateways to Opportunities, Canberra, Department of Social Security, 1997.

**Unemployed and non-employed**

It is barely possible to improve the conditions in a disadvantaged locality solely through job creation or by working with the unemployed. To try to work with the excluded alone, separately from working with the mainstream population, may reinforce their exclusion. A mixture of people from all sections of the population is required to galvanise community activity, and it is by
creating this critical mass that the locality as a whole can be improved. The unemployed and excluded must be specifically targeted and monitored, but their progress should be set within a comprehensive programme of improvement for the locality.

A profile of the whole local population would show the proportion of employed, unemployed, part-time employed, children and young people, retired and elderly, and adults of working age who are not employed in a paid job nor registered as unemployed. This last category, the **non-employed** – as distinct from the **unemployed** – is a crucial one for community involvement because it includes many people, and particularly women, whose main occupation is caring for others and who are therefore playing a productive though unpaid role in the local community. It may also include a substantial number of adults who are too ill to work, and others who have become demoralised by unemployment and no longer try to look for a job – a condition which often overlaps with ill health.

The following figure presents the profile of the whole population of Europe in terms of employment. As this shows, the non-employed far outnumber the unemployed.

Figure 1. European Community employment profile

*The Demographic Situation in the European Union, 1995* (Eurostat)

If the locality in which a particular scheme is working had approximately the same population profile as the average for Europe as a whole, 40% of the people would be employed (including part-time employed), 5% would be unemployed, 21% would be non-employed and 34% would be
above or below the age of employment, i.e. children or retired people. The profile for a particular locality may of course be different: in a disadvantaged locality not only the unemployed but also the non-employed are likely to be an even higher proportion. In either case it is clear why the improvement of the conditions of the locality demand the involvement of a cross-section of the population. Local development schemes should map out the local employment and non-employment profile on the model of Table 1, in order to get a true picture of the proportions of people employed, unemployed, non-employed, retired and below employment age. This profile may be considerably different from the impression one gets from unemployment figures alone, since these are only a percentage of the active labour market. Without knowing what proportion locally are in the active labour market, it is not possible to know merely from the unemployment figure what proportion of the total local population are unemployed.

Job creation should be increasingly targeted at the non-employed as well as the unemployed, as required by the policy objective of increasing the employment rate (see Chapter 2 above – The Policy Context). There would no doubt be distinct targets for the unemployed and the non-employed, so that schemes can weigh up the degree of priority to be attached to each. Encompassing both categories spreads resources more thinly but may make it easier to increase momentum in the local economy: in some cases non-employed people may be brought into employment more easily than the unemployed. Although it requires difficult decisions about priorities, and only a limited number of jobs can be created through a specific scheme, the widening of the target group from about 5% of the adult population to about 25% greatly increases the potential for integrating employment objectives into the general development of the community.

Widening the economic agenda

The key connection between community involvement and employment lies in the personal and collective survival strategies of people in disadvantaged localities (or of disadvantaged people in well-off localities). Being or becoming unemployable correlates highly with being localised – by lack of money, fear for safety, care responsibilities etc. This can easily become isolation, which reinforces unemployability. It is through the intimacy, informality and inclusiveness of local community organisations that people gain/regain the footholds which overcome isolation, give informal education, try out new tasks and responsibilities in an unthreatening environment and gain credibility with local employers.

However, it would be self-defeating to try to cultivate only the explicitly job-creating organisations, which are a minority, and ignore the great variety of mutual aid and mutual interest organisations which provide the essential soil for the sector as a whole. It requires a big floor of mutual aid and community involvement to give people the basic conditions to participate in any form of constructive activity, paid or unpaid. Community involvement is also the sustained interface between the local population and public services.

A vigorous local community sector therefore works naturally on:
• the intrinsic socio-economy – household life, mutual aid, social contact;
• the improvement of public services, by negotiation and supplementary activity;
• the natural preconditions for employability – informal skills and relationships;
• some direct employment creation.

In addition to the familiar employment objectives, therefore, the list of economic activities should be extended to areas or criteria such as:

• ensuring that newly created jobs go to local unemployed and non-employed people;
• ensuring that newly created jobs where possible have additional benefit for the locality;
• development of the social economy and intermediate employment;
• more effective delivery of public services;
• protection and enhancement of the local environment;
• reduction of wasteful consumption;
• improvement in the level of take-up of benefits;
• maximising mutual aid and volunteering;
• building up assets and endowments for the community sector.

These additional areas are sometimes distinct from conventional economic activity, sometimes interwoven with it. An example of interwoven value would be where jobs are created in the local social economy. An example of distinct value would be when young people or parents in a locality get together to run a youth club on a wholly voluntary basis. This has several forms of economic value: it provides free an amenity which would normally have to be paid for, so it saves money both for residents and the public authorities. It also helps young people to socialise and acquire new skills in an informal way, thus contributing to their personal pathways of development. It may also stimulate the public authorities to develop better provision of their own. It is important that the concept of the social economy adopted for local development includes all parts of this spectrum.

Small community organisations may also discover that by growing they can also contribute to job creation even though that was not their primary purpose. Their individual contribution may be very small – one or two jobs per organisation – but where many of these organisations are fostered, their aggregate effect can be appreciable.

The larger community organisations or those with an explicit economic purpose may be called community businesses or intermediate employment projects. Some of the most effective combine a dedicated social purpose, such as care for elderly people or young children, with job creation. In line with the logic of intermediate employment they are likely to be resourced by a mixed economy consisting partly of commercial earnings, partly volunteer effort, partly grant or subsidy. The volunteering element is in effect a subsidy paid to the organisation in kind by the local community. Some community economic initiatives, such as ENVIE (see page 46), deliver multiple value by focusing not only on job creation but on social development, and do so through providing a service of additional value to the environment, and even further value in providing goods cheaply to people with low incomes.
ENVIE began in Strasbourg in 1985, created by Emmaus, a project for the homeless. The idea of Entreprise Nouvelle Vers l’Insertion Economique (ENVIE) was to create temporary jobs for unemployed people in an environmentally useful way by recycling discarded electrical appliances. The organisation has grown into a network of 25 independent non-profit associations across France. Only untrained people are hired and trained. Employees get paid work, vocational training, and support in personal development and job searching for up to two years. In May 1996 the ENVIE federal association employed 380 trainees, 50 trainers, 50 administrative staff and 270 voluntary helpers, mostly the members of the boards of the associations. 57% of the associations’ budget came from sale of goods, and most of the rest from public subsidy, training contracts or donations. ENVIE is therefore a very successful example of the ‘intermediate labour market’ in operation, which is formed by a mixture of commercial trading and public subsidy. Since its creation ENVIE has provided more than 1000 trainee jobs.

The potential for universal indicators

This handbook has stressed that community involvement is an objective feature of local development. Consequently it should be possible to establish baselines describing the initial condition and then to measure whether the intended results have been attained. This should be the primary purpose of evaluation. At the same time it would be valuable to go deeper, throwing light on how the results were obtained, what consequences they had for the beneficiaries, and what implications they might have for further action.

Funding regimes such as the European Structural Funds tend to include a requirement to demonstrate proper use of the money and a record of the results. These requirements are usually standardised so as to allow aggregate and comparative results to be collected for many schemes. Consequently they do not go into processes and explanations. However, they necessarily take priority in the use of resources for evaluation.

In the case of community involvement, there are no standardised indicators, because this factor has not yet been established as a policy requirement, and its objective nature is only now coming to be acknowledged. Whilst this may relieve local schemes of the obligation to evaluate community involvement, neglect of evaluation would merely mean that this factor continues to be regarded as less tangible than others, and this can easily lead to its being treated as less important.

A corollary, therefore, of the argument presented throughout this handbook is that there should be standardised indicators for community involvement in local development schemes. Like other standardised indicators, these would be limited to certain universal features, and would not have
the explanatory powers of a deeper analysis. However, as was stressed in Chapter 5 above (*Establishing Objectives*), internal processes are only of real interest if they can be related to results. This means that there need be no conflict of principle between, firstly, evaluating achievement by a limited set of indicators of results, and secondly, analysis of causes and effects and other interesting factors.

This section is addressed to the building of a set of core indicators, limited to establishing whether community involvement has increased, and leaving aside the more complex questions of what effects this has had on other aspects of local life. For an outline of a more comprehensive approach to the improvement of localities see ‘Ten Building Blocks for Community Development’ in Chapter 5.

The argument of this handbook is that community involvement should be a component of all local development schemes. Equally, therefore, indicators of community involvement should be a component of evaluation. Whilst community involvement will naturally produce different forms of development in different places, because it increases the power of local people to make their own choices, the evidence that they are making such choices can be universalised.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (*The Policy Context*) the spread of community involvement, which is currently taking place at many levels through example and influence, may or may not be solidified at one or another level of policy. This need not delay, however, the formulation of indicators corresponding to the main elements of community involvement which have been identified in this handbook. This chapter is therefore devoted to presenting a proposed set of indicators. These are commended to policy-makers and, pending establishment of some such set of indicators at policy level, to local schemes.

**Scope and limitations of indicators**

Indicators need to be simple and easy to administer. This always involves severe compromise with the complexity of real life – obviously indicators are not capable of telling the whole story about the phenomenon in question: they are a measurable tip of the iceberg and have to be interpreted in context.

In order to assess change over time it is of course necessary to establish a picture of the conditions at the starting point. This is one of the purposes of carrying out the survey outlined in Chapter 6 (*Assessing Activity Levels*). For evaluation purposes it is therefore necessary to repeat the survey in the same form at intervals, at least once every two years.

It is important to be clear about the scope of the indicators proposed below. They are not intended to be indicators of local social and economic conditions, such as levels of poverty and wealth, quality of environment, health and education. Many such indicators already exist, but most of them leave out levels of community involvement. At the same time, levels of community involvement should be limited to exactly what they aim for, and not be confused with conditions.
It is possible for a locality with poor material conditions to have high community involvement, or for a locality with good material conditions to have poor community involvement. In other words it is an independent variable, and also a separate social ‘good’. However, it is clear that there are also important interactions between community involvement and material conditions, and once the indicators of involvement have been established, it will be possible to examine how they correlate and interact with other local conditions.

**Geographical focus**

Involvement takes place largely, though not exclusively, at the level of a geographical locality. The main evidence therefore has to be collected at this level. Evidence at larger levels such as cities or regions would therefore need to be aggregates or samples from the local level. However, it is relevant to ask what proportion of people in a given locality support voluntary organisations outside the locality.

Whilst it is useful to use a geographical boundary that corresponds to local popular conceptions of ‘the place where I live’, it is not necessary to establish that this constitutes a recognised community for the resident population – on the contrary, any attempt to define ‘the community’ is likely to end up with far too many options to be usable. What is being measured is the level of involvement of the resident population of a specified territory in certain kinds of activity. This is concretely ascertainable and is not dependent on a particular theory of what constitutes a community in general or the community in question.

Equally, the relevant local organisations, initiatives and networks are called here the community sector to indicate that they are all the organisations and activities of a certain kind which are operating within (not necessarily exclusively within) the designated boundary.

**The community involvement index**

Community involvement is composed of a cluster of factors. Whilst the use of just one or two factors would be a huge improvement on the use of none, it would be feasible to devise a community involvement index consisting of a balance of the key factors. This is what is presented here. It takes the form of 26 factors. Within these, the nine key factors marked * would perhaps be more feasible as universal requirements in a major policy. However, local schemes within this policy would want to look at the value of taking the full index on board.

The 26 factors are in three clusters:

(a) those to do with **people** (local residents);
(b) those to do with **local community and voluntary organisations**; and
(c) those to do with **public authorities and agencies**.

Evidence directly on **people** has to be collected through a direct survey of local residents.
However, a sample survey of 250 residents (in a locality of up to about 25,000 people) is statistically acceptable. This can also be done by ‘piggybacking’ on other surveys already being carried out. Consequently it need not be prohibitively expensive. Like the other indicators, it would need to be done at the beginning of a scheme to establish a baseline and then at intervals of (say) two years to establish progress. The indicators below are limited to collecting evidence of involvement. A dedicated survey could however collect additional information that would be highly useful for a development programme – e.g. number of people willing to be more active; issues they would like to be active on; obstacles that prevent them being active, etc.

Evidence on **community organisations** would need to start with establishing a list of functioning organisations, including small and low-profile ones. There are established techniques for doing this. Thereafter, evidence on their condition/progress would be collected by a survey of the organisations (again an initial baseline and periodic repeat); by aspects of the people survey and by information from professionals working on social issues in the locality. Again, the items below are limited to those most relevant for establishing the profile of involvement, but a survey could ask also about problems that need to be tackled, aspirations for growth, training needed, potential jobs that could be created, etc.

Evidence on **public authorities** would be collected directly from the authorities and from aspects of the people and organisations surveys. Again, this could form part of a more developmental inquiry.

**People**

The ‘people’ factors can be divided into (i) **subjective** (how residents feel about the locality) and (ii) **objective** (how active they are in the locality).

(i) Subjective:

A. Percentage of all respondents and of respondents in particular categories of disadvantage who feel concerned with how the locality develops.

B. Percentage of respondents, and respondents in particular categories of disadvantage, who believe that they make use of local opportunities to meet people and engage in enjoyable or useful activities.

C.* Percentage of respondents, and respondents in particular categories of disadvantage, who believe that they know about what is going on in the locality, how decisions are made about its development and what the responsibilities of the public authorities are.

(ii) Objective

D.* Percentage of eligible population who voted in the last local elections.

E. Percentage of respondents who are aware of the existence of three or more local community or voluntary organisations.

F.* Percentage of all respondents, and respondents in particular categories of disadvantage, who are actively involved in at least one local community or voluntary organisation (‘involved’ = attended events, used services or helped in an activity at least three times in the past year).
G. Percentage of respondents who took any other form of action on a local issue three or more times in the past year (e.g. attended public meetings, wrote to papers, had discussions with local councillor, contributed to fundraising).

H. Percentage of respondents who are active members or supporters of at least one non-local voluntary organisation.

**Local community and voluntary organisations**

Nearly all local voluntary organisations are small, but the research suggests that there are large numbers of very small local organisations, whether formally constituted or not, mostly indigenous to the locality, and smaller numbers of relatively large organisations, a higher proportion of which would be formally constituted and/or may be branches of national charities or projects initiated by public authorities. However, the pattern differs according to national and regional cultures, so the absolute number of organisations is less important than the proportion of the local population involved. In a locality of up to 100,000 people, it should be possible to establish and survey all the reasonably stable, visible and active organisations that can be found, i.e. all the organisations that have an established name and contact address, a minimum of 10 members or users, and which carried out some form of activity at least six times in the past year.

Factors about the organisations fall into three types – (i) basic facts about functioning and usage by local people; (ii) apparent level of effectiveness; (iii) cohesion and infrastructure of the local sector as a whole.

(i) Basic functioning:

I. Number of community or voluntary organisations functioning in the locality (whether wholly locally based or not).

J.* Number of ‘uses’ of responding organisations by local residents (‘use’ = attend an activity or receive a service at least three times in the past year. Do not include L but note that the same person can be a user and a volunteer on different occasions).

K. Percentage of the known organisations that are primarily controlled by local residents in a voluntary capacity (e.g. residents are majority on the board).

L.* Number of volunteer hours mobilised by responding organisations over the past year. Give as (a) absolute number, (b) average number per responding organisation, (c) estimated total for all known organisations, (d) average number of hours per member of local population.

M. Financial turnover of responding organisations over the past year (grants; trading; donations; value of donations in kind. Do not include L but do calculate cash value of L as a satellite account).

N. Main issues addressed/areas of social activity/categories of disadvantage targeted.

(ii) Effectiveness:

O. Percentage of responding organisations who believe they achieved their aims well or fairly well during the past year.

P. Percentage of responding organisations which increased activity, usage or impact during the past year.
Q. Percentage of known organisations judged effective by users, residents and relevant professionals working in the locality.

R.* Percentage of responding organisations demonstrating improvements in equal opportunities practice over the past year, e.g. increased involvement of ethnic minorities, women, people with disabilities, people experiencing other forms of disadvantage.

(iii) Cohesion/infrastructure:

S.* Existence of local umbrella bodies/development agencies/support systems for the community and voluntary sector. Percentage of known local community and voluntary organisations supported or using services.

T. Percentage of organisations which cooperated with three or more other local organisations during the past year.

U. Existence of forums or mechanisms to represent the views and interests of the sector to authorities and resource-holders. Percentage of known organisations in membership.

Public authorities (primarily the local authority)

V. Existence of policies to support the sector.

W.* Existence of grant regimes or service agreements to support the sector. Total value of these.

X. Existence of mechanisms to involve residents and residents’ organisations in decision making.

Y. Percentage of fieldwork professionals whose remit includes support for relevant local community and voluntary organisations.

Z.* Changes of policy or practice made during the past year as a result of consultation with/intervention by local residents and their organisations.
Community involvement is a field in which the most important information and expertise lies in the details of local experience. It is you, the local practitioner, planner or community activist, who holds the key to the next steps. The Foundation will continue to monitor developments in this field and is keen to reflect views from varied localities, for example in any future edition of this handbook. What we would like in particular are short answers to any of the following questions:

- What is the scheme or initiative that you have experience of?
- Where and when did it take place?
- Who resourced it?
- What policies was it governed by?
- Did these policies include any reference to community involvement?
- Who carried out the initiative?
- How was community involvement facilitated?
- What forms did it take?
- Did community involvement increase or become more effective?
- Did community involvement have additional effects on other objectives?
- What difficulties or problems were encountered with community involvement?
- Are there particular lessons you draw from this experience?
• Are there techniques or policies that you would recommend?

• Do the concepts and recommendations in this handbook make sense in your context?

• What further research, information or advice would most help to foster community involvement in your context?

Please send your response to: Community Involvement Feedback, Teresa Renehan, Information Liaison Officer, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Wyattville Road, Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland. All respondents will be kept informed of future Foundation products on this subject.
The basic anatomy of the community sector was established in the programme of *Citizen Action* research carried out by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions between 1987 and 1992. The combined final report was *Out of the Shadows* (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 1992). Individual country reports were issued for Spain, Portugal, Greece, Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland and the UK. This was followed by a document discussing the policy implications of this programme, *Local Community Action and Social Policy* (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 1993), and a brief summary on implications for practice, *Discovering Community Action* (London Community Development Foundation, 1993). In 1997 the Foundation published a further discussion paper, *Citizen Action and Community Involvement: Getting to the Roots*, reviewing how far the issue of community involvement had emerged in European policy over the intervening five years.


A wide discussion of how to broaden the concept of the economy, including community involvement and alternative forms of work, is contained in *Reconciling Economy and Society: Towards a Plural Economy*, Paris, OECD 1996.

The proposed new *Regulation for the European Structural Funds* for the period 2000 to 2007 was published on 18 March 1998, together with an Explanatory Memorandum, and is available on the internet at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg16/document/doc1g_en.html.
An analysis of the potential of the new Structural Funds for engendering community involvement, *The New Structural Funds – What Development Model for Europe?*, by Gabriel Chanan, is available from the Research Department, Community Development Foundation, 60 Highbury Grove, London N5 2AG, UK.


The progress of debate on the Structural Funds and other European policies is tracked from the viewpoint of their impact on poverty and disadvantaged local communities in the *Newsletters of the European Anti-Poverty Network* (EAPN), 205 rue Belliard, Bte 13, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium.

An analysis of the impact of the Structural Funds on the voluntary and community sector is contained in Brian Harvey, *A community perspective on the Structural Funds and their future*, Community Workers Cooperative (Ireland) and European Anti-Poverty Network. Brian Harvey Social Research, 2 Rathdown Crescent, Terenure, Dublin 6W, 1998.

A catalogue of publications on community development is available from the Community Development Foundation, 60 Highbury Grove, London N5 2AG, UK or on the CDF website: http://www.cdf.org.uk. Information on national community development organisations may be obtained from the Combined European Bureau for Social Development, c/o Margot Gorman, Les Jardins de Mormal, 2 Avenue de Mormal, Appt 5, Bat K, 59800 Lille, France.
Local Community Involvement
A Handbook for Good Practice

This handbook focuses on the practical question of how to increase and improve community involvement in local development or regeneration schemes, particularly in disadvantaged localities. The text – based on experience across the European Union over the past ten years – is designed to inform policy-makers at all levels, planners, practitioners and members of local partnerships, and local residents’ organisations.

The handbook demonstrates that effective resident representation on a partnership or development initiative is based on a ‘hinterland’ of low profile involvement by many residents in independent small-scale activity groups. This ‘local’ community sector of citizen action involves both independent local residents’ organisations and informal networks. Active community participation is defined firstly in terms of residents’ involvement in their own organisations and networks and secondly their involvement in official development schemes, often indirectly through networks.

Specialist workers and targeted resources are usually necessary to increase the level and effectiveness of community involvement. The handbook illustrates how plans and objectives are established and offers a systematic approach to strengthening this involvement.

Most local development schemes have major economic objectives and the handbook discusses the relationship between community involvement and economic development. Evaluation procedures for achievements and best practice are also discussed.

The handbook proposes a core set of indicators of involvement which could be applied to both funding policies and for local schemes.