Partnership Theory and Practice

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Introduction

The importance of the local arena in planning for socio-economic development has gained widespread attention over recent years both in Ireland and further afield (Stohr, 1990; Bennett and Krebs, 1991; Bennett and McCoshan, 1993; OECD, 1990; Walsh, 1996; Maillat, 1997). This section commences with a brief review of the concept of development followed by a consideration of the rationale for local development initiatives and an identification of the key components of strategies for effective local development. The most important is the establishment of an organisational structure based on partnership. The concept of partnership is explored in some detail and the principal advantages and disadvantages of partnerships are discussed. The

remainder of this section reviews a selection of studies that have assessed the role of partnerships in local development in diverse contexts. Part Two of this publication includes eleven case-studies that have been undertaken in order to identify the factors that contribute to or inhibit effective partnerships. Part Three consists of a toolkit for community development.

Development is a process that has been given a wide variety of meanings over the past forty years. It is now generally accepted that while economic progress is an essential component, it does not represent the entire process. Development is a multifaceted process that includes economic, social-cultural and environmental dimensions. For example, it includes the creation of social products such as upgraded local leadership, a culture of enterprise and innovative action, or the enhanced capacity of people to act in concert, purposefully and effectively so as to cope with the threats and opportunities they face. An integrated holistic approach is a key requirement for sustainable development.

The rationale for local development initiatives is not always clearly articulated. One view is that local initiatives are little more than a scaling down of interventions that were previously organised from the top by centralised policy making units, and delivered through sectoral agencies with little emphasis on co-ordination or integration. An alternative approach is to consider local development strategies as a radical response that seek to achieve new objectives in relation to the development process by focusing on concepts such as multidimensionality, integration, co-ordination, subsidiarity and sustainability. In other words, local development is not only about changing the scale at which interventions are made — it is also about finding new approaches to facilitating a broader concept of development.

Following the latter perspective three inter-related rationales can be suggested for local development initiatives. These are (1) to overcome market failures, (2) to improve local capacity, and (3) to facilitate empowerment. Local capacity building is a critical objective as it enables local communities to become empowered (Friedmann, 1992) which in turn helps to overcome some instances of market failure (Michaelson, 1979). The three rationales broadly relate to different types

of objectives, e.g., economic, social and political. In order to achieve these objectives it is necessary to adopt several basic principles which can be conveniently categorised under three headings: partnership structures for subsidiarity as an organising model; strategic planning as a methodology; and animation, facilitation and capacity building as processes for implementation. The processes that are required to implement these principles are summarised in the next section.

Local Development Processes

There is widespread acceptance of the proposition that policy formulation and implementation in the area of local development should be guided by the principle of subsidiarity. This requires the establishment of legally constituted *partnership* structures that allow for devolution of authority and delegation of responsibility but which at the same time ensure that the public interest of society as a whole is protected. Responsibility must be matched with accountability. The type of structure needed to implement the principle of subsidiarity should be broadly based in terms of sectoral and geographical representation, and should also be capable of facilitating greater co-ordination of activities between different administrative levels. The partnership model through its membership structure attempts to give explicit recognition to the fact that different sets of actors — statutory bodies, the private sector and community/voluntary agencies — each have a role in the local development process. The involvement of statutory bodies most of which are organised along sectoral lines from the top, is crucial to the forging of productive relationships between the centre and the local level. The partnership should be involved at all stages in the preparation and implementation of the local action plan — essentially they should view their role as 'owners' of the local development plan.

Greer (2001) has provided a very comprehensive review of the role of partnerships in public policy. Following Bailey, 1994 he defines the partnership approach as "a mobilisation of a coalition of interests drawn from one sector in order to prepare and oversee an agreed strategy for a defined area or objective". His analysis of the main advantages and disadvantages of partnerships are summarised in the following table.

Table 1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Partnerships

Advantages of Partnerships	Disadvantages of Partnerships
Partnerships can establish stability in a turbulent environment created by economic, social and political changes. Stakeholders come together to create a unified organisation which is complex, flexible, and capable of adapting quickly.	Partnerships can increase environment complexity and turbulence. Partnerships are created under numerous strategies leading to confusing mix of inter-linking and over-lapping partnerships and strategic alliances.
Empowerment at the local level will improve local democracy as traditionally excluded groups are given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.	Partnerships may be undemocratic. The may increase the power of self-appointed members of partnership boards vis a vis local politicians thus diluting local accountability. Members of community/voluntary sector organisations may be unrepresentative of their organisations.
Stakeholders involved in developing one common approach create a more effective and coordinated policy. Partnerships adopt a multi-agency approach to multidimensional problems.	Partnerships may find it difficult to develop a common approach. Due to the inclusion of a variety of interests partnerships are prone to conflict and may be hindered by the need to keep all the partners together.
Involving stakeholders in partnerships creates empowerment and ownership which will establish sustainable programmes and a culture of self help.	Partnerships are fragile mechanisms and are unsustainable. Stakeholders come together in partnership largely to gain additional funding.
Synergy. Partnership organisations can achieve more acting together than individually through mutual learning and sharing.	Partnerships may be dominated by powerful interests which creates conflict and hinders the development of a common approach.
Stakeholders in partnerships can gain control over resources and maximise budgets.	

Adapted from Greer, 2001, Table 2.3 pp. 34-35

A distinction has to be made between the establishment of a broadly based partnership and its transformation into a dynamic entity through a partnering process (Craig, 1995). The partnering process implies a commitment to working towards common objectives; a high level of mutual trust; a willingness to co-operate, share responsibility and accept accountability; and where necessary to alter the prevailing institutional structures. This requires that each partner accepts agreed objectives based on negotiation between partners coming from different perspectives (e.g., private sector business interests versus community social objectives). This aspect of partnership is much more challenging for all participants and likely to require fundamental changes in attitudes and priorities. There has to be agreement to participate in joint planning and decision making aimed at resolving problems, and above all a commitment to developing some degree of equality of relationship among the partners. This is a formidable challenge which can only be overcome gradually through constant nurturing, managing and reinforcing. It is important to view this dimension of local development as one that will require a lengthy learning curve, which may be shortened by appropriate interventions under a strategic approach to local planning.

The main requirements of a *strategic approach to planning* are that it must be:

- unified in the sense of tying all the components together,
- comprehensive in relation to all sectors,
- focused on target groups and areas,
- innovative rather than imitative, and
- integrated so that all parts of the plan are compatible with each other.

A number of positive aspects of the strategic planning model have been noted by O'Cinneide and Keane (1990). First, it allows for widespread community participation in the planning process and helps to overcome the sense of powerlessness and apathy. Secondly, it facilitates the achievement of a consensus which will greatly enhance the prospect of the plan proposals being supported rather than being opposed by local interests. However, it must be noted that there are considerable variations between communities in their levels of preparedness to participate in this type of process. There may also be difficulties related to the reluctance of some participants to support any

actions that might alter the status quo and thereby weaken their power base. Another risk is that the planning process may be hijacked by some well organised interests while others are effectively excluded from participation. Yet another possibility is that the planning process becomes "consultant driven" in which case the local community have difficulty in developing a sense of ownership of the plan. These potential problems can be avoided to some extent if the local Group establishes a partnership structure at an early stage, and if it engages in a process that explicitly involves animation and capacity building.

The processes that help to distinguish recent local development initiatives are usually referred to as *animation, facilitation and capacity building*. These processes are central to the objective of empowering communities that in many cases have become dependent and apathetic.

The role of *animation* is to improve the effectiveness of the human resource factor in local development. It is usually initiated through an intensive process of community consultation which is aimed at maximising the extent of local involvement. There are several ways of increasing the level of local participation: e.g., through public meetings, adult education and training courses, personal contacts, local surveys, use of public media, dissemination of information through libraries, exhibitions, fairs, etc. The relative importance of each of these methods varies at different stages in the development process. Public meetings aimed at information dissemination and a preliminary SWOT analysis can be very important in the initial stages whereas training programmes (e.g., community leadership and business skills) become more important at a later stage. Essentially, the nature of the animation process can be expected to become more focused and specialised as Groups progress along a development path. Apart from being of benefit to the local community the animation process also provides an opportunity for the animators to listen to the needs and views of the community, which they can subsequently incorporate into the local Action Plan. Animation should be regarded as an ongoing process which should be provided by professionally trained animators.

Facilitation is a more personalised form of animation involving intensive contacts between project promoters and the animation or project development officers of the local partnership. Its objective is to

assist project promoters in the preparation of their proposals so that they have a good chance of being approved by the Partnership Board. Facilitation essentially attempts to overcome the problems associated with the perceived bureaucracy of larger and remoter agencies. It also tends to dramatically reduce the level of rejection of project applications which can be psychologically very important for communities that have become alienated from the national institutions.

Capacity building is a gradual and complex process aimed at upgrading the local physical and human resource bases. The concept as used here relates to the capacity of the entire local population as distinct from that of individuals — in this sense it can be considered as being about the provision of public goods. It can be achieved by making provision for skills improvement, encouraging new forms of organisation, and stimulating new types of linkages between groups and public agencies and by enabling individuals and organizations to be more flexible and adaptable to changing situations. While much of the activity that is typically described as capacity building is concerned with training it can also cover activities such as resource audits, mentor services, formation of marketing co-operatives, provision of specialist hardware to guarantee the quality of products, etc. Local development programmes should allocate resources to improve the capacity of local representatives to participate in the development process and especially to assist the directors of the local partnership boards to develop their skills so that a genuinely co-operative and proactive partnership can be established (Walsh, *et al.,* 1998).

Typically, capacity building involves three stages which may not be discrete (Bennet and Krebs, 1991). The first is concerned with acquiring the "know-how of development". This is usually a preparatory phase during which the pre-conditions for development are put in place. These include provision of information, promotion of demonstration projects, and recruitment of consultancy and training services. The emphasis is very much on learning how to take actions that will lead to wealth creation and employment. By the end of the first phase there should be in place some local leaders and structures to carry forward the process, an animation and capacity building programme, and a small number of demonstration projects.

In the second stage the emphasis is on providing support and encouragement for spontaneous initiatives. A number of supports may

be required which can range from financial aid packages, provision of workspace, upgrading of management skills, and investment in marketing strategies. The third and final stage is when the local development process becomes self-sustaining. This may require only emerge after intense support over a period of ten or more years, by which time there is a sufficient critical mass of projects and other activities being promoted spontaneously and there is also an experienced local support structure in place (Bennett and Krebs, 1991).

Until relatively recently the complex tasks of animation and capacity building have been largely left to local enthusiasts who frequently are very effective as local catalysts but are not adequately trained to cope with the complexity of the entire development process over a long period. Stohr (1990) found in his United Nations University project on local development that in the majority of cases local initiatives were triggered by one dynamic personality. An important factor in all cases was their interrelation with local personal and institutional networks which gave them access to local social systems and local information.

Drawing on recent experience in Ireland and abroad there is now a much greater emphasis on professionally-trained animators. A detailed description of the roles and skills which they should possess has been provided in a report from the Arkleton Trust (1990). The report of The Committee on Rural Development Training (1993) strongly supported the need for trained animators especially in the early stages of development. In their view, animators should have the following skills and knowledge:

- leadership and motivational ability,
- ability to empathise with people, and to communicate at different levels,
- ability to access and assess relevant technical information,
- knowledge of rural development support systems,
- conceptual skills to analyse group behaviour, and identify hidden obstacles/forces in development activity.

It is essential that resources are provided to train and recruit individuals with the range of competences set out above and that local development offices are staffed by teams that include a broad range of complementary skills.

The requirements for effective local development that have been outlined above — partnership based structures; strategic planning; and actions related to animation and capacity building — have been applied in many contexts, both urban and rural, in Ireland and many other countries (for reviews see OECD, 1996, 1999; Geddes, 1998; Walsh, et al., 1998; Westholm et al., 1999; Hart and Murray, 2000; Greer, 2001). The next section provides a synthesis of the main lessons in relation to partnerships that can be drawn from these studies.

Partnerships as an organisational model for promoting local development

Partnership based approaches to local development were vigorously promoted by the Irish Government throughout the 1990s with assistance from the EU Structural Funds. Evaluation studies have been undertaken for each of the recent local development initiatives in Ireland- see for example O'Malley (1992) on the Pilot Area Programme for Integrated Rural Development (1988-90); Kearney *et al.* (1995) on the EU LEADER 1 initiative; Craig and McKeown (1993 and 1994) on the Area-based partnership response to long-term unemployment; Haase *et al.* (1996) on Local Development Strategies for Disadvantaged Areas and Walsh, et al. (1998) on the role of local partnerships in promoting social inclusion. In addition to the local evaluations, the OECD has also undertaken a review of the impact of local partnerships in Ireland (OECD 1996). A notable feature of these reviews is the extent to which they have adopted qualitative methodologies to focus on the processes involved in local development.

There is general agreement that locally-focused, area-based integrated strategies can make a significant positive contribution to the economic and social well-being of many individuals and their communities. Local development is seen to be much more than simply a scaling down of interventions that were previously organised from the top by centralised policy making units and delivered through sectoral agencies with little attention to co-ordination. Taken together the various local development initiatives constitute a programme that is guided by a multidimensional view of development. Economic, social and political (empowerment) aspects of development are well catered for. The main weakness is in regard to the environmental dimension,

though this is being addressed in a limited way within the second LEADER programme and the sub-programme for Village Renewal within the Operational Programme. More emphasis has also to be placed on understanding the processes of local development and on education and training of local activists. Such training is required for individuals at both the local and central levels so as to facilitate more cooperation and to bring about a change of attitude that will lead to a greater emphasis on soft support measures instead of the more traditional reliance on financial grants and physical infrastructure.

The initiatives are characterised by a strong emphasis on provision of soft supports and the adoption of pro-active out-reach strategies. In these respects they differ from previous sectoral interventions which were regarded as bureaucratic and overly reliant on provision of capital supports. The OECD review team were particularly impressed by the extent to which they regarded the new decentralised economy in Ireland to be more pervasive (in terms of the range of activities undertaken) and more accessible to persons from low wage communities than might have been expected. In fact their overall assessment of the partnerships that they visited was that they are "extraordinarily innovative" (OECD 1996: 85). However, they warn against complacency and more critically they point to the need for institutional reform so that the innovativeness of the experiment can be sustained.

The implementation of each initiative has been devolved to local groups that are organised on a partnership basis. Typically each partnership includes representatives of relevant statutory bodies including the local authorities, of the local communities and of the local business sector. In the case of County Enterprise Boards the composition of the Boards was decided upon by the parent government department. By contrast, LEADER groups were allowed to determine locally the membership of their boards. For the second LEADER programme this autonomy has been retained but there is now a requirement that the boards should represent a tri-partite partnership. The average size of LEADER I boards was fourteen members, though this varied from five to 21. The size of the boards tended to influence the orientation of the programme of actions undertaken by the groups. Small boards tended to pursue a restrictive agenda which was usually strongly oriented towards enterprise support while larger boards were

often dominated by representatives of several community-based groups. These were more likely to lack cohesion and were, therefore, less able to adhere to a strategic approach (Kearney et al. 1995).

The tri-partite structure of most partnerships was successful in facilitating a forging of mutually beneficial links between local community representatives and the statutory agencies. Some groups adopted a brokerage role in relation to the existing agencies which led to some innovative actions. What was most significant about these was that in most cases it was the LEADER Group rather than the agencies that provided the catalyst for ensuring that the events actually happened. The inclusion of private business sector representatives on boards has helped to alter some of the bureaucratic procedures associated with public agencies.

Turok (2000) identified a number of strengths of the local partnerships in Ireland. These included

- A practical problem-solving approach, needs driven agenda and action-orientation have resulted in the provision of new and enhanced services and facilities which have been of direct assistance to many poor and unemployed people,

- The brokering of informal alliances and multi-sector networks that have improved the flow of knowledge and information between organisations and helped to better co-ordinate their employment and social programmes,

- Giving local communities and interest groups a more direct say in the way policies are formulated and resources are allocated has provided important foundations for efforts to address the isolation, powerlessness, marginalisation and political exclusion experienced by many disadvantaged communities,

- The introduction of new ways of thinking into parts of the public service, starting a process that may bring about an organisational culture that will be more responsive to individual and local circumstances,

- The manner in which partnerships have been able to respond to changing needs and circumstances by taking on additional areas of responsibility,

While the partnership model has been found to provide opportunities for innovative approaches to local development there are still some key issues to be resolved at central and local levels (NESF, 1997; Walsh *et al.*, 1998). The extent of centralisation in the Irish administrative system is a constraining factor on the development of effective and dynamic partnerships. While several of the local partnerships have demonstrated that they can be very effective in addressing problems that were previously neglected or inadequately addressed by the larger agencies there have been some difficulties in overcoming the distrust of some personnel in the longer established agencies towards the recently established partnerships. The reasons for this situation are due in part to a tradition where the bulk of public finances have been controlled by central authorities, and also the threat to existing power structures posed by the partnerships. Indeed in the case of one of the programmes the evaluators concluded that some of the key statutory agencies had failed to deliver on any aspect of the initiative (Craig and McKeown 1994).

Another weakness in the effective operation of the partnership model can be the demands placed upon the local community representatives. The time commitment required of voluntary representatives can be excessive. Also the lack of experience of some representatives can at times prevent them from engaging as equal partners. The evaluators have in all cases recommended that special training should be provided for board members and that there should be provision for rotation of membership after a fixed period in order to reduce the burden that is frequently carried by a few and also to safeguard against the emergence of local cliques which could serve to frustrate the ideal of partnership.

The OECD review in 1996 was forthright in its view that there is a legitimacy question to be addressed in relation to the position of many of the partnerships which have benefited from a provisional dispensation from normal democratic controls. It is alleged that they have "substantial informal power to direct funds from state agencies to the benefit of their own projects" (OECD 1996: 85). This assertion may be an overstatement as the situation so described is only likely to arise when a partnership has matured enough to be able to adopt a strong brokerage position vis a vis the better resourced state agencies. Nevertheless, the report is correct in questioning the extent to which

partnership board members are capable of representing the diversity of interest groups within the total population of the partnership area. While success and legitimacy may be temporarily derived from the promotion of innovative projects, in the long run, this "can never substitute for electoral review" (OECD 1996: 85). The issue of democratic accountability was also noted by the Devolution Commission (1996) and has been the subject of much debate since the publication in December 1996 of proposals for a more effective system of local government (Government of Ireland, 1996). Since then progress has been made following the establishment in January 2000 of City and County Development Boards (CDBs) which includes representatives of local government, local development partnerships, state agencies and the social partners — for more details see Meldon, Kenny and Walsh (CREADEL Publication Nr. 1, 2001). The first task assigned to the CDBs has been to prepare integrated 10 year strategies for economic, social and cultural development which will facilitate the achievement of sustainable development in accordance with Local Agenda 21 principles (for example, see Le Cheile — An Integrated Strategy for Meath to 2012 facilitated by Walsh et al, 2001 as part of the NUI Maynooth CREADEL project work programme.

The present institutional system is weak in regard to co-ordination mechanisms which leads to inter-agency conflicts, lack of synergy, frustration for both officials and target groups, and an over reliance on informal exchanges which in the long run will inhibit systemic innovation. There have also been significant difficulties in relation to mainstreaming of pilot actions initiated by local partnerships (Meldon, Kenny and Walsh, 2001). There is a widely held view that the central support units associated with the parent departments are over stretched, while the local groups are so engaged in trying to implement their own plans that there is very little systematic learning taking place.

The problem of weak systemic learning across the partnerships in each programme is compounded by the extent to which different programmes have overlapping objectives thereby encouraging competition rather than complementary actions between partnerships in the same geographical areas. The situation is not helped by the fact that each initiative is under the responsibility of a different government department and that there is no strong mechanism for central level co-ordination.

Turok (2000) noted a number of weaknesses, some of which may be of a general nature while others are more applicable to some partnerships as they have not all developed at the same pace for a variety of historical, institutional and local reasons. In particular Turok noted the following weaknesses.

- They have direct control over fairly limited resources, much less than any of the statutory partners. Thus they rely heavily on facilitating networking and acting as brokers. This is a very difficult challenge in contexts where the local institutional culture is not conducive to co-operation,

- A number of partnerships have not been particularly strategic in their approach. This is a serious limitation and could pose a threat to the longer term sustainability of some local partnerships,

- In line with the previous OECD review (1996) he noted the absence of structures to facilitate systemic learning. In the absence of some explicit structure there is a risk that the valuable experience, learning and trust that has been built up within the partnership structure will be dissipated because it resides principally within the ambit of the individuals involved and is not sufficiently embedded within the wider institutional systems.

Westholm et al 1999 have provided an extensive review of the role of local partnerships in supporting rural development throughout Europe. Drawing on the experience of partnerships throughout Europe they conclude that partnerships have frequently emerged in a context of an initiative vacuum. By this they mean that in many countries or regions there is no single organisation or agency that is capable of responding in a comprehensive manner to problems that result form a combination of local and external factors. Partnerships provide a mechanism for achieving co-ordinated and comprehensive responses. Significantly they argue that the presence of well established traditions and organisations for community development is a key element in the formation of partnerships that can offer alternative ways of distributing roles and tasks.

The central role of partnerships in best practice approaches to local development was also confirmed by the OECD 1999 report on Best Practice in Local Development. In addition to the points that have been made already the OECD report notes the importance of professional

management and effective leaders to support partnerships. The study also states that different types of partnerships may be appropriate in different circumstances reflecting the type of problem to be addressed, the local political culture and the institutional environment. However, they conclude that all partnerships should ensure that:

- Each actor has a recognised role and a clear idea of the benefits to them,

- That representatives on the partnership structures are committed individuals with significant authority and influence within their respective organisations,

- That there are clear communication lines between the partners and effective boards, committee and forum structures,

- That partnership structures are able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Overview of case studies

Eleven case studies have been prepared to illustrate the factors that contribute to successful partnerships for local development. Three of the studies were prepared by the ULB partner, four by the UK partners and four under the direction of NUI Maynooth. Each case study has sought to outline how the local partnership was established, what has contributed to success, what has not worked, what are the transferable lessons and what are the barriers to transferability. A common template was used for each study which included obtaining information from primary research and secondary sources on the background context to the formation of the partnership, membership of the partnership, operating procedures, results achieved and transferable lessons. Some of the main findings are summarised here.

The Belgian case studies demonstrate the role of local partnerships in promoting sustainable development based on natural resources. The first by Gabrielle De Perignon examines the evolution of the partnership to manage the Natural Park of Pays des Collines in Belgium. The partnership involves representatives of public and private sectors and non-governmental and voluntary organisations. As part of its efforts to support local economic and social development, the partnership has

established a local label to assist the marketing of local food crops. The partnership structure has facilitated a high level of local participation and led to the establishment of an extensive network of local players. A constraining factor for the on-going development of the partnership activities is the uncertainty in relation to funding. The success of the partnership in establishing a more positive image for the area has also generated its own problems, especially in the form of gentrification of the countryside.

Pierre Fontaine uses the partnership that was established in the Walloon region in 1999 to oversee the Semois River Contract, which involves twelve municipalities, to illustrate benefits of the partnership approach in the form of a bottom-up water management structure that is capable of achieving sustainable development of the water resources. He notes that one of the outcomes from the partnership is the emergence of a domino effect with additional networks being established outside the river contract, and also the emergence of a greater sense of belonging to the area. This study also confirms that partnership building is a gradual process and that the effectiveness of particular partnerships within the wider institutional framework can be frustrated by other agencies who do not share the partnership philosophy, and also by the absence of an overall structure to coordinate the activities of interrelated but unconnected partnerships.

Rachid Bathoum uses the municipality of Aiseau-Presles, situated between Namur and Charleroi with a population of 11,000, to assess the effectiveness of a local partnership structure in promoting economic and social development. The preparation of a multidimensional strategic action plan was an important factor in the success of the partnership. The experience in Aiseau-Presles also supports other studies that have highlighted the importance of leadership by key individuals to energise the process. Recognising the need for a gradual approach to local development over a long period Bathoum correctly notes that conflicts may arise when the political process tends to seek solutions over a relatively short timeframe.

The four UK case studies present a diverse set of experiences ranging from a market towns forum, to a town council, a very small rural community and a multi-agency project to assist local women living in poverty. Keith Harrison from the Gloucestershire Rural Community

Council describes how the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum was established in 1996 to assist towns with populations between 2,000 and 20,000. The Forum has enabled a number of towns to co-operate in a successful bid to the Single Regeneration Budget. Strengthening the partnership aspect of the Forum has been assisted by a dedicated website and a newsletter.

Laurie Howes describes initiatives undertaken by Dunstable Town Council, the first tier of local government in the UK, to address the economic and social consequences of a declining local economy and the curtailment of local government functions. A key factor in the success of Dunstable in overcoming the challenges was a willingness by the Council to engage in partnerships with other organisations to address a wide range of issues. Among the results achieved through the partnership approach Howes attaches particular significance to the mobilisation of local community support and approval for the actions of the Town Council. Working through partnership has challenged the Town Council in relation to its operating procedures and has necessitated the appointment of professionally trained staff. One of the lessons highlighted by Howes is the need for sensitivity in claiming success; it is important that success is shared among the partnership members so that all can feel that they are participating in programmes designed to achieve win-win outcomes.

Bream is one of several small communities in the Forest of Dean in the West of England which have experienced severe economic and social problems following the decline of the local mining industry. The Community Network established in 1996 seeks to improve the quality of service provision in the area through a partnership approach. In her study Ros Boase perceptibly emphasises the need for goodwill to accompany structures and the need for the partnership to identify how it can contribute some added value.

The UK quartet is completed by James Derounian and Denise Servant's case study on the Amethyst Initiative, located in the Peak District, which seeks "to develop a sustainable network of village contacts to act as information points for local women living in poverty and to support them in acting locally to develop solutions to their problems". The partnership based initiative has undertaken actions that have facilitated networking between women sharing similar

problems, improved the qualitative data available on such women, and also provided a platform where the women can raise issues of concern to themselves, and a mechanism for local agencies to seek their views. Most importantly, Derounian and Servante claim that the project has been able to put a human face to rural deprivation. Among the lessons identified from this project are the roles of the partnership in building the confidence of individual women. The critical factor here was the recruitment of a professional community development worker who could develop and sustain a supportive and empathetic relationship with the disadvantaged women over a long a period.

The four Irish case studies relate to experiences in rural areas. IRD (Integrated Rural Development) Duhallow is one of the longest established community-based rural development partnership organisations. Located in the southwest of Ireland the Duhallow locality exhibits many aspects of rural disadvantage. IRD Duhallow has evolved into a complex organisation that addresses through several programmes and funding streams a wide range of issues that have been identified locally. The comprehensive assessment provided by Susan Lynch identifies several factors that have contributed to the success of the partnership. These include having the capacity to address many local problems; balanced representation on the partnership board; a sense of cohesiveness in relation to strategic objectives among board members; a strong management and operational team; provision of regular training for Board members; and having a positive disposition towards the statutory agencies. Among the weaknesses and challenges that are noted are the uncertainty associated with fixed term funding, high staff turnover and difficulty in getting representatives from the most disadvantaged groups to participate in the partnership structures.

The OAK Partnership was set up in 1995 to address issues related to industrial decline and rural development in northwest Kildare and county Offaly in the Irish Midlands. OAK is a broadly based partnership that has been resourced through the Irish Government's Local Development Programme. Fearga Kenny has noted the importance of board members' commitment to the partnership process; the opportunity provided by subcommittees to involve additional organisations and individuals; and the need for personable, caring and accessible delivery of services. Among the transferable factors are the

importance of training in community leadership, developing good local databases and promoting a vigorous programme of animation and capacity building.

Wicklow Rural Partnership (WRP) addresses some of the issues that arise in the rural hinterland of the Dublin Metropolitan Area. The partnership implements an extensive programme of actions. Kenny's assessment of WRP emphasises the role of training and the support provided by WRP to local community and voluntary organisations as a key factor in the success of WRP. Related to these actions are the calibre of the people involved in the partnership, the broad range of stakeholders that are represented and the willingness by the partners to promote collaborative solutions to complex issues. The principal weakness relates to the very high reliance on funding under the LEADER programme. The transferable processes are mainly related to the establishment of appropriate structures, extensive consultation with all stakeholders, and promoting consensus.

The final case study is also related to a partnership, KELT, established to deliver the LEADER 11 programme in County Kildare which includes extensive areas that are now part of the Dublin metropolitan hinterland. KELT is a partnership with a tri-partite structure (recently, elected councillors were added as an additional component of the structure) and is supported by a number of committees. Much of KELT's success has come from a strong commitment to strategic planning, investment in training board members, plus regular reviews and evaluations. A considerable effort has been placed on animation and capacity building and developing inter-agency linkages.

Collectively, the case studies have demonstrated that the partnership approach is flexible and capable of being applied to many different situations. Successful partnerships are dependent on a number of factors being present. These include balanced and inclusive representation; effective leadership and supportive professional staff; commitment to training plus animation and capacity building actions; strategic planning including regular reviews and evaluations; good local knowledge bases; trust and willingness to collaborate; strategies that allow for win-win outcomes; on-going funding and a supportive institutional context at both local and national levels that recognises the gradualness of the local development process.

Part Three of this report contains a summary tool-kit that has been devised to assist partnerships involved in community development. The topics that are covered include: identifying what local community development is about; getting the process started, assessing needs, roles and responsibilities; recruitment; funding, strategic planning; review and evaluation; inter-agency links and partnership; and finally sources of additional information.

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