

A report by IACD and Carnegie UK Trust

Appreciating Assets

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International Association for Community Development (IACD)

The International Association for Community Development led the production of this report. IACD has more than 1300 members in over 70 countries, supported by a small core staff team based in Scotland and a very active voluntary Board. The Board comprises leaders in the community development field in Europe, Asia, Oceania, North America and Africa. IACD is a Scottish registered charity (SC 036090). Visit us online at www.iacdglobal.org

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¹ FierySpirits Community of Practice is an action research – based programme of learning and exchange for activists, professionals and policy makers who are building resilient, rural communities. It seeks to catalyse systemic social change by creating opportunities for social innovators to connect, challenge and learn from each other and their own practice.

Contents

Introduction to Appreciating Assets	2
Appreciating Assets - Global Roots	4
Background to Assets Approaches	6
Identifying Assets	8
Appreciating Assets: People	
Case Study Brecon and Old Hill Estates Falmouth	10
Letter from Inspiring Communities, Aotearoa, New Zealand	12
Case Study Tipperary Institute, Ireland	15
Seeing Beyond Needs:	17
Different Types of Knowledge	19
Deficit vs Asset Ways of Thinking	20
Anatomy of and Appreciating Assets Worker	21
Characteristics of the Appreciating Assets approach	22
Sitting in the Gap and Finding Others to Sit With	23
Case Study Fiery Spirits Community of Practice	24
Appreciating Asset: Politics	
Letter from Canada	26
New ways of working with complex, 'wicked' problems	28
Case Study: Hill Holt Wood	29
Asset Mapping and Beyond	31
Carts and Horses: Organising service delivery and asset transfer so that they deliver social and ecological justice	33
Case Study: Central Otago District, New Zealand	35
Case Study: Genuine Progress Index (GPI) Nova Scotia, Canada	37
Appreciating Assets: Place	
Place: The next Frontier	40
Case Study: Renew Newcastle New South Wales Australia	41
Building Community and Community Buildings: Asset Transfer, Ownership and Management	42
Case Study: The Isle of Eigg- Community Buy-out of Private Land	43
Letter from Victoria, Australia	46
Key Community Considerations for Asset Ownership and Management	47
Key Community Considerations for Evaluating Leasing as an Asset Option	49
Types of Landlord	50
Ownership Processes: Key Types and Questions	52
Case Study: Community Land Trusts	55
Examples of Community Ownership of Tangible Assets	56

Introduction to Appreciating Assets

Carnegie UK Trust and IACD have developed a keen interest in approaches to rural development that acknowledge the things that communities have rather than the things they lack. The potential of this philosophy was first discussed in Carnegie's 'Charter for Rural Communities', published in 2007². The Trust also supported a range of partner organisations that conducted action research into aspects of the sustainable management of community assets. This report draws in part upon these findings³.

The political and social context in which we consider the well being of communities is undergoing a period of radical change in light of what the New Economics Foundation calls the 'triple crunch'⁴. The credit and debt crises, soaring food and energy prices, peak oil and the growing impacts of climate change are converging and forcing a fundamental rethink of how we live our lives. The credit-fuelled boom years are over and the bullish reliance on expensive capital regeneration projects to change the fortunes of neglected communities has diminished. During the past two years we have seen the collapse of regeneration schemes that have been predicated on ever-rising property prices; schemes that have developed buildings at the expense of people.

It would be extreme folly to substitute this for an approach that, in the name of asset-based community development, places 'asset transfer' and community ownership of land and buildings centre stage, without paying due attention to the need to consider how people matter in any regeneration plans.

We take a broad view of assets, appreciating above all, the potential of individuals and their communities. This report explores the full range of assets – tangible and intangible, available within every place and develops a challenging and alternative approach to the building of sustainable communities. We do not have all the answers: this is work in progress but emerging from the collaborative inquiry that is at the heart of this publication, there are ideas for practitioners and policy makers to reflect upon.



We are aware of the vast amount of international experience of asset-based community development from which to learn. With its global membership, IACD is particularly well placed to build our understanding of the asset 'lens' in community development work⁵ in diverse contexts around the world. Its members have shared critical insights and concerns about potential pitfalls of these approaches.

The framing of UK and Irish work in an international context is crucial in an increasingly globalised world. Importantly, the asset-based approach is an approach that happens without outside intervention in communities around the world. The more formal approach has its roots in many participatory traditions stretching back many decades. Indeed as information and practitioners move around the world, these approaches continue to evolve and cross-fertilise with each other to adapt to local context. In the world map below we show some of the global roots of asset-based community development. This is just a selection. Please free to add your own!



- ² Carnegie UK Trust (2007) *Charter for Rural Communities*
- ³ Carnegie UK Trust (2009) *Manifesto for Rural Communities*
- ⁴ The Triple Crunch Blog <http://neftriplecrunch.wordpress.com>
- ⁵ For example, in the USA & Latin America (e.g. Flora, Marinez, Adams) & Canada (e.g. Mathie & Cunningham, Patterson), Australia (Burkett, Smeaton) and Africa (Ruhunda, Karanga etc), Critical contributions & insight Craig, Murdoch, Barr etc).

Figure 1: Appreciating Assets - Global Roots



Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) / Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

A family of approaches that draw on insights from Paulo Friere's & Orlando Fals-Borda's work. It moves professionals from "on-top" to "on-tap". Emphasises the values and disposition of the facilitator. Robert Chambers and the work of Institute for Development Studies (IDS) are key. www.ids.org

India

Ghandian Philosophy

Works towards the creation of a nonviolent political, economic and social order by nonviolent struggle. Key values are economic & political decentralisation, cooperation, voluntary simplicity, the value of rural life, self-reliance, equality & conservation. www.gandhiserve.org

Tanzania, East Africa

Self Reliance Movement

The goals of egalitarianism and human-centred development characterize Nyerere's political & educational ideology which resonates strongly with the ideas expressed by Paulo Freire.

Endogenous Development /Development from within

Endogenous development is based on local peoples' own criteria of development and takes into account their material, social and spiritual wellbeing. www.compasnet.org

South Africa

Training for Transformation

Developed in the 1980's, by Ann Hope and Sally Timmel as a resource for community workers. This approach is based largely on the work of Paulo Friere combined with experience of working on development projects in rural Africa. It is now widely used in the UK and across the world.

Rights Based Approaches

A rights based approach to development is a framework that integrates the norms, principles, standards and goals of international human rights system into the plans and processes of development.

Background to Assets Approaches

Across different fields, from regeneration and community development to health, a new language of 'assets' is helping practitioners find new ways of tackling old issues⁶. The 2007 Quirk Review⁷ was a landmark publication that helped to open up this territory, investigating community development approaches to asset transfer. More recently, there has been an avalanche of publications from a wide range of organisations, especially umbrella bodies such as the Development Trusts Association whose 'Bearing Fruit'⁸ report looked at the opportunities and challenges of transferring tangible assets such as land and buildings to community control. Carnegie's Manifesto for Rural Communities (2009)⁹ advocated that 'assets' took inspiration from international best practice such as that championed by the Coady Institute in Nova Scotia¹⁰. Regional community development networks are also actively exploring this territory.¹¹

This report is intended to complement all this work by showcasing international, UK and Irish experience of 'appreciating assets'. We will see that practice in the UK and Ireland can stand tall alongside international examples. Throughout, we share questions that practitioners across many contexts seem to be grappling with. Our intention is that these questions can offer readers pause for reflection around key points that contributors to this report have identified as being important.

Question



Why is the 'what you haven't got' approach so deeply ingrained in some organisations?

How do we inspire new kinds of practice?

How do we foster innovation and experimentation and share this with other practitioners?

Why has public policy been so focused on deficits?

The Principles underpinning the 'Appreciating Assets' report

Contributors to this publication share a 'people-centred' approach that insists that everyone is unique, and has a unique contribution to make to their organisation or community: an appreciative approach that recognises the intrinsic worth in people and places.

In accountancy, the term '*appreciating assets*' is used to refer to those assets that have the prospect of growing in value over the long term, such as a stand of forest or a property¹². In this document, we agree that all assets – including people – are best seen for their potential to grow in the long term¹³. We are in agreement with David Boyle¹⁴ and others, who argue for new systems of accounting, which find ways to measure what matters most to people, rather than accounting practices that emphasise growth above everything else. With a growing interest in 'Appreciating Assets', we believe that civil society needs to be very engaged in a debate about the opportunities and pit-falls of this relatively new approach.

⁶ For example, The Marmot Review into Health Inequality in Britain called for an asset based approach to the co-production of positive health outcomes; Jane Foot, *Glass Half Full* (2010) published by I&DeA has built on national and international ABCD experiences to argue for the use of asset-based community development in addressing health inequalities

⁷ Quirk (2007) *Making Assets Work*, Community Management and Ownership of Assets, Department for Communities and Local Government <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/makingassetswork> (accessed on 15th November 2010)

⁸ Development Trusts Association (2008) 'Bearing Fruit Good Practice in asset-based rural community development'

⁹ Carnegie Trust (2010) *A Manifesto for Rural Communities*

¹⁰ Coady Institute (2009) *From Clients to Citizens: Deepening the Practice of Asset-Based and Citizen-Led Development*, <http://coady.stfx.ca/work/abcd/forum/> (accessed on the 15th Nov 2010)

¹¹ YHCDN (2010) 'Making the Difference' conference report <http://www.yhcdn.net/> (accessed on the 15th Nov 2010)

¹² YHCDN (2010) 'Making the Difference' conference report <http://www.yhcdn.net/> (accessed on the 15th Nov 2010)

¹³ NEF have suggested that assets are 'a useful or valuable thing or person'

¹⁴ Boyle, D & Harris, M. (2010) 'The Challenge of Co-Production', How equal partnerships between professionals and the public are crucial to improving public services NEF & NESTA

In recent times there has been a trend in equating the development of land and buildings with the term asset-based development. However we believe strongly that it is people, and not buildings that are the core asset of communities. It is the skills of people who will see that projects can be accomplished. It is people who can learn to see opportunities where before all seemed lost. In these discussions we need to ensure a balance between assets we can see – ‘tangible’ assets – and those we can’t see but which are often crucial to the well-being of people and communities – ‘intangible’ assets.

This involves learning how to unlock the potential in ‘intangible’ assets. It might be that you don’t see the ‘intangible’ unless it disappears one day; or that an intangible asset (such as someone’s enthusiasm) only becomes visible when it’s connected with something we can more easily see (like permission to develop an under-used plot of land).

The 7 capitals framework¹⁵ is a tried and tested way to help categorise assets and make intangible assets more visible. ‘Capitals’ is a term often used interchangeably with assets. It simply means those assets that are available for use as building blocks in the creation of further assets. Every community, however rural, isolated, or poor, has resources within it. When those resources, or assets, are invested to create new resources, they become capital¹⁶:

The Seven Capitals framework helps identify the role that intangible assets such as human and social capital can play in turning buildings and financial capital into assets that the community can build upon.¹⁷ Investing in one capital has the potential to strengthen all the capitals but may also lead to other capitals becoming depleted.

Figure 2: The 7 Capitals Framework

Capital	Definition
Financial	Financial capital plays an important role in the economy, enabling other types of capital to be owned and traded
Built	Fixed assets which facilitate the livelihood or well-being of the community
Social	Features of social organisation such as networks, norms of trust that facilitate co-operation for mutual benefit, includes a sub-set of spiritual capital (that form of social capital that links to religion/spirituality) Bonding, bridging social capital
Human	People’s health, knowledge, skills and motivation. Enhancing human capital can be achieved through education and training
Natural	Landscape and any stock or flow of energy and material that produces goods and services. Resources – renewable and non-renewable materials.
Cultural	Shaping how we see the world, what we take for granted and what we value
Political	The ability of a community to influence the distribution and use of resources

¹⁵ Cornelia Butler Flora, Mary Emery, Susan Fey and Corry Bregendahl, ‘Community Capitals: A tool for Evaluating Strategic Interventions and Projects.’ North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Iowa State University

¹⁶ Flora, Flora & Fey (2004) Using Community Capitals to Develop Assets for Positive Community Change

¹⁷ Gutierrez-Montes, I. Emery, M. & Fernandez-Baca, E. 2009 “The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and the Community Capitals Framework: The Importance of System-Level Approaches to Community Change Efforts” *Community Development*, 1944-7485, Volume 40, Issue 2, 2009, Pages 106 – 113

Question Identifying Assets



The 'seven capitals' framework is one of a number of ways to identify assets. Note down some of the potential assets – tangible and intangible – in the place where you live.

You might then develop some tests to think more about whether these are really community assets, or private ones. For example, think about the following questions:

- Is it a resource that can be used or adds value to community life?
- Is it open/available to everyone in the community?
- Does it help to bring community members together?
- Is it a talent or skill that can be utilised or exchanged in the community?



Figure 3: Assets Checklist

Example of Potential Community Assets	Is it a resource that can be used or adds value to community life?	Is it open/available to everyone in the community?	Does it bring community members together?	Is it a talent or skill that can be utilised or exchanged in the community?
Local currency	✓	✓	✓	✓
Village hall	✓	✓	✓	
Tennis club	✓		✓	
Jim the Postman	✓	✓		✓
School Sports Gym	✓	✓	✓	
Woods walk	✓	✓		
Community Festival	✓	✓	✓	✓
Etc.				

Appreciating Assets as well as (not instead of) Recognising Needs

The best asset-based practice is that which builds on a solid appreciation that there are historic reasons why some communities have poorer access to services, fewer choices, and are (for example) more likely to suffer environmental pollution. This is not a regressive “pull themselves up by their bootstraps” approach:

“The asset approach does not replace investment in improving services or tackling the structural causes of ... inequality. The aim is to achieve a better balance between service delivery and community building.”¹⁸

An assets approach to community development will not, on its own, solve inequality within and between communities – but it can help communities to develop greater confidence and a stronger political voice with which to engage the political system in addressing structural causes of injustice and their roots in an unfair and unsustainable global economic system.¹⁹ However, at a local level, an asset-based approach can bring hope as well as having a “mitigating effect on the structural and social determinants of ill-health and inequality-poor housing, low wages, lack of jobs.”²⁰

Question



As well as identifying and building on current strengths, could my community appreciate better the ways in which history, privilege and struggle have shaped it?

What international links can I make in my work?

The important messages are that:

- **Intangible community assets are just as important as what we can see and feel in the community.**

- **What we do has a ripple effect into other areas—communities are like eco-systems, when you build up or focus on one thing it affects many other areas of the community.**
- **Strong and resilient communities try to achieve balance by working to build on all of their assets.**

The ‘Appreciating Assets’ Report now explores three important themes:

1. People

This section reviews the central role of people and community and other intangible assets in the successful development of place. We suggest key skills that those involved in asset-based community development should develop.

2. Politics

At the local level, what are the politics of an asset-based approach? What are some implications of the strengths based approach on how decisions are made, and who makes them? This chapter opens up questions on these themes.

3. Place

In this section we explore policy and practical aspects of asset transfer. In particular we cover recent developments in UK asset transfer policy relating to community management, ownership or control of tangible assets such as land and buildings. Access to local assets such as land and buildings can be gained through a spectrum of routes from leasing to outright ownership. We explore how physical assets in communities need to be built from and be supported by intangible assets.

¹⁸ Foot, J. (2010) *A Glass Half Full*, IDeA, p.6

¹⁹ Murray, R. (2009) *Danger and Opportunity: Crisis and the New Social Economy*, NESTA.

²⁰ Foot, J. (2010) *A Glass Half Full*, p.13 IDeA

People

Appreciating Assets is about the capacity of people. In this section we look at the subject from two distinct but related angles. The first considers how communities can develop a shared vision for their future, realising the latent capacity that lies within every community and the role that good facilitators can play in releasing it.

Secondly, we explore the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed in this new '*Appreciating Assets*' approach and look at the new challenges that people face in shifting personal or organisational cultures. Essential aspects of this shift involve new forms of networking, ways of learning from experience in a rapidly changing social and environmental context and being able to take a long view.

Releasing the capacity of people

The regeneration literature of recent times has regularly spoken of 'sink' estates and bottom quartile output areas. Discussions about such communities often begin with reference to the data that evidences how 'deprived' this community is in comparison to others. The focus then moves to what can be done to regenerate these communities and change their situation. Too often the main thrust of regeneration has been on replacing old buildings with new buildings rather than changing the circumstances of the people who live there or even involving the people in the process. Even those working in the public sector in such areas have often viewed residents at best as passive recipients of services and at worst a bit of a drain on the system.

If we start with the needs and deficits of a community then not only can these 'become' the community, but often people living in these communities can begin to see themselves from this perspective.

A community nurse, based in a part of Cornwall that was frequently labelled in this way, broke this mould. Hazel Stuteley, who has been a health visitor since 1972, and her colleagues took an asset-based view, recognising the talents and skills of local people that were just waiting to be released. She understood that capacity does not always need to be built from scratch.

Here is their story.

Case Study: Beacon and Old Hill Estates, Falmouth



The story starts with estates that had come to be known to the other communities in Falmouth as 'Beirut'. Judged to be one of the most deprived areas in Britain, the estate was blighted by violent crime, drug dealing and intimidation.

'The flashpoint came simultaneously for us both, literally for Rebecca; she witnessed the family car ignite following the planting of an incendiary device. She was 11 years old then and although physically unhurt, she was deeply traumatised by this. Already in mourning for her friend's pet rabbit and tortoise, which had recently been butchered by thugs from the estate, this was the final straw. As family Health Visitor, I was a regular visitor to her home. Her Mum was a frequent victim of domestic violence and suffering from post-natal depression. My caseload had many similar families with multiple health and social problems. Seeing Rebecca and her family's distress, I vowed then and there that change must happen if this community was to survive. I had been watching it spiral out of control for long enough.'

Welcome to our community!

We are in the lowest quintile of educational achievement, have 19% unemployment, high crime rates, above average teenage pregnancies, one of the most deprived communities in the region.

What will you see in our community?



From the outset it was recognised that community involvement would be essential if the estate was to be turned around. Twenty tenants were identified as having the skills to engage their peers and were invited to work in partnership with the statutory agencies. Of these, five agreed to participate. Resourced by the local housing department, they received training in forming and maintaining a constituted committee. They went on to produce a hand delivered newsletter, along with a 'one to one' chat to all households informing residents of their plans for the estate. A series of increasingly well-attended meetings for residents were held, which were often stormy. But this storminess was interpreted as a good sign by the health visitors, who were convinced that, while a seemingly apathetic community can achieve little or nothing, an angry community has a potential energy that can be harnessed for positive effects. These meetings led the community to conclude that the main problems affecting their health were crime, poor housing, and unemployment, together with the historical failure of the statutory agencies to address these issues. Meetings resulted in the foundation of the tenant and resident led Beacon Community Regeneration Partnership in January 1997. The Partnership began meeting monthly, as it still does to this day.

The most significant aspect of the regeneration process on the Beacon and Old Hill estate was that, from the outset, there was no initial funding, no hierarchy, no targets, no business plan, only a shared vision of what the community wanted to be, rather than an obsession with what it had to do. All this was supported by a little pump priming funding and the flexible use of public employee time.

It was later that the residents won Capital Challenge funding, matched with a further funding from Carrick District Council for the installation of central

heating. An old butcher's shop was converted into a Resource Centre, offering courses and advice, as well as being an informal drop-in centre and hub for communication of news about the estate. Another disused shop was converted into the Beacon Care Centre.

The investment of time and relatively small amounts of money in the area has yielded tangible benefits: the crime rate on the estate has halved, with 87% of those in the community now saying they feel safe. The number of children on the child protection register has fallen from 23 to 4. Children's exam results have improved dramatically: among 10 and 11-year-old boys, numbers achieving level four in national tests at key stage two have doubled. The number of childhood accidents has also fallen 50%.²¹

Today, more and more professionals, notably from the health sector, are seeing the potential of an asset based approach to their work (see for example Foot²²). They are discovering what many pioneering communities already know: places can be transformed by 'people-power'.

There is a vital first step. For community activity to be created and sustained, the skills, capacity and commitment of local people within the community must be recognised and channelled towards shared goals. People from all walks of life, all backgrounds and a wide age spectrum need to be included. And for people to be included, to feel that they can participate, their strengths, skills and assets need to be recognised and valued.

Assets can be seen as anything of value. Intangible 'people' assets can include such things as experiences, personal strengths, stories, cultural traditions, skills and knowledge.

²¹ http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/news/newsletters/newsletter_3/beacon.html (accessed on the 16th Nov 2010)

²² Foot, (2010), *A Glass Half Full*, IDeA

They can also be individual assets, or they can be assets held in relationship, or indeed collectively, that is, held by multiple people in the community. Tangible assets are those that are often most recognised or valued in communities, but in reality it is the intangible assets that will ultimately shape what can be achieved in a community.

Figure 5: Intangible assets

Individual Assets	Relational Assets	Collective Assets
Skills, knowledge, leadership capacities, experiences, personalities, what we have, what we can bring to the group.	Networks, relationships, partnerships, friendships, kinships, group ties, associations.	Stories: traditions, cultures, institutions, norms, collective experiences.

“For tangible assets to be created and sustained there has to be a strong base of the intangibles, which flow from the human assets within a community. Where I believe we get things wrong (and waste considerable amount of money) is when we implement from the build / financial level from outside the people in communities.”²³



A Letter from Aoteara, New Zealand



Inspiring Communities, the organisation I work for, was established in 2008 to learn about how community-led development could work in New Zealand and to foster that approach. An important priority for us is learning how tangible and lasting change happens. We are learning together through a small number of initiatives. It is clear that essential ingredients include:

- Having an explicit intention and vision
- Being adaptable in ‘the doing’
- Having many sectors working together – business, community groups, residents, government, and local councils – to create opportunities
- Time and perseverance

There is an intentional focus on communities of ‘place’: streets, neighbourhoods and local communities, rather than issues. It means rather than being clients or recipients of services, local residents are becoming authors of their own and their community’s development. There is an obvious overlap here with the asset-based approach. Even in this short time we are already noticing tangible changes. For example Waitara’s shared vision, and combined action, has seen crime reduced. Opotiki’s vision and ‘reaching out’ means their aquaculture development is now supported by the Bay of Plenty region and through partnering with China.

Community-Led Development continues to grow across Aotearoa/New Zealand. It has many faces: it may be creating economic development and jobs in Opotiki; it may be neighbours being better connected in Taita; or the community coming together to solve the disease of debt in Porirua. It has huge potential to transform communities, street by street.

²³ Hugh McLean, participant in the Fiery Spirits Inquiry into Asset-Based Approaches online group.

It seems that the time to bring people together was right and things moved faster than anticipated: we quickly found there was already nationwide interest and in the last twelve months regional and national interest in Community-Led Development has grown exponentially.

Auckland is proof of this. The Auckland Community-Led Development Network (ACLDN), established in March 2009, now has 500 people involved. The reality was that many Auckland communities were working in isolation and missing out on the opportunity to leverage off each other. Now, people from a range of local and central government, locality projects, community organisations, individuals, business, funders, and researchers can come together to talk, share and learn. Although 'Inspiring Communities' is co-hosted by a range of other partners – *"the Network belongs to the communities and groups; we are just one part of it"*. Southland, Taranaki, the Bay of Plenty, Northland, Nelson, and Otago also are interested and active. We know that people all around New Zealand are exchanging tips and examples of community building – 'borrowing and trying out'.

A number of networks and agencies are involved in Community-Led Development and fostering resilient communities. Examples include: Transition Towns (at last count more than 50 NZ towns are involved); the emerging NZ Community Economic Development Network; and the Community Currencies network, which includes Time Banking.

Great Start in Taita exemplifies the power of an agency working "with" communities rather than "for" (or doing "to") them. Barnardos began there by asking what the community wanted, before planning which services to offer. After knocking on 1200 doors, they found no new services or programmes were wanted – the community actually wanted help to be better connected.

It's this community-driven intent, rather than specific inputs or outputs that makes Great Start different – and successful. At its simplest, Barnardos provides practical support: a venue, some operational funds and an experienced community development manager. What is less 'countable' but more powerful, is that they are helping the community see its own vision, drive its own development. It's fostering activities that the community does collectively, such as the community garden, parenting courses and a project with Hutt City Council on a new park.

My favourite example at the moment is Nelson's Victory Village. They are a brilliant example of a community being the author of its own destiny. The project won this year's KiwiBank Community of the Year category. Another major event on the calendar for is New Zealand's national Neighbours Day celebration. LIFEWISE, the Methodist Mission, and Inspiring Communities are partnering to develop a national campaign in 2011. The aim is to create a weekend for all New Zealanders to focus on getting to know their neighbours. John McCarthy, General Manager of LIFEWISE, says strong neighbourhoods – not more social workers – are the antidote to emerging social issues: *"We seem to have more and more social workers visiting communities. How many social workers will it take till all our problems are solved? I think the sustainable solution lies in neighbourhoods."*

To sum it up... we're convinced that a strong relationship at a street level is the DNA that forms resilient communities.

Mary Jane Rivers

Inspiring Communities
Aotearoa, New Zealand



A key part of asset-based approaches is for local people to understand and build on the range of assets available to that community at that time. Each community will have their own ideas about what are the key 'assets' they wish/need to develop. The challenge is to create opportunities for people to articulate these ideas, to have them heard and valued, and for these ideas to form the basis from which plans for change proceed.

We set great store by community-led planning – however it would be criminal if wave after wave of professionals, still wearing their 'specialist' hats, came into communities to urge them to 'plan their futures'. An approach that appreciates assets is not a mantra or a simplistic 'quick fix'. Nor is it a mechanism by which to validate a pre-prepared external analysis. People working for outside agencies should act as facilitators not drivers and not try to second-guess what the assets could be; the focus should be on releasing capacity within the community.

"I think that strong community development approaches need to create space for community members to define their own assets and vision. I believe that every community has its own unique set of assets in which to create a vision for change. "We don't need to get hung up in defining assets, communities can do that themselves." ²⁴

Question



How can local people determine local priorities and the way in which their town or village might evolve in the future? In what ways can this extend beyond the traditional consultations to a point where people engage and participate in creating a vision for change? Are there examples of this from your own communities or stories from elsewhere where this has occurred? What would need to happen in your community in order for this to become a reality?

What is good practise in facilitating these processes?

Often the experience of local people, especially in rural communities, is that distant authorities have already made decisions when they seek community involvement. An essential requirement of our new way of working is that power and decision-making is shared and genuine community-led planning is a logical way of achieving this.

For capacity to be released the ideas developed by the group, with or without external facilitators, must build upon the unique knowledge that local people have about a place. There is a whole range of techniques that can be deployed: listening surveys, community celebrations, asset mapping, appreciative inquiry or participative appraisal.²⁵

Hazel Stuteley outlines the shift in professional skills and culture needed to achieve this change.

- Listen to the residents
- Believe in their capacity to lead change
- Connect the residents to each other and to services
- Deliver small wins quickly
- Sustain the initiative through continuous improvement ²⁶

Community-led planning must also be set within a wider context so as to anticipate future social, economic and environmental changes. The plans of a community must therefore be locally rooted but outward and future facing. There are promising signs of progress in this area, even in contexts that do not have a long tradition of participative planning processes. An Irish case study from Tipperary illustrates this point well.



²⁴ Ted Smeaton, participant in the Fiery Spirits Inquiry into Asset-Based Approaches online group.

²⁵ Some key sources for more information on these participative tools are out-lined in the 'resource' section at the end of this booklet.

²⁶ Stuteley, H. & Parish, R. (2010) *The Emergence of the H.E.L.P. Practice Model; 'From apathy to anger to positive energy' Health Empowerment Leverage Project*

Case Study: Tipperary Institute, Ireland



Since 2000, Tipperary Institute has been commissioned by various local planning authorities and community groups in Ireland to assist them in drawing up good local plans. This work has evolved into a framework called Integrated Area Planning (IAP).

In Ireland, Local Authorities are responsible for developing strategic local development plans for each city, town and county. There is also a requirement to invite public input at an early stage and to increase participation and transparency in the planning process. Despite this, issues relating to planning are causing problems in rural areas and there is a clear breakdown in trust at many levels. Much of this was due to a lack of a shared vision among planners, policy-makers, politicians and communities about how rural areas should develop and few mechanisms existed to resolve these tensions.

It is from this experience that Integrated Area Planning (IAP) was born. IAP enables local people to collect views, formulate priorities and to implement a plan for a defined geographical area. IAP is a model of collaborative planning, involving communities most affected by local area plans alongside policymakers and local officials in a partnership that recognises the strengths of everyone.

We as Councillors could use the information presented in an IAP prepared by the community as a rich source of information for us to assist us in designing and feeding into the Local Area Plan on behalf of our constituents. The Councillors could be 'champions' of the IAP.

(Local Politician)

IAP commits to working in an inclusive and participatory way, engaging with all sectors of the community and takes an integrated approach to sustainable planning; seeking a balance between social, economic and environmental needs in the local area plan. IAP creates plans that anyone can understand and ensures structures are in place for implementation of plans once they have been drawn up. Lastly, the IAP process fosters ongoing communication between all those involved.

Ferbane is a small town (population of 1,300) in West Offaly, in the Irish Midlands. Tipperary Institute facilitated the preparation of an Integrated Area Plan for the area during the period 2000/01. The process was undertaken as a partnership between Offaly County Council, the community of Ferbane, elected representatives, West Offaly Partnership and local business interests. The issues that caused most concern were population decline, the loss of employment/reduction in employee numbers and lack of inward investment. The resultant Ferbane Development Plan set out to address these and other issues.

The Ferbane community has undertaken several of the initiatives they laid out in the plan including the development of a business and technology park, the development of a child-care facility, a school amalgamation programme, the updating of existing business ventures, the establishment of local transport services and the provision of additional housing.

'It is important to have clear objectives and milestones – what gets measured gets done.'

(Community activist)

During an evaluation in 2007, the Ferbane community reported that the IAP process developed a sense of community among the residents and brought Ferbane to the attention of the County council and other agencies, creating an awareness of Ferbane's potential. Local people identified the critical success factors in the process:

The establishment of a locally representative group to oversee the process and the positive partnership that developed

Availability of funding from a State agency which was scaling down operations in the area and provided a community compensation package

Independent, external facilitation

- Community participation and community validation at all stages
- The active involvement of elected members
- The active involvement of Council officials as expert advisers
- The establishment of an agreed vision for the town
- The establishment of representative structures for identifying and addressing sectoral issues such as education, environment and business development



A key message from this case study is that an authentic partnership of local people and officials came together to address the issues that were important to the people of Ferbane. Increasingly, public sector professionals are coming to an understanding that better outcomes are achieved by working together with members of the community – a process called co-production.

Co-production is a special kind of partnership that works equally well for service agencies and community. Co-production works in the world of money, which pays for professional services, and the non-monetary ‘economy’ where individuals and communities produce, distribute and consume services not for money, but as an expression of their capacities and needs. Co-production acknowledges hidden and previously undervalued human and social assets inherent in our communities. Co-production works on four principles.²⁷

- Everyone (professionals and community members) has something to offer
- Feeling useful is a basic human need and can be transformative; there is an emphasis on what people can do rather on the things they cannot do
- Relationships work through face to face contact
- Schemes have to be local; people only contribute because they know who will benefit.
- Discussion of co-production as a policy tool for more effective delivery of public services has been growing in a number of countries, for several years now. However, since the election of the UK Coalition government and the coming of the Big Society approach, co-production has emerged as one of the key routes for public agencies wishing to deliver ‘more for less’ at a time of increasing demand and fiscal tightening.

Whilst there is great opportunity here for new partnerships to evolve along the lines of the case study in Falmouth or the examples given later in our politics chapter, there are dangers in being led by a cost-cutting agenda.

This concern is illustrated in early research on co-production for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation:

*“In interviews, practitioners stressed repeatedly that co-production must remain an end in itself rather than a means to other ends”.*²⁸

The institutional and behavioural shifts required to implement co-production cannot be underestimated. People all over the world, and the rural UK and Ireland are no exception, are extremely sensitive to tokenism and false promises so relationships of trust need to be built. This process is two ways, from communities towards agencies and funders and from funders, agencies and government to communities.

We have found some inspiring examples of effective co-production on the Governance International website www.govint.org. However we recognise that this is an area in need of innovation as new solutions are found to the need to deliver cost effective services. Some of these ideas are discussed in our sister publication-

‘A Shareholder’s Guide to Rural Services.’

The Anatomy of an Appreciating Assets Worker

An ‘*Appreciating Assets*’ approach is not about adopting only a ‘rose-coloured glasses’ view of the world, or ignoring people’s struggles and needs.

Rather, by emphasizing the starting point of building on people’s assets, skills and strengths, people are then able to define and address their own needs over time - rather than being continually defined by them.

In this way, effective assets workers are able to change the way we see, define and engage with communities:

- We start with people rather than data;
- We build from people’s strengths, stories, assets and skills rather than seeing people only through the prism of needs;
- We work in partnership and work out together how to understand local issues and how we can work on resolving them.

²⁷ Boyle, D. (2005) *Sustainability and social assets: the potential of time banks and co-production*, NEF

²⁸ Boyle, D. Clark, S. & Burns, S. (2006) *Findings: Informing Change Co-production by people outside paid employment*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Figure 6: Seeing beyond needs



Since people are at the heart of the ‘Appreciating Assets’ approach, one of the challenges is to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the assets, knowledge and skills of all the people ‘around the table’. Without this, power can often remain with the socially valued roles of councillor, doctor or grant holder.

For professionals this involves losing the ‘need to be needed’. It involves believing in the people whose communities are the ‘target group’. It involves new ways of seeing professional skills as being in partnership with, and sitting along side, the skills that reside, often overlooked and underutilised in communities members, groups and associations.

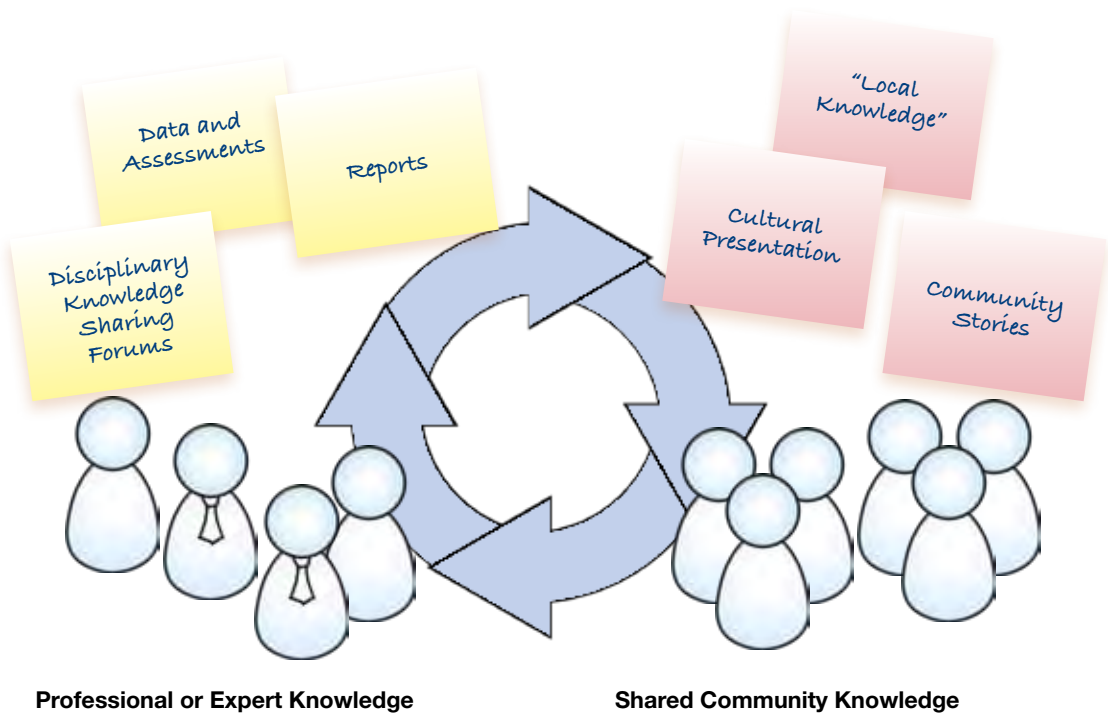
“If co-production is to become more mainstream, the role of professional staff needs to shift from being fixers who focus on problems to becoming catalysts who focus on abilities.”²⁹

Professional knowledge must work with the shared community knowledge to better connect and uncover people, places and local economies and local talents. Whereas ‘professional’ or ‘expert’ knowledge may be expressed through data, written reports, public speeches or assessments, this may not be the way in which people in communities express their individual or shared knowledge.

Connecting with people and taking time to uncover their knowledge and to release their capacities requires skills but it also requires imagination – as shared community knowledge is not always expressed in the same ‘rational’ or ‘disembodied’ ways that professional knowledge is!

²⁹ Boyle, D. Clark, S. & Burns, S. (2006) *Findings: Informing Change Co-production by people outside paid employment*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Figure 7: Differences in knowledge



There are many ways in which we can tap into the knowledge of communities and release its capacity. Of course many of the traditional community development techniques are centred on dialogue and understanding local knowledge. However there are also some very creative new techniques emerging. Some of the most creative ways we’ve uncovered in the process of this project are listed in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Creative Approaches to Community Development

<p>Community Storytelling and listening forums</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazel Stutely’s listening forums create spaces where residents can tell their stories and be heard by a range of other residents and professionals • Paul Born of the Tamarak Institute has written about “Community Conversations” that bring people together to share stories as equals, and then work together on common goals (www.tamarakcommunity.ca)
<p>Pictures tell 1,000 words: Digital Stories and Comics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Centre for Digital Storytelling in the United States has supported the development of many digital storytelling events around the world and shares this technology as a method of community-based storytelling (www.storycentre.org). • The World Comic Network uses grassroots comics to tell people’s and communities stories. They work with communities to teach them basic comic skills and then this used to convey local stories (www.worldcomics.net).
<p>Performance and arts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TR14ers use dance as a way of transforming young people’s lives and the community of which they are part. • Sense of Place works with teachers, artists, historians, museum curators and storytellers to encourage children and community members to explore Cornish perspectives alongside those of the wider world. • Voluntary Arts Wales/Cymru have pioneered participatory arts across a range of platforms. They have also developed creative approaches to project evaluation.

Question



- How would you describe the difference between capacity building and capacity release?
- What other ways do you know of for acknowledging and releasing local knowledge?
- How do you work with communities to release capacity?
- What do the above creative techniques inspire for your work?

An ‘*Appreciating Assets*’ approach requires rethinking of what is included in professional knowledge development. There is a role for good quality training and capacity building. However, if we focus only on the tools, where most training courses begin, we do not get to the significant determinant of the quality of training outcomes: the invisible values, attitudes and behaviours that have a much more significant influence on the successful implementations of a policy. (Foot 2010, Chambers 2005, Kaplan 2002)³⁰.

We can see that tools and analysis are only part of the picture. Knowing how and why we engage, partner and co-produce with communities is equally important.

Figure 9: Types of knowledge

Type of Knowledge	‘Know-about’	‘Know-how’	‘Know-what’	‘Know-why’
	Analysis	Method	Technique	Ideology
Definition	Knowing about the community – information, data, knowledge, maps	Knowing how to engage – having a process and a pathway for action that is practical, shareable and is what you actually do.	Knowing what needs to be done at a given moment in order to achieve what it is that needs to be done.	Knowing why it is that we are engaging here, in this way and through these means.
Ways the knowledge is applied	Maps, plans, evaluations, data, information, knowledge.	Relationships; process principles; guidelines and body of practice – methodology.	Tools and techniques; e.g. you can use mapping tools, group work techniques.	Values, ideology, ideals, goals, expectations.
Key question	What do we know about what needs to be done and who can help?	How are we going about doing what it is that needs to be done?	What is it that we are going to focus on here and now and what will we do?	Why are we doing this, and why are we focusing on starting here?

³⁰ Foot, J. (2010) *A Glass Half Full*, IDeA, p.13; Chambers, R. (2005) *Ideas for Development IDS*; Kaplan, A. (2002) *Development Practitioners and Social Process: Artists of the Invisible* Pluto Press

Training requires critical reflection on what professionals bring to the work: their intangible assets, and what helps and hinders in developing ‘Appreciating Assets’ practice. Learning in this context is not about reading textbooks or downloading modules – it is about engaged, reflective and collegiate learning in which participants are not afraid to give and receive rigorous feedback!

“It is fundamental for us to know that without certain qualities or virtues, such as a generous loving heart, respect for others, tolerance, humility, a joyful disposition, love of life, openness to what is new, a disposition to welcome change, perseverance in the struggle, a refusal of determinism, a spirit of hope, and openness to justice, progressive (community development) is not possible. It is something that the merely scientific, technical mind cannot accomplish”

(Paulo Freire, 1998; p108)³¹

What are the qualities that are needed if we are to adopt an ‘Appreciating Assets’ approach? Figure 11, opposite provides a starting point for exploring some of these qualities.

Question



Can I relate to and add to this anatomy (picture, right)?
 If I am honest are there things in this anatomy that I struggle with or that are difficult in the context in which I work?
 How could these qualities be fostered amongst professionals and how would training need to change or develop to incorporate these qualities?

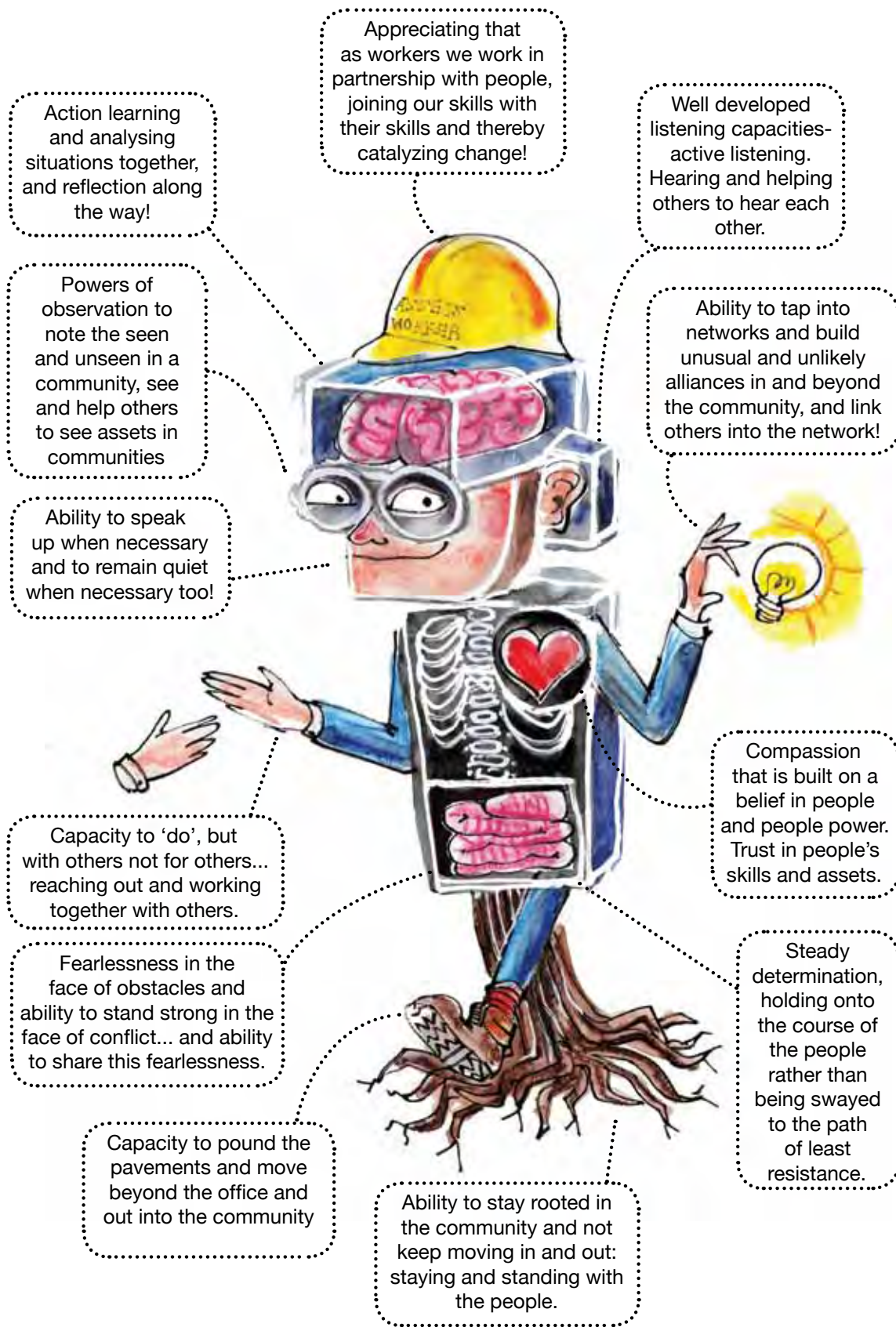
At root, an ‘Appreciating Assets’ approach requires a change of mindset – from one that is fundamentally built on and influenced by deficit thinking, towards an approach that is built on assets, as is illustrated in the table below.

Figure 10: Deficit vs asset ways of thinking

Where we are now – deficit approaches	Where an asset way of thinking takes us
Start with deficiencies and needs in the community, often as defined by external data about the community.	Start with the assets in the community
Respond to problems	Identify opportunities and strengths
Provide services to users	Invest in people as citizens
Emphasise the role of agencies	Emphasise the role of civil society
Focus on individuals	Focus on communities/ neighbourhoods and the common good
See people as clients and consumers receiving services	See people as citizens and co-producers with something to offer
Treat people as passive and done-to	Help people take control of their lives
Fix people	Support people to develop their potential
Implement programmes as the answer	See people as the answer

³¹ Freire, P. (1998) *Pedagogy of Freedom: ethics, democracy, and civic courage*, Rowman & Littlefield

Figure 11: Anatomy of an *Appreciating Assets Worker*



Building on the 'Where assets thinking takes us' column of the table above, we can draw out the following key factors, characteristic of asset-based approaches that need to be built into our structures and systems:

Figure 12: Characteristics of the 'Appreciating Assets' approach

Valuing People and Working Well in Groups: Valuing people requires the skills of being able to function well in groups and of active listening and really hearing what others are saying. These facilitative skills are integral to relationship building and reaching out to others to make new connections and unlikely alliances. An ability to make linkages between the local and global, as well as the ability to work with a diversity of people with different viewpoints and opinions is essential. When we value people we are able to uncover and encourage previously hidden skills and talents and are able to see the potential in people and situations instead of only seeing impediments.

Appreciation and celebration of past successes: This strengthens people's confidence in their own capacities and inspires them to take action

Recognition of the importance of working together: Essentially, the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts.

Focus on a local area: A place-based approach focuses on the assets of an identified geographic area; a place that people describe as 'home'.

Local Leadership: The community leads its own development and community leaders are themselves capable of opening doors to the wider population. Local leaders are therefore defined by the relationships they have within the community; by their social, rather than political or financial capital.

Participatory approaches to development, which are based on principles of empowerment and ownership of the development process.

Addressing Power Issues: Asset-based approaches to community development are not about communities doing it all without outside support. On the contrary, these approaches are about finding the balance between programmes run by non-profit organisations and governmental agencies and citizen groups and associations. In some cases, community members may need to 'step-up' and become stronger and more organised and professionals may need to 'step-back' to become better servants of community members. A skill involved in utilising asset-based approaches is an understanding of and support for people to either 'step-up' or 'step-back' and creating the spaces conducive to exploring and building on assets.

Connect outward and focus on the future: There is a skill involved in being able to recognise the contributions of successes and failures toward the ultimate goals of the community. Focusing on the future allows us to see asset-based approaches as a process and to recognise that uncertainty and even chaos are a part of this process.

Focus on Community Assets: The process starts from an appreciation of existing community capacity and assets, 'building on what we have' both intangible and tangible assets.

Recognition of the importance of relationships: and the importance of 'social capital'. This includes a focus on the power of relationships and informal linkages within the community and the relationships built over time between community groups and external institutions.

Balance: The community takes a balanced approach that addresses and integrates economic, social, environmental and cultural considerations.

Equality and Social Inclusion: All community members, regardless of gender, age, ability, race, culture, language, sexual orientation or social and economic status have equal opportunity to become engaged in the community development process and are able to access its social and economic benefits.

Efforts to strengthen civil society: Efforts focus on how to engage people as citizens (rather than clients) and how to make local governance more effective and responsive

Transparency and Accountability: This framework encourages and requires government and any other outside involvement in community development to be transparent, accountable, and participatory. In turn, communities hold each other to the same values of transparency and accountability, expecting no less of each other than of external agencies.

Learns from experience: Work with a community is never straightforward and along the way there will be a series of ups and downs. Each experience, even those that are disappointing (such as when the planning application fails or the funding is pulled) provide valuable learning.



Question



Which of these factors are currently supported by our organisations and structures? Which are difficult for organisations and systems? What needs to change in our organisations in order for these characteristics to flourish? How might this happen? Where can or could the change begin?

Sitting in the Gap...and Finding others to sit with!

As we suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the 'Appreciating Assets' approach requires us to develop appropriate skills which include new forms of networking to help us learn from experience in a rapidly changing social and environmental context.

At an individual level, utilising asset-based approaches is challenging but we still have a measure of control over the process. What about changing the environments and organisations in which we work? We have met many professionals who wish to do things differently but who are constrained by institutional attitudes that are rooted in the past. How can these individuals find the courage to challenge outdated practices?

More and more people are finding support through networks of other professionals and practitioners, maybe from very different disciplines, but all willing to share experiences. We know these as Communities of Practice.

Communities of Practice within and between sectors are important in maintaining support and momentum for changes in values and skills that are required when deploying an Appreciating Assets approach. At the heart of these Communities of Practice are people known as 'gappers'.

'Gappers' are people who live in the gap between big systems and institutions on the one hand, and communities on the other. They may get their pay cheque from a hospital or school system, but their practice and understanding and spirit is somehow in the community.³²

Gappers can have a tremendous influence on the systems in which they work, especially when they are connected up with each other. They understand the importance of knowledge transfer and networking to the success of an 'Appreciating Assets' approach.

Social Networks

Although the term social networking is becoming more associated with virtual communication forums such as FaceBook, Twitter or Ning sites such as Fiery Spirits, they also describe the social bonds that we make with other people in our everyday life. The importance of these social networks cannot be over-emphasised because they can affect factors as dramatic as how long we live and what chances we have to succeed in life. Social networks can be considered to be a primary route to building the 'bridging' social capital that is essential in improving our life chances and our resilience in times of crisis. Social networks are also contexts where skills, behaviour and attitudes are developed and transmitted across the network. One striking piece of information arising from recent research on social marketing at the Royal Society of Arts was that 'familiar strangers' like postmen and dustmen appear to be under-utilised community resources; and more people recognise and find value in their postman than their local councillor. Another startling finding from a recent review into health inequalities in the UK reveals that

³² Kretzmann in , Mathie A. & Cunningham, G. (2002), *From Clients to Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy For Community-Driven Development*, Occasional Paper No 4, Coady Institute

“Individuals who are socially isolated are between two and five times more likely than those who have strong social ties to die prematurely. Social networks have a larger impact on the risk of mortality than on the risk of developing disease, that is, it is not so much that social networks stop you from getting ill, but that they help you recover when you do get ill.”

Marmot (2010)³³

Routes to tackling social isolation are many and varied. Thousands of communities across the country hold regular community events to renew their social ‘glue’. A high profile example of this is the ‘Big Lunch’,³⁴ an annual, get-together with neighbours on 18th July. Although it began as a ‘wild seed’ of the Eden project, there are now Big Lunches held up and down the country and supporters include the Big Lottery and the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Community rituals such as those created by Sense of Place in Cornwall (see case study in our ‘Places’ chapter), bring all parts of the communities together and increase understanding of a shared past, present and future. In Ireland and Scotland, the traditional ceilidh is an important avenue for valuing and celebrating the talents of all sections of the community.

**Case Study:
Learning from
experience: Fiery
Spirits Community of
Practice**



The Fiery Spirits Community of Practice is about supporting community innovation by enabling and facilitating the transfer of knowledge, skills and

experience. The Community of Practice (CoP) is an action research programme³⁵ of learning and exchange for activists, professionals and policy makers who are building resilient rural communities.

The aim of the CoP is to support social change by providing space and opportunities for people to connect, challenge and learn from each other at face-to-face events and virtually via the fieryspirits.com social networking website. Underpinning this is an approach to rural development, which believes that communities can build on their unique range of physical and human assets. To do this, the Community of Practice:

- Publicises good practice case studies, drawing upon inspiring stories from across the UK, Ireland and beyond.
- Acts as ‘resource facilitators’ to develop partnerships with like-minded organisations to pioneer these approaches.
- Uses convening power to open up dialogue, sometimes at the highest levels.

This initiative is an example of Carnegie UK Trust’s pioneering approach to philanthropy, exercising convening power to create lively spaces where people exchange hard-won experiences, prototype the sustainable rural communities of the future, inspire policy, and connect with wider movements for global justice and sustainability

Nick Wilding, Carnegie UK Trust

The Community of Practice has around a thousand members who focus on key themes. It is not just a website: relationships are sustained through face-to-face events. This platform provided the means by which this inquiry into ‘Appreciating Assets’ was conducted.

Learn More:

Nick Wilding, Carnegie UK Trust
<http://www.fieryspirits.com>

³³ Marmot Review, 2010, *Fairer Society, Healthy Lives*. Report available on www.marmotreview.org/ (accessed November 15, 2010)

³⁴ www.thebiglunch.com/ (accessed November 15, 2010)

³⁵ Following Reason and Bradbury (2001), *Handbook of Action Research*, London. Sage Publications.

Key points of this chapter

- We need to ensure a balance between assets we can see – ‘tangible’ assets – and those we can’t see but which are often crucial to the well-being of people and communities – ‘intangible’ assets.
- An ‘Appreciating Assets’ approach requires rethinking of what is included in professional knowledge development. The Anatomy of the ‘Appreciating Assets’ worker above highlights the range of professional skills, values and behaviours required.
- New forms of networking, such as Communities of Practice, operating within and between sectors are important in maintaining support and momentum for the changes in values and skills that are required.



Politics

In the last section of the report we addressed the centrality of ‘People’ in the ‘Appreciating Assets’ approach. We outlined the need for ‘capacity release’ as well as capacity building and a shift in the skills, attitudes and behaviours of professionals and others who are working with an asset-based approach. In this chapter we look at how assets practitioners work to create and sustain democratic decision making within communities. We recognise that asset-based approaches are always about politics – about whose voices get heard; who sets agendas; and also how people can collaborate to achieve good decisions and better outcomes together.

We begin with a ‘letter from Canada’, from IACD board member, Keith Cossey, from Nova Scotia, Canada. We then consider how the current economic crisis might impact on the politics of assets approaches, including questions of how social and ecological justice goals might not be forgotten in the rush to reform.

Letter from Canada

In my work with rural and coastal communities, decision-making structures and processes can be very revealing about how a community works and about its resilience, capacity for change and sustainability. Intangible decision making processes reflect the ownership and control of tangible assets and influence the distribution of resources. Decision-making is fundamentally about power and leadership and can be mapped by answering the following questions. What kind of decisions are made, who makes the decisions and for whom are they made? What is the dominant style or model of leadership in the community? What level of collaboration, partnership and co-operation exists in the community? Who is included in the decision-making process and who is excluded, who benefits and who doesn’t, whether



by design or chance? How are conflicting values and minority opinions managed and resolved in the community?

Moses Coady, a famous Nova Scotian and founder of the Antigonish Co-operative Movement, once said that people and communities should be “masters of their own destiny”. In other words, a community that is empowered to make its own decisions and use the full range of tangible and intangible assets available to them is one that will prosper and be sustainable in the long run.

In my view, appreciating political assets is about understanding power in the community and how decisions are made on the ownership, use and distribution of community resources. There are different types of community power structures, some obvious and others not so obvious. Identifying the decision-making structures and processes (or lack thereof) in a community is an important key to fostering people power and creating positive community change. When people feel that they lack the power to be heard in the policy development process, they disengage from community life. People are empowered by working together collaboratively in groups to have a stronger voice and gain more leverage in decision-making. Support for community-based decision making comes in many forms such as planning, research, development and managerial expertise, access to good quality information, leadership development, collaborative and participative processes, and other skills training, advisory and technical support.

Allow me to share a good example of the emergence of people power. The rural coastal community of Joggins (area population of 1,334 in 2006) on the Bay of Fundy coast of Nova Scotia grew into a thriving coal-mining town from its humble beginnings in 1686. When the mines closed in 1958, the public and private sectors did not see a future for Joggins and were unwilling or unable to continue to provide jobs and services. Many people left the community to find jobs elsewhere including the corporate elite and traditional community leadership. The local rural economy spiralled into a slow decline.

The remaining local people struggled for a long time but eventually came together in the mid 1990s to decide on a collaborative course of action. They realized that they alone had their future in their hands, indeed in their backyard and had the power to do something about it. Local people collected fossils off the beach for decades and, through discussion and research, came to understand the value of what they had. Joggins was discovered to be the site of the finest example in the world of the terrestrial tropical environment and ecosystems of the Carboniferous (Coal) Age of the Earth's history. Fossil tree trunks, leaves, amphibians, reptiles (ancestors of the dinosaurs) and their footprints dating back 315 million years are in plain sight and falling off the weathered cliff face for 15 kilometres along the beach. The community of Joggins persisted and worked hard on their intangible assets over 10 years to build strong internal and external relationships and to foster collaboration. They partnered with the Cumberland Regional Economic Development Association, scientists and the political and administrative representatives of three levels of government to have the site declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008. They also secured partners and funding for the development of the site.

Today the Joggins Fossil Institute is a community-owned and managed, non-profit organization which oversees a world-class, \$10 million heritage tourism destination on 689 hectares (1702 acres) of land including a green, energy efficient building, interpretive centre, research facilities, trails, restaurant and shops. They are, of course, great physical assets but represent so much more to the local community in terms of building capacity to make their own decisions, to plan, research, develop and manage their own affairs. Rather than forever lamenting the coal that they lost, the residents of Joggins, to their credit, tapped into their potential and developed the full range of their people, place and political assets. They took control and turned a story of economic decline into a success story of collaboration, partnership and shared decision-making.

Keith Cossey, Nova Scotia, Canada

This letter is a hopeful celebration of the power of an 'Appreciating Assets' approach. In Canada, (as has happened across British and Irish society), community, public and private sector interests are still reeling from the massive heart attack sustained by our global economic system in 2008. This presents new political challenges for assets practitioners to address.

Speaking in another age of tempest,
Abraham Lincoln said:

"The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew."

His was a call to US citizens to not be trapped in outdated ideology, but to see clearly how to stay on course building a better society through difficult times.

Today, the consequences of the banking crisis and the subsequent bailout are visible in the threat of unemployment and the insecurity inflicted by rapidly implemented reductions in public sector spending and the prospect of massive organisational change in many areas of public life.

Question



In what ways are you engaging with or hearing of new ways of thinking and acting in response to current political, economic and environmental challenges? How do you think community-based approaches need to change in response to these challenges?

Are there things we should hold on to? Are there new things we should be considering?

Part of the new political thinking involves a new generation of 'wicked' problems, which are more complex, tangled and fast moving than those faced in the past. Today, there are many understandings of and approaches to building 'assets'. As practice develops, it becomes clearer that asset-based approaches are complex – they involve building connections between stakeholders who may never have talked together before; they involve, as Lincoln advocated, being prepared to inquire into 'stuck' ways of thinking, as well as standing firm on abiding and underpinning values. We live in a time when simple sound-bite answers are no longer satisfactory. This is a time of complex, 'wicked' problems, having multiple causes and therefore multiple possible approaches to taking action, and that do not necessarily respond to classical rational analysis but require the 'fuzzy logic' of many people collaborating together to solve instead (Rittel and Webber,³⁶; Horn and Weber³⁷). Examples of 'wicked problems' include intergenerational poverty, violence and crime in a community, rural decline, childhood obesity, climate change, and terrorism. No one organisation can address them on their own.

Health Complexity Group, Connecting Communities (C2) project: new ways of working with complex, 'wicked' problems



Cossey's letter described how the Joggins Fossil Institute is now a major community enterprise – and its success hints at the potential that social enterprise models generally have in addressing 'wicked' problems. In the South West of the UK at the Peninsula Medical School, the C2 group have pioneered an assets process and methodology aimed at strengthening community life in the poorest wards in the poorest county in England. The C2 team are showing that frontline practitioners working 'with' not 'on' the residents they are there to support can achieve transformational outcomes in health and social care, against overwhelming odds. At the heart of the methodology is a seven-step model designed to help local people move 'From Isolation to Transformation'.³⁸

In Step Three, groups of residents host a 'listening event' to hear from other residents what the key issues are and produce a report on identified issues, which are fed back to attendee residents within ten days. Commitment is established for a resident-led, multi-agency partnership to tackle issues. Exchange visits are undertaken to meet communities who already successfully self-manage.

C2 is addressing the complex politics of addressing areas of multiple deprivation with a long history of failed attempts to address inter-generational inequity. It is doing this by bringing agencies and local people together.

Word of C2's success has spread, and the programme is now being piloted in a number of other communities in England through the 'Health Empowerment Leverage Project'^{39, 40}.

³⁶ Rittel, Horst, and Melvin Webber (1973) 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning', pp. 155–169, *Policy Sciences*, Vol. 4, Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, Inc., Amsterdam

³⁷ Horn & Webber (2007), *New Tools for Resolving Wicked Problems*, MacroVU(r), Inc. and Strategy Kinetics, LLC

³⁸ Hazel Stuteley, *Connecting Communities ('C2')*, Health Complexity Group, Peninsula Medical School, University of Exeter

³⁹ Hazel Stuteley and Richard Parish (2010) *The Emergence of the H.E.L.P. Practice model: 'From apathy to anger to positive energy'*, Health Empowerment Leverage Project

⁴⁰ www.healthempowermentgroup.org.uk

The cluster of 'C2' initiatives across the South West of England illustrates how asset based approaches are becoming well established in the UK. Their success shows that complex problems can be addressed by starting (and keeping) things simple (but not simplistic!). The 'butterfly effect' describes how small and sometimes seemingly unrelated actions in one part of the community can have bigger impacts on the whole system. These effects can't be easily planned or controlled, and tend to arise more from peoples' natural enjoyment and enthusiasm of the opportunities they are engaged with than a heavy 'action plan' agreed by committee in distant place. We are discovering that big or universal solutions can often hinder rather than help with getting things done: enthusiasm, trust and fun can be bigger motivators of local action!"

A good example of a 'butterfly effect' initiative is the TR14ers dance group, based in Camborne, Cornwall (see www.tr14ers.co.uk/). Their slogan "Transforming Community Through Dance" summarises an approach that puts dance at the heart of a vision of changing the future for the whole community. In Summer 2010, the group visited Fife to help sow the seeds of similar programme in Scotland. When asked what the name meant, dance tutors said

"It's very simple, the name comes from the postcode TR14. We used to be embarrassed to say we come from Camborne but we've learnt that where we live is part of who we are and that we can be proud of our town and ourselves. "

Question



What could other community-based initiatives learn from the experiences of the C2 work? Within this model are there things that are replicable? Is replication of community-based initiatives possible? What learning alternatives exist to replication? What potentials can you see from community visits or exchanges?

Our next case study reveals more about how dedicated and inspiring community leaders can change the way people think about what's possible or desirable. This, too, is a way of transforming local politics. Sometimes, the most effective way to make a difference is to change the nature of the debate that people are having.

In a time of public sector cuts, and an end of 'grants' culture, community initiatives are increasingly reliant on earning income. Even where grants are still available, they rarely enable organisations to recoup the administrative and other core costs. This situation has left many community organisations (particularly small to medium sized organisations), struggling. However, community ownership and social enterprise models are, in contrast, taking off.

Hill Holt Wood

When bought by Nigel and Karen Lowthrop in 1995, the 35-acre Hillholt woodland was in decline. It would usually have been viewed as a piece of land with limited income potential, due to a damaged drainage system and the removal of the majority of the quality timber by the previous owners. However, Nigel and Karen saw potential where others saw trouble.

They moved into a caravan in the wood and began to nurse it back to health. Soon, they established a social enterprise, which recast the wood as an exciting venue for alternative education and training for young people excluded from mainstream education.

Since 2002, Hill Holt Wood has rapidly evolved into a community controlled charity and social enterprise serving a surrounding community of 10,000 people. In 2010 it will turn over in excess of £500,000, employing over 20 staff, and constantly developing new partnerships with local community groups, businesses, councils, schools and universities. Since 2009 a significant number of young people have been employed through the Future Jobs Fund in partnership with the local council. Hill Holt has proven itself to be flexible, dynamic and inspirational for many visitors. The young unemployed people and the social enterprise are thriving as a result.



This short story of Hill Holt Wood's development to date reveals valuable lessons about how a wide range of assets, including the often untapped potential of young people, can rapidly allow a social enterprise to achieve remarkable outcomes. An important factor in Hill Holt's success has been the leadership offered by its founders. Consummate networkers, advocates, and visionaries, Nigel and Karen (since joined by many others working in the Hill Holt team) demonstrate what asset-based politics looks like in practice. Uncompromisingly holding to the vision they set, but always able to be opportunistic when support is offered, they embody the sense of hope that their work might prove an inspiration to others.

Today, the Hill Holt Wood staff are often invited to talk about their work. Feted as a national exemplar of sustainable development, the initiative demonstrates how social, environmental and economic goals can be achieved by thinking outside of traditional boundaries.

The future looks rosy for Hill Holt Wood – but can we be sure that the model is sustainable? Will savage public sector cuts reduce important sources of income, or will there be more opportunities emerging that counteract this possibility?

Many of the radical new policies born of this time of political and economic change are based on small-scale successes in communities up and down the country. The government is now calling for these models to be scaled-up, with considerable service delivery responsibilities. At the same time they insist that communities and local people remain central to the effective delivery of these programmes. Can stories like Hill Holt Wood, C2, and Joggins Fossil Institute be scaled up, or do we also need to rethink our ideas about what scaling-up involves?

Academics have discussed the political, economic and ideological constraints involved in addressing questions like these (Horn and Weber, 2007, p. 6, Chapman et al; 2009⁴¹). Fewer people have asked whether it makes sense to collect and analyse

data about issues when it may make sense just to go ahead and take action, and learn from it. Often the data about wicked problems tells us about the effects of the problem – where it occurs, how many people are affected, how many times it occurs. But even mountains of this 'objective' data – depersonalised, apolitical, un-contextual – won't necessarily make a difference on the ground, in communities and in people's lives.

It is not that data is negative – rather, an 'Appreciating Assets' approach considers it important to develop 'data-in-action' rather than producing data before action or data after action. One of the key tools for gathering 'data-in-action' within an 'Appreciating Assets' approach is mapping. This involves communities themselves gathering and sharing data about the assets of their community.

When communities actively participate in creating maps of assets this can be an important and helpful part of initiating relationships and beginning to work together to create positive futures. Such maps can tell everyone what assets (physical, human, natural) are present in our communities. They can give us a sense of what the connections are between these assets and what further connections could be made. They can help us to see where we could focus our energies.

However, mapping assets is not an end in itself – it is merely a technique that can help to open opportunities for action and connection. They are helpful ways of collecting and collating data-in-action, and they can inform, stimulate and catalyse action...however maps will not ultimately alter the territory, only people working together will do that!

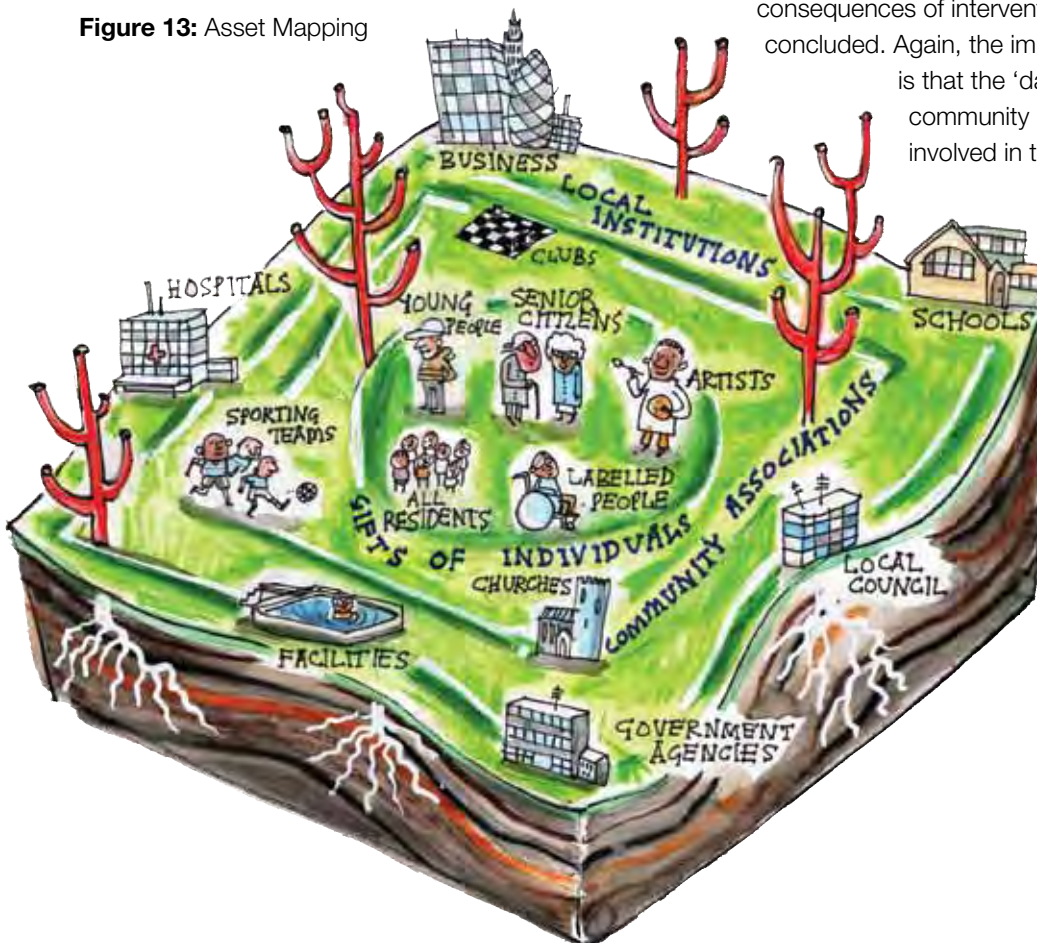
There are some key ways in which mapping can be best used as a 'data-in-action' technique so that it ignites action, informs and animates people not only to hear each others' stories but to use these stories to build stronger communities. These insights can also be used in relation to other community-based ways to develop and utilise 'data-in-action'.

⁴¹ Horn & Webber (2007), *New Tools for Resolving Wicked Problems*, MacroVU(r), Inc. and Strategy Kinetics, LLC; Chapman et al, (2009) *Connecting the Dots*, Demos

- Maps need to be ALIVE – they need to be able to be changed, added to, rearranged by people in a community rather than being static moments in time. Mapping needs to continue throughout the process so that a map is always a work in progress, a part of the developmental process, striving to be an inclusive representation of the change process. Maps can help us to see how things are changing over time – and in this way they can help to keep the energy and enthusiasm up in a community. Ways in which maps can become alive include:
 - Turning a map into an evolving mural – leaving it in a public place after the mapping workshop so that it can be added to;
 - Inviting people to create their own maps to share, rather than leaving ‘mapping’ to experts based on data they analyse and represent;
 - Finding ways times and places to revisit the map and mapping throughout the process, so that changes can be reflected on maps – “on our initial map we identified three social clubs – now there are seven we know of”.
 - Mapping needs to generate some ownership – why are we mapping assets, for whose benefit and who will use / hold the map? Because maps are, by their very nature, political (i.e. they capture data about people, about communities
- and therefore can be used in various ways), maps can be used to act ‘on’ communities just as much as ‘in’ or ‘with’ communities. They can become mechanisms through which decisions and diagnoses can be made about communities rather than with communities, in ways that are not in the spirit of asset-based approaches. If the community owns the map, makes the map and agrees on how the map is to be used, then it is much more likely to have a catalytic potential in that community.
- Asset mapping can sometimes be narrowed into marking physical assets and institutions on a locality map of a community. While this can be helpful in identifying the physical and tangible assets of a community, it is important that maps also identify and articulate the intangible assets of communities as outlined in the 7 capitals framework.
- Asset mapping can be three-dimensional rather than simply flat. It can focus not only on locating assets within a community but also exploring the nested assets inside community organisations, government structures, groups and institutions. This in turn can link asset maps to social network maps – helping us to identify where the potential nodes of energy and innovation are within and between groups and organisations in a community.

Community-based ‘data-in-action’ methods can also be used to check the impacts or consequences of interventions after they have concluded. Again, the important point here is that the ‘data’ is generated by community members and people involved in the intervention, and its generation is part of the action and learning, not separate from it. The reference adjoining explores one such methodology for evaluating how successful our actions have been.

Figure 13: Asset Mapping



Most Significant Change Methodology (MSC):



This is a story-based methodology that involves as many stakeholders in a change process as possible, and asks them to share stories that capture what they think are the most significant changes that have resulted from a project or an intervention. It was developed by Rick Davies and Jessica Dart, and has been used around the world as a methodology that is both participatory and captures not just the 'hard data' about changes, but also the 'hard to capture data' about changes at an intangible level – in peoples' hearts and minds. People involved are participants at all stages of the evaluation process – in developing and telling the stories that bring out their most significant changes; in analysing the collective stories to draw out patterns, common themes and divergences; and in sharing the overall results. In this way people actually define their own indicators of what works, and use their own stories, experiences and knowledge to share and analyse these stories.

There are many MSC resources available. Most are available on Jessica Dart's website:

www.clearhorizon.com.au/category/publication/msc-publications/

There is also a free guide to the methodology, written by its developers:

www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf

Question



How would you describe the difference between 'data-in-use' and other uses of data in change processes?

Are there other examples of 'data-in-use' or story based evaluation methods that you can think of that may be applicable in your work context?

We conclude this chapter by examining some of the bigger political issues at play, which either help or hinder local assets practitioners.

Political Capital/Assets

*"Political capital is the ability of a group to influence standards, regulations and enforcement of those regulations that determine the distribution of resources and the ways they are used."*⁴²

'May you live in interesting times' (a Chinese curse or an Irish blessing)

Although many community organisations are struggling with financial sustainability, some groups do not have a well-developed understanding of why this is the case. Having some insight into global trends can help local people to make more sense of their lives, and more ready to take action to improve wellbeing locally.

A key trend has been public service reform. Everyone will be aware of the growing emphasis on value for money, efficiency and accountability. Where there were once annual grants, there are now Service Level Agreements and an emphasis on outputs and outcomes of the work. This trend has impacted upon the sector in three ways:

⁴² Cornelia Butler Flora, author of the seven capitals framework, uses words such as 'voice' and 'power' and 'influence' in relation to political capital and points out that increased political capital can be shown in "People who share a vision for sustainable future being organised and working together. These people know and feel comfortable around powerful people as well as those who are often excluded. They make sustainability part of the political agenda."

- 1 **Governance:** Third Sector organisations have been urged to borrow more ‘efficient’ working practices from private enterprise. Whilst this challenge can be helpful for some traditional charitable organisations, in many cases it has tended to generate an over-dependence on ‘box-ticking’ approaches to evaluation. Impacts increasingly tend to be measured rather superficially rather than focusing on transformation, which is more difficult to quantify.
- 2 **Practice:** The advent of contractual relationships between funders and providers has resulted in an increased emphasis on the provision of ‘essential services’ to communities at the expense of more generalist support. Community development is now seen as one method amongst many to achieve service and social capital outcomes.
- 3 **Funding and Financing:** This next period represents a crucial moment for creating alternative visions and laying down strong practical and strategic foundations for asset-based approaches. These may not be small changes. In discussing co-production, the Chair of Tayside Health Board & former chief executive of Angus Council, commented at a recent event that

“The direction of travel is now away from service cuts towards whole-scale service redesign”⁴³

If this redesign process is managed well, with communities and service users at the heart of the process, and professionals with the skills, knowledge and attributes to work as partners, then the time may present opportunities to throw off some of the stultifying and disabling aspects of current service provision and put local people in the driving seat. These are big ‘ifs’ however and there is a grave danger that a lack of the requisite facilitative skills coupled with professional rivalry and bureaucratic silos will continue present immense challenges.

Carts and Horses: organising service delivery and asset transfer so that they deliver social and ecological justice

The squeeze on public sector funding streams is forcing a rapid assessment by councils and other bodies of the services that can be afforded. Heads of Departments are required to produce service reviews, demonstrating where savings can be found. This has been the overwhelming imperative. These managers have to juggle a number of questions: how can I best look after the interests of my staff team? Is my own job safe? Will we be working from a different location the other side of the county? How will the unions react to my plans? What are the knock-on effects of my decision for these communities? It would be a very natural response to try and preserve as much of the existing way of doing things but such is the scale of the cuts that this might not be possible. There has scarcely been time to consider how simultaneously services can cost less but be even better from the perspective of the residents but this is what is required. Furthermore, the services that are needed in future may not look very like services today.

In this service review mix will be a range of physical assets, from care homes to ferry boats, from Tourist Information Centres to libraries. The local papers are full of reports that if these facilities are important to communities then the communities will have run them. This newspaper report, from Lancashire, is being repeated all across the UK and Ireland:

⁴³ Sandy Watson, ‘The current challenge and the response we need’ Presentation 21 September 2010 at Community Development: Now More Than Ever, Community Development Alliance Scotland (available to download) <http://www.communitydevelopmentalliancescotland.org/newsEvents.asp> (Accessed on 15 November 2010)

PUBLIC toilets, a popular miniature “zoo” and a country park’s visitor centre have all been earmarked for closure in the latest round of cuts announced by Town Hall chiefs.



Popular events such as the firework display and bonfire at Leverhulme Park and the Kite Festival at Moss Bank Park, which attracted thousands of visitors last year, also face the axe under the spending cuts, which could be implemented as early as next April.

Almost 30 posts are at risk and all workers across Bolton Council’s neighbourhood services department yesterday started a 90-day consultation period over the impact of the cuts.

Town Hall bosses say that if each of the proposals is implemented, the council will save more than £1.7 million over three years.

The authority is being told to save 40 per cent of its annual budget over four years by the government, as it aims to reduce the national deficit.

If the plans are approved in February next year, every one of the borough’s public toilets would be closed, Animal World, at Moss Bank Park, and Rock Hall Visitor Centre, at Moses Gate Country Park, would also close and there would be cuts to the frequency of grass cutting, street cleaning and routine inspection and maintenance of play areas, allotments, woodlands and flower beds.

As the decision-making process is so quick, the commissioners of services may find it easier to contract with an established private sector provider. For example, if recycling is currently undertaken by a multitude of small social enterprises it may look like an expensive luxury when compared to a single contract with Shanks. In the decision-making process, there needs to be an assessment of wider benefits (environmental, social and economic) of each solution.

In any case, communities the length and breadth of the country are being asked to rise to this challenge – take these assets and services on (even though some of them may be loss-making and indeed a long-term liability).

Trying hard to preserve a service-delivery model based upon the way we have always done things is probably not a good starting point. It is putting the cart before the horse. It is difficult for creative thinking to take place when difficult decisions are being made in a hurry. But creative thinking is exactly what is needed. Are we planning services for the future based upon a full appreciation of the assets – tangible and intangible – that we have at our disposal?

This is the dilemma – the timescale for financial cuts and the time needed to put in place considered alternative arrangements (yet alone to incorporate innovative solutions) are incompatible. The point isn’t just to get community groups & individuals contracting and ‘doing things locally’; the point is to redesign services that improve wellbeing and are cost efficient.

There is considerable international experience in tackling these difficult service-delivery issues. For example, the World Bank⁴⁴ has identified some of the obstacles that might be encountered when relating small-scale community service solutions to wider programmes.

⁴⁴ World Bank, *Scaling Up Local & Community Driven Development (LCDD): A Real World Guide to Its Theory and Practice*. Edited by Hans P. Binswanger-Mkhize, Jacomina P. de Regt, and Stephen Spector

1 Institutional setting might be hostile to change

Vested interests and those who currently benefit from – or are comfortable with – the status quo are often unwilling to embrace a change that involves a loss of a budget or staff status. Accountability and legal issues might be used as a reason why new service-delivery methods should be rejected.

2 Total costs may be too high

Many innovative local service delivery solutions originated as pilot projects. These are inherently difficult to replicate because they have had considerable investment in skills development, technology and outside support, which are too expensive to be replicated on a large scale.

3 Difficulties arising from co-production

For co-production of services to work a range of players who are not normally around a table need to be brought together. These players have differential incentives to make a success of the delivery; different levels of government may act as rivals rather than collaborators. Community groups may not be motivated to contribute finance and time. Shifting the role of professional staff from being fixers to catalysts by changing professional cultures through on-the-ground experience can transform these difficulties.

4 Adaptation to the local context may be missing

Services need to evolve to be able to take local context and priorities into account.

In our next case study from Aotearoa/New Zealand, the energy surrounding a period of rapid social and economic change was harnessed to create more community involvement in the design and delivery of local authority economic and social development policy.

Central Otago District Council, Central Otago, New Zealand



“It’s easy to overestimate what you can do in two to three years, but underestimate what can happen in ten.”

In 2004, the Central Otago District Council began an approach of exchanging its top-down management structure for a grassroots, bottom-up approach. The reason that they did it was two-fold:

- 1 Central Otago was undergoing an extraordinary transformation in tourism development and population increase, which highlighted the need to address the impacts of change and make it work for local people.
- 2 The Local Government Act 2002 included some major changes in what communities could now expect of their district council. One such change was the need for councils to actively seek the community’s vision for their district.

To do this the council adopted what is called a destination management approach.

‘Destination management is essentially about communities and cross agency co-operation in areas of planning and environmental management, provision of visitor information centres, management of infrastructure, marketing and site management. Because the tourism industry is complex, involving a mixture of private companies, local and central government and communities, there is a need to build and maintain effective working partnerships between these players if a sustainable future is to be achieved. The notion of managing a destination calls for a whole-of-community approach.’

The approach was used to harness a guiding vision for the region’s future. In Central Otago the District Development Manager and former CEO of the Council provided drive and vision to put this new

contd...

approach into action. As key staff in the council they insist their primary concern was the delivery of what local communities want.

‘It’s about managing the destination for the people who live there first...and then those that visit’.

To understand what people wanted and where they were going, a large community engagement process was undertaken. This included a community listening exercise carried out door-to-door, plus community workshops and public meetings. The ‘Central Prospects’ document that resulted is both a vision and an action-planning document, now in its second edition, taking plans to 2013/14. Each area within the region also developed a detailed community plan covering a vision, action and planning document on a range of local issues such as transport, safety, Maori community, and education. Communities then use these plans as a basis to ensure that recommendations are agreed and actions to implement them are set in motion. This process releases local knowledge and community capacity to initiate and develop their projects.

“It’s all about our collaboration with communities, agencies and departments. One group can’t do Destination Management alone. The council is only one cog in the machine and is there to help provide the infrastructure”

For the impact to extend to a political level, the support of elected officials is paramount. In Central Otago, they ensure that councillors are brought and stay on board through a carefully considered and diligently executed communication strategy.

Learn More: www.codc.govt.nz/facilities/destination-management

In the section above we explored co-production and service redesign and we strongly emphasised the need to keep improved wellbeing firmly in our sights. The case study from Aotearoa/New Zealand illustrates how important public leadership is important in making partnership work.

While it is relatively easy to see how much money a public agency might save if a service is closed or contracted to a third party measures of economic, social and environmental impact and longer-term policy outcomes are more difficult to demonstrate.

In looking at measures of economic, social & environmental impact, one of the key difficulties is the current dominance of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is the key measure of the impact of government policy and a core measure of effectiveness of regional and national economies. Analysts often equate rises in GDP with improvements in wider society. However this is clearly not always the case as GDP goes up when non-desirables such as prison population and crime statistics rise. It also goes up if people are spending more on environmentally damaging technologies. The dominance and even the usefulness of GDP has been therefore been called into question and there is a growing body of work to look at other indicators which may be more sophisticated and useful to public agencies and to communities. To move forward with smarter measures that will help us steer a progressive course during these times of fiscal austerity, we clearly need to use smarter, more discerning measures of progress. The following case study from Canada explores this issue.



Genuine Progress Index (GPI), GPI Atlantic, Nova Scotia, Canada



There is a remarkable consensus across all political divisions on the fundamental principles of a decent society. These duly extend to the benchmarks that would signify genuine progress. We all want to live in a peaceful and safe society without crime. We all value a clean environment with healthy forests, soils, lakes and oceans. We need good health, strong communities, and time to relax and develop our potential. We want economic security and less poverty.

No political party officially favours greater insecurity, a degraded environment, or more stress, crime, poverty and inequality. Why have we not ordered our policies and priorities in accord with our shared values and human needs?

One reason is that we have all been getting the wrong message from our current measures of progress, which are based primarily on economic growth statistics as measured by changes in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). All of us—politicians, economists, journalists, and the general public—have been completely hooked on the illusion that equates economic growth with well being and prosperity. This was not the intention of those who created the GDP. Simon Kuznets, its principal architect, warned 40 years ago: *“the welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income... Goals for “more” growth should specify of what and for what.”*

GDP growth statistics were never meant to be used as a measure of progress, as they are today. In fact, activities that degrade our quality of life, like crime, pollution, and addictive gambling, all make the economy grow. The more fish we sell and the more trees we cut down, the more the economy grows. Working longer hours makes the economy grow. The economy can grow even if inequality and poverty increase.

The things we measure and count—quite literally—tell us what we value as a society. If we do not count non-monetary and non-material assets, we effectively discount and devalue them. What we don't measure and value in our central accounting mechanism will be effectively sidelined in the policy arena. We may pay pious public homage to environmental quality and to social and spiritual values, but if we count their degradation as

progress in our growth measures, and do not count their preservation or improvement as assets, we will continue to send misleading signals to policy makers and public alike.

What is urgently needed are measures of well-being, prosperity, and progress that explicitly value the non-material assets that are the true basis of our wealth, including the strength of our communities, our free time, the quality of our environment, the health of our natural resources, and our concern for others. When you measure something, it has the potential to change behaviour.

Carnegie's Rural Programme resourced a visit to the UK by Ron Colman from Nova Scotia. He spoke at two national conferences on an alternative to GDP. The Genuine Progress Index (GPI) is a holistic measurement tool that governments and communities can use to account for the real costs and benefits of economic activity. In the GPI, natural wealth, health, free time, unpaid work, and education have value; while sickness, crime, disasters, pollution are costs. In addition, reductions in greenhouse gas, crime, poverty, and ecological footprint are all seen as progress, as is growing equity.

By incorporating 'external' costs directly into the economic accounting structure, the 'full cost accounting' mechanisms in the GPI can also help policymakers to identify investments that produce lower social and environmental costs to society. Gambling, and other growth industries might receive less government support if social costs were counted, and sustainable practices might receive more encouragement. The purpose of the Genuine Progress Index is to simply shine the spotlight on vital, critical evidence concealed and hidden in our conventional growth-based measures of progress.

An inspiring example of GPI in action comes from a community consultation process on solid waste management. In Nova Scotia, the waste used to be picked up every other day from the kerb and there was very little recycling. Quite simply, it was the costs of waste pick-up and recycling that were being measured.

In contrast, real indicators of genuine progress can be the percentage of diversion of waste from landfills and access to kerb side recycling. Access to curbside recycling in Nova Scotia jumped from less than 5% in 1989 to 99% today. By changing what was measured, it was possible to change behaviour.

Learn More

www.gpiatlantic.org

Staff from GPI Atlantic are now working in a number of countries around the world to build more intelligent and inclusive measuring tools for progress. In Scotland this work will be taken forward by the Carnegie UK Trust and its partners in 2011 through a “round table” investigation.

In the final section of this report we address Place and outline just how important the place we live is, in defining who we are and how we fulfil our true potential as individuals and communities. This section also covers issues around asset transfer and asset-building in communities.

Key Points we wish to make from this chapter.

- 1 The point isn't just to get community groups & individuals contracting and 'doing things locally'; the point is to redesign services that improve wellbeing and are cost efficient.**
- 2 National policies are often inspired by local successes. However there are a number of key political and logistical challenges which need to be considered in the scaling up process.**
- 3 How knowledge is represented and whose knowledge is valued and included are profoundly political decisions.**



Place

*Over glad lives, sometimes sad lives,
North East the clouds are streaming*

*Over joy and over heartache, to a place
that glads the heart*

*Over working days and idle, to the land
that gives you meaning*

*Back to the friends and family, that were
never meant to part*

**Lester Simpson 'Homeland' sung by Coope,
Boyes and Simpson**

We are beginning to appreciate just how important the place we live is in defining who we are and how we fulfil our true potential as individuals and communities. When people just 'reside in' rather than 'live in' a place and when they do not participate, they do not feel they belong and they do not care if the place is degraded.

'Placelessness erodes our ability to commit to anything other than self-interest and, as a result, we have become a society marked by few allegiances and almost no propensity to shoulder mutual obligations'

Paul Theobald⁴⁵

Access to the tangible assets of land and buildings, woodlands and coasts is therefore of critical importance to the health of communities. When people have a stake in the stewardship of these resources, it is more likely that the assets will be valued and nurtured. It is not surprising, therefore, that the debate about ownership, management and control of tangible assets has assumed higher visibility in recent times. Whilst only one component of the range of assets available to a community, and a fraction of what might comprise an 'Appreciating Assets' approach, we consider it important to

explore the range of options open to communities in what has become known as the 'asset transfer debate'. Indeed, asset-based approaches have almost become synonymous with the development of land and buildings. The underpinning 'people power' which makes these initiatives work is sometimes underplayed. In this section of the report therefore we will look at recent developments in the field of asset transfer, and then the essential role of tangible and intangible assets in making a success out of asset transfer schemes.



An appreciating assets approach sees people at the heart of communities – they are at the core of both the intangible and tangible assets of a community. Therefore when we speak of the role of physical assets such as buildings in communities, it needs to be recognised that buildings in and of themselves do not create communities. The ownership of tangible assets such as buildings is helpful in communities only if they leverage the development of intangible assets and help to build communities. Buildings can be important if they are build on and from people, and in turn help to grow the power and resources of the communities in which they are built.

Figure 14: People and tangible assets

⁴⁵ Theobald, P (1997) *Teaching the commons: place, pride, and the renewal of community* Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Place: The Next Frontier?

A focus on place in community development is not particularly new but recognition of place-based approaches within social policy and the evolution of 'place-based' approaches to practice is. An 'Appreciating Assets' approach takes heed of the growing recognition that place and the reconnecting to place is a key part of building communities that liveable, sustainable and connected.

Maybe a good place to start reconnecting with place is with children and young people. We have been impressed with the approach taken by educator, Will Coleman, in promoting place-based learning – a curriculum for the future. He identifies three characteristics of place-based learning:⁴⁶

- » Citizenship (community, regeneration, social justice, equality and diversity, internationalism)
- » Sustainability (nature study, ecology, interdependence, responsibility, globalisation)
- » Skills (collaboration, challenge, creativity, life outside the classroom)

It seems that he has articulated a vision of the building blocks that children need if they are to become effective, creative and active community members in future, able to be the guardians and stewards of local assets. He offers real hope that the curriculum for tomorrow's children will be invigorating, challenging and rooted in real places.

For adults, rediscovering just what is special about their place can be just as big a revelation. Building connections between people and place is a fundamental part of our 'Appreciating Assets' approach.

“Take me home country roads,
to the place I belong...”

Achieving this ambition is not as easy as it sounds! We are convinced that the way consultation meetings are usually run will not do it. Boardrooms and town halls can be sterile environments that do not allow people to think differently about the place they live. Rather, it can be informal gatherings, where people meet people they did not know they needed to meet, in convivial surroundings that gets creative juices flowing. What does 'a good place to live' look like going forward? This way of communicating can very soon generate an appreciation of what is really important about a place. This may centre on intangible aspects of place – stories, celebrations, people's energies, traditions; or it may be more tangible attributes – a community's distinctive environments or essential buildings. Certainly tangible assets can create a sense of what the community is and can shape what is thought of as possible. We recently heard of a community where the only civic or community spaces were a police station and a law court, and one of the residents reflected on what this meant for him growing up and the sorts of civic expectations that were implied or imposed on local people because of this view of the 'place'.



⁴⁶ Coleman, W (2009) 'Place Based Learning – A Report to Carnegie UK Trust' www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk (accessed on 30th November 2010.)

Renew Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia



Like many regional cities across the globe, Newcastle was experience decline in the old city centre. The sheer volume of empty spaces (150 visibly empty buildings) had reached the point where the decline had become self-perpetuating. It was attracting vandalism, violence and street crime and new businesses were reluctant to open in areas that had been in a spiral of visible decline.

Renew Newcastle, a not for profit company limited by guarantee, was founded to make some of these spaces available on an interim basis to artists, creative enterprises and community groups. Artists and creative entrepreneurs reported that while there were high levels of vacancies it was still comparably difficult to rent vacant spaces as the costs were prohibitive and the terms available did not match their way of working. By putting in place a structure that brokered access to these spaces cheaply Renew Newcastle was able to bring nearly 40 new creative projects and enterprises – both temporary and ongoing – back to the city in the first 12 months.

To date Renew Newcastle has worked directly with private property owners and not through government or with government-owned buildings. Although founded as an independent, both State and Local government now support it. A key feature of the Renew Newcastle approach is that it is ongoing and temporary. Renew Newcastle does not try to permanently occupy buildings but seeks only to use them while they are empty. All projects are inherently temporary – although some can and do continue indefinitely – which means that the Renew Newcastle is not suited to building permanent arts infrastructure or facilities. It works best as a means of incubating new ideas and activities rather than for permanent projects.

Importantly Renew Newcastle legally doesn't lease the buildings but rather negotiates a license agreement (a contract) that allows the projects to access them. The analogy often used is that Renew Newcastle asks for similar terms as those used when someone puts a mobile phone tower or a billboard on a building – the right to access it for a particular purpose on agreed terms. Legally, this is important as it does not trigger the statutory obligations, rights, costs and responsibilities on either party that would go with a lease and are not required for this purpose. As a result the agreements are much easier for the property owner as Renew Newcastle asks for a lot less in the way of rights (and therefore causes a lot less in the way of hassles) than a normal leaseholder would.

Legally, Renew Newcastle, the property owner, and the project are all parties to a license agreement that clearly specifies each party's responsibilities that vary from property to property. In most cases: the property owner agrees to provide the property for a nominal sum until they have a better use for it (with a rolling 30 day agreement); Renew Newcastle agrees to hold the relevant insurance (always including public liability insurance but in some cases this could include some property insurances), contribute to taking care of the space and act as a manager of the space or spaces; and the occupier agrees to keep the space clean and presentable, pay all outgoings associated with them being there (such as water, gas and electricity bills), to keep it open as required, and to take care of the building until the owner wants it back. Any party can cancel the agreement with the appropriate notice. There is something in it for everyone.

Learn more at <http://renewnewcastle.org>

The places and spaces where a community meets and gathers for various activities form a key part of the fabric that makes up community life. In some communities the spaces and places in which people can meet to engage in various activities can shape the sorts of events and activities that take place (so where there are no civic spaces such as halls, it is difficult for indoor community gatherings to take place). The built environment of our communities can play an important role in how our communities work and develop. If there are few



places where people can meet or the community buildings that exist are inaccessible to some members of a community or the types of spaces that exist cannot cater for community interests, then this can have an impact on the ways in which the community engages.

Sometimes community spaces may have been neglected, or may be controlled in ways that are not responsive to local need or may be at risk of closure. It is often an impending crisis that prompts a community to take action to create or save a space in the form of a tangible asset. This can lead to debates and discussions about how communities themselves can manage and even own the places and spaces in which they meet and gather. This ownership of assets at a community level is something that has gained prominence both at a community level and in policy circles over recent years.

Question



Do really disadvantaged communities have tangible assets to be celebrated?

What influence does ownership of assets have in relation to levels of community disadvantage?

Are there any differences in the nature, condition and ownership of assets between disadvantaged communities and wealthier communities?

Building Community and Community Buildings: Asset Transfer, Ownership and Management

The publication of 'Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets' in May 2007 signalled a growing focus across the UK on the acquisition of land and buildings by communities.

Ahead of the game in Scotland, there were early community land buy-outs in the 1990s; the first by the Assynt community followed by the Isle of Eigg and the Knoydart Peninsula. These community land purchases were undertaken primarily to address historical injustices and the neglect of communities by private sector landlords. A case study from the island of Eigg is included here, examined from the perspective of the community itself.



Resource Recap

Many reports and reviews have been released in recent years that explore the ownership and management of assets by communities. Here is some recommended reading about asset ownership and management from around Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland, and the world:



Quirk Report: **Making assets work: The Quirk Review – Communities and neighbourhoods – Department for Communities and Local Government**

Joseph Rowntree: **Community assets / Joseph Rowntree Foundation**

Development Trust Association :
<http://www.dta.org.uk/> <http://www.dtascot.org.uk>

Petra Vergunst Report:
<http://www.sustainablecommunitydevelopment.co.uk/readmore.html>

Foresters Community Asset Building paper:
<http://www.foresters.org.au/Publications.aspx>

Growing Community Assets – an Insiders Guide:
www.hie.co.uk/support-for-communities/community-assets/

The Isle of Eigg— Community Buy-Out of Private Land



In the early part of the 20th century, the Isle of Eigg, which lies 12 miles off Mallaig in the Scottish Hebrides, was used as a recreational and sporting estate. The sale of the island in the 1960s ushered a long period of instability, with successive owners who did little or nothing to maintain the infrastructure necessary to support a strong island community. By the 1980's many newcomers had joined the indigenous islanders in the task of rebuilding the community.

After repeated clashes with the then owner, who sold Eigg to Maruma, an eccentric German artist, the islanders embarked in 1997, on a buy-out campaign.

The 60 million year old lava pillar at the pier commemorates the island's historic buy-out in 1997 by the islanders and their partners in the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (IEHT). The Trust comprises 3 members: Eigg Residents' Association (ERA), the Highland Council (HC) and the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT). The trust therefore combines, local, regional and conservation interests for the benefit of all.

After the buy out, the residents of Eigg worked hard to support the movement that resulted in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 being passed by the Scottish Parliament. Both with and without the use of this legislation, nearly half a million acres of the country – 2% of the landmass – is now held in community ownership via 200 community groups.

The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust has established a number of community-based organisations and projects including a unique scheme to bring reliable, renewable electricity supply to all residents. In the process the community has reduced its carbon emissions by over 80%. Their work has been recognised in a number of awards including the Ashden Award (2010) and a share in the million pound prize in the Big Green Challenge 2010.



The Community Land Unit was established by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) in 1997 to increase the role of communities in the ownership and management of land assets for the benefit of the community. Between 2001-2006, the Scottish Land Fund distributed £15 million of Lottery money to small communities with a population of under 10,000 in the HIE area. The 2003 Land Reform Act, giving communities the right to buy land and buildings in certain circumstances, provided a key legislative boost. This legislation allows voluntary organisations to establish an interest in land or buildings, either public or privately owned. If that asset comes up for sale then they have the first refusal, subject to a community ballot. From 2006, Big Lottery made £50million available throughout Scotland through the 'Growing Community Assets' fund. This funding provided technical advice and support for asset acquisition and development. Although the headline catching land buyouts in the Highlands are well known, the Land Unit also supported smaller scale purchase.

An important evaluation of this Scottish experience of asset acquisition is now underway; SQW have been commissioned to undertake a thorough evaluation of the 'Growing Community Assets' fund that will be completed by 2013. This will look at the economic impact of funded projects, the resulting income generation and community enterprise development, the sustainability of activities and an analysis of the process that projects go through from initially identifying the asset through to acquisition, ownership or other arrangements (for example leasing) and management of the asset to identify the key factors that support successful community ownership. Carnegie UK Trust invited Professor Jim Hunter, from his unique perspective as the former Director of the Scottish Crofters Union and former Chairman of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, to reflect upon impact of land reform and community buy-outs on Highlands and Islands communities in a presentation to the Scottish Festival of Politics and in a publication due 2011.

Question



How can land and buildings be harnessed for community benefit? Can these benefits only be harnessed if the community has legal ownership of the land and buildings? Under what conditions could the benefits be maximised without the costs and responsibilities of legal ownership?

In 2009, the Development Trust Association, Scotland received funding from the Scottish Government to deliver the 'Promoting Asset Transfer' programme. The principal purpose of this project is to "increase levels of awareness and interest within local authorities as a means of increasing community ownership of assets". Asset transfer is a central plank of the Scottish Government's Community Empowerment Action Plan (CEAP)⁴⁷.

Elsewhere in the UK, funding streams have been established to support communities in buying assets, particularly from local authorities. For example, The Big Lottery Fund is working in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government to deliver a £13 million Community Asset Transfer Programme. In Northern Ireland, there has been a concentration on investment in community halls.

In England too, there has been a growing interest in the ownership, management, or control of assets by the community. Steve Wylor of the Development Trusts Association (DTA) has published an excellent history of Community Asset Ownership and he reminds us that this is not an entirely new idea! From common land to the co-operative movement, the Land Settlement Association to residential Settlements, communities have sought to manage land for wider community benefit and these early examples provide inspiration for modern day developments such as Community Land Trusts. The DTA itself was established in 1992 to support community based, multi-purpose Development Trusts, many based in small towns.

⁴⁷ CEAP www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/03/20155113/0 (accessed 16th Nov 2010)

The Market Towns Initiative instigated by the Countryside Agency in 2002 provided support for selected towns to undertake 'health checks' and the drawing up of action plans. Although the scheme faltered in some parts of the country when responsibility for the initiative passed to Regional Development Agencies, sufficient momentum had been built in market town communities for community asset management, not least as a mechanism to raise income for community benefit.

The Asset Transfer Unit (ATU), delivered by the Development Trusts Association with Community Matters and the Local Government Association, funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government, was established in 2009. Like the Scottish Land Unit, the ATU provides expert advice concerning the transfer of under-used land and buildings from the public sector to community ownership and management and helping organisations to develop those assets and deliver long-term social, economic and environmental benefits. In parallel with the development of the ATU, the Community Assets Programme, funded by the Office of the Third Sector and managed by the Big Lottery Fund, will distribute £30m to support the transfer of assets from local authorities to the third sector for community benefit.

Internationally too, the ownership of tangible community assets has both a long and a newer history. There are literally hundreds of examples of community assets around the world. They take many forms and have evolved in different ways.

Here are a few examples:

- In India communities talk of 'people's institutions', which are tangible assets owned by and for communities and where natural assets such as forests and watersheds are managed by communities (see for example, Gram Vikas in Orissa, www.gramvikas.org).
- In the United States there is a long history of building the wealth of poorer communities by investing in assets, and more recently there has been links made between community ownership of assets and individual asset building⁴⁸. There have also been explorations of how residents can invest in their own community assets (see for example The Jacobs Neighbourhood Centre for Neighbourhood Innovation and its work pioneering a Community Development Initial Public Offering (IPO) so that residents could own shares in a new neighbourhood asset).
- In Australia social investors are investing in the purchase of community assets to build the sustainability of communities and the organisations who work in them (see Foresters Community Finance, www.foresters.org.au).



⁴⁸ Thomas, H. and Shapiro, T. (2008),

Letter from Victoria, Australia



In my community, which is a village 25km from the nearest town, the community hall is at the heart of our communal life. Certainly we meet in other places – in the school, in each other's homes, in the parks – but the hall is the place where we have all our important community meetings, where there are community functions, events, parties and workshops. In some ways we don't often think about how the hall got to be there or how it continues to function as a safe and sustainable building. However a few years ago we were forced to think about this. After 2001 the public liability insurance prices for community spaces in Australia rose steeply – so steeply in fact that many community organizations faced the possibility of not being able to pay the insurances necessary to keep community spaces open. In our community it raised for many people the question of 'who owns and is responsible for the hall anyway'? The hall was built in the community over 50 years ago: built by the community for the community. It came about through a bequest to the community from a resident who had passed on, and it was built as a community resource, owned by trustees on behalf of the community. This was a method that was used frequently in communities which were a little remote from local government centres – which had to take matters into their own hands if they were to have spaces and places for community activities.

With the insurance increases there was concern that the community would no longer be able to afford to maintain and sustain the community hall. There were discussions with the local council – could they take over the facility? What would the cost be to the local community in terms of accessibility and the sorts of activities that could take place? In the end the trustees came to the community with the options – and the community decided that communal ownership of the hall was important to its future. And so the village raised the money for the insurance – and we continue to

raise the money for this and all the costs associated with owning that asset. We've seen other halls in other communities closed down. We've seen the accessibility of assets decline. We are not prepared to allow this to happen to our community hall. It holds a very special place in our lives – I had my wedding reception in that hall. It is where we celebrated the birth of our friend's children; it is where we held memorial services for members of our community who have passed on. Is it 'just a building'? No, of course not. It is a space that holds our community – in times of celebration, of need, of sharing. It is nothing without the people, but also, the community would be a lot poorer without the hall where we gather. Do we need to 'own' the spaces and places that serve as our communal gathering places? No, of course not. But it can be helpful to think about who owns these places and what impacts that has for our communities, both in the present and in the future.

Though it is hard to generate real evidence for the benefits of community management and ownership of assets, many of the case studies and reports point to some key benefits for both community organisations and communities themselves. These centre particularly on:

- Financial benefits: generation of income from the asset, particularly unrestricted income; building community and organisational balance sheets through equity; decreased dependence on grant income over time.
- Economic benefits: contribution towards growing and/or regenerating local economies; support for and increased flow of resources into local economies; improved value of land/buildings across and around the community assets; enhancement of enterprising opportunities.
- Social Capital benefits: increased opportunities for local participation in management of local assets; building sense of empowerment and community; increased community pride in place; base for long-term community planning.

Some of the research, however, suggests that it is not just ownership of assets that can produce these benefits. After examining a number of community asset development processes, Petra Vergunst (2009) raises some questions that should be considered by communities weighing up the benefits of ownership over other arrangements:

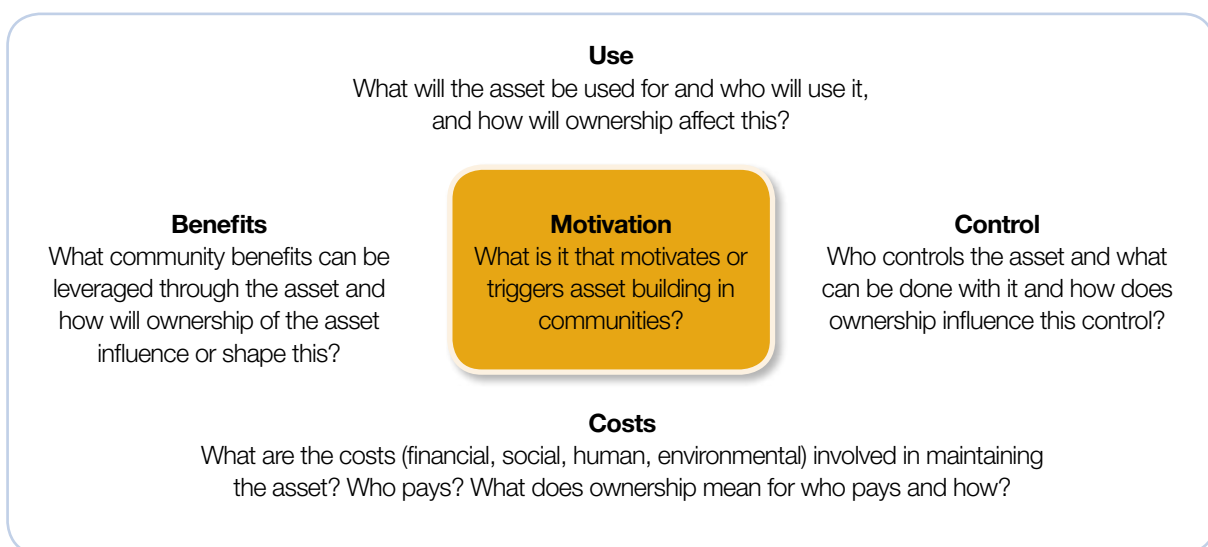
“The question whether legal ownership of land and buildings is needed to actually achieve benefits from land and buildings is not a straightforward one. Ownership certainly has benefits, but the development of common property, co-managed and leased assets has too. Which exactly are the benefits that can only be achieved through community ownership of land and buildings? Ownership involves considerable financial and managerial responsibilities and it is unlikely that every community is willing and has the capacity to respond to those responsibilities. Do these responsibilities actually weigh up to the added benefits of community ownership?”⁴⁹

A review of literature on asset ownership and management and our action research suggests that the development of community assets and

consideration of whether ownership is the most effective way to realise and leverage benefits centres on five key issues (as summarised in the diagram below).

As a consequence of the financial crisis and the resulting squeeze of public sector finances, there is likely to be increasing pressure on local authorities and other public bodies to realise their assets: to dispose of redundant land and buildings and to pass over facilities that represent a drain on resources because they are not in the category of ‘statutory responsibilities’. The intention to devolve service delivery to local communities (and in some cases the physical assets in which they are based) is likely to continue to be a clear political platform into the future, as it not only reduces costs but also offers greater levels of community responsibility in making decisions about local futures. Asset building is not, however, only a ‘top-down’ decision nor a political platform. Many communities are increasingly interested in community ownership of assets and in the right of communities to secure ownership of key facilities such as the shop or pub. It seems likely that many more communities will assume responsibility for physical assets – land and buildings, over the coming years. And the motivation for this can be either one generated from community members themselves or it can be a political decision (or indeed a combination of the two!).

Figure 15: Key community considerations for Asset Ownership and Management



⁴⁹ Vergunst, P (2009) ‘How many cards to hold? The benefits of community asset ownership and management’ www.sustainablecommunitydevelopment.co.uk/readmore.html pgs 8 and 9 (Accessed on 29th Nov 2010)

The key motivations for exploring greater community involvement with assets (whether through ownership or other means) or can be summarised as follows:

Figure 16: Motivations of partners



Although there has been much rhetoric about asset transfer, there is sometimes reluctance within local authorities to ‘sell off the family silver’. Public bodies do have to ensure that holdings of property, plant and equipment are kept under constant review, with a view to disposing of surplus assets as quickly as possible. Public bodies can, under some circumstances, sell assets below market prices, but there is some confusion about the application of this power. In England, for example, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has drawn up guidance on the General Consent for Local Authorities 2003 – ‘the disposal of land at less than best consideration’. Often elected councillors are not confident of the ability of community groups to manage the asset and fear that the general public will criticise any decision that might not maximize income for the council (with consequences at the next

election). The very process of advertising and selling surplus assets happens on such a tight timescale that community groups may find it impossible to raise the requisite capital in time to compete in such sales.

It is also the case, however, that communities need to engage in some rigorous decision-making about whether or not asset ownership is the best way forward – will it help to achieve the things that are important for the community, what will it really cost to own and maintain the asset, and what can it help to leverage in the community that is not possible under current circumstances? In addition, it can be important to examine the consequences if others own the assets – and understand how this can impact on flows of energy and resources into communities.

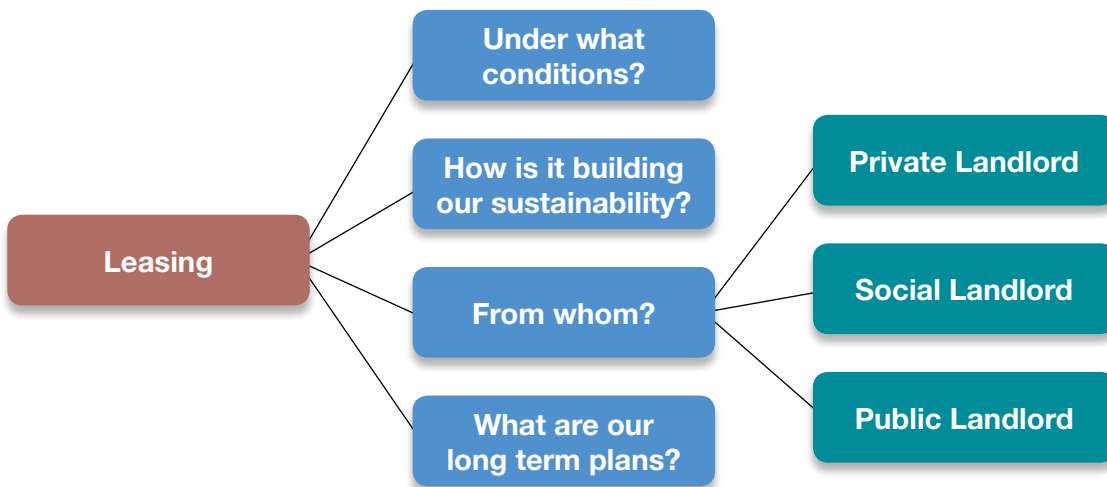
“Communities can use their assets to develop local facilities, economic regeneration, a sense of community, community self-esteem and empowerment, and an increased self determination. Whereas these benefits can be achieved regardless of whether a community owns the asset or not, ownership of land and buildings may increase the sustainability of the facilities, the community’s capacity to generate own income, the strength of the vision that steers the community project and the community’s control over decisions in relation to the asset” (Petra Vergunst, 2009;pp8-9)⁵⁰

Often when we think about management of assets, there are two key possibilities for communities and community organisations. One is to lease a building from an owner. The other is to own the building as a community organisation. It seems like a simple proposition – either we lease, or we own: but actually when we look at the role of assets in communities it is much more complex than this.

Leasing a building means entering into a legal agreement with the landlord and paying an agreed upon sum of money for an agreed upon time for the privilege of occupying the building. However, to whom we pay that money is actually an important question in terms of examining how the asset can be used to foster community development. This also determines the flows of resources that are necessary to sustain and maintain the asset – and

⁵⁰ Vergunst, P. (2009) *How Many Cards to Hold? The Benefits of Community Asset Management and Ownership*, available from: www.sustainablecommunitydevelopment.co.uk (accessed 15th Nov 2010)

Figure 17: Key Questions for Evaluating Leasing as an Asset Option⁵¹



importantly whether and how these resources can be used for community development.

Some of the questions that could be asked about leasing are outlined in Figure 17 and further discussed below.

Leasing – under what conditions?

The costs and conditions of leasing can influence whether and how an asset can leverage benefits for communities, organisations or groups in a community. If the conditions are too restrictive (i.e. no changes to make a building fit-for-purpose are allowed) or the costs too prohibitive, then it becomes less likely that benefits will flow from leasing assets. Conditions that enable innovation and flexibility, one the other hand, and which give organisations and communities a degree of security around their tenure may well mean that many benefits can be leveraged from the leasing of an asset.

Leasing – how is it building our sustainability?

Leasing an asset can promote a degree of focus on the ‘here and now’ rather than encouraging long-term thinking and planning⁵². This can have implications for both environmental sustainability of assets and the ways in which assets can promote

financial sustainability in organisations.

Investment in making an asset such as a building sustainable from an environmental perspective may not be a priority for an owner. Organisations or community tenants may not be able to or keen to invest their own savings into sustainability of such buildings – particularly if their security of tenure in a leased building is unclear.

From a financial perspective, leasing assets can be beneficial for tenant organisations or community groups – but only if there is some thought given to the long-term future of the asset and the organisation’s future within the asset. Sometimes the ownership of an asset lies in the hands of more benevolent entities who offer very low or token cost lease contracts (such as is sometimes the case with public authorities) – and this can enable smaller or less well off groups to access affordable space for their operations. However, it can also be important to use such opportunities to plan ahead – what if the owner suddenly raised their lease costs or, if ownership changed for some reason, or the asset was to be used for other purposes? An organisation and a community which has planned for shifts and changes in assets and asset ownership can make better use of a leased asset than those who take asset status quo for granted!

⁵¹ Foresters Community Finance (forthcoming), *Community Asset Building: Working towards sustainability in the community sector*, Foresters Community Finance, Brisbane.

⁵² See for example the work of Foresters Community Finance in Australia (www.foresters.org.au) who have been exploring how asset ownership can promote long-range planning for sustainability.

Leasing – from whom?

When an asset is leased from someone for community benefit it can be important to understand who owns the asset and what this means both for current and future uses. Knowing who owns an asset and for what purpose can help a community to track costs and flows of resources around a community; align this with the impacts that could be generated from the asset; and plan for various scenarios. It can be important to know about:

- Whether the owner is a private landlord; a social landlord (see Figure 18 below) or a public landlord;
- What commitment the owner has to the community and to the use of the asset for community purposes;
- What level of commitment the owner has to maintaining, restoring or refitting the asset for community uses;
- What the longer-term goal of the owner is in relation to the asset – is there a long-term commitment to the asset? Is it likely to be sold in the future? Will there be options for later community ownership? And what sorts of impacts do the long term plans have for its current use (i.e. If the aim eventually is to redevelop a site, then what will that mean for maintenance or community use now and at that time?).

Figure 18: Types of Landlord

Who is the Landlord?	Pros	Cons
<p>Private Landlord: The Property is owned by a private citizen or company for commercial purposes</p>	<p>Greatest choice of properties. Paying commercial rents for a property means that the community organisation is acutely aware of the provisions needed to occupy a property in the local area.</p>	<p>Commercial rents are not accessible for smaller COs or informal groups. Commercial landlords are not necessarily interested in the sustainability of the CO – merely in whether they can pay the rent!</p>
<p>Social Landlord: Where an entity owns the property for the purpose of ensuring it is and remains a community asset.</p>	<p>Stability of tenure. Potential for negotiating costs and refitting so that it is 'fit for purpose'. Commitment of the landlord to community and to ensure that the asset generates social impact.</p>	<p>Social landlords may have a timeframe over which they own local assets, it may not always be a permanent situation. Need to ensure that the social landlord has the capacity to 'invest' in the asset – maintain it over a period of time.</p>
<p>Public Landlord: The property is owned and maintained by the State – either through local or national government bodies.</p>	<p>Stability of tenure. Usually the most affordable rents for the space. The public owner is usually concerned about the use of the asset for public purposes which suits social service organisations.</p>	<p>Increasingly publicly owned assets are being scrutinized for their cost/benefit. Though affordable, often the public landlord is not concerned with building the sustainability or capacity of community organizations, so if they decide to divest themselves of the asset the COs can be placed in a very vulnerable position.</p>

Leasing – what are our long-term plans?

Having an idea about what long-term space and place plans are for an asset such as a building can help a group to make decisions about ownership and whether leasing could be a beneficial option. What works as a space for organisations and community groups at a particular time in their development may not be suitable for them at another time. Thinking about growth, reach, impact

and strategy can be helpful in making decisions about what kind of relationship an organisation needs to have with tangible assets.

In addition, an anchor organisation⁵³ that has a long-term commitment to a particular community would clearly have a very different perspective about how assets could embed them in a place than would an organisation that has a regional focus or a commitment to impacting a particular issue such as health or arts.

Idea of a social landlord

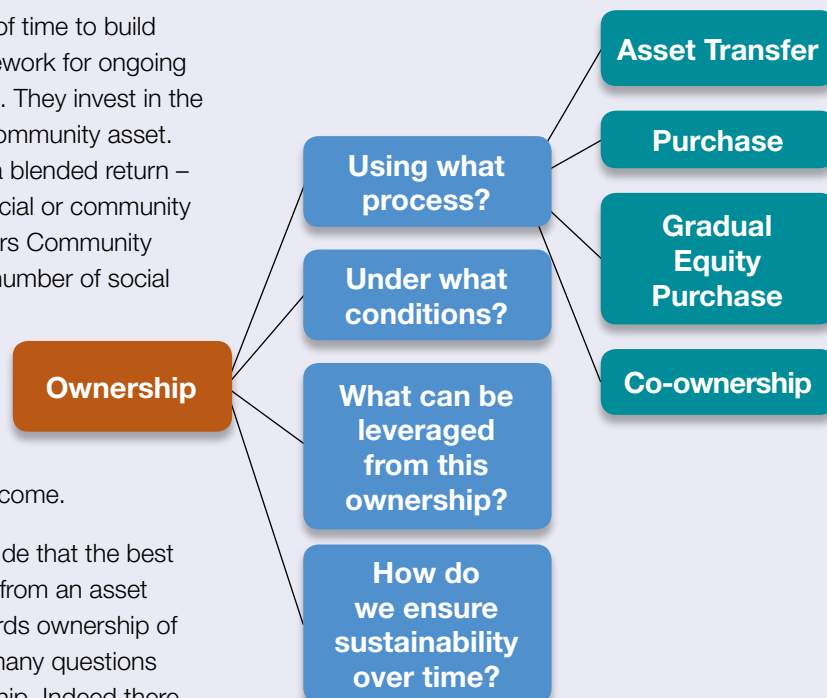
Although in the UK social landlords are mainly government funded not-for-profit organisations focused on affordable housing (such as housing associations, trusts or cooperatives), in Australia there is another kind of social landlord, one focused on community assets. They are trustees of community assets such as halls, neighbourhood centres, civic centres or recreation spaces. They bring private investment to bear so that the assets can be purchased and then leased back to the community organisations, with a commitment to work with these organisations over a period of time to build their capacity and a financial framework for ongoing community ownership of the asset. They invest in the asset to ensure that it remains a community asset. The investors in the asset expect a blended return – some financial return but also a social or community return for their investment. Foresters Community Finance is currently working on a number of social landlord models and developing the frameworks of capacity building that will ensure that the assets that are purchased benefit the communities in which they exist for a long time to come.

Sometimes a community may decide that the best way to protect or to derive benefit from an asset such as a building is to work towards ownership of that asset. Just as leasing raises many questions for consideration, so does ownership. Indeed there

are many roads to ownership, and each of them can have implications for what people benefits can be leveraged from an asset and what the costs are to the community and organisations involved. Figure 19 below outlines these questions, which are then also briefly examined below.



Figure 19: Key Questions for Evaluating Leasing as an Asset Option⁵⁴



⁵³ Anchor organisations: “are independent community led organisations with multi-purpose functions, which provide a focal point for local communities and community organisations, and for community services” (www.localpeopleleading.co.uk)

⁵⁴ Foresters 2010

Ownership: Using what process?

Communities come to the decision that asset ownership is the best option for many different reasons, and under a range of circumstances. Sometimes the decision is precipitated by a threat of closure of an asset and there is a sense of urgency to taking control and ownership of the asset. Other times ownership is a decision that is reached over a period of time, in discussion with the current owners and the broader community. There is no single pathway towards asset ownership, and neither is there only one process through which assets become 'owned' and managed by a community.

It is important in the first instance to explore the different processes that are available for asset ownership in the context of community development. These different processes for ownership are outlined in Figure 20 below.

Ownership: Under what conditions?

The DTA's Asset Transfer Unit speaks about 'Viability not Liability' as a key foundational principle for considering asset ownership in communities. This points to the need to consider what kinds of foundations asset ownership needs to be built on – or what McLean and Clunie term 'bedrock elements' of asset ownership (see below). It is important to have a clear picture both of the asset itself (e.g. its current and future maintenance costs, the motivations for transfer or sale), and the sorts of conditions that make ownership viable for a community (having the right people, the right resources and the right motivations). Learning from other community experiences of asset building can add help to examine what could work and what needs to be in place for assets to deliver the benefits we envisage.

Figure 20: Ownership Processes

Type of ownership process	Key Issues / Challenges
<p>Transfer</p> <p>Transfer of Title (or very long-term lease, such as 99 year lease) and responsibility for the asset to a community organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careful assessment of the asset, costs and potential benefits need to be undertaken; Any committee examining asset transfer should undertake some capacity building to ensure that they are prepared for the demands of asset ownership;
<p>Purchase</p> <p>Purchase of the asset usually via a loan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As this usually involves mortgages, there is a need for due diligence, savings, capacity building and good governance to be in place; Ensures that asset has sufficient income potential for repayment of loans; Demands high levels of monitoring from a group of trustees or committee members to ensure that the asset is adequately maintained and that appropriate returns (financial and social) are leveraged from the asset to justify its purchase.
<p>Gradual Equity Purchase</p> <p>Use of particular legal and financial instruments to enable the purchase of equity in the asset over time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires sympathetic investors and appropriate legal structures to enable gradual purchasing of equity (e.g. Unit Trusts); Requires increasing capacities and resources over time in order to enable gradual purchase of the asset and ensure that it can be adequately sustained and maintained.
<p>Cooperative Ownership</p> <p>Joint ownership or co-ownership of an asset.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires appropriate legal and governance structures to enable multiple entities to own the asset; Requires very solid relationships and communication protocols amongst owning groups as they will have to work together to sustain and maintain the asset.

Ownership: What can be leveraged from ownership?

Community ownership of assets is not an end in itself, but rather, a means to an end. There are many different motivations for communities to get involved in asset ownership and management: to address a broader goal of achieving social justice and addressing poverty and inequalities or creating employment or enterprise possibilities. Some of the goals of ownership articulated in the case studies in this section include:

- Establishing a base in the local area: One of the key facilities within a community is a multi-purpose meeting place.
- Securing or improving services provided to the community: It is often the threat to a local service (such as closure of the shop or post office) that prompts the community to consider ownership.
- Building enterprising capacity: Local community organisations acquiring buildings or renewable energy installations have the potential to generate income, which can then be reinvested in new enterprise development.
- Preserving and maintaining the local landscape and heritage: community organisations frequently take responsibility for the restoration of habitats and historic sites, managing land to secure biodiversity or access.

- Looking after the most vulnerable members of the community: Many assets are acquired to secure positive outcomes for vulnerable people; day centres for older people, land for therapeutic horticulture.

Articulating the visions or goals that are sought through the ownership of a community asset can help not only in the decision-making process about whether ownership is 'right' for a particular circumstance, but can also help to hold the process to account later on. It can help to ask some of the difficult questions: is the asset really helping us to deliver better services? Will the asset leverage benefits for the most vulnerable members of our community? Are we generating enterprise and income in our community through the ownership of this asset?

Ownership: How do we ensure sustainability over time?

One of the key questions that underpin ownership of community assets, and that probably has not been adequately examined since the latest wave of asset transfers across the UK, is that of sustainability. Can asset ownership lead to greater levels of sustainability – environmental, financial, social and cultural?

Figure 21: Sustainable Assets

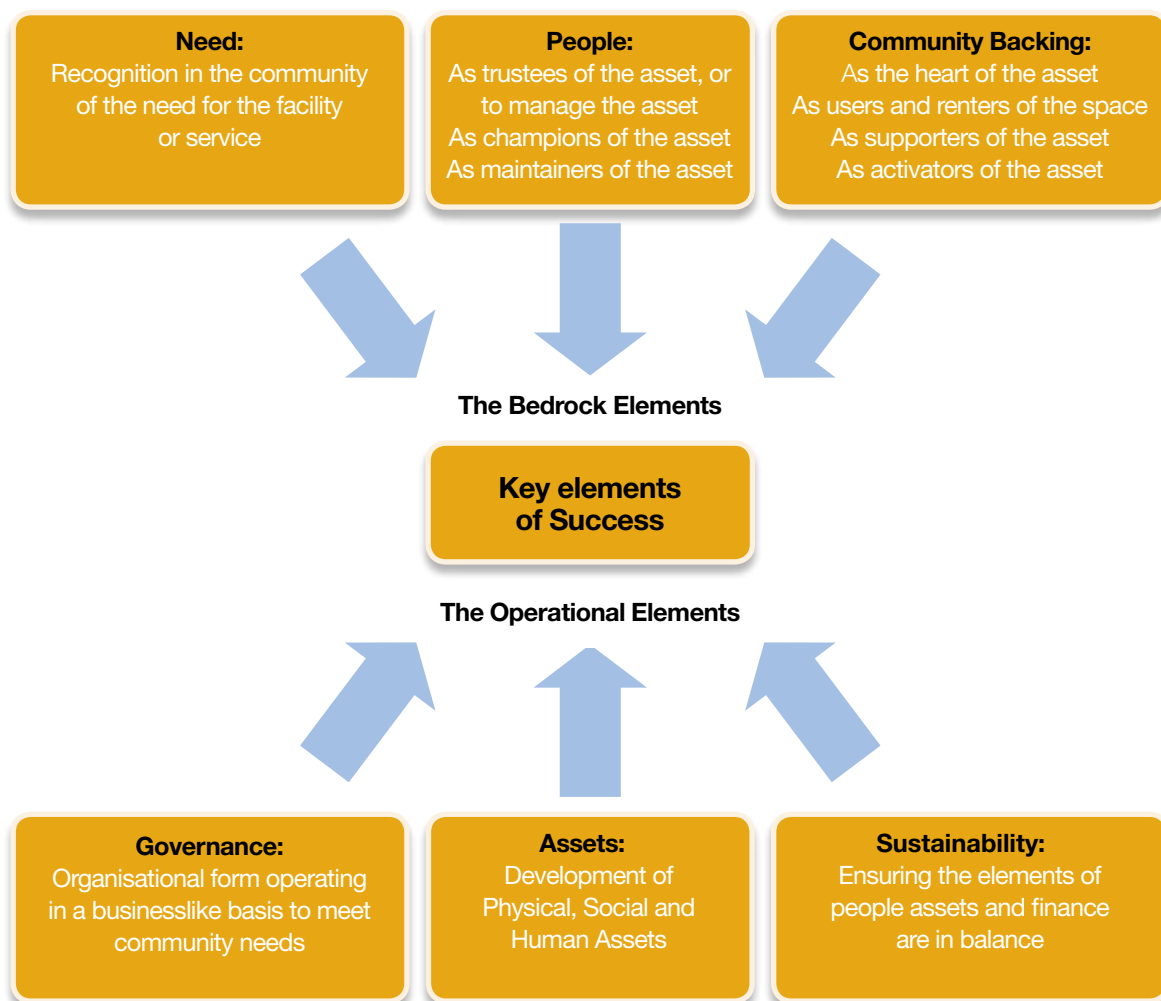
Type of Sustainability	Definition in relation to physical assets	Key Question
Environmental	The asset contributes to ensuring the long term health of the environment in the long-term by reducing its environmental footprint.	Is the asset able to contribute to the conservation and preservation of the local environment?
Economic/Financial	The financial viability of the asset is sustainable over the long-term, which includes covering costs and generating surpluses.	Can the asset enable the flow of resources into the community rather than just requiring resources from the community?
Social	The asset is able to continue to support positive social impacts in a community over the long-term.	Does the asset contribute to the growing of social capital in the community?
Cultural	The asset remains a space of hospitality and diversity where people from across and around the community are welcomed, over the long-term.	Is the asset a contributor to or a venue for cultural development in the community?

Back to Basics: Bedrock Elements and People at the Heart of Community Buildings

Ownership of assets is not always possible, and it should only be considered if a community has all the 'bedrock elements'⁵⁵ of 'Need, People and Community Backing' to ensure that an asset can be owned in such a way that it remains an asset and does not become a liability. The resources needed to sustain and maintain an asset owned by a community have been summarised by one group of asset owners as follows:

These elements – both the 'bedrock' and 'operational' elements are helpful to consider in relation to physical assets no matter what ongoing legal connection a community or organisation has to the asset – leasehold or ownership.

Figure 22: McLean and Clunie's Bedrock Elements



⁵⁵ McLean & Clunie (2009), *Steps to Successful Community-Led Service Provision in Rural Areas*, Carnegie UK Trust

Community Land Trusts



In 2006, Community Finance Solutions (CFS) at the University of Salford carried out a National Demonstration programme for the Community Land Trust (CLT) model. Combining research and action, CFS supported 14 communities around the country to test the CLT idea. Encouraged by the results, in 2009, CFS and Carnegie UK Trust were awarded resources from the Government's Empowerment Fund to progress CLT development.

CLTs are established in communities to acquire assets and then hold them in perpetuity for local use. They work on a non-profit basis, raising money from new sources and unlocking existing resources, to provide housing, employment, and other accommodation. They work on the basis that occupiers pay for the use of buildings and services at prices they can afford, while the value of land, subsidies, planning gain and other equity benefits are locked up on behalf of the wider community.

In practical terms, CLTs:

- Buy, develop and hold land, housing, community buildings and services for the benefit of a local community;
- Attract investment for projects from local individuals and private companies, as well as public and voluntary bodies;
- Let workshops, offices, agricultural and residential accommodation at sub-market and market rents;

- Re-invest growing income from rents where available in new social and economic provision;
- Engage local people and organisations in the control and management of community assets;
- Bring together a wide spectrum of different partners to produce interdependent solutions;
- Mobilise the goodwill and services of local professional and skilled people.

The work undertaken by CFS has supported the development of a growing number CLT pioneer projects, learning lessons so CLTs can sit alongside Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and other community-led housing initiatives to provide affordable, intermediate market housing in perpetuity.

CLT projects are now spread around the country, from Northumberland to Cornwall. For instance, Cornwall Rural Housing Trust set up a Community Land Trust to cover the whole of Cornwall. This Community Land Trust employs a project worker to provide hands-on support and advice to any project wishing to set up a CLT. Successful CLTs with houses on the ground include St Minver, where phase one consisted of twelve homes built on a self-build basis, all for young people and families who would otherwise be unable to afford to buy in their home village. This CLT is now considering phase three! Now with a National CLT Network in place, hosted by the National Housing Federation, the number of CLTs is growing all the time.

Visit www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk for tools, advice and templates

The opportunities and responsibilities of asset management, whether through ownership or leasehold, can be also be explored further through learning from the experiences of communities that own, manage and/or control physical assets around the UK and Ireland. Some of these communities are listed in Figure 23 overleaf

Figure 23: Examples of Community Ownership of Tangible assets

Asset	Examples
Community and village halls	<p>Chipping: Chipping is a village in Lancashire, in the north of England. The Village Hall is a modern Community Resource Centre, built as part of the lottery funded Millennium Halls Programme. The village hall provides a high quality venue for a wide range of activities and events for both the local community and outside groups. www.chippingvillage.co.uk</p> <p>Forest of Bowland, Lancashire: When the Barley Village Hall underwent refurbishment work, the village hall committee looked to reduce their running costs by using renewable energy wherever possible. They installed a photovoltaic system on the hall roof that links to an air source heat pump to heat the two main rooms in the hall. www.forestofbowland.com</p>
Community shops and post offices	<p>Uig Community Shop: The remote community of Uig on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland has recently added a £500,000 extension to their Community Shop. The shop includes a petrol station and post office. The shop was in risk of closure because of financial difficulties, this situation sparked a community drive to secure the premises and ensure that a vital local facility was retained for future years. An agreement was struck with the Co-Op to supply produce at the same prices as those offered to the group's supermarket in Stornoway. A renewable energy dimension will be incorporated in the coming months to help supply the shop with electricity through small wind turbines and solar panels, a venture supported through the Highlands and Islands Community Energy Company. www.uigandbernera.com</p> <p>Sulgrave Village Shop and Post Office: Sulgrave is a small village surrounded by the rolling farmland of South Northamptonshire, near the town of Banbury in England. The Sulgrave Village Shop is a not for profit venture with profits reinvested to improve the business and support community activities. The aim of the shop, which includes the post office, is to provide a selection of quality, locally produced fare not generally found in supermarkets, at competitive prices. www.sulgrave.org (link broken at the moment)</p>
Community land ownership	<p>Eigg: Since their historic community land buy-out in 1997, the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust has established a number of community-based organisations and projects including a unique scheme to bring reliable, renewable electricity supply to all residents. In the process the community has reduced its carbon emissions by over 80%. Their work has been recognised in a number of awards including the Ashden Award (2010) and a share in the million pound prize in the Big Green Challenge 2010. www.isleofeigg.net</p> <p>Gigha: The island of Gigha sits between the Kintyre peninsula and Islay in south-west Scotland and is home to a community of 156 people. The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust was set up in 2001 when the latest laird decided to put the island up for sale. Inspired by visits to the Isle of Eigg to learn about their community buy-out, the community organised a purchase of the island with support from Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE). They now own and manage 47 cottages, four farms, a hotel, quarry, wind farm and a 54-acre garden, including a walled garden. The village hall has been in community ownership since the early 1950s. www.gigha.org.uk</p> <p>North Harris: In 2003, the community of North Harris voted overwhelmingly in favour of purchasing their land. The North Harris Trust was formed and it now manages the one of the biggest estates in community ownership in Scotland. The aim is to build a stronger community by increasing employment opportunities, addressing local housing needs, and protecting and enhancing North Harris's wonderful cultural and natural heritage. To do this they have developed social and rental housing, a community development fund, energy generation and conservation measures and several environmental & conservation projects. www.north-harris.org</p>

Asset	Examples
Farms	<p>Fordhall Farm, Shropshire: Fordhall Organic Farm, in Market Drayton, Shropshire has been in organic production for over 65 years. In 2006 continued this pioneering tradition by becoming England's first community-owned farm.</p> <p>The Fordhall Community Land Initiative (FCLI) now manages the land, which is farmed by brother/sister tenant partnership, Ben and Charlotte Hollins. With its 8000+ shareholders/landlords, it has developed a successful educational resource, running training, events, workshops, demonstrations etc. www.fordhallfarm.com</p>
Pubs	<p>The Old Crown, Hesketh Newmarket, Cumbria: The Old Crown pub is owned by a co-operative of more than one hundred local people and other supporters and it is believed to Britain's first co-operatively owned pub. www.theoldcrownpub.co.uk</p>
Recycling plants	<p>Cae Post, Powys: Cae Post is a pioneering charity and social enterprise, established in 1986, that provides work experience and training to people with disabilities and others disadvantaged in the job market. Over the last eight years, Cae Post has worked to achieve their goal through recycling projects. In partnership with Powys County Council they now run a commercial scale, recycling centre near Welshpool employing 23 people. They work closely with the schools and communities in Powys and beyond to spread the message of social inclusion and sustainability. www.caepost.co.uk</p>
Allotments	<p>St Ann's Allotments, Nottingham: The St Ann's Allotments are the oldest and largest detached town gardens in Britain, possibly the world. People have used them for at least 600 years and a voluntary community group that employs eight staff to take care of the education, leasing and other aspects of their work, currently manages the 670 individual gardens. One exciting feature of St Ann's is the rich heritage of the Community Orchard. Hundreds of varieties of apple and pear have been identified and a project is underway to identify and propagate these for use by other allotment holders. www.staa-allotments.org.uk</p>
Leisure Centres, swimming pools	<p>Atlantis Leisure: Atlantis Leisure is a 'best in the region' facility which is owned and operated by the community and is based in Oban in the West Highlands of Scotland. www.atlantisleisure.co.uk</p>
Affordable housing	<p>Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are non-profit community based organisations that own and manage assets, including affordable housing, on behalf of the community.</p> <p>St Minver Community Land Trust: Rock, a Cornish surfing resort is reputed to be one of the most expensive places in the world to buy property. To address the lack of affordable housing for rent and purchase by local people, interested locals came together with members of the parish council and formed a Community Land Trust. In 2008, twelve local people in the Rock area helped build their homes on land donated by a farmer. An additional eight bungalows to buy and four to rent followed on an adjoining site.</p> <p>Watch a short film documenting the development of this CLT and others – http://communitylandtrusts.ning.com</p>

contd...

Asset	Examples
Renewable energy	<p>Settle Hydro scheme, North Yorkshire</p> <p>Settle Hydro Scheme was established as an 'Industrial and Provident Society for the Benefit of the Community' with the specific purpose of owning the Settle Weir Hydro Electric Scheme. It has installed reverse Archimedes screw technology to generate hydro-power and the Society generates revenue by selling 'green' hydro-electricity. Any surplus revenue is used by the Society to benefit the local community through its twin aims of regenerating the local economy and promoting the environmental sustainability of Settle District.</p> <p>The scheme is expected to save 3,200 tonnes of carbon over an expected lifetime of 40 years. www.settlehydro.org.uk</p> <p>www.yorkshire-forward.com/improving-places/where-we-live/rural-market-towns/settle/case-study</p>
Cultural facilities, theatres, museums	<p>Galeri, Caernarfon, Wales</p> <p>As an increasing number of the town's buildings became neglected, run-down and empty, Galeri Caernarfon Cyf (formerly known as Cwmni Tref Caernarfon) was set up as an independent Town Development Trust in 1992. It began by taking on the challenging task of transforming and refurbishing some of Caernarfon's biggest eyesores. To date, the Trust has renovated and refurbished over twenty neglected and vacant properties in the town, which are now occupied by tenants. The company has grown from strength to strength and their work now includes Galeri, the £7.5million Creative Enterprise Centre at the town's Victoria Dock. The opening of Galeri in 2005 marked a significant development for the arts and creative industries in North Wales. Galeri houses a 400 seat theatre/cinema, two rehearsal studios, art space, bar, café, offices and several meeting/conference rooms.</p> <p>www.galericaernarfon.com</p>
Infrastructure; broadband, transport	<p>Alston Cybermoor, Cumbria</p> <p>Alston Cybermoor is a co-operatively run community website for the residents of Alston Moor. It acts as a social and information hub for rural <i>residents</i> and hosts latest news, a 'what's on' guide, a market place and discussion forums. Achievements include recent opening of Alston's 'Fibre moor' network, the UK's first fibre optic network both owned and built by its community. www.cybermoor.org/</p>
Health centres	<p>Shoreditch Trust Healthy Living Centre, Hackney London</p> <p>Since the Shoreditch Trust was set up in 2000 under the New Deal for Communities it has developed considerable experience of developing and managing community assets. The Healthy Living Centre is a community asset owned by the Trust and is one of over 400 projects completed over the past decade. It is part of a mixed-use scheme of student housing and community healthcare space including Homerton Hospital's Maternity Care Centre, office space for partner organisations, three complementary therapy rooms and a community meeting space. www.shoreditchtrust.org.uk</p>

The experience of these 'early adopters' is of critical importance in understanding how asset management can support economic and social wellbeing.

Question

How do we know if asset transfer works? What can we learn from the experiences of other communities that may be relevant to our own situation? How can we share learning between and across communities?



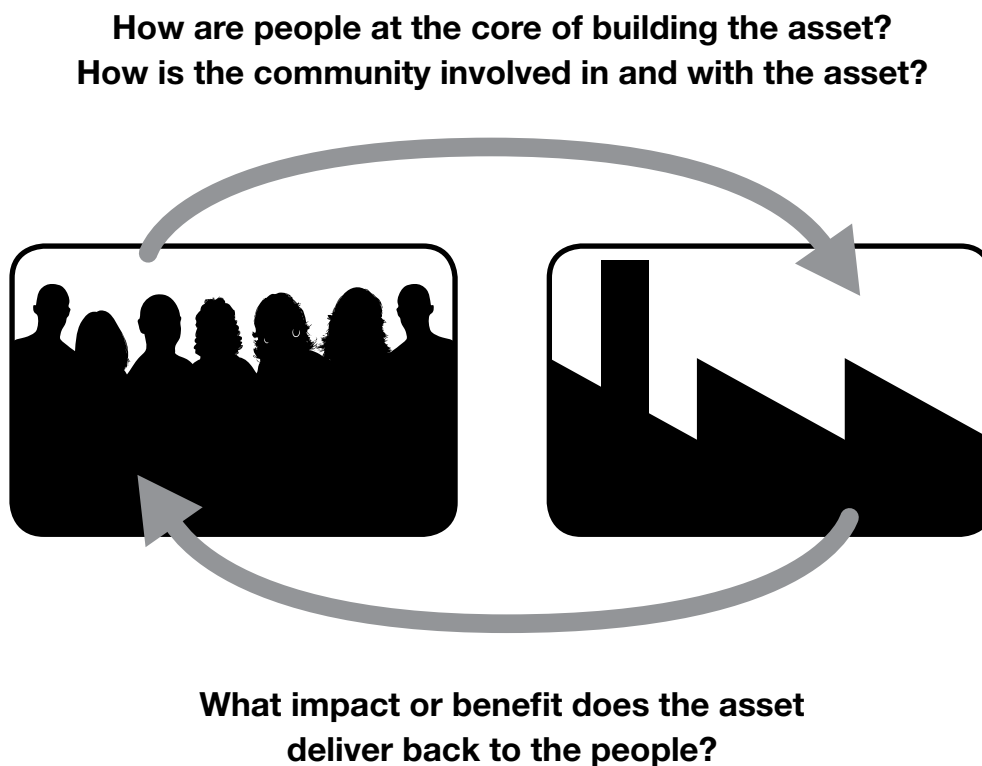
How can we ensure that people are at the core of build the asset?

In this section there has been a great deal of attention given to tangible assets but as we outlined in the previous section, the skills and talents of local people are a fundamental prerequisite in any successful asset transfer. An *'Appreciating Assets'* approach starts with people and may build towards buildings from there – but only if the building in turns leads to benefits for people!

Key Points from this chapter

- Place – and the reconnecting to place – is a key part of building communities that are liveable, sustainable and connected.
- It can be helpful to think about who owns the spaces and places that serve as our communal gathering places and what impact that might have for our communities, both in the present and in the future.
- Ownership involves considerable financial and managerial responsibilities and should not be considered unless the 'bedrock' elements of 'Demonstrable Need', 'People Skills' and 'Community Backing' are in place along side operational elements of 'Good Governance', 'Development of all Assets' and 'Sustainability' are taken into account.

Figure 24: Impacts of Assets on People





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The Carnegie UK Trust works to develop evidence based policy to support beneficial change for people living in the UK and Ireland. The Trust is one of over twenty foundations worldwide endowed by Scots American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

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