



SECTION TWO
GUIDING IDEAS



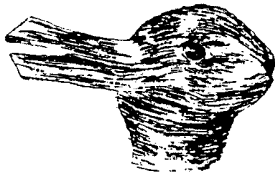
GUIDING IDEAS

Introduction

The four key ideas that guide the Community Partnering process are related to disadvantage, economy, community, and research. When we think about each of these issues we are usually standing in a well-worn spot from which we know that:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Disadvantage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>disadvantaged areas</u> are made up of needs and problems |
| Economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>the economy</u> is made up of businesses and markets |
| Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>communities</u> are made up of people who share things in common |
| Research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>research</u> is something that academics and other experts do. |

In a Community Partnering project we move away from the familiar vantage point and reposition ourselves so we can explore disadvantage, economy, community, and research from new and unfamiliar angles. It is like doing the visual puzzle where we refocus our vision so the duck becomes the rabbit (or the rabbit becomes the duck).



Is it a rabbit or
duck?

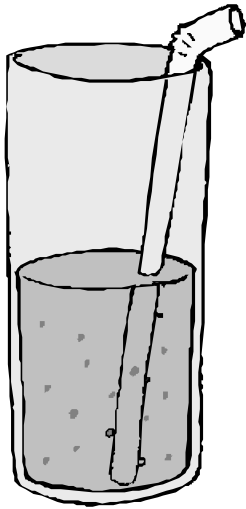
(Gombrich, 1972, page 4)

We believe it is important to make this shift because it opens up new ways of addressing some of the key issues facing communities today – whether they are urban or rural, small or large.

This section of the resource kit introduces and discusses the four guiding ideas. Look for the shaded statements that summarise how the ideas are used in Community Partnering. The section then concludes with case studies of four community initiatives that exemplify the guiding ideas.

Reference:

Gombrich, Ernst Hans, 1972, *Art and Illusion: The Psychology of Pictorial Presentation*, Phaidon, London.



Is the glass half full or half empty?

A community portrayed as half-empty will come to rely on outside help.

A community portrayed as half full will harness its own resources.

Portrayals

When communities tackle social and economic challenges they invariably think in terms of needs, problems and deficiencies – like the lack of jobs, lack of opportunities for young people, lack of skills, lack of investment.

According to John Kretzmann and John McKnight from Northwestern University in Illinois this is like saying that the glass is half empty. It ignores the resources, skills and abilities that already exist in a community.

They argue that there are important differences between portraying a community as half empty or half full. A neighbourhood that is depicted in terms of emptiness, needs and problems will be on the receiving end of all sorts of services designed and delivered by outside experts. Residents will be positioned as passive, powerless and dependent on outside help and assistance.

A neighbourhood that is portrayed as resourceful and gifted will be more likely to draw upon the skills of local people to address issues and solve problems. Outside assistance and resources may still be required but the agenda will be set by the local community. People in these neighbourhoods are positioned as engaged citizens, capable of shaping their futures.

Kretzmann and McKnight argue that all people and all communities are gifted, resourceful and capable – even those most marginalised and disadvantaged by social and economic change. Their project is to turn the “needs map” into an “assets map” (Figures 1 & 2).

This does not mean that people and communities do not have issues or problems, but it opens up a different way to approach the challenges. It can mean seeing the same person or thing in a very different light: a young unemployed person becomes someone with experiences to contribute; an older person becomes

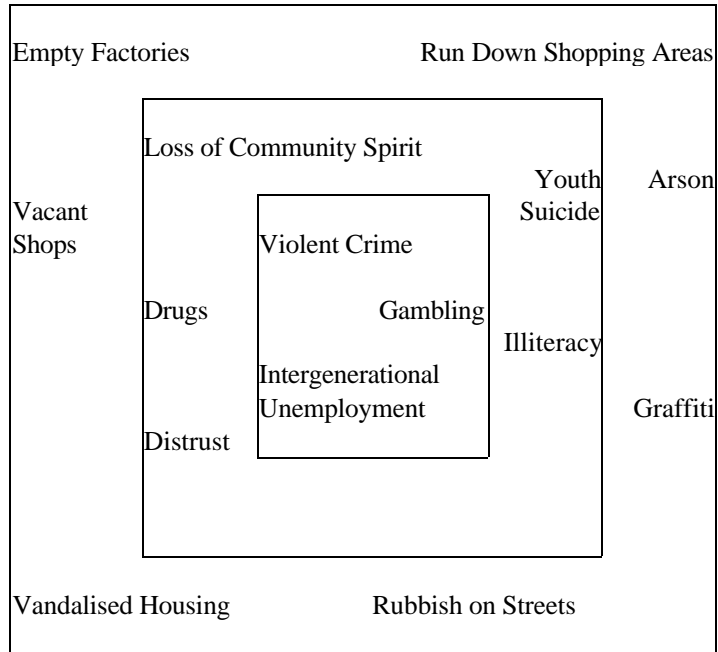


Figure 1: The "Needs Map"

Adapted from Kretzmann & McKnight (1993, 3)

The most important resource in a community is people, particularly those who are marginalised and usually defined in terms of needs and problems.

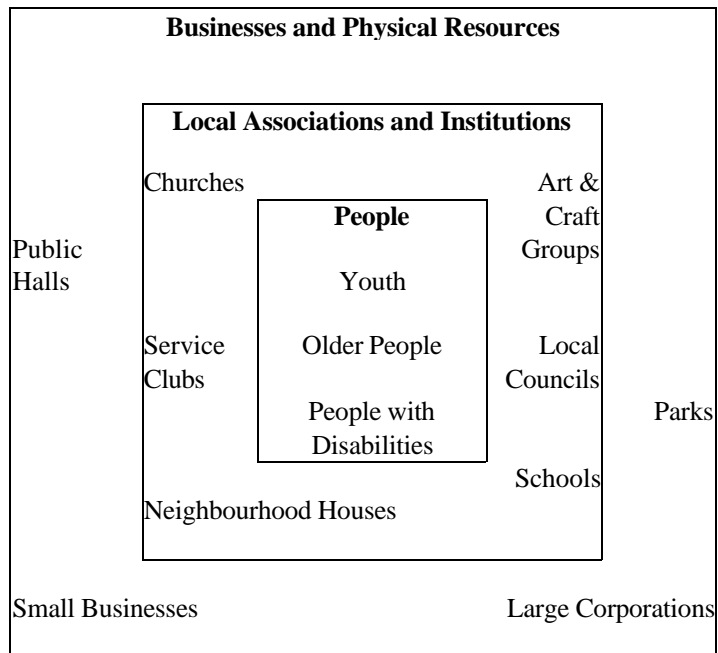


Figure 2: The "Assets Map"

Adapted from Kretzmann & McKnight (1993, 7)

someone with passions and ideas to offer; an unused building becomes a potential community resource.

The Community Partnering process is guided by the portrayal of all people and all communities as resourceful and gifted. It is oriented towards creating community initiatives based on the skills, interests and ideas of people who are marginalised and disadvantaged.

References and Further Reading

Through the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University John Kretzmann and John McKnight have produced an excellent set of resource materials.

Their key text is:

Kretzmann, John & McKnight, John, 1993, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, The Asset-Based Community Development Institute, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

Chapter One is available online at:

<http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/publications/buildingblurb.html>

They also have an extremely useful training video:

Kretzmann, John & McKnight, John, 1996, *Mobilizing Community Assets*, The Video Training Program for Building Communities from the Inside Out, produced by Civic Network Television, distributed by ACTA Publications, 4848 N. Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60640.

Information about their publications and resources (including how to order materials) can be found online at:

<http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/abcd.html>

Economy

Generally when we think of the economy we imagine the factories and businesses that employ people and produce goods and services for the market.

The economy includes unpaid work and non-market transactions

We can also take a much broader view of the economy and include the whole range of unpaid work that people do to produce goods and services that are either sold on the market or used in non-market transactions. In this case the economy involves activities such as housework; growing vegetables in the back yard; odd jobs done as favours for family and friends; art and craft activities; and voluntary work done for kindergartens, schools and community groups.

People who are not in paid employment make important economic contributions to their communities

Many people spend more hours each day doing unpaid and voluntary work than they do in paid employment. At a national level more time is spent in unpaid household and voluntary work than in paid employment (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1993). Indeed, the value of the goods and services produced in households by unpaid workers is almost equivalent to the goods and services produced for the market (Ironmonger 1996).

Different views of economy lead to different economic development strategies

The second, broader view of the economy is important because it recognises that people who are not in paid employment still participate in economic activities that contribute to their communities. These economic actors include workers who have been retrenched from their jobs, young people who are unemployed, women who have children and are not in the paid workforce, retired workers and people with disabilities who do not have access to paid work.

The two different ways of thinking about the economy impact economic development strategies. If the economy is understood as comprising only paid work and production for the market then promoting business growth will become the focus. Strategies to do this might include:

- incentives to attract large employers
- schemes to support small businesses

- plans to revitalise shopping areas to make them more attractive to retailers and shoppers
- infrastructure development (like roads and rail links) to assist industry and businesses
- training programs to ensure that the labour force is skilled and ready for employment.

These measures contribute to economic growth and development. But if we take the broader view of economy then other economic development interventions focusing on community, voluntary and household activities emerge as being important. Strategies to foster this type of alternative economic development include:

- supporting community-based and voluntary projects that have the potential to develop into more formal economic practices and activities
- supporting communities to take on economic activities that were once provided by formal businesses or the state
- resourcing households to alter their production and consumption activities.

Each of these strategies is discussed in more detail below.

Supporting community-based and voluntary projects that have the potential to develop into more formal economic practices and activities.

This strategy is based on a model of economic development in which formal market and paid economic activities “percolate up” from community and voluntary projects. It is a model that contrasts with the assumption that community well-being “trickles down” from economic growth and development (see Cameron & Gibson 2001).

CERES and the Bronx Community Paper Company (pages 20 to 23) are excellent examples of economic initiatives that have “percolated up” from community endeavours.

Supporting communities to take on economic activities once provided by formal businesses or the state.

With public and private enterprises withdrawing from service provision, local communities can be resourced to develop community-owned economic enterprises to provide services.

Formal economic practices can “percolate up” from community and voluntary activities

Communities can be supported to develop their own economic enterprises

Households can be resourced to become more efficient producers and consumers

Mirboo North Newspaper Cooperative Ltd, and Yoeval Multi-Purpose Health Centre are two outstanding community enterprises (pages 24 to 26).

Resourcing households to alter their production and consumption practices.

As one of the key sites of production, households can be supported to produce goods and services more efficiently and cost-effectively. Practices such as on-site recycling of household water, composting, use of solar power, and improved insulation and building techniques free up scarce resources for other purposes. These resources range from household incomes to community environmental assets, like water and clean air. This strategy promotes the development of new industries that are more environmentally sustainable (and that might be run as community-owned enterprises).

Sydney's Sustainable House is a dramatic demonstration of just how radically household production and consumption practices can be changed. The house is found in the polluted inner city suburb of Chippendale. From the street it looks like any other renovated terrace house but inside it is an exemplary model of self-sufficiency and energy efficiency.

For more information see:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/earth/handouts/chippendale.htm>

The Community Partnering process is guided by the broad definition of economy and it aims to generate community-based economic enterprises which address both community and economic goals.

References and Further Reading

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1993, *How Australians Use Their Time*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

Cameron, Jenny & Gibson, Katherine, 2001, 'Regional communities reinvent economy', in Dibden, J; Fletcher, M.; and Cocklin C. (eds) *All Change!: Gippsland Perspectives on Regional Australia in Transition*, Monash Publications in Geography and Environmental Science, Melbourne (forthcoming).

Ironmonger, Duncan, 1996, 'Counting outputs, capital inputs and caring labor: estimating gross household product', in *Feminist Economics*, 2(3), 37-64.

The internet is an excellent source of information about alternative economic projects. Good starting points are:

The Centre for Community Enterprise
<http://www.cedworks.com/>

Community Economic Development Centre
<http://www.sfu.ca/cedc/gateway/sharing/>

Community Quarterly
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~comquart/>

National Civic League (Alliance for National Renewal)
<http://www.ncl.org/anr.ced.html>

Rocky Mountain Institute
<http://www.rmi.org/index.html>

Sustainable Communities Network
<http://www.sustainable.org/casestudies/>

Links to other resources and projects can also be found at:
<http://rspas.anu.edu.au/ce/connections/index>

There are some excellent references about community-based economic development. The following are useful:

Gunn, Christopher & Gunn, Helen Dayton, 1991, *Reclaiming Capital: Democratic Initiatives and Community Development*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.

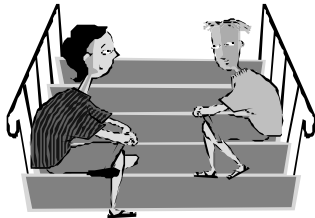
McLeod, Greg, 1997, *From Mondragon to America: Experiments in Community Economic Development*, University College of Cape Breton Press, Nova Scotia.

Perry, Stewart & Lewis, Mike, 1994, *Reinventing the Local Economy: What 10 Canadian Initiatives Teach Us About Building Creative, Inclusive and Sustainable Communities*, Centre for Community Enterprise, Vernon, B.C., Canada. (Order in downloadable format from:
<http://www.cedworks.com/>)

Communities can be made up of people who share a common identity or special interest

Communities of sameness offer a sense of belonging but differences may be silenced

It is possible to have communities of difference?



Conversations can build communities of difference

Community

Communities are usually thought of as being made up of people who share a common identity or special interest. Examples of communities based on common or shared characteristics would include the farming community of East Gippsland, the elderly Vietnamese community of Cabramatta, the quilters' community on the internet, or the community of recreational fishers concerned about commercial fishing practices.

These communities of sameness offer a sense of belonging and oneness. But what happens to people who are out of tune or out of step? Are people able to express differences or must they conform to a set of unwritten rules and expectations? Sometimes the value that is placed on sameness and belonging means that differences between people are silenced or hidden.

Can there be other types of communities? Is it possible to have communities based on a valuing of difference rather than sameness? How would such communities be created and sustained?

One way to approach communities of difference is to think of community as the call or appeal to become something new and different (Gibson 1999). Instead of common identities that are already present and known, community can be thought of as bringing into being new and as yet unknown identities. Conversations between people of very different backgrounds about their values or guiding principles would be one way of bringing new identities into being. These sorts of conversations do not always have to be serious and intense but might take place through fun events where people express joy and pleasure in each other's company. Festivals that celebrate cultural differences are an excellent way of opening up spaces for new ways of being to emerge.

The West Gippsland Loggers and Conservationists Dialogue Group is building a community of difference based on a call for a new way of being. The group was started by a semi-retired logger and “greenie” who were neighbours. Through conversations the conservationist learned that the logger had a deep respect and love for the forest, and was concerned about levels of logging. The logger found out that the conservationist did not want to see all logging completely stopped.

Other loggers and conservationists were brought into the conversation, and a group began to meet on a regular basis to get to know each other better. A richer picture of the issues and values was built up. This allowed the group to deal with differences in ways other than fighting. They lobbied governments about sustainable forestry practices in native forests and started to discuss other contentious issues like water.

The group wanted to work against the antagonistic and oppositional model of most political debate so planned regular “Politics in the Pub” evenings where different points of view could be put forward and explored in a convivial atmosphere.

(Liz Clay, personal communication, 2000)

Communities of difference can also be based on giving and receiving gifts (Corlett 1991). The emphasis is not on gifts that can be calculated or predicted because of an already existing identity (such as the presumption that someone of Maltese background will be gifted with the ability to speak Maltese); rather the emphasis is on unexpected and spontaneous gifts. Giving is a wonderful way of building connections between people, learning respect for what others have to offer, and being always open to the surprise of people’s hidden and often untapped gifts and abilities. This type of gift giving changes the giver and the receiver, and creates the opportunities for new sorts of identities to emerge.

Mirboo North Newspaper Cooperative Ltd has been able to build a community of difference by valuing and nurturing the gifts of local people of all ages and backgrounds (see pages 24 to 25).

Communities can be thought of as constantly moving between difference and sameness

Communities of difference can be created through the call to a new way of being or through the giving of gifts. Over time communities of difference can become communities of sameness. This is not necessarily a problem but communities need to be careful that the expectation of sameness is not enforced. Communities need to be open to and inviting of differences that unsettle their unspoken norms and rules.

In place of communities comprised of people who are already identical because of a shared identity or interest, we can envision community as a fluid process of moving between moments of sameness and difference, between being fixed and “in place” and becoming something new and “out of place”.

The Community Partnering process aims to generate communities of difference by bringing together people with diverse life experiences and backgrounds to work with each other on community initiatives.

References and Further Reading

Corlett, William, 1991, *Community Without Unity: A Politics of Derridian Extravagance*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.

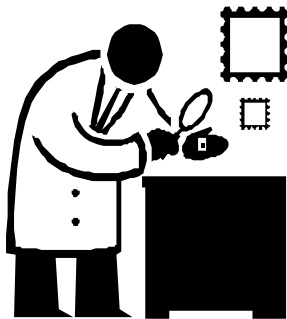
Gibson, Katherine, 1999, ‘Community economies: economic politics outside the binary frame’, <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/ce/knowledges/gibson.html>

For more on community as sameness see:

Kenny, Susan, 1994, *Developing Communities for the Future: Community Development in Australia*, Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, Australia.

For more on communities of difference see:

Miami Theory Collective (eds), 1991, *Community at Loose Ends*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.



In a traditional model of research academics and other experts study societies

In an action research process, people are involved in researching their own communities so as to produce change



Research

Most people are familiar with the traditional model of social research which involves academics and other professionally trained experts studying people. This research is concerned with describing and analysing the way societies work and the changes they go through. It is generally the model of research used when government bodies commission researchers to investigate a social problem or issue and develop recommendations about how government should respond.

Seen in the worst possible light the traditional model of research has been described as an exercise in “poking and prodding” communities, treating people like “lab-rats” and writing reports that sit on shelves gathering dust (while academics retreat to their “ivory towers”).

A very different model of research is known as action research. In action research local people participate in all aspects of the research process, with or without the help of academics and other professionally trained experts. This model of research is oriented towards producing change in the world, rather than simply analysing or describing social conditions (hence the idea of research as action).

Action research is extremely compatible with the asset-based community development approach of John Kretzmann and John McKnight (see pages 8 to 10). Both approaches are based on the idea that all people (and not just academics and those who are professionally trained) have knowledges to contribute to their communities (see also Sheil 1997). The research process then involves bringing people with different knowledges and forms of expertise to the table to collaboratively develop strategies and ways of moving forward and producing change in the world.

The action research process used in the Community Partnering project is characterised by:

- A collaboration between people with professional training (such as academics, social planners, community development workers) and others in the community (particularly those who have been marginalised and disadvantaged by economic and social changes)
- The use of conversation as a key research tool so that people listen and learn from each other's experiences and knowledges.
- An emphasis on research as a way of supporting and informing the creation of community initiatives and enterprises.
- A commitment to research producing tangible outcomes and actions.

References and Further Reading

Freire, Paulo, 1970, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, Herder and Herder, New York.

Sheil, Helen, 1997, *Building Rural Futures Through Cooperation: Study Circles Kit*, Centre for Rural Communities Inc., Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Churchill, Victoria.

Case Study 1

CERES

Beginnings

CERES (Centre for Education and Research into Environmental Strategies) started in the late 1970s when a small group of volunteers were given access to a disused seven-hectare tip site on the banks of the Merri Creek in inner city Melbourne. The group started off by developing community gardens with a no-dig garden method.

Supporting the interests of diverse communities

Community Activities

CERES now provides a range of activities and facilities that appeal to diverse groups in the surrounding community. The original community gardens are largely used by migrants from southern Europe. People interested in urban sustainability participate in composting, recycling and permaculture. School children are involved with the animal farm and educational centre. Local residents care for the free-range chooks.

People are encouraged to build connections with each other and develop their own community initiatives. The community gardeners, for example, have established their own bocci court, while another group is building a sauna.

From a disused tip site to a \$1.6 million community economic initiative with a strong environmental commitment

Economic Activities

CERES is a non-profit incorporated association characterised by diverse economic practices. Commercial activities include a café, nursery (specialising in permaculture and bushfood) and educational programs. These activities generate around 60 per cent of the \$1.6 million annual budget. Other funds come from government grants and sponsorship.

There are also non-commercial activities. The residents who tend the chooks, for example, are “paid” in free-range eggs. Manure from the chickens is used on the community gardens where people grow their own food. People involved in the apiary make their own honey.

CERES currently employs fifteen people on a full-time basis and another 55 part-time.

Future Directions

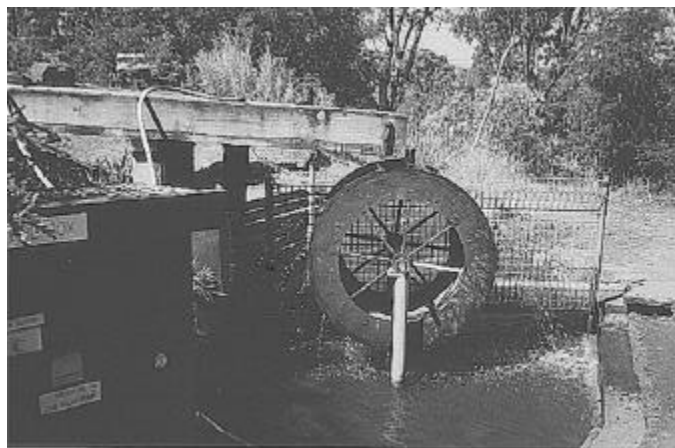
CERES is continuing to develop the site for sustainable community and economic activities. It has recently been selected as a demonstration project by Australia's Greenhouse Office.

Further Information

<http://www.ceres.vic.edu.au/>

8 Lee Street, Brunswick, Victoria, 3057, Australia

Phone: 61 3 9387 4472 or 61 3 9387 2609



Case Study 2

Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association

From community protests to the largest manufacturing development in New York City since World War II

Beginnings

Banana Kelly started in 1977 in New York City when a group of thirty local residents banded together to stop the demolition of their homes in Kelly Street, a crescent shaped street in the South Bronx. This action started them on their pathway to renovating, building and managing affordable housing.

Community Activities

Banana Kelly has built more than 2,500 apartments for low-income households in the South Bronx.

It has received approval and funding from the New York City Board of Education for a high school in which hands-on community-based activities will play a central role in the curriculum.

Banana Kelly specifically uses an asset-based approach to promote a shift away from the idea that people of the South Bronx are needy and deficient:

Banana Kelly employees and volunteers have learned many times that more is less. They have learned to start their local projects with what they have within the neighborhood, instead of looking beyond their own area for answers and resources. They do not accept the commonly-held view of “reality”; and have learned to trust that they can create their own reality.

(Kretzmann et al., 1997, page 51, emphasis in original)

Economic Activities

Banana Kelly now employs 120 full-time workers and has hundreds of volunteers. It manages real estate holdings of more than \$50 million. It runs a training program and a \$2 million loan fund to assist local residents in establishing small businesses.

Future Directions

After three years of negotiation Banana Kelly has gone into partnership with the Natural Resources Defense Council to form the Bronx Community Paper Company. The company is building a \$500 million paper recycling plant, the largest manufacturing development in New York City since World War II. The plant is being built to stringent environmental standards and will recycle half of New York City's waste paper—the urban forest. Over 1,500 local South Bronx residents will be employed in the plant.

References and Further Reading

Kretzmann, John; McKnight, John & Sheehan, GERALYN (with Mike Green & Deborah Puntteney), 1997, *A Guide to Capacity Inventories: Mobilizing the Skills of Local Residents*, The Asset-Based Community Development Institute, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois
(To order, see: <http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/abcd.html>).

<http://www.bronxpaper.org/>

[http://www.sustainable.doe.gov/success/
bronx_community_paper.htm](http://www.sustainable.doe.gov/success/bronx_community_paper.htm)

Case Study 3

Mirboo North Newspaper Cooperative Ltd

Beginnings

The Mirboo North Times was a local newspaper that was about to close after 103 years. A group of local people volunteered to work with the newspaper company to assist with production. In April 1997, after eighteen months, the company decided to shut down the newspaper. Having been hit hard by other economic changes in the area, the community rallied and formed a cooperative to run the newspaper. By July 1997 the cooperative was producing the newspaper.

Community Activities

Each week over 50 volunteers contribute to all aspects of newspaper production. Volunteers include local high school students, unemployed workers and retirees. Any and all contributions are valued.

Out of this approach people have developed new skills and new identities. One of the coop members tells of people's initial reactions to working on the newspaper and the new identities that have emerged through supporting people's gifts.

The people who said:

"I could do some proofreading" – went on to become editor.

"I've got some computer skills" – went on to become compositor, coordinator, director, video reviewer, member of several committees and became actively involved in other community groups in the town. He has also developed public speaking skills and leadership skills.

"I could do some keyboarding" – went on to become a writer and proofreader.

"I can't do anything really, but I'd like to help" – this lady compiles the community notes, helps around the office and works on three committees, bringing a wealth of local knowledge to each activity.

"I've got no skills" – this is the competent, hardworking, sales representative.

(Gero Gardner, quoted in Sheil 1997, 2.13)

The Mirboo
North
Newspaper
Cooperative Ltd
has built a
community of
difference by
valuing the gifts
of local people.

Economic Activities and Future Directions

In 1998 when the local bank branch closed down the community had the skills and confidence to take matters into their own hands. A banking cooperative was formed and has gone into partnership with Bendigo Bank to provide banking services in the town.

Reference and Further Information

Sheil, Helen, 1997, *Building Rural Futures Through Cooperation: Study Circles Kit*, Centre for Rural Communities Inc., Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Churchill, Victoria.

Mirboo North Newspaper Cooperative Ltd, 30 Ridgway, Mirboo North, Victoria, 3871, Phone: 61 3 5668 1201.



Case Study 4

Yoeval Multi-Purpose Health Centre



Beginnings

In 1988 the State government decided to close the local hospital in Yoeval, a small town in Central New South Wales. The people of Yoeval, with the assistance of their State member of parliament, formed a cooperative to take over ownership and control of the hospital. The government agreed to support the initiative in its early stages by making available funds that it would have contributed to the hospital had it remained in State hands.

Community Activities

Community-owned health facilities certainly require more local community involvement but Yoeval has proved this has many beneficial effects, not the least of which is the drawing of communities together and the re-establishment of local pride in achievement.

Member for Dubbo, Mr Gerry Peacocke, MP

Economic Activities and Future Directions

Through fundraising and contributions the Yoeval Multi-Purpose Health Centre has increased its facilities to include nursing home beds, hostel beds, hospital beds and ambulance and ancillary services. Local residents are shareholders in the cooperative and profits are used to further develop the centre and reduce the cost to members of using the facilities.

Further Information

<http://www.lisp.com.au/~ychc/index.html>

Yoeval Multi-Purpose Health Centre, Phone: 61 2 6846 4100

Other Case Studies

Community Recycling Network

<http://www.crn.org.uk/about/cases/main.html>

Cheticamp's Co-ops

<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Community/Support/CUSO/cheticoops.html>

FarmFolk CityFolk

<http://www.ffcf.bc.ca/>

Fig Tree Community Garden

<http://rspas.anu.edu.au/ce/stories/index.html>

Hoa' Aina O Makaha

<http://www.aloha.com/~hoa-aina/>

Materials for the Future

<http://materials4future.org/>

Mondragon Cooperatives

<http://www.mondragon.mcc.es/>

Octopod

<http://www.octopod.org.au>

Wai'anae Backyard Aquaculture Project

http://www.sustainable.org/casestudies/hawaii/HI_epa_aquaculture.html

