

ATTENTION TO PLACE

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Public policy is not implemented by buildings or systems or procedures: it is implemented by people. The active dynamic in relationships between the state and civil society is human imagination... It is the energy of human imagination in every encounter that will create the relationships we need for the future."

Sue Goss (2001: 207)

Of late there has been much debate on the perceived capacity imbalance between federal, provincial and local governments. The perceived *fiscal imbalance* has taken centre stage in this; however, the *policy imbalance* by comparison has received scant attention. While the former refers to the financial capacity of each tier of government to fulfill its policy intents, the latter refers to their capacity to actually enact robust enough policies that may fully respond to the needs of citizens.

Several writers have suggested (OECD, 2001a; Paquet, 2005 & 2006) that the governance environment has become too distributed in terms of knowledge, power and resources for single actors to produce the outcomes they desire on critical files. Moreover, this increasing distribution of governance stretches not only across public sector organizations, but it also extends to other sectors -- business, not-for-profit and educational sectors as well. For instance, the immigrant worker challenge is, according to a recent Conference Board report, "a collective failure of business and all levels of government, not the cities alone." (Lefebvre, et al., 2007: v). It is also reflected in a recent *Globe and Mail* headline "Forget government, hire a business leader" (Maxwell, 2007), that has identified a growing involvement by business leaders in resolving intractable social problems.

All this increasingly points to a public policy game in which no one can be said to be 'in charge' and where fostering cooperative decision making and joint action among stakeholders have become the new pre-eminent capacities of public sector leadership. As Betsy Hubbard has written, "Collective leadership involves facilitating participation, understanding divergent perspectives and drawing upon the collective wisdom of the group. It is an approach to problem solving that reflects a deeply democratic ethos" (2005:11). The *policy imbalance*, therefore, reflects the degree to which the public sector institutions still believe themselves to be 'in charge' and believe 'collective leadership' undermines their legitimate right to govern.

This paper examines several jurisdictions that have attempted to address this *policy imbalance* with respect to community outcomes by accepting the principle of subsidiarity and demonstrating a willingness to enter into relationships of shared governance with locally rooted partners. The paper is based on recent research conducted by me for Human Resources and Social Development Canada¹ between December 2006 and June 2007 that involved an extensive literature review and interviews with sixteen key informants (Wilson, 2007b).

To even the most casual observer in Canada, federal and provincial socio-economic policies, despite their good intentions, have not had uniform impacts at the community level. For example, the recent requirement by the Ontario Ministry of Education for schools to flush their water systems on a daily basis to prevent lead build-up in school drinking water illustrates a perfectly sensible policy -- except in its implementation. In some areas where there is no lead in the water or lead piping in the schools, there may be issues of water scarcity or insufficient staff

¹ Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper the author's and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Human Resources and Social Development Canada or of the federal government. The goal of the research upon which this paper is based was to encourage broad participation in discussion and debate on important public policy issues.

to do the flushing (CBC, 2007). The unintended consequence of the Ministry's policy in those areas has been to curtail the availability of free drinking water, thus reducing affordable drinking options for students and encouraging their use of pop. Thus even this sensible policy when locally implemented produced variable benefits or no benefit at all.

In some communities, these "neighbourhood effects" (Ross & Dunn, 2005), can produce outcomes with regard to social inclusion, crime, poverty, education, environment, or health that vary dramatically from provincial or national averages. For example, the national homicide rate is 1.85 per 100,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2007), but the comparable rate in the neighbourhood of North Central Regina is 50 times higher (Gatehouse, 2007). Likewise, the rate of HIV infection in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is estimated to be 30% (Christoff and Kalache, 2007) almost 3,000 times BC's rate of 9.9 per 100,000.

This unevenness of policy outcomes can be graphically illustrated by the distribution of poverty in Metropolitan Toronto and brought to light by the well known "Poverty by Postal Code" initiative (Figure 1). 2001 census data indicates a median annual household income across Metro Toronto was \$59,502, yet in sixteen Toronto neighbourhoods the percentage of the population living below the low income cut off (\$21,760 - \$32,759 depending on family size) ranged from 40-72.8% (United Way of Greater Toronto, 2007).

Despite the consistency of federal, provincial and municipal policy frameworks across Toronto, their outcomes were not. Naturally, the question is why? Why do policies that seem to work reasonably well in most places fail to produce their intended result or even exacerbate problems in some neighbourhoods? Understanding and then adjusting these local variabilities requires an ability to tailor policy and program responses to local conditions, which is the primary focus of community-based initiatives.

To help local partners address these situations many countries -- despite their constitutional, political, socio-economic, cultural, geographic and historical differences -- have adopted national strategies to support collaborations of local actors and their community-based change efforts. My work for HRSDC reviewed the community-based approaches of Australia, the European Union, particularly the UK, together with the US and compared them to the Canadian experience.

This paper encapsulates that work. It identifies the three concepts of 'community-based initiatives' in common currency, including: placed-based policies; locally rooted collaborative partnerships; and national strategies in support of community-based partnerships. It focuses on the latter; summarizes the international experience with community-based strategies; and then compares it with Canada's, identifying along the way some important lessons that would be relevant to restoring *policy balance* in Canada by way pursuing a national community-based strategy.

Background

In recent years, community-based partnerships and the national policies that support them, what I shall refer to as community-based strategies (CBS), have become increasingly utilized in OECD countries. Such strategies have been used both to encourage local problem solving and as core elements of national socio-economic policy making. These strategies represent much more than the traditional local extensions of national or regional policies and programs. They have become local vehicles for civic engagement, social learning, complex problem solving, and collective action. They have helped to enhance local self-sufficiency, to help integrate public sector decision making, and to reshape the roles and relationships between key local, provincial (state) and national stakeholders.

Within OECD countries, the national policy focus has increasingly shifted from the simple mitigation of social problems through transfers to individuals towards facilitating responses that are more causally directed and capable of producing more positive life outcomes (Judge, 2005). That is, the policy focus has become more prevention oriented and therefore less amenable to traditional people-based policy tools that require some prior establishment of individual need. This prevention orientation therefore argues for more area-based policies that may help adjust the local socio-economic environment so as to preclude individual need.

Notwithstanding this trend, social policies in Canada and most OECD countries are less in need of major overhauls than in the development of a capacity for 'continuous improvement', as evidenced by a variety of comparative international benchmarks. This is especially true for Canada, which has continually bested the OECD average on the UN's Human Development Index since 1980, and taken the number one spot 10 times in the past 26 years -- more than any other nation! It currently ranks fourth among 177 nations (UNDP, 2007-2008).

Nevertheless, even the most cursory review of the state of Canada's communities will reveal that they are not without blight, or fear, or a sense of vulnerability. So while Canada's socio-economic policies have generally achieved their targets, based on international benchmarks, those results have been neither consistent nor constructive across *all* Canadian communities. This local outcome asymmetry has proven chronically problematic and has given rise to a new policy challenge that combines prevention and 'continuous improvement' with a focus on communities.

Some jurisdictions, most notably Australia, the UK, the Netherlands and the US, have responded to this local challenge by emphasizing community-based strategies and making them key elements of their social, economic, environmental and health policies. In the UK, for instance, they have been used to coordinate and facilitate the spending of over £32bn by the UK government on locally directed programmes and services as part of its eight-year National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). In the third version of the Dutch Urban Policy, over €3.7 billion in funding has been set aside for neighbourhood revitalization in 30 major cities to assist them with local infrastructure, economic, health, education and safety issues (UPIRD 2004).

Australia has made the Regional Partnerships Programme the cornerstone of its community development strategy and has allocated over \$500m since 2003 to encourage community "self-reliance". In this way, the Australian Government explicitly set out to adjust the uneven local impact to new national policies and programs, such as environment, immigration and labour market policies, and ensure that the burden of change would be shared equally across the country and not just by a few communities (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001).

In contrast, Canada's experience with community-based initiatives, although not at all insignificant, has been less by design. Federal community-based initiatives have tended to be sector-based, and at the discretion of individual federal departments. Much the same is true at the provincial level. "Change leadership should be more local" said the External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities (2006: XV) for community-based initiatives often seemed to be shoe-horned into federal or provincial priorities. According to the Auditor General of Canada (2005) they also suffer from a lack of national policy and program integration.

This 'silo' approach to community issues has not served Canadian communities well (External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities, 2006) because fragmented policies and programs reduce the ability of community-based partnerships to respond to issues comprehensively. Yet neither does it serve federal interests as the growing public awareness of the intractable problems in communities such as Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, North

Central Regina, and Toronto's Malvern (Gatehouse, 2007) contributes to an image of federal powerlessness in the face of pockets of local distress and despair.

Without trying to suggest that individual outcomes should be everywhere the same, the desire to create a level playing field speaks to a fundamental facet of the Canadian psyche that embraces equality and fair play. Why should the rights of citizenship mean more in one place than another? Why should public policies intended for universal benefit serve some demographics and some neighbourhoods more than others? No one would dispute that doing the same thing everywhere is not the same thing as producing the same outcome everywhere, yet in terms of policy choices, the former has too often occurred at the expense of the latter. Community-based partnerships, on the other hand, offer the possibility of tailoring national policies to local conditions for better results.

Community-based strategies

There are three concepts of community-based initiatives in common currency: placed-based policies; locally-rooted collaborative partnerships; and national strategies created to support the effective workings of community²-based partnerships. The following presents a quick look at each of these approaches.

Placed based policies

People- and placed-based policies are the traditional components of national local strategies. People-based programs are clear, simple and effective in providing relief directly to people in need. However, there is little evidence that they are any more than palliative (Ross and Dunn, 2005; Kraybill and Kilkenny, 2003). In the long run they prove costly because they do not provide mechanisms to reduce the demand for support.

Place-based strategies, conversely, are more causally focused on relieving identifiable problems or disadvantages in a specific locale or region by means of grants, subsidies or tax incentives directed at local institutions, businesses or governments. The most prominent Canadian examples of federal placed-based policies are the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Economic Development Canada for Regions of Quebec, FedNor, and Western Economic Diversification that act as the regional redistributive arms of the federal government by investing in development projects of regional significance.

Placed-based policies work to assist citizens in distress by attempting to improve outcomes among local businesses and service organizations with the intent of increasing the number of jobs or providing more assistance to those in need in the community. Thus their impact on citizens therefore is more indirect compared to people-based policies. Placed-based strategies are also complicated by the fact that they usually involve multi-step, causal paths between the point of investment and the target outcome. For instance, an investment made to help local businesses market their products might be expected to lead to a greater demand for local products and services, and then to more local jobs and eventually to a reduction in local poverty.

Place-based strategies have been used for years by many governments as tools to combat poverty and economic sluggishness. But while they have always been politically popular, they have not been generally regarded as being particularly successful. Critics (Glaeser, 1998;

² Community here refers to a broad collection of local actors and is not limited to municipal governments. While much of the recent debate in Canada on local issues has centred on support for municipalities, elsewhere the debate on community issues clearly involves a geo-governance concern inclusive of local business, educational, and human services organizations in addition to municipalities.

Kraybill and Kilkenny, 2003) claim that place-based policies reduce the incentive of disadvantaged persons to migrate to localities that offer better employment and development opportunities, and therefore contribute to the creation of regional concentrations of dependency, and ghettos of deprivation.

In addition, the complicated logic models often associated with place-based initiatives are rarely realized in practice. A greater demand for local products and services may not yield new jobs only new efficiencies. It may result in more qualified people being hired from outside the region, reducing the demand for less qualified local people, and contribute to a downward spiral of opportunity and income, i.e. more poverty. Frequently, too, the people who most benefit from place-based policies are not those who are targeted (Glaeser, 1998).

Despite these short-comings, some authors (Partridge and Rickman, 2006) have argued that there remains an important need for place-based policies. In particular, they point out that while geographic isolation or smallness may hinder successful economic development,

“they also may lead to disadvantaged residents garnering more of the benefits if economic development is successful, suggesting the potential efficacy of place-based antipoverty policies. That is, if job creation occurred in these distressed areas, more of the benefits would go to the disadvantaged because the area’s remoteness would cut down on employment competition from new commuters or migrants” (2006:13).

In other words, if place-based policies were applied in areas of low mobility then more of their benefits would be retained locally.

Local partnerships

Another well used notion of community-based initiatives refers to *grassroots local partnerships* that are created to respond to local concerns. Such efforts often attempt to produce comprehensive solutions by working between governments, across departments, across sectors and across the community. Often they are facilitated by a local not-for-profit organization. There are literally thousands of these initiatives across Canada and worldwide, some involving senior government participation and others not. Some well-known Canadian examples include: the partnerships included in the Vancouver Agreement, the Quint Development Corporation in Saskatoon, the Sault Ste. Marie Group Health Centre, the Pathways to Education project in Toronto, and the Halifax Inner City Initiative.

According to a seminal Aspen Institute paper, *Voices from the Field*, a community-based initiative refers to an effort that is rooted in a place, location, community or neighbourhood, and that “seeks to improve the lives of individuals and families, as well as the local socio-economic conditions of the locales in which they reside” (The Aspen Institute, 1997). They not only try to coordinate public sector responses but they also engage those people and organizations most affected by a local problem in defining and implementing its solution. As such they tend to reflect a high level of community self-reliance. I will refer to these types of grassroots, community-based initiatives as community-based organizations or CBOs.

The programmatic focus of CBOs extends beyond the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion, but also includes a wide range of other community concerns, including: healthcare, economic development, environmental protection and crime prevention -- wherever a process of local engagement and community collaboration is required. But despite this diversity, they share two common threads.

First, they recognize the systemic and interdependent nature of their community’s assets, people, processes and organizations; and *second*, they understand the need to apply concerted, collaborative effort to address the community’s issues. For instance, in the

Netherlands, one author commented that “more than ever before, people realise that [community] problems are difficult to resolve and need to be tackled with all partners involved. There is no place in this approach for tightly drawn bureaucratic frameworks” (EUKN, 2005).

Faced with complex community problems, improved outcomes are not likely to be obtained by simply transferring additional resources to municipalities. The theory of change most embraced by CBOs is that neighbourhood failure is a systemic effect, the result of the interplay of a number of contributing factors. Identifying and then adjusting to this ‘system of effects’ is therefore a necessary precursor to positive, sustainable change. This adjustment has been interpreted by many community-based organizations as a need to foster one or all of the following objectives:

- the creation of new behaviours among local residents;
- the development of new relationships among local institutions and service providers; or
- the formation of consensus around a new community vision and set of priorities.

According to Auspos (2005), these three objectives give rise to a community-based framework capable of linking initial community building efforts to the creation of partnerships and the identification of resources and ultimately programmatic outcomes via a series of double-loop learning processes (Table 1).

However, as Auspos points out (2005), after thirty years of CBO experience in America there is a “growing consensus” that community self reliance is insufficient in itself to comprehensively address neighbourhood issues. Besides community partnerships, comprehensive solutions require influencing external policy environments and accessing resources that are external to the community. That communities can not on their own fix what ails them was also a key message in the Aspen Institute’s *Voices from the Field II* report (Kubisch, et. al., 2002) which was strongly critical of community strategies that focused solely on developing internal connections and capacities.

With that in mind, the community building framework of Auspos suggests a number of possible partnership roles that may be relevant to federal or provincial governments, including:

- Local champion
- Knowledge broker & ‘best practice’ disseminator
- Conflict mediator
- Business planning support
- Seed funder
- Service provider
- Co-decision maker
- Data provider & assessment support
- Policy integrator and reform

Community based strategies

Community based strategies may be considered as somewhat of a combination of the previous two. They are a more recent addition to the toolbox of national local strategies along with place- and people-based policies. They represent explicit attempts to link CBOs to external policy environments and resources as well as to provide additional means to strengthen the local collaborative process. CBS may include elements or adjustments to place- and people-based policies but they may include other forms of support for such things as strengthening local governance, performance monitoring, and knowledge transfer.

National community-based strategies present new forms of *geo-governance* (Paquet, 2005) and differ from place-based strategies both in the leadership allocated to local actors and in the degree to which policy coordination and policy ‘bending’ take place in order to fit national policies to the local ‘system of effects’. In effect, they marry the policy and program supports of place-based policies with the local resources and grassroots commitments of CBOs to

generate the possibility of comprehensive responses to localized manifestations of wicked policy problems.

The International experience

Today more than ever national sustainability, competitiveness, and social coherence are clearly linked to the success of our communities. In this context community development can no longer be considered simply as a purely local concern. As one can see from the community statistics on crime, HIV and poverty, the intensity of the problems in some communities may be such as to bring down national or provincial averages.

The international experience demonstrates a continuing recognition of the need for national, state or provincial authorities to bring their policy, knowledge, expertise, and financial resources to the local table as partners in local development. Speaking to an OECD conference on urban policy in March 2007, the OECD Secretary-General described the “urban paradox” that juxtaposes high concentrations of wealth and employment alongside high concentrations of unemployed and marginalised people and then encouraged OECD member states to rethink their national urban policy agendas to provide a more integrated response. “... the necessary condition to deal with the different challenges and opportunities faced by our cities is *to mobilize different stakeholders*³. Cities and regions have become key actors in delivering policies. National governments need to better align their respective policies and actions with that of cities and regions [and not the other way around as is traditional]” (Gurria, 2007).

In many of the countries I have examined, this cooperative rationale is consistently encouraged by the formation of policies that can coordinate and optimize national efforts to mobilize different stakeholders and support their community-based collaboration. Let me unpack this point because it is important in a Canadian context.

Because the success of national policy objectives is seen in some countries as the consequence of the social and economic success of their communities, they have been willing to step back somewhat and adopt a more servant leadership role in order to advance their goals. This new national role involves catalyzing and sustaining local partnerships; facilitating cross sector decision making, joint action, and shared funding; and encouraging open and transparent accountability. Most importantly it involves relinquishing program leadership to community partnerships or as Judith Maxwell has described, allowing “local people [to] lead and senior governments [to] follow” (Maxwell, 2006:16). In several instances, such as in Australia, the Netherlands and the UK, the national policy and program apparatus has begun to adjust to local needs.

In many countries, the task of fostering local growth and mitigating the complex causes of local socio-economic disadvantage is being orchestrated by policies that support community building activities, the sustainability of physical and social assets and the development of community self-reliance which is rooted in local collaborative governance arrangements. These policies tend to provide an integrated public sector support infrastructure that helps communities to discover and implement those local responses that are most likely to be effective for them. In the US, for instance, \$5.7bn (2005) in federal funds are directed to the socio-economic revitalization of American communities through programs such as the Community Development Block Grants, but the program takes a very ‘hands-off’ approach, preferring local partnerships to both identify the need and implement its solution (Pomeroy, 2006).

³ Emphasis added

Despite the diversity of country organizations, national community-based strategies have emerged in almost every form of country organization. Of the jurisdictions considered in my HRSDC report and most frequently used as benchmarks for Canadian policy makers, most have national community-based strategies of one sort or another or, like Germany, Ireland and Spain, they have national regional strategies that are moving the country in that direction. Only a handful of European countries (Greece, Austria and Luxembourg) had no explicit urban or regional community-based strategy (van den Berg, 2004). By contrast, the Canadian experience with community-based partnerships seems more ad hoc.

My review observed seven 'enabling conditions' that were frequently discussed in the context of national community-based strategies. They included:

1. Unitary vs. federal organization
2. The degree of local autonomy
3. Adherence to an *explicit* vs. *implicit* model of national-local policy (Bradford, 2007)
4. Presence of forums for national-local dialogue
5. An urban vs. regional focus
6. A bottom-up vs. top-down approach to public decision making
7. The use of block funding vs. sector or project funding

Yet when different jurisdictions were compared, none of these 'enabling conditions' seemed able to predict whether a country would or could adopt a community-based strategy.

That said, if one were to try and identify a 'single' enabling condition, that condition would most likely be the extent to which mechanisms are employed to foster local buy-in and leadership. We can see this by examining the mechanisms utilized by countries to affect their community based strategy (Table 2). Those countries employing more of these mechanisms in dealing with communities were also those countries which were more likely to have strong, national, community-based policies.

Mechanisms for *co-funding* and *intergovernmental partnerships* were commonplace in all EU countries, Australia and the US, as was the use of *cross-sector partnerships* involving the private and not-for-profit sectors. In addition, all but one government had in place a *national framework* that spelled out how local and national interests would work together. All but one provided CBOs with *support for coordination and evaluation*. I would suggest that together these five represent the core elements of any national strategy.

The first major distinguishing feature among countries employing community-based strategies was that Australia, the US and most European countries (but not all) demonstrated a clear willingness to *let communities take the lead* in determining local priorities and overseeing local implementations. The Dutch Urban III policies, for instance, allow for cities to formulate their own long-term, development strategies using *broad special purpose grants* that permit them to spend as they choose to respond to local conditions. The UK experience was a prominent exception to this. In recent assessments of its community-based approach, the central UK government has been much criticized for its micro-management of community-based initiatives (EIFUA, 2006; Goss, 2005; Davies, 2003). However, in response the UK government has recently taken steps to devolve greater authority to local municipalities and to local community partnerships (Bleas, 2007b; Communities and Local Government, 2007).

Many national governments have also increased their *policy and program flexibility* in the context of local partnership activities. The EU's *2007-2013 Community Strategic Guidelines* for example, have established three broad priorities within which member states, regions and cities set their own objectives. These include: improving the attractiveness of communities; encouraging innovation; and creating more and better jobs (European Commission, 2006). This

has allowed collaborations of partners in each community to adapt national policies to local conditions. In addition, most national governments have encouraged *inter-community networking* and information exchange, such as the Regional Conferences in Germany, as a means of fostering the spread of best practice and local level self sufficiency. In France, such networks were even accompanied by increased local taxing authority.

In most jurisdictions with national community-based strategies, the national government has assumed responsibility for *improving horizontality* within the central government and facilitating coordination with state and municipal governments (frequently referred to as 'joined up' government) so as to deal more coherently with communities. For instance, to facilitate more integrated public sector responses and to resolve policy and program conflicts, Australia, the EU and some EU member states have developed mechanisms for high-level national, state and/ or local government dialogue. Sometimes, as in Australia's case, this was accomplished through a multi-level national forum, the Council of Australian Governments, but generally this was accomplished through the presence of Cabinet level representation on local issues (as in France, the Nordic countries, and the UK).

The majority of jurisdictions provided '*expert support*' to communities in their funding application process, like the 56 Area Consultative Committees operating in Australia, and many also provided *long-term funding* on a 5-10 yrs basis that was accessible through a *competitive process*. A majority of jurisdictions also had in place mechanisms for channelling *local input into national policy making* beyond those provided by local political representatives, and most *participated directly in community-based governance* in ways that contributed to a '*whole of government*' relationship with the communities instead of the more traditional 'hands-off' sectoral relationship.

Less common features of national strategies included: explicit provisions to help *local champions* coordinate local stakeholders; the *collection of community level intelligence* for national decision makers; support for the *collection and provision of local data*; the development of *community visioning*; and *technical and professional support* for local projects.

Many of the issues tackled by CBOs such as social exclusion, poverty or community health, were typically determined in a 'bottom-up' fashion. This made a sector specific issue focus less important in the overall context of national strategies than a broad partnership direction and supportive attitudes, such as establishing local leadership, supporting local governance capacity and encouraging evaluation. This was particularly evident in the UK where the local strategic partnerships required 3-5 years to effectively establish themselves (EIFUA, 2006).

The review found that the primary impact of community-based initiatives has been the increased coordination among stakeholders that led to improvements in local governance (OECD, 2001b). This observation is also consistent with the US experience with the Community Development Block Grants (Pomeroy, 2006), the Aspen Institute's review of US CBOs (Kubisch, 2002), with the EU's experience with the URBAN and LEADER programs (EU Directorate General - Regional Policy, 2003; OECD, 2004), and with Australia's experience with its Regional Partnerships program (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001; State Government Of Victoria, 2005). The improvement of coordination and governance among local stakeholders was generally accepted as a short term proxy for improving national programmatic outcomes in the long term.

The most commonly cited challenge among local partnerships in different countries was their relationship with the central government and its ability to work as a 'true partner'. In the UK for instance, it was observed that "the success of LSPs⁴ depends not only on a progress at local level, but on a positive central-local relationship" (EIFUA, 2006: 114). This issue was also

⁴ Local Strategic Partnerships

evidenced, in the recommendations arising from the evaluation of the EU's URBAN I initiative, where evaluators suggested senior level governments adopt a more supportive role:

- Resources should be managed by communities themselves;
- The programming of area-based interventions should be flexible. In particular there should be time allocated to build community capacity and consensus about priorities;
- Area-based interventions at the sub-city, city and regional levels should be implemented in the context of coherent overlapping strategies;
- Specific interventions to build capacity at the community level should be supported in order to ensure that there is sufficient knowledge to manage and deliver programs; and
- Further support should be given to promoting learning from experience, the development of capacity and the transnational exchange of good practice (GHK, 2003:xi).

One of the biggest drawbacks with regard to community-based strategies is their lack of unequivocal evidence. As the progress report on the UK's LSPs comments, "It is difficult to draw overall conclusions about the progress of LSPs because the pattern is so varied. In some cases, progress has been painfully slow and achievements have been very thin on the ground. In others the picture is a very different one of strong progress" (EIFUA, 2006:113).

For a variety of reasons definitive, causally linked outcomes from national community-based strategies have tended to be less than hoped for and mixed (Wandersman, 2003). This is much less a reflection of the efficacy of community based partnerships and strategies than of the inadequacy of the evaluation processes applied to them. Anecdotal evidence in Canada and internationally suggests results have been both positive and negative. Many authors suggest that the complex nature of the local challenge and of its collaborative solutions has frequently resulted in the wrong things being measured (Keith, 1998; Kubisch, 2002; Backer, 2003; Davies, 2003; Street, et al., 2004; Auspos, 2005; and EIFUA, 2006).

Measures that attempted to assign definitive causation or to compare programmatic outcomes across different communities were invalidated by the differing local contexts. Evaluation schemes frequently did not account for:

- the time needed to build collaborative capacity before taking action;
- the need to create better alignment between local governance and senior government decision-making; and
- the misidentification of local problems as simply complicated instead of being complex or 'wicked' (Westley, et. al., 2006).

Nonetheless, programmatic results are there even if they are not there uniformly. It was predicted, for example, that the EU would be the largest contributor to LEADER projects in Spain (73% of estimated costs), however, with local leadership the Spanish private sector turned out to be the largest investor, contributing 46% of local development costs, even greater than the EU share of 36.5% (OECD, 2004). The success of the LEADER partnership approach has led to its being adopted as one of the four axes of the EU's Rural Development Policy 2007-2013⁵.

Australia's focus on neighbourhood renewal strategies have produced positive initial results, like those in the State of Victoria that saw:

- Strong resident participation (40–50 %) in the local governance;
- 60 % increase in employment, self employment, education or training of unemployed residents;

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm

- improvements to 2,630 public housing properties including 130 new properties; and
- 70% decrease in property crime, 50% decrease in person directed crimes, and a 60% reduction in recorded offences.

Because of the uniqueness of their activities, community partnerships are less transportable than other forms of public intervention. Consequently, there has been less of an incentive to produce appropriate evaluative frameworks. Nonetheless future research will need to focus on developing such frameworks both for community partnerships and national community-based strategies (Wandersman, 2003; Gorman, 2007). Beyond the standard task of trying to find out what works, an analysis of the best and worst cases would tell us a lot about what was learned from each experience and how that might be applied to producing better results in the future (Torjman & Leviten-Reid, 2003; Sridham & Lopez, 2004).

Absent this, is there evidence to support further investment in community based strategies? Undeterred by the uneven outcomes, practitioners both in Canada and abroad tend to agree that the results of local collaboration are real and likely to become more pronounced and positive over time (Gray, 1989; Chrislip, 2002; Auspos, 2005; EIFUA, 2006; and Gorman, 2007). According to the Aspen Institute, there is no question that CBOs have produced real benefits -- chief among them being: "increases in programs that strengthen infrastructure and services, increases in neighborhood capacity, and increases in resources flowing into the neighborhood" (Kubisch, 2002: 15).

Based on a review of 50 community-based initiatives by *The Finance Project* in the US, the reviewers concluded that there was "strong and convincing evidence that these initiatives present a rich opportunity to test new concepts of service delivery, community building, and economic development," (Hayes, 1995). However, they too felt the need for a new evaluation methodology. In a review of 116 CBOs by *the National Network for Collaboration*, the reviewers found community collaborations "hard work" but "wise investments in the present and the future" (Keith, 1998). Again evaluators of the UK's program of LSPs concluded that "LSPs have, in a relatively short time, established themselves as a *vital* part of the institutional arrangements of modernised local governance" (EIFUA, 2006:113). The governments of Australia, the EU, the Netherlands and the UK continue to expand their use of community-based strategies both in terms of resources allocated to them and in the 'governance space' allocated to them as legitimate avenues of democratic expression.

Back in a Canadian circumstance and drawing from a recent survey of 1,200 senior public sector managers by the *Crossing Boundaries National Council* (CBNC), it appears as if a consensus is forming on the need and legitimacy of public sector partnerships with business and community organizations as a means to fulfill the intents of public policy and program delivery.

This, when coupled with Canadian and international experience with public sector partnerships, might suggest the formulation of a pan-Canadian strategy to optimize the use of community-based partnering has somewhat of an aura of inevitability. However, unlike most of the countries I examined, in Canada there appears to be little to regularly connect and coordinate local concerns nationally. Local policy is simply not a major national concern. Here, contrary to the EU, the US and Australia, there is too little willingness to allow Canadian communities to lead and too much attention is paid to the issue of 'separation of powers' and the reasons for not acting together. Furthermore, feedback from the CBNC survey was clear that "we do not have a common understanding of the term 'partnership'" and that "Canada -- particularly at the Federal level -- is lagging behind other Commonwealth Countries and the United States in the development and use of innovative partnering arrangements" (Lenihan, et al. 2006:3).

Even the notion of single accountability so esteemed by public administrations in Canada may not only be overly simplistic and confusing to the public in the context of community-based partnerships but it may also contribute to the ongoing lack of horizontality among departments (Bakvis, & Juillet, 2004; Auditor General, 2005) that is so necessary for effective community-based partnerships. In an OECD survey of area-based partnerships, for example, it was suggested that “opportunities to improve governance are missed due to inconsistencies in the national policy framework, a narrow approach to policy implementation and failures in accountability” (OECD, 2001c:9).

With these cautions in mind, the literature suggests that if policy makers in Canada were to consider a national community-based strategy, then Canada’s federal structure, though a challenge would not represent an insurmountable obstacle. The biggest challenge for a Canadian ‘national strategy’ may be similar to that of the UK’s – trying to find ways to encourage more ‘bottom-up’ local collaboration without being too prescriptive.

The prospect of creating a Canadian community-based strategy was underscored by both the variety of national approaches and the variety of project themes that may be found as the focus of community-based work. Interestingly, in sorting through this variety, the commonalities that surfaced across national jurisdictions were, in fact, attitudinal not structural. They centred on the type of relationship between the state and its citizens that enabled those citizens to become engaged in solutions that mattered to them. They included:

- The belief that community issues were central to the nation’s socio-economic well-being;
- The conviction that local leaders should lead and senior governments should follow;
- The appreciation that the appropriate local response is evolved through a social process of ‘learning-while-doing’.

Offsetting the uncertainty created by this approach was a process of relational governance (Goss, 2001) and contingent cooperation (Wilson, 2007a) that was committed to holistic community development through such trust affirming mechanisms as community building, collaboration, subsidiarity, integration, local empowerment and ownership, joint decision-making, a focus on outcomes, shared accountability, and the demonstration of patience.

Lessons

In examining national community-based strategies elsewhere, several core and important lessons regarding can be identified, lessons that are likely to have particular relevance to Canada should governments here wish to pursue similar community-based strategies:

Core lessons

- A government-wide community-based policy ‘lens’ would likely be a starting point;
- A better mechanism for improving coordination among all three levels of government would be an essential element of a community-based policy in a Canadian context;
- A more thorough understanding of the dynamics and good practices within CBOs and the requisite government skills, behaviours and practices necessary to support good CBO practice would seem to be crucial; and
- Support for community-based partnerships would likely include support for the establishment of the local partnership, ongoing governance and progress monitoring.

Important lessons

- Senior government intervention in communities should be done on a selective basis that reflects the specific needs and conditions within each community;

- Identifying those communities with the greatest need would probably be an early objective;
- The literature suggests that the “biggest bang for the buck “ in a Canadian strategy would not only call for a focus on distressed neighbourhoods in major metropolitan areas but also on mid-sized, rural and remote communities where less mobile populations would retain more of the impact of any intervention;
- Since the most chronic community problems will require long term solutions, the literature suggests a long term approach to funding coupled with the patience to achieve results;
- To assist with accountability and an understanding of local dynamics, the international experience suggests the creation of a local intelligence and support function to act as the senior government’s local eyes and ears while simultaneously being empowered to act as a direct intermediary with the community; and
- A national strategy would likely create even more pressure for program and service integration both federally and provincially.

Final Thoughts

The international trend towards community-based strategies is encouraging. It reflects the broader transformation that is occurring from *big G*-Government to *small g*-governance. As Goss has observed, “Crude uniform solutions dictated from the centre will [no longer] help, since there are no uniform problems. We need new learning processes that are helpful in this difficult process of ‘self-changing’: creating space for challenging and recreating ideas about what is possible” (Goss, 2001:209).

But whether this shift to community-based strategies amounts to the “quiet revolution” referred to by Australia’s Deputy PM in 2001 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) or “a reinvention of governance” as the UK Prime Minister has recently indicated (Blears, 2007a), it clearly demonstrates a growing maturity among citizens that they can and are willing to take more responsibility for themselves. It represents a profoundly democratizing transition and one that will inevitably strengthen our bonds of community, the whole rationale of which is that we can do more together than we can separately.

The shift is not unlike the change in relationship that accompanies the transition from teenager to young adulthood, and where the young adult in asserting parental independence learns that freedom has its own price in terms of new obligations and self reliance. And along with it, the parental relationship naturally transforms from one of protection to one of support and ‘letting go’. From this perspective, the emerging use of community-based strategies seems to be creating space for the next, more mature phase of citizen-centred democracy to flourish.

For senior governments, long the overly protective parents of their citizen children, this shift may require a leap of faith similar to the one parents display when they trust that their children can indeed find their own way. That faith is sorely needed to avoid the consequences of not being able to ‘let go’, as most parents with young adults can testify to. “The answer does not lie in heavier rulebooks, but in evolving approaches to diversity, dialogue and creativity that match local people’s ambitions and needs” (Street, et al., 2004).

In the end, addressing the *policy imbalance* will be a process of trial and error. When you know you can’t do it by yourself and that the contribution of others is necessary, you are naturally encouraged to adopt different tactics. In strategies that involve community partnerships, those tactics will most likely include listening, learning, teaching, negotiating, sharing, and supporting. Some countries are taking solid steps in this direction and establishing frameworks and mechanisms for collaboration. With Canadians no less in need, it is interesting to speculate when Canadian governments might engage in the same way?

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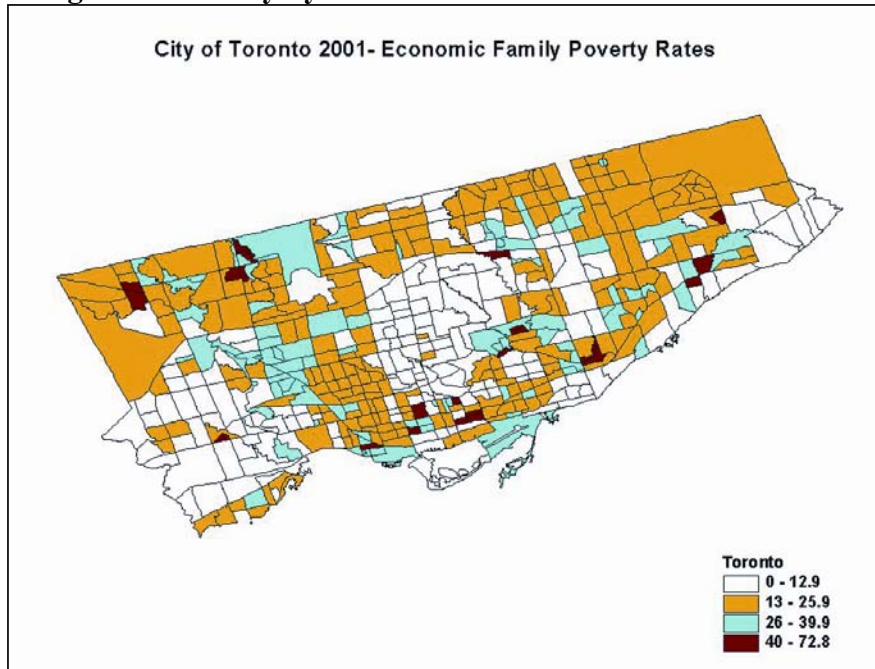
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Figures & Tables

Figure 1: Poverty by Postal Code in Greater Metro Toronto



Source: <http://www.uwgt.org/whoWeHelp/reports/Poverty-by-Postal-Code/map-pages/toronto2001.html>

Table 1: A Framework for Linking Community Collaboration to Programmatic Outcomes

	Community Building Strategies	Community Action Strategies	Community Implementation	External Influences	Assessment of Programmatic Outcomes	Course Correction
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing Networking Leadership development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeting Incentives Education & marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AIDA⁶ Empowering Teaching Joint action 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavioural changes to residents and citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebration Engagement Social learning Participatory decision making
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational development Coalition building Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem Identification Social learning Resource identification Commitments MOUs Rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship building Joint decider Joint action Monitoring & information sharing 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved, expanded programs & services Improved infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring & information sharing Celebration Social learning Joint action Relationship building New MOUs
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visioning Analysis & planning Priorities & agendas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civic strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visioning Analysis & planning Priorities & agendas 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to behaviours of outside actors Changes to community conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visioning Analysis & planning Priorities & agendas

⁶ AIDA: awareness, interest, desire & action

Table 2: Comparison of National Community-Based Strategies

Mechanisms Encouraged by National Strategies	AU	DK	FR	DE	IE	NL	NO	ES	UK	US
Co-funding arrangements	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Intergovernmental partnerships	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cross-sectoral partnerships	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
National local framework	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
Support for local coordination & evaluation	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
Local leadership	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√
Flexible & tailored implementations	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√
Facilitation of national networks & inter-community knowledge sharing	√	√	√	√		√	√		√	√
Joined-up government (horizontal & vertical integration of public sector)	√	√	√			√	√	√	√	
Community application support	√					√	√	√	√	√
Long term funding (5-10 yrs)	√					√	√	√	√	√
Competitive funding	√			√	√			√	√	√
Local involvement in national policy making	√	√	√			√	√		√	
National representative in local governance	√		√		√			√	√	
“Whole of national government’ relationship w/ communities over sectoral	√		√			√		√	√	
National strategy is bottom up				√		√		√		√
Support for local visionary/ champion	√					√			√	√
Development of community level intelligence for national government	√	√	√			√				
Local data support	√					√	√		√	
Technical & professional support	√								√	√