

We need the Community

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Abstract: Modern societies tend to become fragmented by new migration patterns and human mobility. Urbanization, large-scale residential environments and a lack of social ties makes people alienated, and social cohesion, crucial to human well-being, is weakened. In such societies, the old class divisions are replaced by other sectors of the population and interests. Deviant behavior and criminality developed when informal social control does not work. It will then be replaced by formal control devices, which usually fail to create effective social environments. It is in this context community organizing has become a means and method to re-create inclusive environments where people work together for common concerns, understand and learn about their community and themselves in the same process. It provides opportunities for people to collaborate and influence their life situation, which community organizing very much is about. This article is about the concept of community organizing.

Key words: Action theory, belonging, collective action, community organizing, dialectical processes, empowerment, social mobilization, social movements.

Title: Necesitamos la Comunidad.

Resumen: Las sociedades modernas tienden a la fragmentación por los nuevos patrones de migración y movilidad humana. Urbanización, ambientes residenciales a gran escala y la falta de lazos sociales hacen que las personas sean alienadas, y la cohesión social, que es crucial para el bienestar humano, se debilita. En estas sociedades, las antiguas divisiones de clase son reemplazadas por otros sectores de la población y sus intereses. Ante el comportamiento desviado y la delincuencia desarrolladas, el control social informal no funciona. A continuación, se sustituye por dispositivos de control formales, que por lo general no logran crear ambientes sociales eficaces. Es en este contexto, donde la organización comunitaria se ha convertido en un medio y un método para ambientes inclusivos donde recrea situaciones en las que la gente trabaja junta por intereses comunes, comprende y aprende de ellos mismos y sobre su comunidad en el mismo proceso. Proporciona, así, oportunidades para que las personas colaboren e influyan en su situación de vida, con una organización comunitaria muy importante para ellas. Este artículo trata sobre el concepto de organización de la comunidad.

Palabras clave: Teoría de la acción, pertenencia, acción colectiva, organización comunitaria, procesos dialécticos, empoderamiento, movilización social, movimientos sociales.

We live in a time when many people are experiencing an increasingly fragmented society, where one can feel a little lost and abandoned. This is a process that lasted a long time, but has been reinforced by the new mobility of people. For some this may be offset by new social media, but it can also stop at an imaginary contact, more than where you meet real people of flesh and blood.

Man is a social being and needs to be included in a social context, in which she feels belonging and where she will be appreciated for what she is, a member of the Community. Human

beings develop in their interaction with other people and therefore it is important that she develops relationships with other people in the close group. Belonging is created by her act and interact with other members of the group and the local community. The interaction develops her social skills, participation and accountability.

Group membership also gives her the opportunity to act and act with others for common concerns. The group is thus a social resource that strengthens human capacity and self-reliance. When people gather in an organization and see that they can work to-

gether, it also brings thoughts about what one can and wants to do. Action readiness therefore increases with the social group as well as membership in a dialectical process (Block, 2009).

Community organizing is a way to get this to happen, creating new venues and social gatherings, meetings in new forms and gets new relationships, in which people learn about others and themselves in the same process. It is also a way of making people feel at home, the sense of belonging and appreciation. This article is about how we can organize ourselves by the method called community organizing and create conditions for joint action on common goals.

The emphasis is on mobilizing human resources and organizing local people. Through deliberate collective actions people, groups of people, communities are taking power and influencing their living conditions. In this context the social group and local community are important. The interplay between community members allows each and every one to develop their capacity. People are seeing possibilities where they did not exist under other conditions. The feeling for the community, the new community spirit, has provided unity and strength to its members. They have empowered them self by community building (Ronnby, 1995b).

The Communitarian Movement and Amitar Etzioni argue for the recreation of our communities, that is to say social groups where we feel at home, belong, feel solidarity and where we can get a degree of control over our lives (Etzioni, 1993). We must recreate community spirit because alienation, loneliness and greed are problems of our time. Robert Putnam argues for the re-establishment of strong civil societies where we can save and develop democracy (Putnam, 1992), which Björn Elmbrant and others have shown to be rocking on its foundations as far as Sweden is concerned (Elmbrant, 1997). Democracy is not functioning because politics, power and influence have been taken over and monopolised by a political and economical elite in co-operation with technocrats.

Counter forces exist within the new woman's- cooperative- and village- movements, which are striving to create strong groups and local communities. These movements has so far been strongest in rural areas and smaller communities, although in the new urban renewal projects (i.e. the suburban venture in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö in Sweden) serious interest has been shown in learning from the new mobilizing movements. The emphasis is on local mobilisation of human and other resources. Endeavours are being made to develop new local communities. Ideas surrounding "the Urban Village" are being developed. We are looking for the means and forms of work and social intercourse that can lead us to an increase in community to counterbalance the economical alienation and mobility of our time.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

"Place-based" community organizing is a process in which local people, united by concern for renewing their own small territory, plan and act together from an organizational base that they control. They are usually aided by a community organizer, either professional or volunteer, who has skill and experience and helps the body of people to plan and move toward achieving their agreed-on goals." (Murphy and Cunningham, 2003) Community organizing is a practice in the small community that involves collective action centred on people's participation and mobilization of local resources. The emphasis is here on the nature and importance of the places-based small community which has an underlying web of human relationships, the social infrastructure. This social fabric, the interacting of people who knows each other, is something that gives the small community a latent power structure which can be used as a tool for change and development. Mostly the work is based on volunteer collective action with some support from community organizers.

When we use the term small or local community, social group or interest group, it refer to the group that has something that binds it together, where there occurs a more or less frequent interplay between the members.

One interesting and significant aspect of the work with mobilisation and organisation is the development within the group from that of having been a group in itself to that of becoming a group for or by itself. In other words, a group where kinship and solidarity is strengthened through a process of co-operation, joint work and joint efforts, insights into common interests and possibly through experiencing a threat to the group, and/or a common vision.

That which simplifies (or complicates) this process and new initiatives, are the social assets or "social capital" of the village or local community. That is to say the social micro and meso-structure: the human network of social relationships, social interplay and co-operation methods. This approach of building community from the inside out is best expressed through bonds of friendship between individuals and families, through co-operation in clubs and associations, village citizens committees, church choirs, economic associations, local institutions (i.e. schools) and community associations (Kretzmann, 1993). Richly developed organisational activities, local associations and other joint action methods help to strengthen the capacity for action in the local community and simplifies mobilisation (Homan, 2008)

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment comes from the Latin *potere* meaning to be able to, which says very little about what one is actually capable of.

The concept is used in various ways and sometimes refers to the ability of individuals to influence their own life, and sometimes to the strength of groups and collectives to change their living conditions. Empowerment is defined as “the process of enhancing an individual’s or group’s capacity to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” (Alsop, 2006). Empowerment is suggested both as a goal in itself and as a driver of development. It is occasionally also used to describe the individual’s feelings of self-reliance and sometimes civil, structural conditions that give people the chance to influence matters (Askheim, 2007) .

In community organizing we see ourselves as working mainly with group, collective and structural questions. The structure is created and maintained through collective actions and is changed through collective actions. We are therefore occupied with how people can organise themselves and through joint action shape their existence. Participating, organising, mobilising, collective co-ordination and unanimous, deliberate actions are central activities through which people, groups of people, can take power and influence their living conditions. In this context the social group and local community are of significant importance (Staples, 1984).

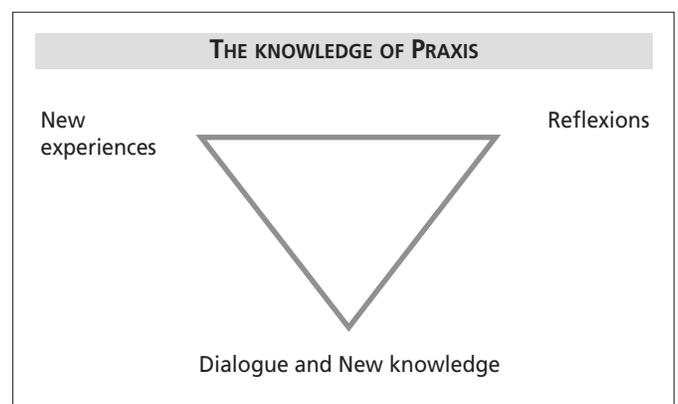
This means that the interplay between group members allows each and every one to express and develop their capacity through new challenges and experiences. The atmosphere that prevails in a group is then consenting and encouraging. The group members see each other as equally important and respected with the acknowledgement that differences are, if anything, supportive rather than degenerating for the development of the group. All members of the group are of equal importance and acknowledge each other through social interplay. Participation in a pedagogical, creative group such as this strengthens self-confidence and self-awareness.

The group process is also important and lays the foundation for the exchange of thoughts and experiences. Dialogue, which is the giving and taking of thoughts and feelings under equal conditions and mutual interest, is the instrument for the exchange of ideas. It stimulates the members’ reflections surrounding their own experiences, points of view and attitude. The process teaches people to communicate their thoughts. It is all about putting a name to the world, creating or learning concepts that provide the members with linguistic instruments to enable them to understand and explain their world and create new perspectives. It is also about seeing possibilities where they did not exist under earlier conditions. This process, which also consists of actions that go beyond the limits, reflections, dialogue, new reflections, new actions, etc. in a continuous cycle, is what Freire calls praxis (Freire, 1993).

THEORY OF ACTION

I work in particular with the praxiological theory of action. This theory is based on a number of assumptions surrounding factors and conditions that help to form conscious, planned, purposeful human actions. The main assumption is that people act in accordance with their motives, objectives and competence and the circumstances and concrete conditions of significance which they interpret as being valid when carrying out the action. Expressed as a dialectic process; because of the action, peoples’ material prerequisites, experience and competence amalgamate with their ideas, theories and intentions. People act then according to these practical and theoretical prerequisites to reach their objectives. During action that goes beyond the limits when people go in new directions, they go over and above their earlier experience.

The new impressions, observations and experiences are (can be) processed to new knowledge through reflections and dialogue with other people. Through interplay with others, people become more aware of themselves and their world, and therein lies the praxiological theory of knowledge, that is to say the assumption of how people get knowledge of their world. This happens through having an active, investigative and process able relationship to the surroundings and society. Put simply, people understand the world by changing it. This means that people in the local development groups *act in accordance with the structural and material conditions, their own knowledge and competence and their intentions and expectations*. Within this process they develop their knowledge and awareness on the actual field of action. *New activities and new experiences give birth to new thoughts and ideas for those engaged, which is strengthened through stimulating discussions and exchange of experiences within the group.*



The theory around praxis, that is to say actions that go beyond the limits, expresses a holistic approach to the process whereby people create and change the world and the ideas and knowledge in and surrounding this process. The surrounding thoughts and

the changing of conditions are parts of one and the same process. *People develop themselves and their world in the same process.* People in the development groups create ideas surrounding their activities while they are developing them, and vice versa. For instance, thoughts and knowledge about democracy in daily life are developed when people practise democratic principles. When people intentionally change their conditions, they are also changed. If we go more into detail into the assumptions in praxiology regarding which conditions influence and shape peoples' actions, we can describe it in the following fashion:

The action's "determiner"

Background: concerning the person's history, experience and frames of reference

Social context: the person's social context, network patterns, relationships and social interplay

Perspective: the cultural filter through which the person sees himself, other people, the surroundings and the world, and interprets what he sees in a certain situation. And, of interest here, understanding of his possibilities and limitations, and what he perceives as the "world within reach". That is to say, interpretations of what can reasonably be achieved under given conditions.

Situation: the person's actual place in life, person enclosed within the structures and influenced by the movements of the time, current questions and problems, deprivation, crisis, dissatisfaction, new openings and possibilities, popular ideologies, politics and economy. The situation provides or contains the immediate conditions for the action.

Intention: the person's objectives, motives, interests and ambitions, which are a fusion of background, social context and perspective, history and future, seen in the light of the actual situation. The intention is formed by the person's experience, competence and social environment, together with future prospects and judgements of what can realistically be achieved under given conditions.

Means: the person's knowledge, competence and other material, social, cultural and mental resources.

Resistance: structural resistance, the difficulty in shaping the world according to one's will, other people's resistance, competition, rivalry, envy, spite, the Jante law* and man's indecision and powerlessness.

* The Jante law, town in Denmark in a novel by Axel Sandemose that distinguished itself through its citizens' distrust, envy and jealousy.

This outline is also in principle the same for group actions. The same factors influence the group's joint actions. As with the individual, there can naturally exist certain factors, as well as individuals in the group, that influence more than others and the interpretations can, in principle, be just as many as the number of members. But in practice, when it comes to people in a common culture, they do not radically differ from each other. It is not possible from the theory to predict exactly what a person or a group of people will set about doing, but the theory gives directions for what we can study and attempt to judge. It also shows us what to look for in order to understand why people do the things they do. And not least, guidance to help us develop the methods, tactics and strategy for development work.

LEADING LIGHTS

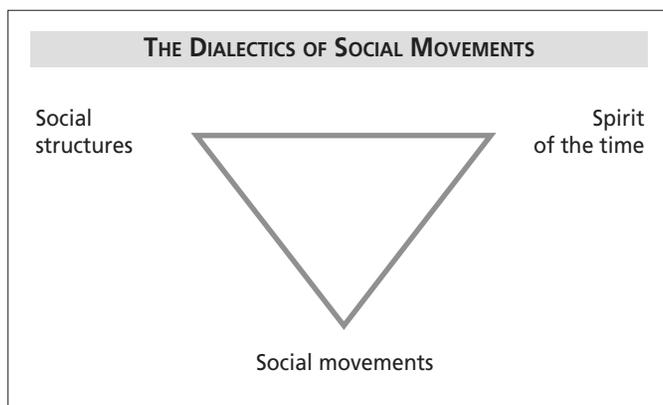
Conditions, situation and the group create the leading lights that people have confidence in. This does not however mean that anybody can be a leading light. Experiences show that it is the more outgoing, versatile, committed people who have ideas and like to do things - can make decisions and get things done - that are "chosen" to be leading lights and leaders. It follows that these people have contacts in the local community, which they have got through being involved in co-operative and organisational activities etc. Leading lights have a certain amount of organisational experience.

People can have different reasons for taking part in local development work. I believe there are three main categories: those who choose to join, those who just become part of it and those who are forced through group pressure. In other words, there are those who make a deliberate decision, those who just follow the stream and those who go along because they are dependent on the group. The first category is the most interesting. But these people could have a whole host of motives for their choice: those who have a financial interest, those who feel public responsibility and want to do something out of solidarity, those who think it is self-developing, those who seek leadership, want to take part in decision-making, get a higher status, those who look for company and friendship, those who see it as a hobby, those who seek an

identity through group participation and those who see it as a survival strategy where organisation is necessary. Group participation can be instrumental or expressive, a goal in itself or something imposed (Kahn, 1991).

MOBILIZATION

The praxiological theory of action also contains theories about how the mobilisation process takes place. First, the overall dialectical thought structures for, or view of, the dynamics of society. Social movements are seen as the dialectic result or synthesis of social structures and the spirit of the time. This means that structural conditions (created and maintained through collective action.) and leading ideologies, values, views and theories mutually influence each other. People in a community are influenced by these conditions and create the different movements we see, which in their turn have repercussions on the social structure and philosophies in a continuous process. This model only attempts to capture a basic structure and says nothing definite about what sort of movement it is just that one can understand the movement when set against a background of social structure and spirit of the time, whatever that might be in a given time period.



The new village movement can then be understood from the structural tension created through the centralisation of work and welfare, which has brought about impoverishment of the sparsely-populated areas. At the same time, the higher knowledge and level of education has put higher demands on democratising everyday life. The new-born pride the people in sparsely-populated areas feel at being just people in sparsely-populated areas has given them increased self-reliance. Structurally, there exists a new situation that offers new possibilities for other types of production and employment in rural areas. This, in combination with the new interest for strong local communities and movements, has created new possibilities for local mobilisation (mobilising local communities).

In the discussion surrounding what it is that creates social movements, it cannot be said that praxiology has any special standpoint, other than it could be, and probably often is, many different conditions that play a part. It could be structural tension i.e. structural rationalisation within production (rationalisation within forest and agriculture, shutting-down of works and industries in rural areas), negative changes in living conditions (unemployment, reduced income, deterioration of or lack of services: child care, schools, nursing, old-age care and commercial service), dashed hopes, deprivation (postponed development plans, housing problems, surplus of men, having to move to get work). Other factors include the hope that improvements in living conditions can be achieved through making new technology available to new groups, that production improves making profits that the workers want to share, or through taxation, which represents community resources that the people in rural areas want a part of etc. It could be external stimuli such as seeing what others have been able to achieve in similar situations or it could be trigger mechanisms such as council leaders threatening the village by closing the school.

To conclude, it is the praxiological assumption that both structural/material and mental/social conditions, (external and internal conditions) influence the mobilisation process both at individual and group level. In other words, external conditions create frames around the individual and the collective (tighter for the individual than for the collective) and ideas, perspectives, self-reliance (opinion-carrying categories of thought) create, so to speak, the individual's (individuals') inner basis for the action. In the actual mobilisation work the following assumptions exist surrounding conditions that seem encouraging for collective action:

MOBILISATION WORK

1. People - a group of people - experience a common problem or need, which is not taken care of by anybody else.
2. People realise they can tackle the questions through co-operation and co-ordination.
3. People have experiences of co-operating together to achieve a common objective. There are traditions of co-operation in the local community.
4. People hope to achieve success through collective actions. There is hope for the future in the local community.
5. There are people in the group who can draw up realistic goals worth aiming at, that are interesting for all the participants, and show how these can be achieved through their own efforts.
6. People can see their own possibilities and the possibility of acting in accordance with their own basic requirements. They have control over the resources needed to act.

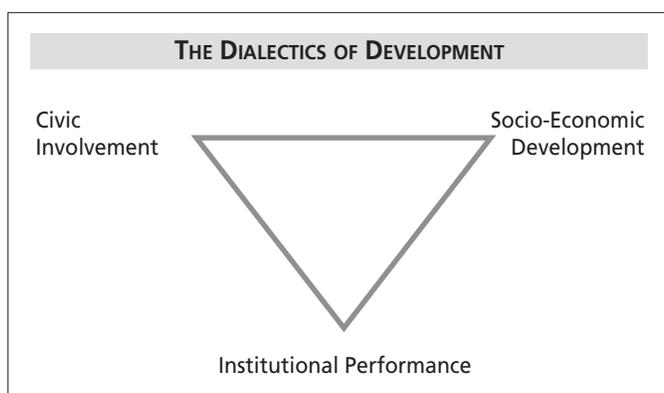
7. There are good examples and models they can identify with and get inspiration from for their own projects.
8. There are people in the group leaders, leading-lights, etc. who have the necessary pedagogical, tactical and strategic knowledge to be able to mobilise the resources and carry out the projects.
9. There are initiative takers that people trust who can motivate and organise people.

I have formulated a praxiological assumption about peoples' "rationality" that could be of significance:

People only take part in (can be persuaded to take part in) an activity that demands personal sacrifice when they think they can get something out of taking part (which could be to ward off threats or achieve some sort of success), or that they think the project or the undertaking is possible. They take an active part when they see they can do it (that is to say they have the requirements and can use their resources) and the "costs" (time, money, energy, self-denial, etc) are in a reasonable proportion to what they want and think they can achieve.

Projects with minimum risk and maximum profit are the easiest to rally round. Observe that it is not only economic values that are aimed at, a further dimension exists. People experiment with social innovations as a strategy for handling new situations in an ever-changing world. People generally strive to create order in their lives so as to make conditions understandable and manageable. Experience shows that when people are confronted with problems and threats they develop their ability for organising. The desire for self-organising intensifies when people experience chaotic conditions and the need for a survival strategy.

Robert Putnam has the experiences that there is an interplay between people's civic involvement and participation in socio-economic development (Putnam, 1992). The dialectics of these can result in a broader and deeper institutional performance. It means that then people have a strong feeling for their place



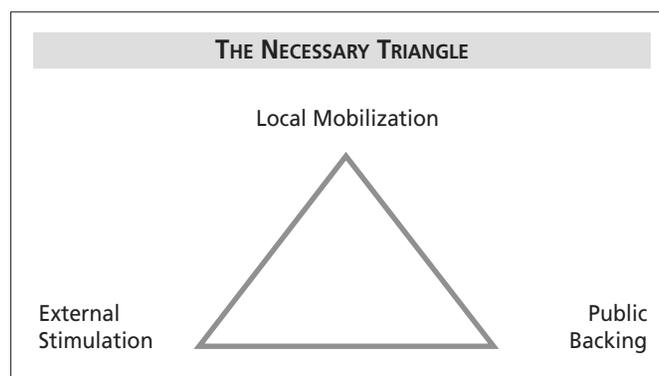
(town, etc) and participate in the social infrastructure, they are more interested in making a policy for community development.

THE NECESSARY TRIANGLE

In Scandinavia we refer to the *necessary triangle*, which is an expression given to the triangle of forces that are often involved in successful local development projects (Almås, 1985). The three parts, or corners, of the triangle contain:

0. Local support and mobilisation of local resources.
 1. Support from the public sector.
 2. External support and stimulation.

Local support for the project, it is fundamental that local people who the residents have faith in take the initiative, and that the whole thing starts with a mobilisation of local resources. The project should also start at grassroots level with local conditions and requirements as the starting point.



Nearly all local development projects have some form of *support* from the public sector. This is when the local municipality, county administrative board, county council etc, act as *facilitators* of the project. Furthermore, it is often the case that other forms of *external stimulation* or impulse gets the project underway. It could be the good examples seen in other communities that are easy to identify with. It is often experts and advisers who play this role.

The community organizers, irrespective of which organisation they come from, function as catalysts - sometimes even initiators - for the development process within the group and local community. This means that their role is to stimulate the process not be organisers themselves. The task of the catalyst is to get people (those who belong to or can form a community) to agree on common matters, develop a dialogue, analyse the problem, reach the common objectives, guide the organisational work, help to plan tactics and strategy etc. The function of the community organizer is then to initiate, encourage, guide and support the

group process and organisational work. A role on the "middle level" in other words.

HOW DOES MOBILISATION TAKE PLACE?

What is it that happens when local populations become active and change their living conditions? There is often a release mechanism, an incident that makes people react. It is often a crisis situation where some of the affected parties, often people with self-confidence, organisational skills, education and contacts, take the initiative to gather together those affected to a collective action to tackle the problem. Usually an existing organisation is used (i.e. village community club) for the introductory gathering. Workgroups or committees are formed later to eventually grow into a whole new organisation such as a community co-operative.

The leading light is a person who emerges in the right place at the right time as initiative taker and driving force through their ability to formulate the thoughts of others in the village. The leading light is a person who inspires confidence in the local population, has certain organisational and strategic skills and can mobilise others into action and co-operation. They are very important people for the mobilisation work not least in the initial stages. In a study I carried out on leading lights in Jämtland, Sweden it emerged that most of them are in their 40's, the youngest is 31 and the oldest 67. The average age is 47. A third are politically active and more than half are active in an association or club. These two together make up nearly 90 percent (Ronnby, 97).

THE THREAT

The starting point for mobilisation in most cases is some sort of threat to the community or a serious problem. The release mechanism is often when the problem becomes acute: "Now it's serious! We must save the community!" We could describe the actual prelude as being about *crisis awareness*. This means that people have often seen the difficulties coming for some time, but have not bothered to do anything about it. There is often sluggishness when it comes to taking action. It is not until it is obvious that something must be done to save the community that people mobilise force, energy and time to take the bull by the horns. But it is not enough to just realise there is a crisis, at least two other conditions must be fulfilled, namely; *that there is hope for a change and hope that something can be done to create a new situation. There must exist ideas about what can be done.*

By way of introduction to the mobilisation work, a discussion surrounding the possibilities that exist and what, who, and how

to carry it through must be arranged. This discussion is about defining the requirements and conditions for action and whether it is realistic or not. The discussion also makes clear which resources are available for the group. Characteristic for sparsely-populated areas is that people are often prepared to join in with a lot of voluntary work. Local resources usually available are people who are willing to join in with voluntary work, people with all-round practical know-how, ability and will to co-operate and with a certain or great amount of patience. There are often meeting places and equipment for assemblies etc. and usually machines and other equipment for practical work. The most successful have a network of contacts, which give them an exchange of resources, ideas, experiences and stimulation. There are often more economic resources in the local economy than people imagine. A summing up of the positive prerequisites for local mobilisation could look like this:

Positive prerequisites for mobilisation work:

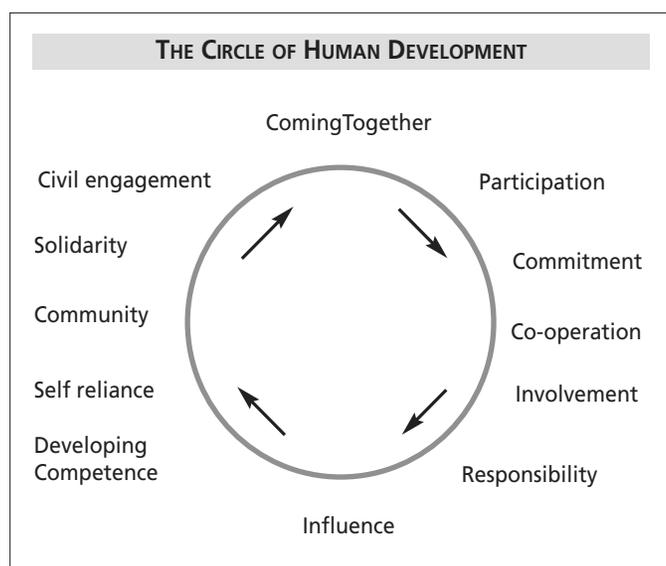
One condition is that people believe in the project, believe they can do something to prevent or turn a negative development around and create better conditions for themselves. Local mobilisation work is built on the resources and competence available in the local community. One usually starts with the small easier projects first before going on to the larger more difficult. Then it is a case of building on experience. It is important that certain objectives are reached early in the process because this is encouraging and strengthens self-reliance; the world can be influenced! It is not often that the whole local community takes part in the actual work. Attitudes to development groups play a large part in motivating the local population so the development group must take great pains to create a positive, creative relationship with the local community. Co-operation with other development groups where you can find positive examples, encouragement etc. is also motivated.

Mobilisation work is made easier if the participants have experience of working in organisations and projects. It is also important to be able to handle and solve conflicts in the group and the work should be stimulating and developing for both individual and group. Everyone should be able to make suggestions and the workload should be divided so that everyone is stimulated into active participation. Decision-making and work plan should be democratic and be preceded by discussions that everyone can take part in order to attain consensus. Majority decisions are not good because they are usually rushed. The group members must feel that they are welcome to take part in the work, that they are needed and that it is nice to work together and co-operate around common objectives. During the course of time the "we feeling" is developed and strengthened, which improves the con-

ditions for continued work. The participants are then also willing to sacrifice both time and a part of their comfort to achieve their common objective.

THE GROUP IS POWER

We can see that the process that leads to empowerment (self-confidence, self-reliance, self-respect and capability to act for own interests) is built on participation in a collective task, participation in a group that goes beyond the limits. Organising in development groups in the local community strengthens self-reliance. What seemed impossible outside the group now appears possible through being many together, reacting in unison and supporting each other. The Process can be described as a spiral movement that starts with partaking in a united action, which in its turn leads to participation and shared responsibility. This creates possibilities for action that goes beyond the limits and for learning through exceeding the members' earlier experiences. They can now go in new directions and get new experiences. The members dare to go in new directions because they are doing it together with others who they know are loyal and supportive. They support each other with the feeling of being a collective with common objectives and interests and with the ability to co-operate and strengthen their self-reliance. They are not alone and afraid any longer left to their own devices.



ORGANIZING

By organising themselves, developing competence, unity and group solidarity, the residents have also created a new basis for influencing the conditions around them and they get a greater influence over their living conditions. This is a continuous process

where the members via the group or the group's united actions take the power to influence what is for them important conditions and situations in the community. Through participation in the creative group the members become different people. They change when, together with others, they change their living conditions, their world. With this they have crossed the obstacles that earlier limited their actions and ability to influence their living conditions.

Through organisation the initiative takers create better possibilities for people to take part in the work. Self-acting then constantly reproduces and develops conditions for action, which naturally also occurs in interplay with the surroundings. People need to be part of a creative interplay with others in order to shape their environment, participate in it and acquire a measure of self-control. This is an important counterweight to "just" being receiver or consumer of what others have to offer. The structural and social conditions that are in force at the beginning change through people's actions, so we could say that they create their own local *environment for action*. They constantly create new situations with their possibilities and limitations though they have no supreme control over these because there is a world around them with a lot of local influence. But how people locally see themselves through their actions can be of extreme importance for their self-reliance and possibilities.

One clear experience from the Nordic countries is that support from the public sector offers better possibilities for success. Successful projects have often had support and stimulation from external experts such as the community organizer, rural developers, co-operation advisers and female network mobilisers. Now that local development work in this form has become a national movement we can see that it has dynamic effects. It has created new perspectives and attitudes within the movement. We could say that a new culture for local mobilisation and development work is developing, which is very interesting from the community organizer's perspective. A new strong interest for mobilising local resources and developing self-supporting structures is growing, where the know-how the community organizers possess is in demand.

NEW CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL WORK

The Swedish welfare society is undergoing quick changes. The old centralised, top heavy structures are being broken up and old values being reconsidered. The state must also save money so interest in the local and civil community is obvious. The changes are both good and bad. One thing though is clear, the old social state as we have known it since the 1940's is on the way to being wound up. The structural changes we have seen are probably just the beginning. There are more pluralistic models; com-

binations of public and private, co-operative and voluntary initiatives and commitment, which puts demand on greater flexibility and ability to co-operate in new types of organisations that go beyond the old boundaries in projects, workgroups and networks.

New types of organisations are developing such as new learning organisations, partnership organisations, network organisations, project organisations, the co-operative organisation and social clubs. Development of human resources is often at the centre of things. In both urban and rural areas the need for mobilising local resources is on the increase especially now that central funding is decreasing. In the towns and suburbs as well as sparsely-populated areas the local residents have a need for greater influence over their living conditions. Even bureaucratic authorities have started to realise that long-term and successful development work is built upon people's commitment and competence and participation in the process of change, plus the creation of self-supporting structures.

NEW KNOWLEDGE IS NEEDED

Even in social work the need for competence is increasing, for project work, for working in the new organisational forms - which demand structural objectives, co-operation and conflict-solving, resource mobilisation, organisation development and social innovations. Knowledge is spread out and no one person possesses the answer to everything in our very complex and complicated world, but at the same time total efforts are often necessary to achieve objectives. Social work must be carried out in co-operation between many participants in co-ordinated efforts under open and flexible forms where each and every person's competence is fully utilised. Social workers need to be able to function as catalysts for the social mobilisation process in co-operation with the new social companies, local development groups and social movements.

The role of the catalyst contains of some elements of behaviour: *understanding* peoples perspectives, *matching* the target group to be able to communicate, *dialogue* is important to be able to exchange views between the community organizer and the target group, the local people, *questioning* is the Socrates way of helping people to think about tactics, strategies and solutions, *enabling* is helping to make things possible, helping to mobilizing resources, *psychological support* is to helping people to dare to act, *feedback* is to helping people to learn from their experiences.

SOME LEARNING HOW COMMUNITY ORGANIZING COME ABOUT

1. There are conditions that unite people such as social in-

terplay, networks and patterns of social behaviour that create community feeling and belonging.

2. There is a crisis awareness among the residents, alternatively a strong belief in that they have the right prerequisites to achieve change and success.
3. There are local resources (human and material), mainly people to mobilise.
4. The starting point should be local traditions of co-operation and the local culture and resources.
5. The initiative comes from people in the local community, from people with support from the residents.
6. There are a few leading lights who push forward and get other people with them.
7. People must believe in the project. There are some good ideas that seem credible and realistic, and show the way to tackle joint problems and needs.
8. The project is built upon developing something of which the residents (at least some of them) have some experience and the correct requirements for getting involved.
9. Take a step at a time, take the easy part first and the most difficult when the ability to co-operate has been achieved and competence has been developed.
10. Achieve certain objectives early in the process.
11. Build on experiences and use the great variety of competence that exists among the group members.
12. The group has the ability to co-operate and to solve conflict.
13. Mobilisation work is made easier if participants have experience of working in organisations.
14. Things go smoother if the leaders possess tactical, pedagogical and strategic knowledge, and are used to working with people and solving conflicts.
15. Leaders who really are interested in seeing that local resources are utilised.
16. The work should be stimulating and developing for the individual and the group. Everybody should come with suggestions. The work should be put together so that it stimulates activity. Decision-making must be democratic and be preceded by discussion where consensus is reached (majority decisions are not good).
17. The group members should feel needed and appreciated by the group.
18. The group members should feel that it is pleasant to co-operate and be together. The members should be able to develop their personal relationships within the group.
19. But the group members must also be prepared to sacrifice a little of their comfort, and a lot of time and energy.

20. A stronger self-esteem, "we-feeling" and identity is developed in the group during the course of the work.
21. It stimulates to have good examples of how mobilisation and development work can be carried out successfully.
22. Co-operation with other groups is fortifying.
23. One normal prerequisite for success is getting certain resources and support from the public sector.
24. Successful projects often have help from external experts and advisers (i.e. co-operation advisers).
25. If the local activity becomes part of a regional (and/or national) movement, then this increases the positive conditions.
26. The people who succeed are they who always look for the possibilities. If they don't find them, they create them.

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