



**FOURTH
EDITION**

Asset Building & Community Development

**Gary Paul Green
Anna Haines**



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& Community
Development



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Gary Paul Green

University of Wisconsin–Madison

Anna Haines

University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point



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FOR INFORMATION:

SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

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Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record of this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-1-4833-4403-4

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

15 16 17 18 19 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Preface

Can community residents work together to improve their quality of life? There are numerous examples of residents collaborating to provide affordable housing, job training, and credit for local businesses and consumers. Yet there continues to be skepticism about the ability of communities to overcome problems of concentrated poverty in the inner city, underdevelopment in rural areas (especially in Appalachia and on Native American reservations), and social isolation in so many of our communities today. In this book, we examine the promise and limits of community development.

We define community development as a planned effort to build assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life. These assets may include several forms of community capital: physical, human, social, financial, environmental, political, and cultural. For each type of community capital, we examine the role of community-based organizations in mobilizing these assets, the strategies that communities can use to improve their quality of life, and the external institutions and organizations involved in the community development process. We contend that these assets will not generate as many local benefits if communities rely entirely on either markets or governments to guide their development. Development that is controlled by community-based organizations provides a better match between the assets and the needs of the communities, whether we are talking about job skills, housing, natural resources, or financial capital.

We should note that our definition of community development is fairly broad. Many people today limit the definition of community development to the activities of community development corporations (CDCs), especially in poor neighborhoods. Although CDCs certainly have become key actors in the affordable housing and economic development arenas, there are many other organizations and institutions actively involved in promoting locality development. Although we discuss the role of CDCs, we also explore other organizations outside the “industry.” In particular, we discuss local economic development organizations, neighborhood associations, and faith-based organizations. Many other informal organizations, such as neighborhood watches, building-level tenant associations, block clubs, and volunteer youth groups doing community service, serve as the foundation for community

development work. We also consider the role of specialized organizations, such as microenterprise loan funds, land trusts, and training consortia.

Most people use the term *community* to refer to residents of a specific geographical area. Our book is directed primarily at “communities of place,” although the material is relevant for “communities of interest,” such as organizations and associations, as well. We also discuss many innovative regional programs that go beyond traditional place-based community development efforts. Although most of the literature on community development focuses on urban issues, we address rural communities and their concerns, too. Discussions of community development also are limited frequently to low-income neighborhoods. Again, we take a broader perspective and examine how middle-class communities are relying increasingly on community-based organizations to address problems associated with urban sprawl and the environment. Many of the lessons learned about working in low-income neighborhoods can be applied to a variety of settings.

We do not intend this book to be a cookbook for practitioners. There are several excellent books and manuals that readers could turn to for these strategies. We discuss some different approaches to community organizing, but our focus is much more on the outcomes of these processes. Instead, we provide students and practitioners with several elements of community development: (a) the basic concepts and theories; (b) a conceptual map of the institutions, organizations, and actors involved in various arenas of community development; (c) common strategies and tactics used by communities; (d) case studies of successful (and unsuccessful) communities; and (e) resources available on various topics related to community development.

In Chapter 1, we discuss the major concepts, issues, and theories used in the community development field. Although community development draws from a variety of disciplines, a growing number of concepts and theories help define community development in theory and in practice.

In Chapter 2, we present a brief overview of the history of community development in the United States. Community development efforts in other contexts will look quite different because of the variation in local versus central control and in the cultural factors influencing participation and authority. Even within the United States, there is considerable variation in community-based development efforts. We begin with a discussion of early attempts at community development with the rise of settlement houses through the New Deal and the War on Poverty to contemporary efforts of CDCs, community development finance institutions (CDFIs), and comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs). A critical assessment of the history of the movement helps to identify the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary community development efforts.

In Chapter 3, we introduce the concept of community sustainability. Originally a concept from ecology, sustainability has been given many definitions. Essentially, the term *sustainability* refers to the ability of a system to sustain itself without outside intervention. We evaluate how communities are

attempting to incorporate sustainability in their development strategies and the types of indicators communities are using to assess their progress toward the goal of achieving sustainability. The concept of sustainability is not considered a separate topic, but it is woven throughout our entire discussion of community development in this text.

Chapter 4 focuses on four stages of the community development process: community organizing, visioning, planning, and implementation/evaluation. Many academics and practitioners have debated the importance of process (development *of* community) versus outcomes (development *in* the community). Most community development programs, however, involve both elements. In this chapter, we focus on various strategies for developing a process that will engage residents in the strategic decisions affecting their localities. We also discuss alternative approaches to community planning and public participation.

CDCs are the most visible organizations engaged in community and neighborhood development. There continues to be a debate over the effectiveness of CDCs. Critics charge that CDCs have lost their capacity to mobilize communities and have become primarily technical assistance providers. We examine these debates and assess the future of CDCs. In Chapter 5, we describe the structure of CDCs and review some of their strengths and weaknesses. We examine some of the constraints and limitations CDCs face in promoting neighborhood development. We also look at other community-based organizations, such as local development organizations, neighborhood organizations, faith-based organizations, and youth organizations. The larger issue for this discussion is whether organizational dynamics contribute to the loss of local control and bureaucratization of these entities.

We next examine seven forms of community capital: human, social, physical, financial, environmental, political, and cultural. We refer to these attributes as capital because investments in these resources yield greater returns in the quality of community life. In many cases, these forms of capital are public goods that require collective action, rather than individual investments, to grow. Each chapter follows a similar structure: limits to individual or government solutions to these problems, history of community development efforts in these areas, the theoretical basis for community intervention, key actors and institutions, and strategies.

Human capital theory focuses on the relationship between a worker's education, skills, and experience and the individual's labor market experiences. According to the theory, workers with lower level skills tend to be less productive and therefore are rewarded less in the labor market. A major focus of many community-based development organizations is training, which is assumed to increase the level of human capital and ultimately the quality of life in the community. In the chapter on human capital (Chapter 6), we focus on the role of community-based organizations in providing workforce development. We discuss how federal and state efforts are placing increasing emphasis on comprehensive approaches to workforce development that rely

on community-based organizations. These workforce development strategies help overcome some of the obstacles workers face in obtaining training and the barriers employers encounter in providing job training.

Social capital is defined as the norms, shared understandings, trust, and other factors that make collective action feasible and productive. Social capital enables members of a neighborhood or social network to help one another, especially in terms of economic opportunity and social mobility. In the chapter on social capital (Chapter 7), we concentrate on community networks (both individual and organizational) that influence local development. These social ties and networks can serve as both resources and constraints in a community's effort to promote collective action. In many ways, social capital is at the center of asset building for all the forms of community capital we discuss. It is an essential feature of community action.

Physical capital refers to buildings, tools, and infrastructure. Investments in physical capital can enhance quality of community life and provide support for other forms of community capital. In Chapter 8, we focus our discussion of physical capital on housing, primarily affordability issues. The federal government has had a huge role in physical capital since the Great Depression, evidenced by the variety of programs for housing and other areas of physical capital, such as roads and other infrastructure. Due to federal devolution to lower levels of government and others, communities have an opportunity to pursue innovative affordable housing solutions. In this chapter, we examine the variety of ways in which communities can address affordable housing problems. We also assess why community-based organizations are at the forefront of the efforts to build more affordable housing options.

Poor and minority communities frequently lack access to financial capital. Capital markets typically do not solve these problems. Many communities are building local financial institutions, such as revolving loan funds, micro-enterprise loan funds, and community development banks, to address their credit problems. Chapter 9 explores various strategies for addressing credit problems in communities. Most of the emerging community-based models emphasize the importance of social as well as economic objectives.

In Chapter 10, we explore the concept of environmental capital. Many communities are beginning to recognize that wisely managed natural resources, a community's environmental capital, play a major role in community satisfaction, quality of life, and economic development. Community-based organizations can offer an alternative to public sector zoning and regulations that aim to protect a community's environmental capital, especially in places that do not have the broad support necessary for protecting key environmental resources. To demonstrate the role of community-based organizations in preserving natural resources, we look carefully at the role of land trusts in addressing environmental problems.

Power is central to the community development process. Before engaging in a community development project, it is essential to understand the local power structure. It is equally important to know how to organize residents to

build community power. In Chapter 11, we examine different ways of measuring and analyzing the local power structure. We discuss different strategies that organizations use to build political capital. Much of the literature on community power structure has focused on local issues. We discuss how community-based organizations can build political capital through establishing stronger networks with other communities and organizations.

Cultural capital, the subject of Chapter 12, is seen increasingly as an important factor in community development. Unfortunately, cultural resources are often viewed as something consumed by the rich and having little to do with middle-class and working-class residents. This view of culture and its potential role in community development is very limited. It is important to recognize how cultural capital in a broad sense can contribute to community well-being.

The next two chapters illustrate how the asset-based development approach can be applied to food, energy, and natural disasters. In Chapter 13, we examine how community assets interact to promote local self-reliance through the development of community food systems and renewable energy systems. The growing criticism of our global food system has spawned a wide variety of community initiatives that promote local food systems. Similarly, the challenges we face in the area of energy policy have sparked a movement to promote new renewable sources of energy at the local level. These examples illustrate how local initiatives can build on community assets to promote greater sustainability.

Similarly, in Chapter 14, we explore how the asset-based development approach can promote local responses to global climate change and natural disasters. While these local strategies are not a solution to these larger problems, they do represent some ways in which communities can become less vulnerable.

Globalization and technological change are presenting new challenges and obstacles to community development and to the organizations that pursue it. As financial capital becomes more mobile, it may be increasingly difficult to establish bonds among other forms of capital to create a sense of place in a community. In Chapter 15, we consider how technological changes are presenting new obstacles, and possibly new opportunities, to the field of community development.

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Acknowledgments_____

This new edition was shaped and improved significantly because of the valuable insights and suggestions that reviewers offered. These individuals include Michael Ba Banutu-Gomez, Rowan University, USA & Banutu Business College, The Gambia; Robert Blair, University of Nebraska Omaha; Amy E. Boren, University of Nebraska–Lincoln; Moe Chowdhury, Jackson State University; Thomas Kersen, Jackson State University; Eva M. Moya, University of Texas at El Paso; and Kenneth L. Stewart, Angelo State University.

About the Authors _____

Gary Paul Green is a professor in the Department of Community & Environmental Sociology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and a community development specialist at the University of Wisconsin–Extension. Green’s teaching and research interests are primarily in the areas of community and economic development. His recent books include *Mobilizing Communities: Asset Building as a Community Development Strategy* (2010); *Introduction to Community Development: Theory, Practice, and Service Learning* (2011); and *Handbook of Rural Development* (2013). Green also has been involved in teaching and research on community development issues in China, South Korea, Uganda, and Ukraine.

Anna Haines is a professor in the College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point and a land use and community development specialist with the University of Wisconsin–Extension. Haines received her PhD from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning. Her research and teaching focuses on planning and community development from a natural resources or environmental perspective. Her research has engaged in evaluating community planning and zoning in terms of smart growth and sustainability, land parcelization, and local food systems. Her extension work has concentrated on comprehensive planning and planning implementation tools and techniques, sustainable communities, and property rights issues.

1

The Role of Assets in Community-Based Development

Community development's intellectual roots are in several academic disciplines, including sociology, economics, political science, planning, social work, and even architecture. The interdisciplinary approach of community development has many advantages, but it also presents some analytical problems. It lacks a common language, a conceptual framework, and a set of agreed-upon issues or problems. Community development also is frequently driven more by practice than by theory. There also is considerable debate among practitioners whether community development is primarily a process or an outcome.

Community development has always had a diverse set of objectives: solving local problems (e.g., unemployment and poverty), addressing inequalities of wealth and power, promoting democracy, and building a sense of community (Rubin & Rubin, 1992). As a result, it has been defined in a variety of ways, including local economic development, political empowerment, service provision, real estate development, comprehensive planning, and job training. In this book, we do not overcome these ambiguities, but we define some of the major concepts and issues for which there is considerable agreement in the community development field today. We believe the asset approach offers the best potential for providing a common conceptual basis for community development theory and for practitioners. We begin with one of the most slippery terms—*community*.

BOX 1.1 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FACTS

- Racial and ethnic minorities account for 83% of the growth in metropolitan areas.
- One out of eight Americans is an immigrant, and half of the foreign born live in a few of the largest metropolitan areas.
- By 2008, high-wage workers in large metro areas had outearned their low-wage counterparts by a ratio of more than five to one, and the number of their residents living in poverty had risen 15% since 2000.

SOURCE: Metropolitan Program at Brookings (2010).

Whither Community?

Community is one of the central concepts in the social sciences, yet it lacks a precise definition. In a review of the community literature many years ago, Hillery (1955) found more than 94 separate definitions. The term *community* also has been used interchangeably with *neighborhood*. In this section, we provide working definitions of *community* and *neighborhood* and discuss some of the implications of these definitions for the field of community development.

Following Wilkinson (1991), we define *community* as including three elements: (1) territory or place, (2) social organizations or institutions that provide regular interaction among residents, and (3) social interaction on matters concerning a common interest. This definition excludes **communities of interest**, such as professional organizations or religious groups. Although many people have broadened the concept of community to include interaction solely on interest, we focus on **communities of place** in this book. As we will discuss in more detail later, our approach is somewhat problematic because research shows that people are becoming less attached to specific places and increasingly linked to communities of interest. Growth of the Internet, for example, provides new opportunities for individuals to connect with other people who have similar interests and concerns. Individuals have become more strongly linked to national and international organizations and institutions as well.

Many issues that affect residents, however, remain place based, such as schools, housing, and environmental quality. So, although we recognize that there are social and economic forces changing the nature of community, place-based issues continue to influence the quality of life of most people. Place is especially important for understanding the social and economic processes in poor neighborhoods that trap residents in concentrated poverty and racial isolation. Local institutions and social ties are important forces on social and economic opportunities as well.

One of the other difficulties in defining community is the fact that they can vary considerably in terms of size and density. Areas with very low population densities present some obstacles to community development. On one hand, low density may reduce the opportunities for social interaction and community mobilization. Proximity and distance matter, and they can be obstacles to collective action. On the other hand, large cities with high population density, however, are difficult to organize because of the lack of sense of community and more heterogeneous social ties.

In this book, we also consider the existence of local institutions, such as a school or even a restaurant, as key factors facilitating the development of a sense of community. Local organizations and institutions are important for a couple of reasons. They provide residents with opportunities for interaction and frequently represent the common interests of those in the area, such as a school district. Many local institutions today, however, are actually controlled

by national and international organizations. This situation may influence the relationship of the institution to the locality. We will discuss in the later chapters how community-based organizations and institutions are more likely to benefit local residents and contribute to a sense of community. One of the central goals of the **asset-based development** approach is to provide stronger ties between institutions and the residents in a locality.

Finally, this definition suggests that community is a contingent phenomenon, dependent on a number of conditions to achieve social interactions in pursuit of mutual interests. Simply living in the same place does not necessarily create a sense of community. Action promoting a common interest is not necessarily a result of objective conditions, participation in local organizations and institutions, or even the realization that individual well-being is linked to the quality of life in the community. There may be structural factors that contribute to opportunities to build a sense of community, but these conditions do not necessarily lead to collective action.

We discuss some of the factors that can contribute to a sense of community later in the book. This argument suggests, however, that community development is often more of an art than a science. It is not just about helping people realize their own interests. It is about identifying assets that can help, developing the leadership to mobilize residents, and building the capacity to act in the future. In this regard, developing community agency is a fundamental tenet of the community development field. By *community agency*, we mean that residents have the capacity to act collectively in their own interests.

We need to make one more qualifying remark about this definition of community. Some critics charge that the concept of community implies a consensus or common values. For example, they point to the fact that communities of place are often sharply divided by class and race. Other divisions, such as gender or length of residence, may also create **conflicts**. We do not believe the process of community development assumes homogeneity of values or consensus. In fact, much of our discussion in this book focuses on conflict and power relations within communities. Numerous case studies, however, illustrate how diverse communities have been able to identify common interests that provide the basis for local action. Of course, there will always be those instances of structural conflict, say between developers and environmentalists, where it is more difficult to find common ground. Conflict is not inherently bad. It may help to resolve some of the underlying tensions that communities face. At the same time, we must not assume that all communities are riddled with social conflict. Consensus may be possible if residents focus more on their interests rather than specific strategies or issues. Just because communities of place may be heterogeneous or have a history of conflict does not necessarily mean that they cannot find common ground.

Next we turn to distinguishing between the concepts of **community** and **neighborhood**. Probably the easiest way to distinguish between the two is to use the latter to refer exclusively to a specific geography and the former as social interaction on matters concerning a common interest. Based on this

distinction, a community may or may not be place based. Community can be defined, for example, as a group of residents acting on a common interest, such as a school or road issue. Or community may be defined as a group sharing a common interest, such as religious beliefs, professions, or ethnicity. Neighborhoods usually refer to a specific geography, such as residential areas demarcated by major streets or other physical barriers. This does not assume, however, that there is any social interaction or effort to address common needs in the area, as is the case in the definition of community.

This simple distinction between neighborhood and community does not resolve some of the conceptual problems that exist in using these concepts. One of the perennial problems is that individuals in neighborhoods and communities of place, especially those people who live in metropolitan areas, do not limit their social relationships to people in the same locality. Studies have consistently shown that most individuals have extensive social ties with other people outside their neighborhood (Gans, 1962; Suttles, 1972). Thus, the boundaries of the neighborhood or community are difficult to define. Many researchers use official areas, such as census tracts (Jargowsky, 1997) or counties (Lobao, 1990), to define neighborhoods or communities. These designations, however, do not necessarily correspond to bounded areas of social relationships, although the Census Bureau considers things such as natural barriers in its process of defining census tracts. One result of the growing tendency to maintain contacts outside one's neighborhood is that it may be increasingly difficult to develop a sense of common interest.

Neighborhoods are an important focus for our discussion of community development because social problems tend to be bundled together. In the social science literature, this is often referred to as the **neighborhood effect**. Problems such as crime, environmental hazards, and homelessness tend to vary considerably across space and are concentrated in specific places. These problems are strongly linked to social inequality, which is also manifested across space. The ecological concentration of poverty and affluence has increased significantly over the past several decades. Neighborhoods can shape social outcomes in several ways: (1) Neighborhoods can serve as a source of socialization for youth and thus influence their behavior. Adults in the neighborhood can shape the values and behavior of youth in the area. (2) Through social interaction, neighborhoods can be a source of social contagion, spreading social problems in the area. Crime in a specific block may spread throughout a neighborhood. Gangs, for example, operate at the neighborhood level and provide social support for specific types of behavior. (3) Neighborhoods may shape social outcomes through institutional processes. For example, banks serving a neighborhood influence access to and the cost of credit for consumers in the area. Overall, there is a growing body of literature suggesting that these contextual effects that operate in neighborhoods are much stronger than individual characteristics. The implication of all of these findings is that policies and programs addressing social problems should focus on changing the context for individual behavior.

This problem of defining the boundaries of neighborhoods and communities, however, does not mean that individuals do not maintain all of their social relationships and ties with their neighbors. There is ample evidence that neighborhood ties and relationships continue to be important sources of support for many people (Campbell & Lee, 1992). Communities of place, therefore, should not be considered bounded entities that contain the bulk of social ties and relationships that residents hold. As individuals now tend to work, live, and consume in different places, it is more likely they will develop social relationships in these different settings. The liberation of community ties may make the development of community of place more difficult to achieve in some settings but not impossible. Although local crises, such as a plant closing or an environmental threat, may lead to short-term actions based on common interest, these actions may not be sustained long term. In addition, many community development programs are based on helping residents access key resources, such as loans and grants, from state and federal institutions. Access to social networks and resources outside the community of place may be a key to the success of these local efforts.

In this next section, we turn to an equally contentious concept—development.

Growth Versus Development

Growth and **development** are often considered synonymous. Community residents see the two concepts increasingly in negative terms, especially by those who assume that growth and development automatically lead to more people, traffic congestion, and environmental degradation. There are some important differences, however, between the two concepts that we need to consider. *Growth* refers to increased quantities of specific phenomena, such as jobs, population, or income. It also could be used to refer to changes in quality, such as better jobs or more secure sources of income. *Development*, on the other hand, involves structural change, especially in how resources are used, the functioning of institutions, and the distribution of resources in the community. One of the primary goals of community development is to reduce vulnerability to shifts in production technology and in the market. It also implies that there is an attempt to balance economic growth with social justice and environmental protection. Many people suggest that there is actually a great deal of overlap between the concepts of development and sustainability. Perhaps a more precise definition would focus on community resiliency.

Community development is often equated with economic development. Many practitioners, however, consider community development as a set of activities that must precede economic development. Communities need to provide a good infrastructure, including housing and schools, to generate jobs and income. Some community development activities, however, are more directly related to economic development, such as job training and business

management. The concept of community development, then, is broader than economic development and may include many activities that are directly economic in nature.

Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, defined development as freedom (Sen, 1999). From his perspective, high levels of social and economic inequality present obstacles to development because the poor do not have the same opportunities to develop their capacity. Sen argued that development should encompass five different types of freedom: (1) political freedoms, (2) economic facilities, (3) social opportunities, (4) transparency guarantees, and (5) protective security. Political freedoms refer primarily to civil liberties. Economic facilities are the resources that families hold to produce, consume, or exchange in the marketplace. Social opportunities are the societal arrangements for the conditions to improve quality of life, such as education, health care, and so on. Transparency guarantees can be defined as the level of trust that exists among individuals and between individuals and their government. Finally, protective security includes institutional arrangements that “provide a social safety net for preventing the affected population from being reduced to abject misery, and in some cases even starvation and death” (Sen, 1999, p. 40).

Although Sen’s analysis focuses on national and global development, especially in Third World countries, many of these elements can be applied to the local level as well. The main point, however, is that development cannot simply be reduced to growth in income or jobs. Instead, it should be viewed as a much broader process that improves the opportunities and quality of life for individuals. Many economists assume that economic growth will automatically improve quality of life. Sen’s analysis suggests the relationship is much more complex and that economic growth does not necessarily improve social conditions in communities.

On the basis of this discussion, we can see that growth may or may not lead to development. A few examples may help to further illustrate this difference. If a community experiences an increase in wealth by just a few families, this change would be considered growth and not development. Similarly, many people would consider a community that is able to attract a new employer that provides 100 new jobs as an example of development. However, if the vast majority of the jobs go to people who reside outside the area (and those workers do not purchase goods and services locally), this too would be considered an example of growth and not development. Another example might be if a fast-food chain establishes a restaurant in a community, but most of the profits from the operation are drained from the local area. Finally, if a forest-dependent community attracts a paper mill that exploits the natural resources of the area in an unsustainable manner, this case would be considered growth, not development. If the resources for future economic activity are destroyed, it cannot lead to additional development.

Development may lead to a more efficient use of resources, reduce a community’s dependency on external resources and decision making, and create a better system of managing markets (financial, housing, labor, etc.) to satisfy

local (societal) needs. A key element of the process is the allocation of development decisions to the local level, where relationships between economic development, the environment, and social needs are most visible. The result is that the community is better able to maximize preferences and capacities, whatever they may be.

People Versus Place

One of the continuing debates in the field of community development is whether policies and programs should emphasize place or people. Supporters of people-based policies contend that there is no evidence that place-based programs really work (Lemann, 1994). These critics point out that it is very difficult to attract established businesses to poor communities or to help new businesses start there as well. There also is a tendency for residents to leave the community if the programs are successful, leaving the community with a net loss in human capital. The dilemma for most communities is that increasing the skills and education of their existing workforce may not have any payoff if workers cannot find jobs in the area.

Lemann (1994, p. 30) argued, however, that there are several reasons that place-based policies are attractive. First, politicians represent geographic areas, so they see logical benefits in promoting the welfare of places. If they can provide benefits to residents, they are more likely to get reelected. Second, foundations invest in place-based development because they can have a greater impact at that smaller scale. It is more difficult for them to reform large-scale systems, such as an educational or health care system. Finally, the business sector often supports place-based approaches to development because it eschews big government approaches. Community development often receives support from those who would like to see the federal and state governments downsized and services shifted to the private sector or to nonprofit organizations.

Place-based approaches have been at the core of community development efforts for more than 50 years. Advocates of place-based programs argue that an emphasis on people rather than places ultimately leads to more problems because those who are successful leave their community. As a result, these programs contribute to concentrated poverty and social problems. Place-based strategies assume that community still matters. Advocates of place-based strategies recognize the social and economic costs of promoting community disintegration. In many cities, for example, local policies promote growth on the suburban fringe and decline in the inner city. This pattern has enormous costs that are not often considered by residents. Building new schools and providing new infrastructure to the suburbs adds to the fiscal pressures for most cities. Abandonment of old buildings and declining enrollment in inner-city schools adds to the problems of poor neighborhoods. A more appropriate strategy, they argue, is to emphasize place-based development in existing neighborhoods that reduces the social, economic, and environmental costs.

A variety of place-based strategies have been implemented in the past. For example, communities may choose to attract outside capital through tax and financial incentives. The Clinton administration established the Empowerment Zones (EZs) and Enterprise Communities (ECs) in several poor communities in the United States in an effort to promote development. These communities offer a variety of incentives for businesses locating in these areas. President Obama's Promise Zones (PZs) are the latest place-based policies that attempt to provide a more holistic approach to neighborhood development. These place-based programs have the benefit of taking a holistic approach toward improving community well-being by considering how various community assets are related to one another. For example, rather than just providing access to financial resources, these approaches recognize the need to also build educational and housing programs that will enhance the capacity of residents to take advantage of these financial resources.

Other place-based approaches focus less on outside investments and more on ways of increasing the quality of life by establishing new institutions, improving the physical infrastructure, or building on existing resources in the community. The new urbanism movement emphasizes the benefits of higher density development and infill of existing properties as a key to promote place-based development. The assumption behind new urbanism is that the existing institutional structure undermines the viability of most poor and minority communities. Institutional change is required to improve the quality of life and to capture the resources leaving the community. Most of these efforts attempt to leverage local resources to promote local ownership and control of resources (i.e., land, labor, capital). In other words, community-based strategies frequently generate demand among extra-local actors that produces benefits and returns the created surplus to the community (Gunn & Gunn, 1991).

Finally, place-based approaches recognize the contribution and value of community sentiment and support to residents. Many would argue that building strong social relationships is essential to both human and community development. In addition, places become the shared arena in which the disenfranchised can obtain political power. Many of the policies we discuss in later chapters focus on helping the poor become more spatially mobile. Although research suggests this may have some individual benefits for families, there are still questions about the impacts of such policies on community activism.

Capacity Building

A fundamental tenet of community development is that the ultimate goal is to help communities learn to help themselves. Many people refer to this concept as “**capacity building**.” Capacity building can broadly be defined as the ability to become active agents (rather than objects) of change. Typically, capacity building involves four key components: (1) a sense of community,

(2) level of commitment, (3) ability to solve problems, and (4) access to resources.

Many practitioners contend that communities are not ready to undergo a development process but instead need to build their capacity first. How do we build community capacity? Community development practitioners tend to rely on four broad strategies:

1. Leadership development. Many communities lack a diverse set of strong leaders. In some cases, it is always the same people who take responsibility and attempt to improve local conditions. There is always a need to identify and expand the pool of leaders to improve public participation and the quality of leaders in the community. Many organizations and institutions now offer leadership programs (see Case Study 1.1 for a concrete example of a leadership program). Leadership programs tend to vary in how they approach training. Some focus on providing information on substantive areas of interest (e.g., economic development, housing, natural resources) so as to increase the competency level of leaders. Others build leadership skills through personal empowerment. These programs tend to offer educational programs that improve individual confidence in and awareness of one's own abilities. Presumably, these skills will enable leaders to more effectively work with others in the community. Finally, many leadership programs emphasize process skills. For example, leaders may learn how to be effective facilitators, which will ultimately improve the ability of communities to make good decisions. Overall, **leadership development** is necessary for community development to become sustainable.

2. Organizational development. Having strong and accountable organizations is an important prerequisite for community development. As we will discuss in future chapters, organizations provide communities with the social ties and resources that are necessary for organizing and development. Capacity building focuses on strengthening existing organizations by improving board management, member recruitment, and resource allocation. It is also possible to build local capacity by establishing new organizations that address community needs. These organizations typically have a variety of needs, including establishment of vision, goals, and action plans for the future.

3. Community organizing. Communities are frequently not well organized and lack sufficient power to bring about social change. Capacity building means helping residents become more aware of their common interests to generate durable power. Community organizers tend to differ in how they build capacity—usually either through consensus or conflict. Several different models of community organizing will be discussed in later chapters.

4. Organizational networks. One of the important keys to success in community development is the ability of local organizations to access resources and information outside the community. Capacity building, therefore,

involves the establishment of mechanisms for interorganizational connections. Access to external sources of resources can be improved through participation in regional organizations and associations, as well as building social ties with key leaders outside local communities. Interorganizational networks also are the key to building power and a mass-based social movement to promote social change.

In many instances, community development practitioners focus on capacity building before they organize around specific issues. Capacity building enables communities to identify strategies and organize neighbors to improve local conditions.

CASE STUDY 1.1 MODELS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Blandin Community Leadership Program (<http://bclp.blandinfoundation.org/program/>) emphasizes framing issues, social networks and relationships, and mobilizing strategies. This program has provided training to more than 6,000 individuals in over 400 rural Minnesota communities. The program involves 8 days of training on interpersonal communication, conflict management, community power analysis, civic participation, and working effectively in small groups.

Leadership Wisconsin (<http://leadershipwisconsin.org/>) is a 2-year program that involves eight 3-day seminars, as well as a weeklong trip to Washington, D.C., a weeklong regional domestic trip, and a 2-week international trip. Thirty-five participants are chosen for each 2-year cohort. Although the program emphasizes some specific leadership skills, it also stresses the political, economic, and social issues facing society today.

Community Sustainability

There is a growing interest in promoting social, economic, and environmental sustainability at the local level. This concept is taken from the environmental literature but has much broader meaning in the context of community development. Efforts to promote **community sustainability** focus on local policies that contribute to the long-term survival of the social, economic, and environmental base of the locality. Sustainability is often considered an outcome of community development, but we view it as a guiding principle throughout the process of community development practice. This approach forces us to examine the interconnections between local economic, social, and environmental goals. This interaction is often referred to as the **triple bottom line**. Practices that promote economic development, for example, need to ensure the sustainability of the environment and provide opportunities for marginalized residents in the community.

There are numerous contradictions involved in pursuing the triple bottom line. One of the typical obstacles is the perceived conflict between jobs and the environment. Creation of new jobs may threaten environmental quality. This may be especially important in communities that are dependent on extraction of natural resources, such as forest- or mining-dependent communities. Conversely, improving environmental quality may come at the expense of unemployed and poor residents because of restrictions or limitations on how they may be using natural resources. This contradiction probably cannot be eliminated, but there are strategies that communities can use to preserve the long-term viability of their natural resources and to create good jobs that do not threaten environmental quality. One of the difficulties is that many local development programs do not accurately assess the market value of their natural resources, which often leads them to exploit them for their short-term profits.

Similarly, there may be contradictions between economic development and social equity. There is a growing recognition that creating new jobs may do little to improve the conditions for the poor and underemployed in a community if they do not have the skills or experience to fill those jobs. Also, the skill requirements of jobs may not match the experience and skills of the existing workforce, so the economic development may do very little to address unemployment and poverty. Improving the match in skills between job training programs and employer needs enables communities to address this contradiction.

Finally, we must recognize the potential contradiction between environmental protection and social equity. A substantial body of literature suggests that poor communities are more likely to take a short-term perspective toward natural resources, which can often lead to exploitation and depletion of those resources. Engaging communities in policies that affect their ability to use their natural resources is a first step in recognizing and addressing this contradiction.

The point of this discussion is that the concept of the triple bottom line makes sense at the theoretical level, but it is fairly difficult to achieve in practice at the local level. We believe, however, these obstacles can best be addressed at the local level where these contradictions are most apparent.

What is the relationship between community sustainability and asset-based development? First of all, we must recognize that sustainability strategies must focus on finding new methods of using local resources in a way that reduces environmental problems and improves social and economic opportunities. In Chapter 13, we will explore how community development practitioners are working on sustainability efforts through local food systems and renewable energy projects. The success of these sustainability programs will depend largely on identifying the key assets or resources that are available at the local level.

Similarly, we need to understand that many of the assets that exist in communities are multifunctional in nature. By this we mean that the resources can

serve a variety of functions or purposes. Natural resources, for example, can serve both production and consumption functions. They can be the inputs into an extractive production process or amenities to support tourism-related activities. Community development efforts need to work at the local level to find the most appropriate strategy that provides social, economic, and environmental benefits to residents.

The Challenge of Regionalism

Aside from the criticism that it is too difficult to create development in poor neighborhoods and communities, two other critiques frequently are made of place-based community development efforts. The first critique is that the focus on community and neighborhoods ignores the regional nature of development, especially in metropolitan areas. For example, Myron Orfield (1997) has argued for a regional approach to addressing the problems of concentrated poverty in the central city. Orfield contended that racial residential segregation, the lack of resources in ghettos, and incentives for migration to the suburbs make traditional community development efforts inadequate unless they address these social and economic forces. Among Orfield's policy recommendations are property tax base sharing across cities and suburbs, deconcentration of affordable housing across metropolitan areas, and land use policies that discourage sprawl. Other regionalists such as David Rusk (1993) have emphasized the importance of cities' ability to expand their boundaries to capture the benefits of the movement of people and jobs to the suburbs.

A second critique is that the community development literature creates a false choice between people and place. One example is the so-called mobility strategy (Hughes, 1991), which attempts to help city residents commute to suburban jobs, rather than try to bring employers to the city or move workers to where the jobs are. This approach has the advantage of solving the labor market and income problems of the poor, while still keeping them in their neighborhoods. This strategy could be addressed in a few different ways. The most common tactic is to develop transportation systems that assist workers in finding and obtaining jobs in other parts of the region. Many cities are now providing transportation from the inner city to jobs in the suburbs. Another approach, however, might be to bring work (rather than the entire business) from employers in the suburbs into the inner city. This tactic helps develop the experience of the workforce in the inner city and often provides employers with some confidence that these workers have the needed skills.

We do not believe these regional strategies are not necessarily an alternative to traditional place-based community development strategies. Instead, they build on existing links between communities and their regions. Recommendations for the mobility strategy are still based on the assumption that it is important to build the community or neighborhood. The challenge

for regional development strategies is to remain connected to community-based organizations and local efforts to mobilize residents. Without these connections, **regionalism** can take a “top-down” approach and lose grass-roots support.

Asset Building

Community development is a participatory effort to mobilize community assets that increases the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life. We now turn to a more detailed discussion about what we mean by the concept of community assets. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) defined assets as the “gifts, skills and capacities” of “individuals, associations and institutions” within a community (p. 25). Melvin Oliver (2001), the former vice president of the Ford Foundation, further elaborated on the importance of asset building:

An “asset” in this paradigm is a special kind of resource that an individual, organization, or entire community can use to reduce or prevent poverty and injustice. An asset is usually a “stock” that can be drawn upon, built upon, or developed, as well as a resource that can be shared or transferred across generations. . . . As the poor gain access to assets, they are more likely to take control of important aspects of their lives, to plan for their future and deal with economic uncertainty, to support their children’s educational achievements, and to work to ensure that the lives of the next generations are better than their own. (p. xii)

This focus on community assets, rather than the needs, represents a significant shift in how community development practitioners have approached their work over the past couple of decades. In the past, community development practitioners began their efforts by conducting a needs assessment that examined the problems and weaknesses that exist in the community (Johnson, Meiller, Miller, & Summers, 1987). One of the advantages of needs assessment is that problem identification can help mobilize communities to address local issues. The tendency, however, is for residents to look to others outside the community, especially to professionals, for help. By relying on professionals and other forms of technical assistance, communities become more dependent on outside resources and often lose control over the development process. In response to these tendencies, Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) emphasized the importance of looking to community assets as a way to identify strengths and resources that can contribute to a strategic planning process.

As McKnight (1995) suggests, it is in the interests of professionals and technical-assistance providers to promote dependency. Local residents frequently turn to outside assistance because they believe the issues or problems

are too complex for residents. This type of assistance does very little to help build community capacity. It is possible, however, for professionals and technical-assistance providers to empower local residents. This might mean helping residents develop the research skills, substantive knowledge, or both to address community issues rather than providing them with recommendations or “answers.”

The distinction between needs and assets does not mean that practitioners have to make a decision to use one approach or another. In many cases, it may make sense to begin by identifying a community’s assets and then examine its needs. A discussion of the needs and problems is almost inevitable in community processes and often serves to mobilize residents to act on an issue. The concern with an exclusive focus on needs is that a community often jumps immediately to problem solving rather than identifying its goals and strengths.

It is difficult to identify a single theory or conceptual basis for the asset-based community development approach. Asset-based development is more a method than it is a theory of community social change. It clearly has some intellectual ties to Wilkinson’s (1991) interactional theory of communities (or **field theory**), which rejects the view of communities as independent social structures. Instead, through interaction in a locality, an awareness of common interests emerges. In this process, people learn to identify, manage, and leverage local resources to the benefit of their locality (Wilkinson, 1991). Much of this is dependent on developing social ties and relationships that enhance the ability of residents to act collectively to address local concerns.

Asset building, therefore, has some interesting intellectual ties to **social capital** theory as well (Putnam, 2000). Participation in local organizations and associations builds social relationships and trust that are so essential in mobilizing community residents. Social capital becomes the basis for building other community assets, such as human and financial capital. In addition, social capital is critical to economic development and democratic political structures.

There are a variety of other theoretical ties to asset-based development. **Dependency theory**, which is often applied to nation-states, points to the exploitive relationships that develop through international trade and investment. Its focus on the development of dependency is very similar to the critique of needs-based approaches that McKnight (1995) criticizes. In this theory, development requires greater autonomy and independence from external actors and institutions.

Finally, there are some parallels to theories about social movements, such as **resource mobilization theory**. According to this theory, the success of social movements depends largely on the ability to mobilize people and to acquire resources that enable them to achieve their goals (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). The theory also asserts that participants in social movements are rational actors—they weigh the benefits and costs of involvement in the movement. Moreover, social movements are not necessarily the result of perceived grievances but can be the result of a variety of goals and values.

Community development, then, draws insights from this diverse set of theories to build an understanding of the relationships between social interaction, organizations, institutions, and resources. Collective mobilization begins with social interaction that contributes to a sense of community. The development of and participation in local organizations enhances the social capacity in the locality and builds trust among residents. The creation or restructuring of local institutions helps to better serve residents. Finally, improving access to local and nonlocal resources is critical to the achievement of goals of community development effort.

CASE STUDY 1.2 THE DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

Probably one of the most widely acclaimed success stories in the community development field in recent years is the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI). The philosophy behind DSNI was to build on the local assets rather than to focus on the needs of residents. Dudley Street is located in Boston's Roxbury District, one of the poorest areas in Massachusetts. Approximately 35% of the families in the area live below the poverty line, and the neighborhood contained many abandoned buildings, a large number of vacant lots (20% of the lots), and a persistent drug problem.

The DSNI began in 1984 when the Riley Foundation, a Boston-area community foundation, decided to make an investment in the neighborhood. Local residents challenged the plan presented by the Riley Foundation because it was not "their" plan. In response to this initiative, residents established DSNI, which had a 31-member board of directors, with the majority consisting of local residents. There are more than 2,500 voting members of the DSNI, and the organization employs approximately 16 full-time staff.

The organization launched several projects that were immediately successful, including removal of illegal dumps on Dudley Street and even provision of affordable housing for residents. Part of the DSNI's success was due to its combining the role of developer of low-income housing and provider of social services with the role of community organizer. The most controversial project of the DSNI was its program to take eminent domain of 30 acres of vacant land and develop it as a land trust. The DSNI had strong support from the city government for this project.

The DSNI took control of more than 1,300 abandoned parcels of land in the neighborhood, converting them into parks, gardens, and other public spaces as well as 400 single-family and cooperative homes for low- and middle-income residents. The DSNI organized a youth committee to address young people's concerns, such as recreation and educational opportunities. The DSNI, which has been especially concerned about recognizing the various cultures in the neighborhood, sponsored several multicultural festivals. The organization also has moved into the area of economic development but has had less success with these efforts.

For more information on DSNI, see Medoff and Sklar (1994).

The video *Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street* (Lipman & Mahan, 1996) documents the efforts of DSNI as well.

CASE STUDY 1.3 ASSET BUILDING IN INDIAN COUNTRY

The First Nations Institute was founded in 1980 to assist Native American people in building the capacity of tribal communities. The institute has used asset-building strategies to promote culturally compatible stewardship of the assets they own, including land, cultural heritage, and natural resources, to develop tribal communities. They consider several types of assets in their approach, including financial, physical, natural, institutional, human, cultural, social, and political assets. The institute emphasizes strategies that enable Native American communities to control, retain, increase, use, leverage, and create assets. Some examples of asset-building strategies include starting a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), using Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), and establishing a fitness program for tribal youth. For a good discussion of their approach and model, see <http://www.firstnations.org/about>.

The bottom line is that asset-based development has a variety of intellectual ties and roots to several social and political theories. The strength of this approach is that the connection between theory and practice is much stronger than most social or political theories. Asset mapping is a process of learning about the resources that are available in a community and building strategies that leverage these resources to achieve local goals. The following items include examples of assets mapping:

- The identification of economic development opportunities through the mapping of available skills and work experience
- The documentation of natural resource assets that may promote economic development through tourism or increased home values
- The assessment of consumer spending practices to identify the potential for new businesses in the neighborhood
- The development of a community resources inventory to identify the experiences of residents in providing services, such as child care, to identify the potential for more providers in the community

In this book, we expand the definition of community assets to include seven forms of **assets**: physical, human, social, financial, environmental, political, and cultural. There are other assets that we might consider, but most community development activities focus on these seven forms of **community capital**. We use the term *community assets* for a couple of reasons. First, this concept suggests that there are underused resources available in the community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Individuals may have job skills or experiences that do not match the local demand. Individuals and families may have savings that are being invested outside the community. The community may have natural resources that could potentially be of value as an amenity, but these resources are overlooked as having economic value. The goal of asset-based community development is to identify these resources and mobilize residents to make better use of them to meet the needs of residents.

We refer to these forms of assets as *community capital*. *Capital* is used here in a very broad sense. Most of the time, capital is defined as wealth that is used to create more wealth. This concept, however, can be applied to other resources as well. Investments in education and training (human capital) produce additional benefits for workers. Similarly, investments in social relationships (social capital) generate social resources (help from neighbors, friends, and others) that can be used later. When communities make the right investments in the resources they have, it creates future benefits in the quality of life for residents.

The asset approach also implies that the community development effort is directed toward the locality or place. Rather than providing training for jobs that workers must take elsewhere, there is an attempt to match training efforts to jobs that can be created locally. Similarly, if an absentee-owned firm processes natural resources, many of the benefits will flow outside the community. The same thing may occur if families place their savings in banks and other financial institutions that invest these resources in other localities.

Finally, the asset-based approach assumes that many institutional obstacles to the development of places are difficult to overcome through individual action but instead must be addressed through the activities of collectivities or community-based organizations (CBOs). Community-based organizations can overcome many of the collective-action and economies-of-scale problems associated with community development. For example, although individual employers in a community may lack skilled workers, and although they all have an interest in having a skilled workforce, individual businesses may be reluctant to invest in training because they may lose these trained workers. Community development offers collective solutions to these problems by building on the existing resources within the community. In his analysis of community-based development organizations (CBDOs), Rubin (2000) found that asset building is the real objective of these organizations:

It matters less what is built than that projects introduce assets, both material and social, for those in neighborhoods of deprivation. These assets create an economic stake in society, for both recipients and the CBDO, as well as a set of obligations—paying rent, maintaining property, concern with the quality of the neighborhood—that is socially empowering. (p. 162)

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) outline several steps in mobilizing community assets. The first step is to identify the capacities of residents, organizations, and institutions. The idea that all individuals have the capacity to contribute to their community is fundamental to this approach. Also often overlooked are the potential contributions of youth, seniors, and people with disabilities. In addition to standard labor market skills and experiences, communities need to know about volunteering activities, hobbies, caregiving experiences, and so on. This information is often captured through surveys, conducted either face to face or through the mail. An excellent resource for measuring individual capacities is a workbook by Kretzmann, McKnight, and Sheehan (1997).

Associations and organizations can facilitate mobilization. Asset-based development efforts usually attempt to map both formal and informal organizations in the community. Formal organizations are usually visible, and there are directories to help identify them. Informal organizations, such as block clubs, neighborhood watches, and garden clubs, however, usually do not appear on formal lists because they are not incorporated or do not have paid staff. Probably the most efficient way to collect this information is to conduct a survey of individuals that asks them to identify all of their memberships. These data can help identify the organizations to be contacted. It is helpful to compile a list of board members, leaders, and resources available in the organization.

Community institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and libraries, are potentially important resources for community development. Institutions purchase goods and services that could contribute to the local economy. They have facilities that can be used for community events. They also employ workers, which affects the local economy. Mapping these institutions involves assessing the institutional assets with the goal of identifying resources that could contribute to community building. For example, farm-to-school programs have developed across the country in recent years. These programs identify ways of improving markets for regional farmers and improving the quality of food in school. By purchasing local produce, schools are a powerful asset of the local economy.

After mapping these community assets, practitioners build relationships across the community that will help implement the goals and vision of the project. Mobilizing assets requires broad-based support. The asset-based development approach relies on leveraging local resources to gain outside support. Although it is important to build from local resources, it is also important to tap into existing resources that will enhance those assets.

The asset-building approach is not without its critics. Proponents of asset-based development have often been accused of ignoring power relations within communities. Some will argue that without changing the structure of power relations, it is impossible to bring about meaningful social change. The needs assessments approach, however, establishes power relationships between professionals and citizens. By identifying problems and needs, communities often become dependent on **technical assistance** and experts to help address these issues. Asset building attempts to address these power relationships by building on existing resources and strengths to guide the community planning effort. This approach does not rely solely on local resources but focuses on innovative ways of leveraging these resources.

Asset-based development tends to be less conflict oriented than some other community organizing approaches. It emphasizes common interests and can serve as an excellent basis for mobilizing residents to address the critical issues facing their communities. In this regard, it has much in common with the techniques and strategies employed by the Industrial Areas Foundation, which is discussed in a later chapter. There is nothing inherent in the approach that avoids conflict with the power elite. Nor does the emphasis on common interests ignore conflict. The approach seeks to overcome racial, gender, and class differences that frequently constrain community development projects.

BOX 1.2 AN EXAMPLE: SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY ASSETS

Schools and communities have a mutually beneficial relationship, but several forces work against cooperation between the two. Professionalization and bureaucratization encourage the linkages to the broader community. School officials, it is argued, have the training and experience necessary to make better decisions about education than the public. Another trend that undermines the relationship between schools and their community is the charter school movement. Privatization and marketization of education reduce access to the assets offered by schools.

Professionalization and bureaucratization also have shaped the community development field in recent decades. The emphasis on finance and housing, the bread and butter of many community development programs, limits the role of schools. Professionalization places much less emphasis on community organizing and more on accessing external resources as a means of promoting development. These processes have also moved community development professionals away from working through local organizations and institutions.

There are numerous reasons, however, why schools should logically be the focus of community development practitioners. In many communities, schools are one of the few remaining local institutions. Local businesses have been replaced with regional, national, and international chains. Independent hospitals have been acquired by outside organizations. Small-town banks have become branches of national, and even international, holding organizations. Support for other local organizations also declines as these institutions restructure their relationship to the community. Schools can potentially play an important community function because they have this localized relationship that other social institutions lack today.

How can schools serve as a community asset? First, school facilities are underused because they are typically used for only a part of the day. School facilities can provide a meeting place for community organizations, business groups, and informal organizations (e.g., book clubs). Community organizations, especially those serving youth, can use recreational facilities. Most communities struggle to find facilities for artists and musicians, and schools can cooperate with local organizations to provide these key resources. School grounds are increasingly used for community gardens. These gardens not only improve the food security for the community but also provide an educational opportunity for students.

Second, schools often have equipment that could benefit the broader community. For example, there is growing interest in the concept of community kitchens that provide equipment and facilities to entrepreneurs. Caterers and bakers could benefit from gaining the barriers they face in the startup phase. Thus, schools can serve as incubators for entrepreneurship in the community.

Third, schools can stimulate the local economy through their purchasing power. Rather than purchasing goods and services outside the community, schools can support local businesses through their purchases. The growing number of farm-to-school programs is an excellent example of “going local.” In an effort to introduce more fresh fruits and vegetables into school lunch programs, many schools are purchasing products from local farmers and ranchers rather than from wholesalers. These programs benefit the schools because they not only provide nutritious food but also offer educational opportunities and support local farmers.

Fourth, schools can offer educational programs to the broader community. Many schools offer courses on English as a second language. Local schools are best prepared to reach out to local residents who may not have the resources to obtain this training elsewhere. The potential ties through students can be an effective way of reaching this audience.

Public Participation

Community development requires the involvement and participation of local residents in identifying the strategies they wish to use to improve their quality of life. Most people use the term **citizen participation** to characterize this process. We prefer to use the concept of **public participation**. Langton (1978) defined *citizen participation* as “purposeful activities in which citizens take part in relation to government” (p. 17). This concept is too restrictive for a couple of reasons. First, this definition is limited to citizens (i.e., legal residents). By using the term *public*, we also include people who do not have all of the rights and obligations of citizenship. Given the high rates of immigration in many American cities, and rural areas as well, and the disproportionate number of poor communities with a large number of immigrants, this restriction does not make sense today.

Second, citizen participation includes only activities related to the government. Public participation refers to activities in any public institution of society or the government, which includes organizations and institutions other than government. Although many community development activities either collaborate with or are directed at governments (e.g., improving social service provision or transportation systems), many more activities do not involve government at any level.

Having differentiated between citizen and public participation, we do recognize that much of the public’s participation in the past has been in relation to local, state, and federal governments. It is useful to distinguish between two types of participation here. First, there is community action resulting from activities initiated and controlled by CBOs that is frequently directed at changing government services and policies. Second, there is community action that can be referred to as **public involvement**, which is initiated and controlled by the government.

There has been rapid growth in the number of programs initiated by the government to promote public involvement. Increasingly, the public has been directly involved in decisions (Roberts, 2004). Almost all federal and state programs contain some element of public participation. Some examples are federal requirements for public participation in the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, the Airport and Airways Development Act, and, more recently, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The primary purpose of these programs is to gain support for decisions, programs, and services. Of course, many of these programs have been criticized for not allowing the public to make these decisions but simply to have an opportunity to comment on decisions that have already been made. We examine these issues in more detail later when we discuss the community development process (in Chapter 4).

We believe, however, that community development is much broader than adhering to government requirements for public participation or organizing to demand better government services. There are a wide variety of activities

outside of government-related issues in which community development organizations are engaged.

Why is there so much emphasis on public participation in community development? Participation is seen as developmental, educative, and integrative and as a means of protecting freedom (Roberts, 2004). One of the key assumptions of participation is that local residents will be more supportive of decisions, and therefore increase the likelihood of its success, if residents have input in the decision-making process. Also, local residents probably have much better knowledge about the assets and needs of the community. Thus, participation improves the quality of decision making. Finally, public participation is considered the centerpiece of the democratic process. Local officials, however, have not always accepted this emphasis on public participation. As we discuss in Chapter 2, public participation among the poor during the 1960s was an especially controversial topic.

The Role of Community-Based Organizations

One of the distinguishing characteristics of community development is that it involves the creation or leveraging of local organizations to help build assets. Throughout this book, we place a great deal of emphasis on the role of CBOs. These organizations offer several advantages, compared with nonlocal organizations, for carrying out place-based programs. CBOs are rooted in place and have extensive contacts and information about the neighborhood. Their primary mission is aimed at the locality; they emphasize the importance of place over other goals. Also, in ideal situations, local residents control CBOs. Typically, control is characterized by representation on the board and input into the organization's policies and programs.

Community-based organizations are essential ingredients for mobilizing and organizing residents. For example, in his review of the factors contributing to the civil rights movement, Morris (1999) suggests that it was cooperation across social movement organizations that contributed to the success of the movement. Community-based organizations play four critical functions (Rubin & Rubin, 1992): (1) They create power as they gather resources, (2) they provide continuing and can sustain action over time, (3) they create expertise through their experience, and (4) they are able to react quickly to various opportunities and issues.

One of the principal vehicles for carrying out community development activities in the United States today is the community development corporation (CDC). Because these organizations are so important to the community development movement, we devote almost an entire chapter to discussing their activities (see Chapter 5).

Community development, however, can occur in a variety of other CBOs. For example, we also examine local development corporations, which are responsible for coordinating economic development activities in many

communities and regions. Neighborhood associations address issues such as real estate development and social service provision. Faith-based organizations are increasingly called on to provide social services to the needy. Religious organizations have played an increasingly important role in providing services to the poor and are more involved in job training and housing issues than they were in the past, largely due to welfare reform. A large number of nonreligious nonprofit organizations, such as homeless shelters, neighborhood clinics, and child care centers, serve a more specialized function in communities. And nongovernmental organizations are major actors in international development. Community foundations are nonprofit organizations that provide long-term funds for organizations and activities in a defined geographic area. Currently, more than 400 community foundations exist, with their total assets exceeding \$8 billion (Mayer, 1994). Throughout this book, we discuss other specialized community-based organizations, such as loan funds and training organizations.

The organizations discussed previously tend to have paid staff. Many nonprofit organizations without staff play a critical role in community development. Examples of these organizations are parent-teacher organizations, tenant associations, block clubs, recreational clubs, and other smaller organizations. These organizations receive very little attention in the literature.

Models of Community Development

Although there are some common issues and problems in the field of community development, there is still wide variation in how practitioners approach their work. One of the ways of conceptualizing these differences is the typology developed by James Christenson (1989). Christenson identified three different community development themes or models: self-help, technical assistance, and conflict. Although many community development efforts do not fall neatly into one of these three models, the typology is useful for understanding some of the different ways practitioners may approach their work.

Self-Help

At the heart of the **self-help** approach is the belief that community development is primarily about helping people to learn how to help themselves. Practitioners who adopt this model tend to define their role as a facilitator, helping communities identify goals and increasing capacity to participate in the solution of collective problems. The facilitator adopts a neutral position in the social change process and is primarily concerned about the process of community development rather than the specific outcomes (e.g., jobs, houses, services). The self-help approach assumes that increasing the capacity of residents to address their problems will ultimately result in long-term improvements in quality of life.

The self-help approach requires several conditions to be effective: (1) Individuals must have the necessary democratic skills, (2) participants must have a reasonable expectation that their efforts will have some impact, and (3) they also must identify their shared interests to develop a common set of goals. When these conditions do not exist, it may be necessary to build the capacity of the community prior to taking on development projects. This may involve building leadership skills, resolving conflict, or simply bringing residents together to identify common concerns. Community development efforts using the self-help approach tend to have more long-lasting effects than do some of the other approaches because residents have greater ownership in the process.

Facilitators are always faced with the dilemma of how to balance the need for information and technical assistance with the facilitation process. We will discuss this issue in more detail in the chapter on the community development process (Chapter 4). It is important that facilitators clearly identify the goals and expected outcomes before the community moves to “solutions.” In addition, there are strategies facilitators can use to help ensure that the community maintains control of the process while seeking information and technical assistance.

It can be challenging for facilitators to maintain their neutrality throughout the community development process. This approach can raise ethical issues for practitioners. To what extent should they intervene if the process becomes dominated by a few people? Should facilitators help communities avoid problems that can sabotage the community effort? When should a practitioner “hand off” the leadership role to residents? These are all difficult questions that practitioners must grapple with on a case-by-case basis.

Technical Assistance

Practitioners who adopt the technical assistance model assume that the most important obstacle communities face concerns information. This model is firmly rooted in the rational planning approach to development. Thus, the appropriate role for the community development practitioner is one of a consultant. Those who advocate the technical assistance model are much more concerned with the eventual outcome of the community development effort than they are with enhancing the capacity of residents. Technical assistance also can be provided in a variety of ways, from ongoing local assistance to short-term consulting.

A variety of issues should be considered when taking the technical assistance approach to community development: Whose values are being served by the assistance? How have the goals been established? Should other alternatives be considered? Will the assistance help residents address community problems in the future?

Technical assistance can be provided through several different institutional arrangements: a centralized location, a regional provider, or local assistance.

Technical assistance offered through a centralized location is the most cost-efficient but often lacks the follow-up that is frequently necessary. The consultant may deliver a product or advise and leave it to the community to decide whether or how to use the information. An alternative is to provide technical assistance through local or regional providers. This approach has several advantages. The consultant usually has much more knowledge about local or regional conditions and also is available for follow-up consultation once the project has been initiated. Of course, this type of technical assistance is usually much more costly than the traditional consultant model.

Conflict

Probably one of the most established traditions in community development is the conflict approach, which is most often identified with Saul Alinsky (1969). The practitioner's approach in this model is one of organizer or advocate. Practitioners who adopt this approach assume that the fundamental source of most community problems is the lack of power. And this approach is most often used in places where residents have been marginalized or lack the ability to shape decisions that are affecting their quality of life. Neighborhoods generally lack power because they are not well organized. This approach often begins with an assessment of the local power structure. The goal is to determine who has power and what strategies can be used to change the situation. We discuss several methods of analyzing local power structures in a later chapter.

According to Alinsky (1969), the community organizer then needs to choose a problem and organize the community around this problem. The conflict should be small and winnable. The goal is to demonstrate to residents that they can be successful. Alinsky's approach is based on the assumption that community organizations should not directly confront the power structure. Instead, they should use a variety of tactics to embarrass local political leaders and to demonstrate the value of power to residents. Although this approach has proven to be successful in low-income neighborhoods, it is unclear how successful these tactics would be in middle-class neighborhoods. This approach also may have difficulty in cross-racial, ethnic, and class lines in a neighborhood. Finally, community organizers using this approach frequently have difficulty maintaining momentum in the community development process once residents have achieved some success.

To address some of these weaknesses, Alinsky (1969) argued that it was important to work through existing organizations in the neighborhood. These organizations can provide resources, contacts, and legitimacy in the neighborhood. His strategy was to identify common concerns and issues that are identified by leaders of these organizations and work toward a consensus on addressing the problem.

These three models represent very broad approaches to community development. It is important for practitioners to understand how the context may

influence their decisions about which model is most appropriate for a particular situation. Similarly, it may be necessary to shift models in the process as the community develops capacity or encounters obstacles in its path.

Summary and Conclusions

Community development defies many of the standard assumptions we make about community and development in America today. The emphasis on community rather than the power of markets or government programs challenges the policy prescriptions of both political conservatives and liberals. The requirement that residents participate in the solutions to common problems contradicts the accepted view today that community no longer exists or that problems are usually too complex or technical for the average person. Emphasis on place rather than people also puts community development squarely in opposition with the individualistic nature of our culture and society, as well as the emphasis on the importance of residential mobility.

Yet community development is consistent with some of the critical values and ideals we hold, regardless of our political views, to be extremely important, such as democratic control and local autonomy. Financial interests may drive the political system and individuals may have little control over bureaucratic institutions (e.g., corporations and the government), but the community offers a place for people to learn the value of cooperation and civic virtue. Participation, like any other skill, must be learned through experience. The promise of community development is that these skills can be transferred to other walks of life.

KEY CONCEPTS

Asset-based development	Dependency theory
Assets	Development
Capacity building	Field theory
Citizen participation	Growth
Community	Leadership development
Community capital	Neighborhood
Community of interest	Neighborhood effect
Community of place	Public involvement
Community sustainability	Public participation
Conflicts	Regionalism

Resource mobilization theory

Technical assistance

Self-help

Triple bottom line

Social capital

QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast the three models of community development described by James Christenson.
2. What are the three necessary elements in the definition of community? Why is community such a difficult concept to define?
3. What is the difference between growth and development? Provide some examples.
4. Identify three key differences between the assets approach and the needs assessments approach to community development.
5. What are the basic strengths and weaknesses of place- versus people-oriented approaches to development?
6. What are some strategies for building community capacity?
7. Why are community-based organizations so important for community organizing?

EXERCISES

1. Ask several of your neighbors to draw a map of your community or neighborhood. How much agreement is there in these maps and how do they differ? How many neighbors do they know in this area? How often do they have contact with these people? Do they belong to any clubs, organizations, or associations in this neighborhood?
2. Identify all of the CBOs (both nonprofit and profit) in your neighborhood or community. Build a directory that identifies the services that each provides and a contact person for each organization. Assess the overlap in their missions and the networks that exist between these organizations.
3. Identify a community-based organization and evaluate its efforts to promote public participation. How does the organization engage the public? To what extent is the board representative of the community? How does the organization solicit input from residents? How could the organization improve its efforts to promote public participation?
4. Search for some leadership programs that are offered in your region. Obtain a summary of the curriculum for each of the programs. Compare and contrast the approach to leadership that is used in each.

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ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES

Readings

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Websites

- ABCD Training Group—<http://www.abcdtraininggroup.org>. This website provides information on training in the principles, concepts, and application of asset-based community development.
- Asset Building Community Development Institute—www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html. This program at Northwestern University provides resources, publications, and training on capacity-building approaches to community development.
- Comm-Org: The On-line Conference on Community Organizing and Development—<http://comm-org.wisc.edu/index.html>. This site has a wealth of information on references, data, syllabi, and other resources on community organizing and development.
- Community Development Society—www.comm-dev.org. The international Community Development Society is a professional association of community development practitioners. The society represents a variety of fields, including health care, social services, economic development, and education.
- Community Wealth—<http://community-wealth.org>. This website is a project of the Democratic Collective. It consolidates information on a variety of issues related to community wealth.
- Ford Foundation Asset Building and Community Development Program—http://www.fordfoundation.org/pdfs/library/building_assets.pdf
- International Association for Community Development—<http://www.iacglobal.org/>. This organization aims to develop a global network of practitioners involved in community development. On the website, there are several publications and case studies of asset-based development.
- International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)—<http://www.iap2.org>. This organization is a leader in promoting public participation. It provides training, education, and research on public participation.
- LISC Institute for Comprehensive Community Development—<http://www.instituteccd.org/index.html>. This organization provides training and information on conducting comprehensive community development in neighborhoods.
- Metropolitan Policy Program, Brookings Institute—<http://www.brookings.edu/about/programs/metro>. The Brookings Institute supports research on a broad range of urban policy issues.
- NeighborWorks—<http://www.nw.org/network/training/training.asp>. This nonprofit organization provides financial support, technical assistance, and training for community-based revitalization efforts.
- Search Institute—<http://www.search-institute.org/>. This nonprofit organization focuses on asset building, with a focus on youth and communities. The institute provides several tools for asset building and has a wonderful set of case studies.
- Urban Institute—<http://www.urban.org>. This organization conducts cutting-edge research on urban development issues in the United States.

Videos

Gaining Ground: Building Community on Dudley Street (2013), produced and directed by Mark Lipman and Leah Mahan (58 minutes). This video is a follow-up of the documentary of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. Available from New Day Films, 22nd Hollywood Avenue, Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423.

Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street (1996), produced and directed by Mark Lipman and Leah Mahan (58 minutes). A nice summary of one of the most heralded community development efforts in the United States over the past two decades. Available from New Day Films, 22nd Hollywood Avenue, Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423.

Inviting Neighbors to Participate in Community Development. This video provides a nice summary of how to engage local citizens in a community development process. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4b56ky6118&feature=related>

Mobilizing Community Assets, by John Kretzmann and John McKnight. This video training program is for *Building Communities From the Inside Out*. Produced by Civic Network Television. Distributed by ACTA Publications, 4848 N. Clark South, Chicago, IL 60640; phone: (800) 397-2282.

Other Resources

BALLE (Business Alliance for Local Living Economies). This nonprofit is essentially an alliance between businesses and community development organizations that works for promoting more locally owned businesses and enhancing local economies.

Center for a New American Dream. This organization focuses on the negative aspects of hyperconsumption and advocates for community and environmental sustainability strategies. It provides some very concrete strategies for promoting localism.

Community Development Council. This nonprofit organization was established to promote the accreditation of community development educational programs, professional certification, and the development of community volunteer leaders. It offers training and certification programs in several different locations of the United States.

Community Development Digest. This publication provides an excellent summary of pending legislation on community development issues.

Equality of Opportunity Project (<http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org>). This unique website provides data on mobility patterns in metropolitan areas and counties throughout the United States.

Evidence Matters (<http://www.huduser.org/portal/evidence.html>). This publication from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development published research articles on a wide variety of issues related to housing and community development policy.

A Guide to Careers in Community Development, by Paul C. Brophy and Alice Shabecoff (2000). Washington, DC: Island Press. This book is an excellent reference for anyone considering working in the community development field. The authors include information on jobs, universities and colleges offering community development curricula, training programs, and other resources on community development.

Shelterforce (<http://www.shelterforce.org>). This is a valuable source of information on housing and community development. This online magazine is published by the National Housing Institute and covers a wide variety of community development topics, including housing, community organizing, economic development, sustainability, and policy issues.

The Urban Research Monitor. A useful reference tool developed by HUD USER. The publication makes it easy for researchers, policy makers, academicians, and other professionals to keep up with the literature on housing and community development. Each issue contains a listing of recent books, articles, reports, dissertations, and other publications related to housing and community development.

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A History of Community Development in America

Community development matured in the United States in the 1960s with the rise of place-based policies (mostly antipoverty programs), professional training programs and degrees, and formal organizations with community development as their primary mission. Many of the ideas behind community self-reliance, however, have their roots in earlier intellectual sources, such as those of John Dewey (1916). Some of the first intentional efforts at promoting community development occurred at the turn of the 20th century (Kanter, 1972).

In this chapter, we trace the evolution of community development in America. We begin our analysis at the turn of the century, with the **Progressive Era** and some of the efforts to construct community programs to address poverty and other social problems. We examine the programs of the New Deal and the Great Society, which placed the federal government in a central role in community development. Finally, we discuss contemporary efforts to promote development in poor and minority neighborhoods. This review of the evolution of community development is an important step in understanding how we approached these issues in the past and how a place-based approach to development has become so central to the federal government's role.

In this brief history, we point out several tensions and contradictions in the community development movement. One of the most critical tensions is the role of public participation in place-based development efforts. On one hand, it has been difficult to obtain public participation in local decision making. Residents have few experiences with and face numerous obstacles to participation. On the other hand, governmental officials and professionals often are threatened by public participation when it is successful. The result is a great deal of rhetoric about the importance of participation, which is seldom achieved in practice. Federal programs also have been contradictory. Although the federal government developed several programs to address the problems of localities, it has provided incentives through tax breaks and infrastructure to encourage suburban development. In doing so, the government has undermined many of the place-based policies that were established.

The Evolution of Community Development

Although there continues to be much debate about the best approach to promote community development, the public generally supports the ideas of local control and the importance of community in social life. The idea of community development has evolved considerably during this century. In this brief review, we identify the main currents of thought in the community development field in the past century.

The Progressive Era

The origins of the community development field can be traced to the Progressive Era, especially to the ideas of social scientists and reformers at the turn of the 20th century. The most distinguishing characteristic of the Progressives was their resistance to individualistic explanations of poverty and social disorganization (e.g., juvenile delinquency, crime, and the breakup of the family). Instead, they explained poverty and deviant behavior as results of social conditions in communities, as products of the subcultures of these neighborhoods. Progressives considered these subcultures to be obstacles to integration into the larger society. They argued that to improve local conditions, social intervention should have three important characteristics (O'Connor, 1999). First, social intervention should be comprehensive, focusing on the integration of education, social services, jobs, and physical conditions in a locality. Second, community intervention should promote collaboration between experts and citizens in addressing local problems. The growth of comprehensive city planning during the period is one example of this model. Finally, Progressives placed a great deal of emphasis on citizen participation. As we discuss in this chapter, later in the 1960s, this element of the community development program was highly controversial, especially during the War on Poverty.

One of the most infamous community development efforts in urban areas at the turn of the 20th century was the **settlement house** movement. The objective of the settlement house movement was to help immigrants adjust to their new environment. In many ways, those who were involved in the settlement movement saw themselves as class mediators between the working class and the wealthy. In addition to providing social services, they attempted to raise awareness about social conditions in poor communities. The settlement house movement provided adult education (especially English-language lessons), day care centers, libraries, recreational facilities, and other social services to help integrate residents into the larger society. Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr established probably the most famous of the settlement houses, Hull House, in Chicago. The clear intention was to reduce the impact of immigrants' native culture and introduce them to American society. The movement grew to more than 500 settlement houses across the United States.

The settlement house movement helped shape progressive legislation on child labor laws, occupational safety, compulsory education, and immigrant rights. They were also strong supporters of trade unions and women's suffrage. The system was reformist, however, because it did not attempt to address the fundamental causes of poverty or redistribute wealth.

Another important effort to address social conditions in urban America at the turn of the century was the **community center movement**. The first national conference on community centers was held in 1911 in Madison, Wisconsin. Josiah Strong was elected as the first president. The objective of the community center movement was to increase the use of public schools by the wider community. Proponents of the center movement saw use of public schools as an important exercise in democracy. In New York City, workers used 40 schools for shop meetings, dances, and even dinners in the corridors every night. This improved social interaction was seen as a mechanism to create more unity and consensus, as well as a means of organizing neighborhoods in a democratic manner. Although its stated objective was to build neighborhood self-help, it still relied heavily on professionals providing leadership to the programs.

Another important social movement during the Progressive Era was the **social unit plan**. Probably the most innovative experiment was the project established by Wilbur and Elsie Phillips in the Mowhawk-Brighton neighborhood of Cincinnati. The Phillips established citizens councils and occupational councils to determine needs and priorities for neighborhoods. The unit plan hired block workers in each of 31 blocks (with about 500 people per block). Thus, the unit plan provided for a more direct system of democracy. One of the first tasks of the Cincinnati Social Unit Plan was to develop programs improving children's health. It established a direct system of care for every household that had a baby.

The Chicago School of Sociology, and especially Robert Park's (1915) work on urban development, provided much of the intellectual foundation for intervention in urban neighborhoods. These academics provided a stronger intellectual basis for community organizing than did the proponents of the settlement houses. Park insisted that the problems of cities, such as juvenile delinquency and crime, rather than being the result of social disorganization, reflected the gradual assimilation of immigrants into the mainstream society. Park claimed that there was more social order in these settings than observers recognized. Neighborhood disorganization was necessary because it meant that immigrants were shedding their cultural influences.

Park's work in Chicago led to a spatial theory of cities that suggested competition was the driving force behind the spatial form of cities. According to Park, competition creates more efficient land use patterns in cities. This meant that the poor tended to be located in neighborhoods that were physically separated from middle-class families. Social isolation, therefore, was one of the most difficult hurdles to promoting social integration. Park argued that this process was necessary for immigrants to eventually be integrated into the social life of cities. It was important, however, to provide