A LEAP for Wales

A tool kit to promote community engagement to change things for the better

Version 1 05/07/2012

1 Advantages of community engagement

A national government view
In 2010, the Social Justice Department of the Welsh Government produced an action plan to develop a high quality and responsive community development sector in Wales, with a focus on bringing about change founded on social justice, equality and inclusion. The aim is to strengthen Wales's economic performance and transform the life chances of people in Wales. This requires a community development workforce that can support the creation of an inclusive society that encourages individuals to achieve their potential and contribute to society and their communities.   The objective therefore is to transform learning for young people and adults by facilitating communities to identify their own needs and aspirations, take action to exert influence on the decisions which affect their lives, improve the quality of their own lives, the communities in which they live, and societies of which they are a part.

A local government view
Wrexham Borough Council Leader Aled Roberts has illustrated through a series of examples how his own local authority had benefited from involving residents in setting up and running local services. This experience also demonstrated that there is no single model of neighbourhood regeneration because communities are best placed to decide how it should be done. Quoted from ''Bringing Neighbourhood Centre Stage in Wales; 2008'

http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/1910-regeneration-neighbourhood-involving.pdf

A community view
'Come Outside!' is a new Wales-wide scheme, which enables communities to gain the benefits that the outdoors has to offer. By addressing community needs and aspirations through outdoor activities, participation becomes valued and the benefits are sustained.   Dave Horton, Senior Community Development Worker Ely/Caerau, where this scheme was trailed in Cardiff, said:

 "This project is aimed at uniting the communities of Ely and Caerau and giving people the confidence to enjoy their local environment.

"It also offers the local community a chance to learn new conservation skills such as planning and managing green spaces."

A school view
"Schools should engage with families and the broader community, including businesses, other statutory agencies and the voluntary sector. Schools also need to work with other agencies to address the well-being and citizen aspirations of individual learners. When schools work with other agencies to deliver joined-up programmes, the full range of resources and expertise can be harnessed to deliver improved learner outcomes and well-being."

http://www.raise-wales.org.uk/centralsouth-resource-maw

2 General logic model for community change

A logic model is a story or picture of how an effort or initiative is supposed to work. The process of developing the model brings together stakeholders to articulate the goals of the program and the values that support it, and to identify strategies and desired outcomes of the initiative.

As a means to communicate a program visually, within a coalition or work group and to present it to external audiences, a logic model provides a common language and reference point for everyone involved in the initiative.

A logic model is useful for planning, implementing and evaluating an initiative. It helps stakeholders agree on short-term as well as long-term objectives during the planning process, outline activities and actors, and establish clear criteria for evaluation during the effort. When the initiative ends, it provides a framework for assessing overall effectiveness of the initiative, as well as the activities, resources, and external factors that played a role in the outcome.

To develop a specific model, it will probably be necessary to use both forward and reverse logic. Working backwards, a start can be made with the desired outcomes and then identify the strategies and resources leading to projects that will accomplish them. Combining this with forward logic produces a pathway to produce the desired effects (Fig 1).

Fig 1 General community planning logic http://ctb.ku.edu/en/default.aspx
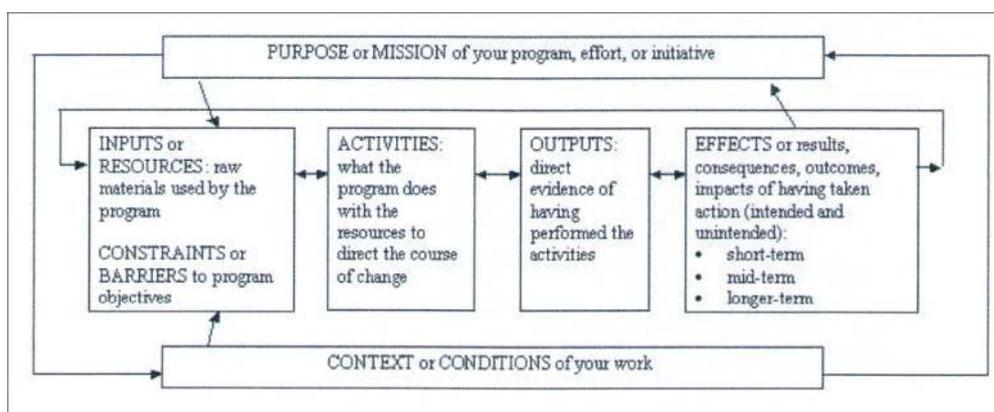
The model will probably be revised. This is precisely one advantage to using a logic model. because it relates program activities to their effect,. It helps keep stakeholders focused on achieving outcomes, while it remains flexible and open to finding the best means to enact a unique story of change. For these reasons it is important to start with a prepared document template.

3 Planning for community improvements

An understanding of planning logic is necessary for all human activities, from baking a cake to running a multi-national corporation. The basic procedure for making a community action plan is to set a measurable objective for a feature of the neighbourhood, which raises a local issue, schedule the work to be done to meet the goal, and report what was actually done. Monitoring is then carried out to check how close the outcome is to the objective. Plans are essentially diaries of what to do, what was done, what the outcome was and what remains to be done.

Making a start with local 'green' issues is good beginning because the increase and maintenance of local biodiversity is the central principle of sustainable development on all geographical scales and is closely associated with the establishment of a sense of place. This could be tidying up waste ground, tree planting etc.

Sense of place encompasses the meanings that a given place holds for people and the attachments that people develop for that place. It is expressed when people say they feel good about where they live.

There is a broad environmental element, pinpointed by what have come to be known as 'front door issues of environmental poverty' and an economic element (the 'back kitchen' issues of traditional poverty.

Environmental justice seeks solutions to front door issues of environmental poverty.
These issues are usually defined in the 'square mile' where people live, walk and socialise.

The overall aim is therefore to increase the proportion of people who feel good about their square mile/neighbourhood'. Success in achieving this objective is measured with simple before and after surveys that can be done within the community. Valid and reliable surveys for measuring sense of place exist and have been tested successfully as assessment instruments. These yield outcome performance indicators of the community action plan.

Factors influencing community well being are many and varied:

i Sociability, which includes:
> Number of women, children and elderly
> Social networks
> Volunteerism
> Evening use of the neighbourhood
> Street life

ii Uses and activities, which includes:
> Ownership of local business
> Land use patterns
> Property values
> Rent levels
> Shops

iii Comfort and image, which includes
> Crime
> Sanitation rating
> Littering/refuse collection
> Condition of buildings

Trees, gardens and grass
Graffiti
Local history/heritage highlights
Signage
Recreation/play areas
Creative arts groups

iv Access and linkages, which includes
Traffic
Public transport
Pedestrian and cycling activity
Condition of roads and pavements
Parking patterns

Success in creating a good sense of place depends on bringing many different providers of expertise and finance together to enable community volunteers to address one or more of above factors in an action plan.

4 The LEAP for Wales planning logic

LEAP stands for 'learning, evaluation and planning', which is the title of a community framework document designed by the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) to support a partnership approach to achieving change and improvement in the quality of community life (Fig 2).

'LEAP for Wales' is a development of the Scottish initiative as a community planning procedure, which incorporates the feedback logic of the conservation management system (CMS) software, used by UK Environment Agencies and Wildlife Trusts to produce conservation management plans for nature sites.   Making a community LEAP for Wales is based on answering the following seven questions (Fig 3).

> 1 What are the issues that bug the community?
> (*Identifying the need*)
> 2 What does the community want to see happen?
> (*Setting the vision and the specific objectives*)
> 3 What are the barriers preventing the community getting where it wants to be?
> (*Determining the limiting factors of the objectives*)
> 4 How will the team know when they have overcome the barriers?
> (*Setting measurable outcomes as performance indicators*)
> 5 What work has to be done?
> (*Scheduling resources and actions*)
> 6 What progress is being made?
> (*Monitoring by measurement of outcome performance indicators*)
> 7 Who needs to know the outcomes?
> (*Feedback reports to the team, partners and funders*)

The SCDC says their LEAP framework should be useful to community organisations; local authorities; voluntary sector organisations; and policy makers, particularly those involved in community well being programmes, community planning partnerships, community regeneration programmes, and social inclusion and social justice initiatives.

- It encourages critical questioning to ensure that all those with a stake in taking action for environmental improvements are working to a shared agenda.
- The LEAP framework emphasises self-evaluation, encouraging participants to take joint responsibility for planning and evaluation throughout a project or programme.
- It is a learning-based planning and evaluation framework to support good practice in community working to improve the quality of community life.
- It helps identify the difference a community hopes to make, to plan more effectively, work in partnership with each other and other members of the community, and learn the lessons from the experience.
- The LEAP framework can be used in different contexts, to support the work of different sectors, and at project, programme and policy level. It is particularly useful as a tool to support partnership working and the production of community action plans.
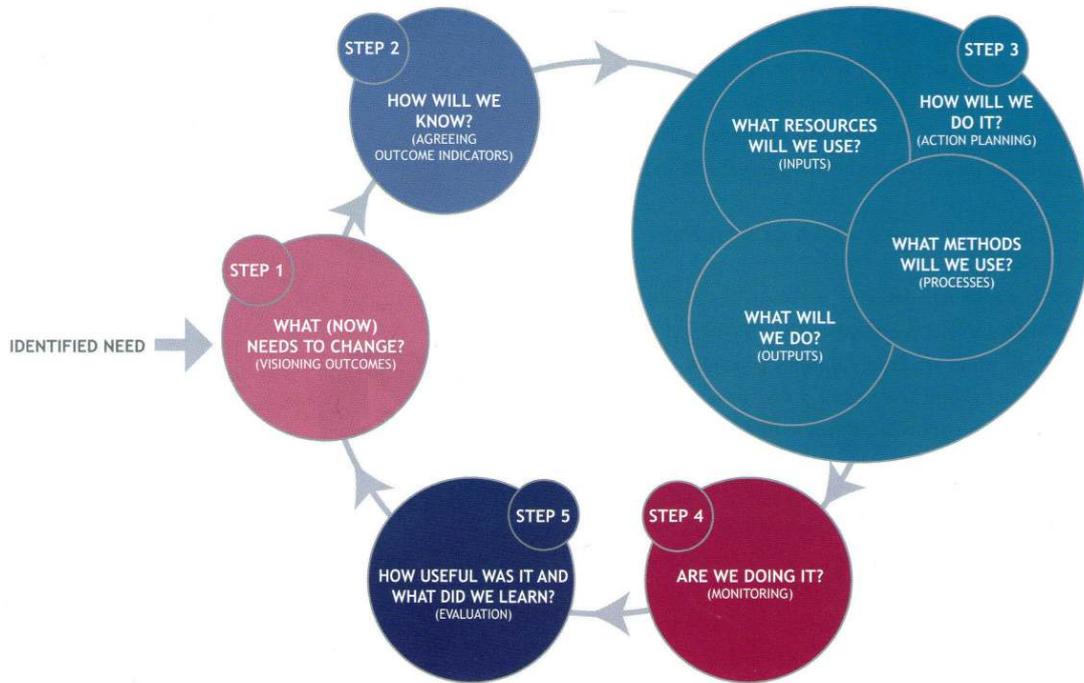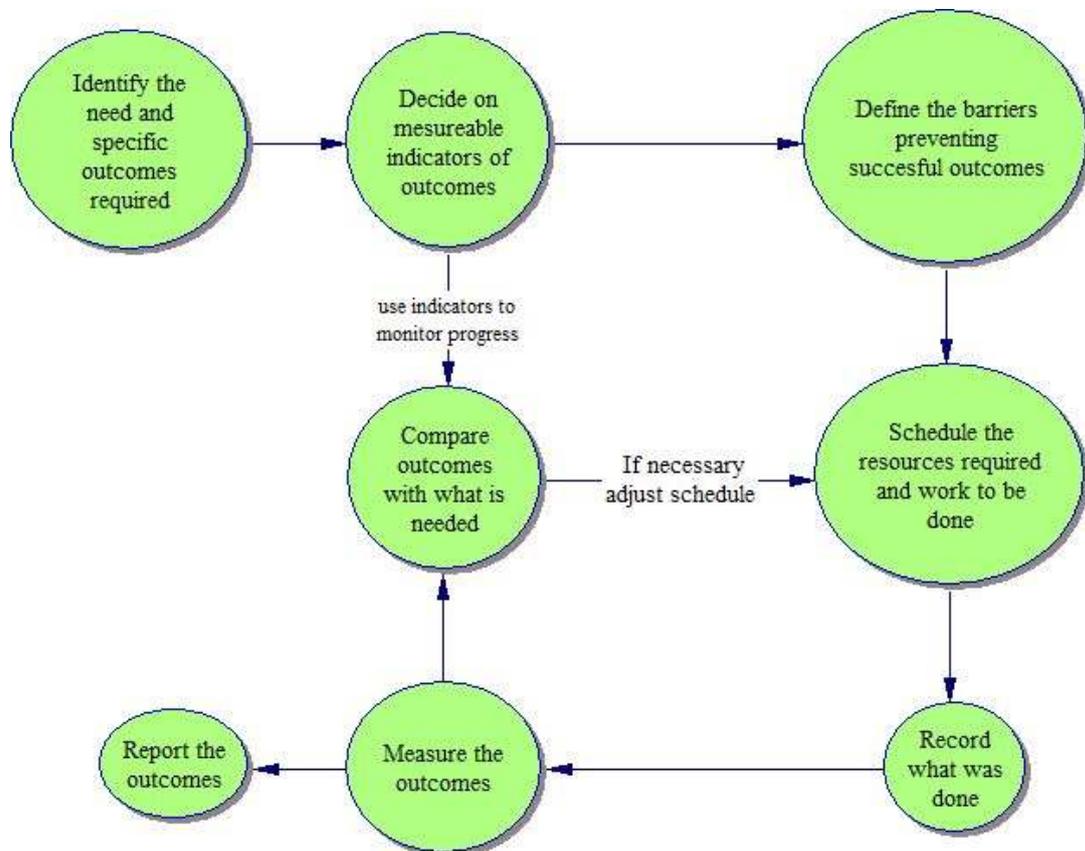
Fig 2 The original LEAP logic diagram (2005)

Fig 3 The LEAP for Wales logic diagram

5 Networking for community action

Plans can be made on paper, when a community sets out to answer the seven questions of the CMS logic, but using software as a set of spreadsheets or a dedicated database-diary is better for continuity and reporting. In a wider community context, conservation management is equated with planning for sustainability in all aspects of community life. Every nook and cranny of a neighbourhood becomes a distinctive place worthy of environmental surveillance. A community action plan can be modelled on the preservation or enhancement of its core green heritage assets, no matter how small. The plan can then be extended to include the management of other community assets/issues, such as health, transport, security, energy use, tidiness, and opportunities for employment and recreation. In this context the basic planning logic unifies action and recording across sectorial boundaries.

Electronic networks may help support human networks and combat social exclusion - provided there is sufficient access and support. Experience shows that most communities start as small emergent clusters organized around common interests or goals. Usually these clusters are isolated from each other. They are very small groups of 1-5 people or organizations that have connected out of necessity. Many of these small clusters are found in under-developed communities. If these clusters do not organize further, the community structure remains weak and under-producing. Without an active leader who takes responsibility for building a network spontaneous connections between groups emerge very slowly, or not all. This network leadership role is known as a *network weaver*. Instead of allowing these small clusters to drift in the hope of making a lucky connection, the weaver actively creates new interactions between the clusters. Through this activity useful community structures are emerge. This process is not easy to start and maintain.

When the UK strategy for sustainable development was first launched, the idea of a national citizen's environmental network was proposed. The aim was to unite people to share their ideas and achievements in making and running community action plans for living sustainably. It was envisaged that a 'copycat network' should be initiated and controlled at the community level to ensure good ideas and practices should be multiplied. However, the idea as it was originally proposed, did not materialise; the Internet was in its infancy and freely available social networking software did not exist.

An environmental network needs to have the following two features:

(i) A system for social networking

(ii) A freely accessible database for presenting the community's planning process and its current state of progress towards meeting outcomes of citizen-led environmental improvements.

The Internet is now available to accommodate these two features on line. The first requirement is exemplified by text-based screen presentations such as 'wikis', blogs and 'conversational threads'; the second is illustrated by the 'web viewer' for presenting versions of the databases that are used to record planning and its outcomes as a process, which can both be interrogated on line.

An Internet community consists of:

• People, who act socially as they strive to satisfy their own needs or perform special roles, such as leading or moderating;

• A shared purpose, such as an interest, need, information exchange, or service that provides a facility for the community;

• Policies, in the form of tacit assumptions, rituals, protocols, rules, and laws that guide people's interactions;

• Software systems, to support and mediate social interactions and facilitate a sense of togetherness"

These common activities help to create a sense of community by providing a common feeling of identity, with which the members of the community can associate themselves. This growth of trust between members of a community is an important factor in the success of an online community. The common factors that help shape the behaviour of community members become practiced habits that help to construct the norms and identity of the community as a whole. The strength of such a network is frequently perceived to impart a heightened vitality to the community, and contributes to a strong sense of community identity.

6 Social networking

Social networking is the process of initiating, developing and maintaining friendships and collegial or project sharing relationships for mutual benefit. Current discussions surrounding social networking deal with web-based or technology-mediated tools, interactions, and related phenomena, but social networking really takes place in many forms, including face to face. A community that is active in strong in planning and acting grows through social networking, a process in which the Internet is now a primary driver.

Much technology-facilitated social networking is done in the form of person-to-person exchanges that can be classified as question and answer, point and counterpoint, announcement and support, action and feedback.

Technologies that facilitate social networking tend to emphasize ease of use, spontaneity, personalization, exchange of contacts, and low-end voyeurism. Some technologies that are often considered social networking technologies may not be socially oriented in and of themselves, but the communities that form around such technologies often demonstrate key elements of social networking (for example, the discussion communities that form around collaboratively authored wiki content).

Online community networks are often developed and deployed to supplement residential face-to-face communities in an effort to revitalise and grow neighbourhoods and to revive civic engagement and local community identity in society. In this context, the ubiquity of the Internet enables and encourages users to pursue 'personalized networking' which leads to the emergence of private 'portfolios of sociability'. 'Proximity' is the factor in on line residential communities, which produces networked individualism. This gives online residential communities a competitive advantage over dispersed online communities. Residential networks allow residents to interact online and to continue developing online interaction offline, in real life and face to face. This offline and place-based dimension introduces challenges to the design, development and rollout of online community networks.

Reaching a critical mass of users is considered to be the key criterion of success and has been reported as one of the most common stumbling blocks: "If you build it, they will not necessarily come". However, other studies have shown that a critical mass of interconnected users alone is not sufficient for a community network to live up to higher expectations, such as increasing social capital in the community, fostering sociability and establishing community identity. Those geographic communities already rich in social capital may become richer thanks to community networks, and those communities poor in social capital may remain poor, or simply put, connectivity does not ensure community. Something else has to be done. The Internet neither destroys nor creates social capital, people do, and the Internet will not *automatically* offset the decline in more conventional forms of social capital, but it has that potential.

Some examples of popular social networking technologies include:

- asynchronous discussions via discussion boards or newsgroups
- instant messaging, e.g. MSN, AIM, and ICQ
- text-messaging or SMS
- message logging and sharing, such as Twitter
- document sharing and controlled collaborative authoring, such as Zoho or Google Docs & Spreadsheets

- loosely structured collaborative authoring and information sharing, such as wikis.
- photo sharing, such as Flickr and Picasa
- video sharing, such as YouTube
- blogs (life-sharing, news analysis, and editorialising)
- online communities, such as Nings, Facebook, etc.
- Second Life - sort of a combination of many of the above communication and collaborative tools.

So much for inter-community bonding. Spreading know how and good ideas and achievements is also vital so a community knows where it stands. This requires groups coming together in geographical nodes, which then make connections with other nodes. Nodes can appear coalesce in community facilities, such as churches and heritage centres. At this level, the ecomuseum emerged as an idea to promote the idea of citizen's environmental networks.

7 Neighbourhood ecomuseums

Introduced by the French museologist Hugues de Varine in 1971, the word ecomuseum is used to define a very special kind of museum based on an agreement by which a local community takes care of a place (M.Maggi, 2002, *Ecomusei. Guida europea*, Torino-Londra-Venezia, Umberto Allemandi & C.), where:

- agreement, means a long term commitment, not necessarily an obligation by the law;
- local community, means a local authority and a local population jointly;
- take care, means that some ethical commitment and a vision for a future kind of local development are needed;
- place, means not just a surface but complex layers of cultural, social, environmental values, which define a unique local heritage.

According to "*Declaration of Intent of the Long Net Workshop, Trento (Italy), May 2004*" an Ecomuseum is a dynamic way in which communities preserve, interpret, and manage their heritage for a sustainable development.

A 'dynamic way' means to go beyond the formal aspect of a museum, and beyond a simple set course, designed on paper. It is about designing real actions, able to change society and improve the landscape.

Community means a group with:

- general involvement;
- shared responsibilities;
- interchangeable roles: where public officers, representatives, volunteers and other local actors are all playing a vital role in an ecomuseum.

Ecomuseums are more properly defined by what they do rather than by what they are. Interest in ecomuseums is growing all the time. Museums of this type are now springing up all over Europe. Over 80% of such initiatives saw the light in the last 30 years, and the phenomenon multiplied notably in the 1980s. After the Second World War, the entire landscape and the economy of European countries had been turned upside down: factories closed, unemployment reached new levels, trades disappeared, traditions, customs and modes of life were wiped out. It is during this period of rapid transformation that the concept of the "Ecomuseum" came to life; partly to protect some of this complex heritage and also as a tool to help the concerned populations that gave a meaning to this heritage. Examples of abound in Europe and notably in France around the industrial parks of Eastern and Northern France that had been abandoned during the early 20th century.

The basic tasks of the ecomuseum do not differ from those of traditional museums and heritage centres to collect, document, study, conserve and communicate a given heritage. However, "new" museums differ from conventional museums in that they ascribe utilitarian value to the tasks of preservation and connect the work to non-museum aims, such as the presentation of ideas to promote living sustainably.

The area for the ecomuseum is referred to as a discrete territory, which can be a parish or electoral ward, or a region consisting of a group of these communities networked to a regional node, which could be a conventional museum (Fig 4). In the context of LEAP, the ecomuseum is could be seen as a virtual on-line entity using social networking software to present and explain its exhibits, in the form of pictures, videos, audio files and text documents.

Fig 4 Necklace models of ecomuseums
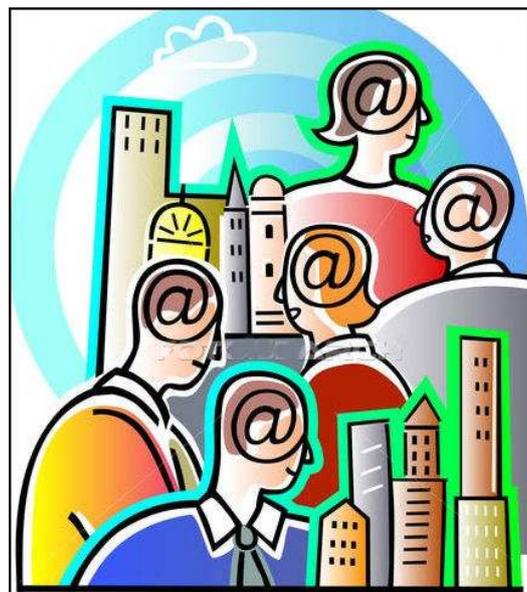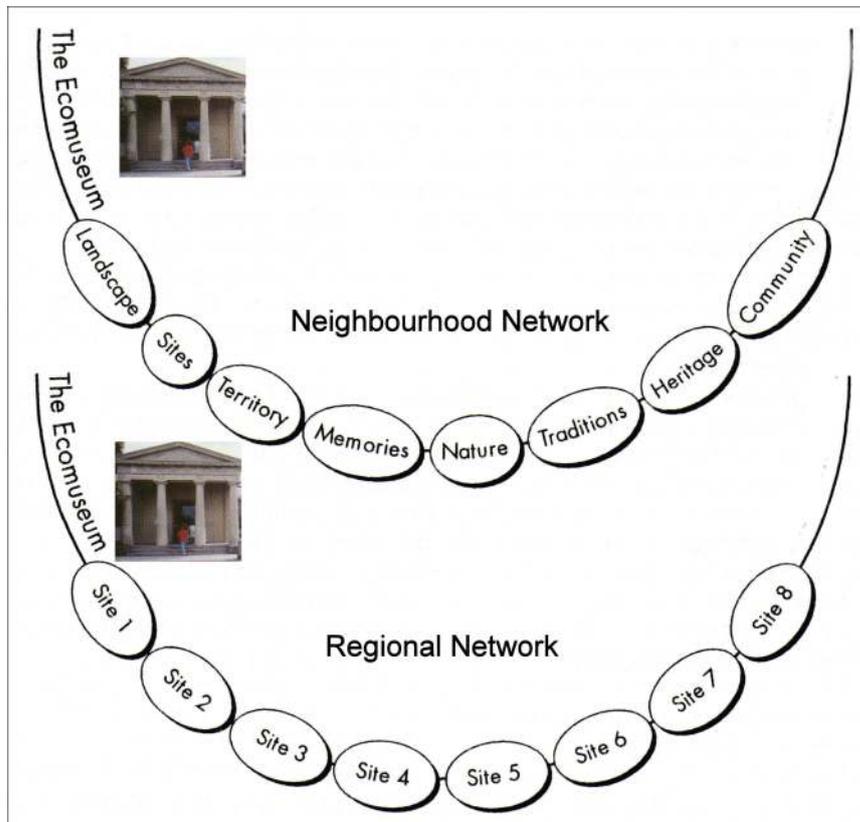
8 An integrated model of localism

Organisations of all sizes suffer from the consequences of internal functional barriers. This is a major pain point in government because because most major strategies require support from many different support groups. In order to break down these silos, each functional group and the individuals within it must understand how they fit into the core functions of bigger strategic frameworks. The problem is variously termed as Silo Thinking, Silo Vision, Silo Mentality or the Silo Effect. This is evident when departments, teams or staff, who may be high performers individually, fail to choreograph their activities to for delivering their resources required to integrate with the inputs from others. This symptom is so widespread that it is often accepted as an inevitable problem within all organisations. Except that it is not inevitable. The problem with organizations that are trapped in this siloed mentality is that employees rarely study how their function relates to the inputs of others.

Silo thinking of this kind can only be overcome by all providers working to a common systems model, which for community development is described as a community resource map. The map defines the connections between stakeholders and those in support. It shows the alignment and deployment of the resources from a particular agency or department towards a clear set of objectives, with accountability for the efficiency and effectiveness of their application. Managers will then take responsibility for defining clearly what has to be achieved for their group to secure its successful integration into the mission.

Community resource mapping is a strategy for promoting inte-agency collaboration by better alignment of programs and services for neighbourhoods. The major goal is to ensure that all have access to a broad, comprehensive, and integrated system of services essential in achieving desired outcomes defined by the stakeholders. Community resource mapping can be used to improve education, workforce development, and economic development in a community by aligning available services and resources, streamlining those services and resources, and identifying areas of need. The idea of resource mapping builds on the community's strengths by increasing the frequency, duration, intensity, and quality of services and supports in the community. It is a route map to organize information and give direction to meet a common community goal. As a result of resource mapping, people have more flexibility and choice in navigating the system, whether they be providers or stakeholders.

Community resource mapping is particularly important as a strategy for improving outcomes for communities with complex and varied needs. When collectively pooled, resources for such communities can create a synergy that produces services well beyond the scope of what any single provider can hope to mobilize. The alignment of resources, streamlining of resources, and identification of service gaps within the community enables educators and service providers to (a) understand the full range of services available to different members within a community, (b) more efficiently provide the specific supports needed by each, and (c) develop new services and supports targeted to fill existing gaps.

An example of a community resource map is presented in Fig 4. It is a system designed to funnel services from departments within the Welsh government, local government and partner agencies, so that national community development strategies can be more effectively integrated into communities who are making action plans to increase their well being.

Fig 5 Community resource map for integrating top-down support for bottom-up needs
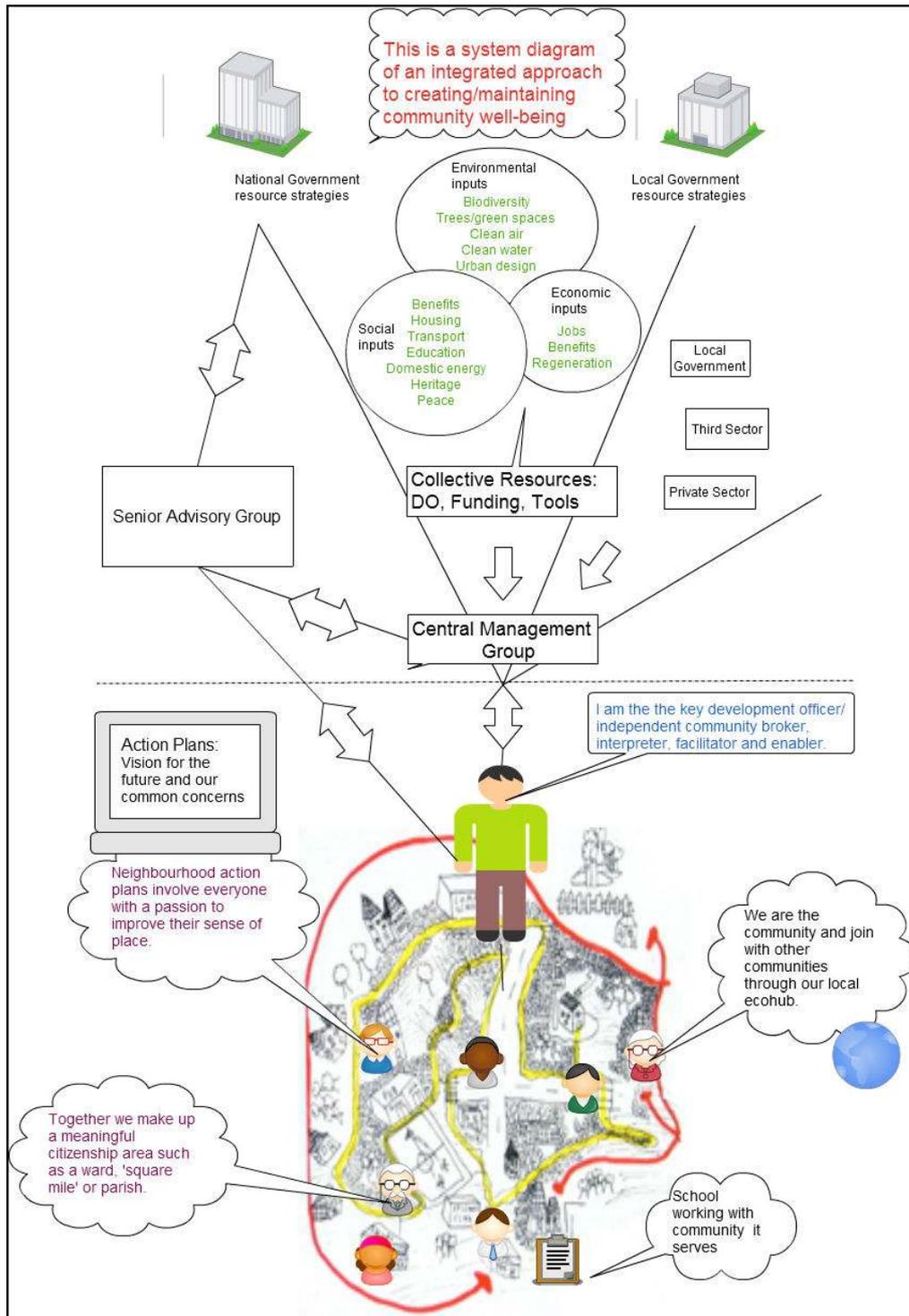
9 Some examples of 'copycat' school/community networking

http://www.blything.wikispaces.com
www.biodiversity.ecoworld.co.uk/lincolncms
www.biodiversity.ecoworld.co.uk/cwicnet
www.biodiversity.ecoworld.co.uk/rigsby
http://www.ecomemaq.ntua.gr/Files/Draft%20Model%20Ecomuseum.pdf
https://sites.google.com/site/scanresources
http://www.supportingadvancement.com/web_sightings/community_building/community_building.pdf
http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/LEAP/