

Local environmental sustainability

Edited by
Susan Buckingham and Kate Theobald



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Local environmental sustainability

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1

Building alliances for local environmental sustainability

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1.1 The context for local environmental sustainability

In the UK, environmental sustainability has, arguably, been driven not by national government, but by the twin pressures of supra-national and local organisations. At the global level, the most highly publicised impetus has been the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the most enduring outcome of which appears to have been the local and national variants of Agenda 21 (Osborn and Bigg, 1998; United Nations, 2001). However, also significant is the fact that every United Nations Conference now requires consideration of environmental matters, which has implications for national governments legislating on issues as diverse as poverty, women and housing. As this book was going to press, world leaders were convening in South Africa for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to address new and continuing environmental problems as well as to review progress made on ameliorating those identified in 1992. In some respects, these subsequent conferences and the discussions held therein signal how far understanding and acceptance of ‘sustainable development’ and ‘environmental sustainability’ have come in the past ten years. Environmental sustainability and sustainable development discourse is now commonplace, even if it is not always well understood. (The term environmental sustainability is used here to signify a particular aspect of the broader sustainable development debate, where the former refers specifically to measures to ensure that the environment is not depleted or damaged further than it has already been, and the latter encompasses a broader range of social economic and environmental goals. Whilst the definition of these terms continues to be

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contested, Myerson and Rydin's 1996 paper gives a good overview of the terms' rhetoric. See also Chapter 11.) In contrast to this, on many of the indicators identified in 1992, there has been little progress to date, and some conditions have worsened, although ten years may be a short time period on which to judge these (Buckingham-Hatfield and Walker, 2002; Desai, 2001; Glass, 2002 and Velasquez, 2000).

The other high profile environmental issue to have emerged from the UN is, of course, climate change, although it has been much more difficult to legislate as the events leading up to and beyond the Kyoto Conference in 1997 testify (Grubb, with Vrolijk and Brack, 1999). Whilst there are severe limitations to the Kyoto Agreement on Climate Change, nevertheless it is a significant driver of environmentally linked policy, particularly in the European Union and its member states. For the UK, the most pressing supra-national driver of change regarding environmental legislation is undoubtedly the EU which, from the inception of its first Environmental Framework programme in 1972, signified its intention to harmonise and strengthen environmental controls across member states. This has been successively tightened through the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty, both in response to global pressures and in an attempt to create a level playing field for business, a better quality of life for citizens and a system in which the actions of one member state should not negatively affect the environment of another. Additionally, environmental concerns have been at the forefront of discussions for entry to the EU of the accession countries.

The influence of the EU has been felt through both individual directives (such as on environmental impact assessment, packaging and waste, water quality and recycling) and through general commitments to principles such as subsidiarity, the 'polluter pays' principle and carbon savings. Some of the influence of the EU has derived from its increasing stature as an international negotiator at, for example, UNCED and the Kyoto Conference, acting somewhat as a counterbalance to the increasingly intransigent USA. Whilst UN treaties and protocols have little legal standing, EU legislation binds member states and must therefore drive policy making at the national level, and much of the UK's environmental legislation is a result of this (as Chapter 7 on recycling discusses). In addition, the EU Court of Appeal offers a site to which environmental campaigners can and do appeal if they feel that existing laws and policies are not being complied with. This has often been used by national environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs), who are another effective pressure on government to be more environmentally attentive.

Within the UK, the relatively new regional level of governance has concern for 'sustainable development', although the role of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) is limited and, being non-elected, the agencies are not democratically accountable. Chapter 2, on the role of the UK's

RDAs in climate change prevention, details their capacity. The real energy behind environmental policy and initiatives, then, when it does not emerge from the supra-national level, emanates from a range of local organisations, from local government and from civil society: NGOs, communities of interests and local communities.

Notwithstanding this, there is an inter-relationship between different geographical scales which is both highly complex and not always very clear. For example, the (Local) Agenda 21 programme agreed at Rio was in large part a result of the pressure and innovation of local, national and international NGOs working across international boundaries at the preparatory committees (prepcoms) to forge an initiative which would, through the international community, require signatories to take concrete actions for environmental sustainability. It is, therefore, not always appropriate or entirely meaningful to categorise environmental organisations or influences by their geographical scale. Having said that, this is precisely what this book intends to do. The editors are interested in the ways in which local initiatives (whether from local government, local partnerships or local communities) are able to make a difference to the local environment (and, collectively, environments further afield). Of particular interest is the way in which these local initiatives are articulated with (mostly local) government and how this works in different places and contexts; this will be explored in more depth later. Whilst local government has many limitations (for example, its capacity to act is severely constrained by central government funding and legislation, and its democratic legitimacy is strained by low voter turn out at local elections), it is still the only democratic force at the local level and, as such, is important in ensuring that local initiatives have the widest benefits, and in protecting the interests of the weakest. This argument is developed further in Chapter 11.

1.2 Local government

During the ten years since the Earth Summit, the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development have become declared policy objectives at local, national and international levels, as enshrined in the Agenda 21 document (UNCED, 1992). Whilst national and supra-national governments clearly have a central role in the pursuit of sustainable development, it is equally clear that local government plays a crucial part. Local authorities are agents for implementing national and international policy; they can act as initiators of new ideas and approaches (from within the institution) but they also have the capacity to facilitate and support local community action and initiatives for environmental sustainability.

The formal agreement to Local Agenda 21 (LA21), Chapter 28 of Agenda 21, is a brief document (around three pages) which outlines the

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broad principles of LA21. The first paragraph headed 'Basis for Action' is of particular importance, since this established the central role of local authorities in the process of sustainable development:

28.1. Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and co-operation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives. Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and sub-national environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilising and responding to the public to promote sustainable development. (UNCED, 1992)

Paragraph 3 defines the process for achieving local sustainable development:

28.3. Each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organisations and private enterprises and adopt 'a Local Agenda 21'. Through consultation and consensus-building, local authorities would learn from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organisations and acquire the information needed for formulating the best strategies. The process of consultation would increase household awareness of sustainable development issues. Local authority programmes, policies, laws and regulations to achieve Agenda 21 objectives would be assessed and modified, based on local programmes adopted. Strategies could also be used in supporting proposals for local, national, regional and international funding. (UNCED, 1992)

Local Agenda 21 Principles (see Box 1.1) emphasise that local authorities need to make considerable changes, both to their policy making approaches in order to incorporate the perspectives and views of a range of sectors in the locality, and to the ways in which they interact with a range of groups and individuals in the policy process. Implicit in this is an assumption that local authorities need to work in partnership with a range of agencies in order to deliver sustainable development, and that it is possible for such partnerships to be effective. Furthermore, it is assumed that local government is in a position to provide effective education and training for all sectors, in order to improve the level of awareness of sustainable development. Evidence of the important role that local government has played, and should continue to play, in delivering environmental sustainability will be presented by prominent international local government organisations such as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

Box 1.1 Local Agenda 21 Principles, as characterised by ICLEI¹

- The integration of issues: environmental objectives are linked with economic and social objectives.
- The integration of interests: in a culture of dialogue and participation, all groups in society are to be involved.
- Its long term character: measures and projects are based on long-term objectives keyed to the precautionary principle.
- Its global dimension: impacts of local action on global development are measured, ways of counteracting the global unequal distribution of consumption and wealth are identified. The local contribution to global sustainability is an explicit goal.
- Sustainable management of resources: utilisation of natural resources is based upon the rate at which new resources are formed; substance inputs into the natural regime are based on its capacity to degrade them.

Source: ICLEI (1998).

¹ The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) is the international environmental agency for local governments whose mission is 'to build and serve a worldwide movement of local governments to achieve and monitor tangible improvements in global environmental conditions through cumulative local actions'.

1.2.1 Operationalising environmental sustainability at local level

Lafferty and Coenen (2001) identify different modes of LA21 implementation that have been adopted since the mid-1990s – and suggest that the 'external or fragmented' mode is the most common type, whereby LA21 is parcelled out as sub-group projects, within traditional small-scale environmental areas, for example, composting and school projects. For Lafferty and Coenen:

... the fragmented nature of the involvement and the lack of integration among projects, and between projects and major political and economic decisions, point to relatively narrow and superficial change. (2001: 295)

However, it is also appropriate to consider the importance of the cumulative impact of environmental projects and initiatives, which even if not explicitly aimed to contribute to all dimensions of sustainable development, may be addressing different elements, for example 'community identity', and involvement in environmental/social improvements at a local level (by a range of 'stakeholder' groups).

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In theory, there are a number of ways in which local authorities can meet the requirements of environmental sustainability (or more broadly sustainable development). Policy areas such as procurement, environmental management and audit, green transport plans and waste minimisation all present opportunities for local authorities to operate within a framework for sustainability. For instance in the UK, the recent requirement for local authorities to charge a landfill tax, and to produce and implement 'green' transport plans are two such examples. Across many countries and local authorities in Europe, there is evidence of a shift towards the adoption of environmentally-friendly approaches to transport and mobility, particularly in terms of provisions for pedestrians and cyclists, and the use of less polluting vehicles. However, there is less progress to date in the adoption of land-use plans and policies that place sustainability principles at the centre, a point which is developed in Chapter 12. Local authorities are introducing a range of policy initiatives to improve energy efficiency, and increasingly are supporting, and in some cases investing in, alternative sources of energy. There is also a gradual shift towards a 'think global, act local' approach, although in many cases policies which clearly impact on global sustainability, such as reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, are still focused on the local level.

The possibilities for pursuing policies that support and contribute to environmental sustainability need, however, to be considered within the wider context of the capacity/freedom to act and resources that local government possesses. In a recent extensive survey of progress with LA21 in Europe under the Fifth Framework programme of the European Commission (Evans and Theobald, 2001), it was found that the extent to which local authorities are able to make appropriate decisions for a sustainable future is perceived as fairly high in some respects in countries across Europe, with the opportunities provided by self-governance playing an important part in this in Scandinavia and Central/Eastern European countries in particular. However, local authorities acknowledge that the level of understanding both in local authorities and in the wider community is fairly low. Thus the institutional capacity within local government to address the requirements of sustainable development, needs to be further developed and strengthened.

The UK case provides an example of the tensions between top-down prescriptive policies from central government, and locally-led strategies and policies (both for environmental sustainability, and across all areas of service delivery).

During the past 10–15 years, local government's role has been changing from that of direct service provider (whereby local authorities had the power to decide to use local firms as suppliers of goods, and positively to encourage those firms to introduce environmentally and socially benign practices). In the UK at least, a series of re-organisations has reduced the

functions, powers and resources of local authorities, so that they have much less potential for either direct action or influence than in the past. In particular the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) during the 1980s in UK local government had a major impact on the capacity of local authorities to address social and environmental aspects of policy making, through, for example, ethical purchasing policies or more environmentally sustainable practices (Theobald, 1999). CCT placed lowest cost at the heart of decisions on service provision, and although local authorities have found ways to circumvent the prescriptive nature of CCT legislation (through carefully worded contract specifications) much of the literature highlights concerns about the pressure to accept low bids (from private contractors and in-house workforces) and cut back on service quality.

Research by Theobald (1999) revealed the detrimental effects of CCT on local authorities' abilities to address the requirements of sustainable development, for instance through a neglect of environmental and social criteria in contracts, and a reduction in the level and quality of service provision in key environmental service areas.

Since the late 1990s, a revised framework for service provision in the form of 'Best Value' has attempted to address many of the problems and restrictions of CCT, in particular removing the compulsory element in terms of purchasing policies and procurement. In practice, local authorities are still operating within strict guidelines on providing 'cost-effective' service delivery.

UK Government rhetoric, enshrined in the legislative framework of Best Value, emphasises its commitment to bring sustainable development into the heart of local government policy making by decentralising power, reinvigorating democracy, engaging local communities and encouraging integrated working. The Government is seeking, as part of this 'modernisation' agenda, to get local government to establish sustainable development as a core policy principle through both the Best Value and Community Strategy approaches. The key elements of Best Value and Community Strategies are briefly detailed below. These are worth stating as they have implications for the role and capacity of local government in delivering sustainable development.

Best Value

The Best Value framework requires local authorities to deliver services to clear standards by the 'most effective, economic and efficient means available'. Through legislation it places a duty on local authorities to be more accountable to local people and to have a responsibility to central government within the broader national interest. Its objectives, according to central government, are to help councils address the cross-cutting issues such as sustainable development – issues which are beyond the reach of a single service or service provider. According to the Government, local

authorities have been given the role of 'community leader' using partnerships and co-operation to ensure the services received are the ones that the locality needs and expects (DETR, 1999).

Under Best Value, each local authority is required to publish an annual Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP), which is the principal public document that identifies each authority's assessment of its past and current performance. These are measured against indicators – nationally and locally defined standards and targets set through a consultation process by the Government.

Boyne (1999) states that a number of local authorities are concerned about the objectives of the 'Best Value' concept and how it translates in practice. He argues there is

. . . a clear tension between local and central accountability . . . [and] the presence of centrally specified indicators and targets may direct the attention of local politicians and managers upwards to government rather than outwards to local communities. (1999: 4)

The threat of central government intervention could lead local authorities to 'cherry pick' areas where they know they will be within government guidelines and ignore or set low targets in areas where they may fall short. There is already evidence that this is undermining the development of integrated policy making for environmental sustainability in terms of a lack of cross-departmental working, short-termism, and a lack of innovative policy making.

Community Strategies

New legislation which requires the production of a Community Strategy is inextricably linked to the delivery of a local authority's Best Value report:

Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 places on principal local authorities a duty to prepare 'community strategies', for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well being of their areas, and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. (DETR, 2000: para 1)

The legislation outlines four objectives that must be met in Community Strategies. They are intended:

- to allow local communities (based on geography and/or interest) to articulate their aspirations, needs and priorities;
- to co-ordinate the actions of the council, and of the public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate locally;
- to focus and shape existing and future activity of those organisations so that they effectively meet community needs and aspirations; and
- to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development both locally and more widely, with local goals and priorities relating, where appropriate, to regional, national and even global aims.

Thus, the delivery of these Strategies should have a beneficial impact on the implementation of environmentally sustainable policies, and should also enhance the relationship between a local authority and civil society. Local authorities are advised that ‘only by working together with other public, private business and voluntary bodies will it [be] possible to deliver the broad range of outcomes encompassed by community strategies’ (DETR, 2000: para 17). The following section looks at ways in which local government can work with the wider local community to meet these objectives.

1.3 The local state and local civil society: partnerships for environmental sustainability

A central concern of this book is to explore the ways in which local government interacts with elements of civil society to create environmental initiatives. In a positive and productive way, local government can give local initiatives valuable support and security (whether legislative, financial or practical), ensuring that the initiative can be sustained beyond the lifetime of the charismatic innovator so often critical for getting the project off the ground. However, local government also sometimes fails to nurture projects which have the potential to contribute to environmental sustainability, or worse, to support actions that run counter to this potential. Decisions which undermine the viability of local shops and increase car dependence are well known examples of this. Often it is not a single decision (nor a single decision-making body) which creates this, but a process of cumulative decision-making in which connections are not made between each individual decision. The community response to this will vary depending on its particular set of social and geographical circumstances. In some cases the response is resignation (to use the car more often, or internet shopping – providing the technologies are available); occasionally it is more constructive.

Consider the Wiltshire village of Maiden Bradley whose only local shop announced its closure in the light of its lack of profitability. The village response to this, galvanised by a dynamic parish councillor, was to lease the shop from the landlord and run it as a community service. Funding was raised by public subscription (£5000 from shares offered to those on the electoral roll) and from the Countryside Agency’s ‘Vital Villages Scheme’ (£21 500). The shop is run by volunteers and is trying to stock local produce in order to support local businesses and reduce its environmental impact (although they have had difficulty in stocking local milk due to legislation governing milk marketing and supply). If successful, the shop may well be able to contribute to greater environmental and social sustainability, and it has plans to buy a minibus to make local food deliveries in outlying villages, and to transport people without cars to doctor’s surgeries and other essential, often non-local, facilities. To date this is a community initiative that has

been launched without the help of its local authority and may well thrive as long as barriers to its implementation are not introduced. It is not the first community owned shop in the UK, but if it is well supported, it could offer a way forward for other under-provisioned villages. This initiative has been successful so far in large part due to the strength of the local community and a determined champion. In places where these are less pronounced there may be more need for local government to take the lead.

Local government often finds itself in a position in which there are conflicts of interest and different interpretations can be put on the role of local government in these instances. For example, in one London borough, land which has supported local allotments has been sold to developers for a project which is explicitly designed to promote an activity which will increase car use. On the one hand the local authority sees an opportunity to attract more people to an amenity of national importance, thus raising the visibility and income of the area, whilst on the other it is both removing a local social and environmental amenity for residents and increasing local environmental stress through rising traffic levels.

In a more subtle mix, the relationship between local government and community initiatives may require giving the community space to be creative. The most innovative projects are rarely conceived of within local government; it is in the more radical spaces of direct practical action that this takes place. Such spaces can allow creative protest which local government may be sympathetic to, but cannot ally itself too closely with, or may be a testing ground for projects which might have a wider application. One useful role of local government could be to identify how these individual projects might be applied and to mainstream those with wider potential benefits and applications. Chapter 8 illustrates how a London borough took the concept of Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS) from communities with a relatively strong social and economic fabric, and with identifiable environmental concern, and applied this as an anti-poverty strategy in a borough with little social cohesion, pockets of poverty which rarely intersected, and highly variable environmental concern. Whilst local economic trading appeared to work well between neighbours familiar to each other, it could not be sustained as a strategy to provide essential services to strangers (for example, babysitting – a mainstay of traded services in a cohesive community – is just not feasible as a practice to exchange between people who have no previous knowledge of each other, nor does it have any ‘guarantee’ that may be offered by a service paid for).

Church and Young (2001) comment on the success of projects for sustainable development run by NGOs and community organisations. Many of these projects, such as farmers’ markets, recycling schemes, local amenity projects and tree-planting, have their roots in environmental concern and are often linked to schools. Other projects link environmental and social concerns for example, in regeneration areas, as Box 1.2, presenting the Beddington Zero Energy Development (BedZED), demonstrates. Such

Box 1.2 Beddington Zero Energy Development (BedZED)

BedZED is a mixed development urban village conceived of by Bio-Regional and built and managed by the Peabody Trust. On a brownfield site in the London borough of Sutton the development provides 82 dwellings (in a mixture of flats, maisonettes and town houses), offices, community accommodation and a sports clubhouse.

According to the designers of BedZED, the combination of super-insulation, a wind driven ventilation system incorporating heat recovery, and passive solar gain stored within each flat by thermally massive floors and walls, reduces the need for both electricity and heat to the point where a 135kW wood fuelled combined heat and power plant (chp) can meet the energy requirements for a community of around 240 residents and 200 workers. The community treats all its black and grey water on site, and collects rainwater to minimise mains water consumption. A photovoltaic installation provides enough solar electricity to power 40 electric cars and the community has the capability to lead a carbon neutral lifestyle – with all energy for buildings and local transport being supplied by renewable energy sources. Other environmentally sensitive practices include community composting and plans for urban gardening on part of the adjoining Metropolitan Open Land, subject to local authority approval.

The design provides a carefully researched balance between the needs of residents, businesses and community activities; the need for sunlight and daylight; an economic construction system and high levels of insulation without losing contact with the outside world. It must also meet the needs of the Peabody Trust which owns the freehold and manages the accommodation.

Using the Bio-Regional principles of local material and labour sourcing stimulating the local economy, and minimising pollution from transportation, the team is now developing a site based prefabrication technique. On-site workshops will accept second hand materials directly from demolition sites, clean up both timber and steel, and use simple jigs to build structural frames. New hardwoods such as oak and chestnut are sourced from local WWF Forest Stewardship Council approved woodland. Local brick, concrete aggregate and precast floor planks can all be sourced within 35 miles of the site, ensuring that all bulky materials have a reduced embodied energy.

The designers (Bill Dunster Associates) note that the true value of any site is determined by the amount of accommodation the local planning area sub-committee will allow to be built on it – empowering local communities to promote zero emissions developments, without relying on large central government grants, or asking the developer to pay for the increased building costs of super efficient urban fabric.

projects have a dual purpose of making both social and environmental improvements and, through community input, developing the capacity of local communities to do so (sometimes in the face of contradictory pressures). It is to this capacity building aspect that we now turn.

1.4 Local capacity building

A number of commentators have argued that building local knowledge and building on local knowledge within civil society is key to the development of social capital and institutional capital. Healey (1998) comments on the importance of local knowledge within different sectors of civil society, and emphasises that there is a need for local government to learn about 'different social worlds' from which 'stakeholder' groups and organisations come. This view is echoed by Taylor (2000), who argues that local communities do bring significant local knowledge to the table, and that this has been undervalued in the past. This clearly links to wider debates on the 'shift' within local government from government to governance and the importance of greater interaction with civil society, particularly the need for local policy makers to build up processes of social learning (or capacity building).

The term 'capacity building' has been applied, both in relation to policy making at the local level in general, and specifically in terms of LA21 and other initiatives for sustainable development. For example, the United Nations Development Capacity 21 programme understands capacity building as:

... the sum of the efforts needed to nurture, enhance and utilise the skills of people and institutions to progress towards sustainable development. (UNDP, 1999)

The concept of capacity building has a particularly prominent place in contemporary environmental policy making in that it was identified as the principal 'means of implementation' for most of the programme areas of the 1992 Agenda 21 agreement, and as such it has become an important element in Local Agenda 21 programmes worldwide. Capacity building is usually understood as a process which strengthens the ability of local communities and organisations to build their structures, systems, people and skills in order to undertake and develop initiatives which will contribute to sustainable development.

Indeed, research on the progress and process of LA21 across Europe (Evans and Theobald, 2001) indicates that participation both by citizens and stakeholder groups is clearly being seen as a key aspect of sustainable development, both by local authorities and stakeholder groups themselves. However, there are distinct variations between countries in the level of community involvement, and the nature of that involvement. Across

Europe there is a view that greater participation is needed from the private sector, social NGOs, and community groups.

An issue of particular concern (raised in the European research – Evans and Theobald, 2001) is how to engage individuals and groups in decision-making processes. Two specific approaches emerge as being important: firstly the need for local authorities to establish and invest in long-term projects for sustainable development. This would indicate that they are committed to the process on a long-term basis. It would also provide opportunities for local people to participate in practical projects within the local community. Secondly, it is essential that local authorities both gain and maintain the trust of local people and stakeholder groups, and the involvement of local people in projects could both help to improve trust, and to raise awareness of sustainable development issues.

There are many examples of linking local government and civil society, through community-based projects. There is a synergy from building on these links so that capacity building is achieved through partnership in delivering local environmental sustainability projects and policies. Greater capacity as the sum of the collective work done in various initiatives is greater than the individual parts or partners, and, overall, individual projects and initiatives have a positive impact locally regarding environmental sustainability.

One recent initiative (BedZED) in the UK, described in Box 1.2, exemplifies the opportunities for local environmental sustainability when a local authority supports the development of innovative projects which benefit the local community and contribute to the social, environmental, and economic aspects of sustainable development. (However, it should be noted that local authority support has not been unequivocal and has been the result of substantial negotiation.)

The purpose of BedZED, as Box 1.2 shows, is not only to minimise the development's environmental impact, but also to foster community activity and integration in a relatively poor area of South London. For example, local, non-BedZED residents are encouraged to use the development's facilities. The project demonstrates how environmental and social principles can be synergistically combined, with minimal electricity bills making a significant potential contribution to the budgets of particularly low-income households, for whom these represent a higher proportion of income. The Easterhouse Solar Project in Glasgow likewise emphasises the benefits of this, where a pilot group of 36 flats has been treated to super insulation (added conservatories at ground level, glassed-in balconies), and more efficient central heating and solar roof panels, which have dramatically reduced heating bills allowing residents to use energy effectively, and eliminating the previously notorious damp and mouldy conditions (McDowell, 1999). This project was supported by Glasgow City Council and was part funded by the European Union and, as with BedZED, has served as a demonstration project.

1.5 Structure of the book

This introduction has made reference to a number of projects demanding various levels of investment and with both environmental and social benefits, which illustrate what can be achieved by local communities, not-for-profit organisations and local government working in various combinations. They are small scale and, as yet, not widely replicated, although there are indications that some provide inspiration to other groups and localities (a similar project inspired by BedZED is being developed in the London borough of Merton, although, at the time of writing, a number of financial and logistical hurdles had yet to be overcome).

This book includes reviews of a number of similar initiatives and practices, which combine environmental and social sustainability and which have been developed to a lesser or greater extent nationwide. Local markets (Chapter 6) and recycling (Chapter 7) are familiar practices in the local landscape and constitute more than their ostensible respective purposes of provisioning food and managing waste. Both marketing and recycling enable participants to feel part of the wider community as do the less common, but emerging activities of local economic trading schemes (Chapter 8) and community gardening (Chapter 9). These four case studies are by no means problem free and their limitations are discussed by their respective authors, but the chapters show the potential for local scale responses to the need for localities to become more environmentally and socially sustainable. The case studies are concluded by Chapter 10, on the Canadian experience of local projects in which the author considers sustainable development projects in Toronto.

The case studies are preceded, however, with introductory chapters outlining more general aspects of sustainable development. Chapter 2 discusses the role of regional government in the UK in delivering sustainable development. It particularly focuses on Regional Development Agencies and their obligation to develop a strategy to combat climate change (as part of the UK Government's commitment to EU targets in this area). Since the RDAs must work with local authorities, this provides an important connection to this relatively new sphere of governance. Chapter 3, on the restructuring of the china clay industry in Cornwall, illustrates how a more environmentally sustainable approach to recovering landscape degraded by minerals extraction can be secured at the local-regional level. This is followed by a chapter on the development of Local Agenda 21 across Europe, signalling the importance of this initiative and how its success is contingent on particular partnerships at the local level. Chapter 5 considers the importance of working with local communities in developing sustainable development strategies, particularly through the mechanism of the focus group. Given the difficulties many local authorities in the UK and elsewhere have had in generating public participation (Buckingham-Hatfield, 1999; Evans and Percy, 1999; Selman, 1998), it is of critical importance that they have

decision-making structures in place that are open to and encouraging of public involvement.

The book concludes with a chapter on inequality and disadvantaged communities, which calls for planning, as part of local government, to be reinvented as an egalitarian mechanism to achieve fairer sustainable development practices and processes. Central to this is the notion that, however imperfect elected local government is, it is the most democratic and accountable form of decision-making that exists at the local level and, as such, is of critical importance in developing projects which have the widest benefit and which address the needs of the poorest, most disadvantaged and (as usually follows) least vocal groups in society. An earlier version of this chapter was given as the Judith Matthews Memorial Lecture at a conference organised by the Planning and Environment Research Group (PERG) of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers (RGS-IBG)) in 1999, from which the idea of this book emerged. Judith Matthews' work was distinguished by her commitment to making academic work relevant to local community needs, and she put this into practice in her own work in West Devon. After her death in 1998, the PERG honoured her by creating a bursary to support young researchers working on community-related research to attend international conferences. Andy Blower's lecture inaugurated this award and it is an appropriate segue to the rest of this book to emphasise that the academic research reported here is yet another important component of local partnerships working towards sustainable development.

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1.7 Useful links and web addresses

1. BedZED (Beddington Zero Energy Development): www.zedfactory.com/bedzed/bedzed.html
2. European Commission 6th Environmental Action Programme: www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/newprg/index.htm
3. European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign: www.sustainable-cities.org/home.html
4. ICLEI (on the Rio + 10 conference): www.iclei.org/johannesburg2002
5. Local Government International Bureau (local government affairs worldwide, including sustainability): www.lgib.gov.uk/policy/pgp-c3.htm
6. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (where local government and the regions is situated): www.local-regions.odpm.gov.uk/index.htm

7. Real World Coalition (coalition of not-for-profit organisations campaigning on a number of constituent elements of sustainable development, such as environmental sustainability and democratic renewal): www.realworld.org.uk
8. United Nations Development Programme (link to the Rio + 10 conference): www.undp.org/wssd

2

Skeletal frameworks: Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks and the issue of climate change

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2.1 Introduction

Sustainable development is essentially a normative and contestable concept, urging changes in institutional and individual behaviour. Accordingly, variation in its formulation at different levels of policy making is to be expected. But it is also a relatively new concept, needing to gain policy space amongst traditional political and institutional balances, and requiring innovation and institutional creativity to do so. This chapter examines aspects of this innovation and variation through the new Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks (RSDFs) prepared in the English regions, and in particular their response to the emerging policy arena of climate change. It considers the relationship of the regional to the local level, in the context of local statutory measures such as Community Strategies.

One outcome of the Rio Summit of 1992 has been the proliferation of strategies and statements on sustainable development by different levels of government. These strategies have been promulgated at trans-national level, such as in the EU's Fifth and Sixth Environmental Action Plans (Commission of the European Communities, 1992 and 2001) and at national levels (Jänicke and Weidner, 1997). Such national strategies are exemplified by the UK's Sustainable Development Strategy of 1999 (Her Majesty's Government, 1999). At the same time, there has been a complementary focus on the local level through Local Agenda 21 (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992) and the UK Government's promotion of Community Strategies. The encouragement of action at the local level has generated much debate on the politics of the 'new localism'.

Some justify localist ideologies in terms of community ownership of problems, actions and solutions (Selman, 1996). Other more sceptical commentators (such as Marvin and Guy, 1997, and Rydin, 1999) point to the strength of non-local forces such as the global flows of capital and knowledge.

But given the relative novelty of sustainable development compared with conventional development models, one might expect some different levels of government and forms of governance to have emerged. In the environmental field, this might be especially expected given the complexity and the trans-boundary nature of many environmental problems. One level of governance where there has been institutional innovation in the UK has been that of the region, a level with significant autonomy and powers in other European countries, but one which has seen a diminution of status in the UK throughout the 1980s and early 1990s (Marshall *et al*, 2002).

The policy of devolution pursued by New Labour since 1997 has given rise to new regional institutions, which have been explicitly given the task of pursuing sustainable development. This chapter asks to what extent the new English regional governance has made its own interpretation of sustainable development and how this articulates with the local level discussed elsewhere in this book. It does so through examining the Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks (RSDFs) produced by all the English regions in order to assess a number of aspects:

- how far the region is a coherent level at which to pursue sustainable development;
- the model of partnership between agencies in drawing up the RSDFs;
- the variation between regions in their aims for sustainable development;
- the models of local implementation adopted in the RSDFs;
- what overall model of regionalism this suggests.

The chapter focuses particularly on the treatment within RSDFs of climate change. Climate change is a particularly revealing issue: as one relatively new on the agenda, unlike economic development or housing figures, it is not yet comfortably embedded in strategies or structures, and the field is open for innovation in policy making and implementation (Shackley, 2001). Alongside the complex of regional initiatives, with their inevitable stresses ‘spatial, institutional and sectoral’ (Marshall, 2002: 6), there is both opportunity for innovation to flourish in the interstices, but also a danger of these being crushed as the blocks are reconfigured.

2.2 Interpretation of sustainable development

The UK Government’s reformulation of the Brundtland definition of sustainable development (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) was published in its Sustainable Development Strategy of 1999, *A Better Quality of Life*. The strategy states that:

[A]lthough the idea [of sustainable development] is simple, the task is substantial. It means meeting four objectives at the same time, in the UK and in the world as a whole:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- effective protection of the environment;
- prudent use of natural resources;
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth. (HMG, 1999: 8)

Under its guidance to regions on the preparation of RSDFs (DETR, 2000a), all English regions had to sign up to that broad interpretation. This chapter does not discuss the rights and wrongs of that interpretation as such – although it clearly represents a weak form of environmental sustainability, with its emphasis on balance between the aims, and with no sense that there are environmental limits which will put a constraint on the achievement of other aims (Jacobs, 1991). However, it is instructive to review the way in which these aims have been differently interpreted by the regions.

2.3 Role of regions

This section considers what regions can offer in terms of sustainable development, and the distinctive aims and tools for implementation of sustainable development at the regional level.

2.3.1 Administrative and local identity justifications

Some justifications for a regional perspective on sustainable development seem to suggest an almost tautologous role – regions can link top-down central policy and bottom-up local policy, linking the strategic with the community (Hewett, 2001). There is an assumption, to some extent untested, that a strategic view necessarily requires a spatially extended view, and that this means a level of governance greater than the existing local administrative boundaries. More specifically, it is argued that:

... centralised policy is often a blunt instrument, and that pressures and opportunities are not geographically or socially uniform. Splitting England into regions allows more regionally specific implementation of national policies like planning and transport. (Hewett, 2001: 8)

A further justification is that regions have some sort of cultural resonance and meaning for local people, and it is somehow easier to create the partnerships seen as necessary for sustainable development at that level. This justification is examined further in discussing partnerships in the regions.

2.3.2 Ecological justifications

Other proponents of the regional level for the delivery of sustainable development have set out more substantive reasons. For instance, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), in its report pressing the Labour Government for a strengthening of regional planning in the devolved administrations of the UK and in England, argued that there is a strong ecological imperative at that level:

Planning in the UK is based on administrative, not bio-geographical, units. Natural habitats are often split by administrative boundaries. Planning at the regional scale is important for nature conservation as it deals with large geographical units and long time horizons. It is more likely to cover large habitat blocks and ecological processes. (Brooke, 1997: 1)

This raises the issue of another dimension – that of time. It is often assumed (an assumption rarely critically evaluated) that the larger the geographical scale at which plans are made, the greater the scope for an extended time-frame. This is particularly important, as we shall see, in climate change analysis and responses.

2.3.3 Economic justifications

The Government itself, in its White Paper of 1997 which set out its proposals for Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), saw the role of regions very much in terms of economic competitiveness and modernisation. It argued that a regional tier of governance was necessary because English regions were under-performing compared with equivalent regions elsewhere in Europe (DETR, 1997). It suggested that greater co-ordination was needed at the regional level than the existing fragmented structures allowed. But the less explicit aim of regionalism was political, to allow in England the creation of agencies and structures to match the devolved structures in Wales and Scotland.

RDAs were given five statutory purposes:

- economic development and regeneration;
- business efficiency and skills;
- innovation and competitiveness;
- employment;
- sustainable development.

The concept of sustainable development given to the RDAs was also interpreted as related to the competitiveness agenda, either through more efficient use of natural resources or through the quality of regional environments being themselves an economic asset, for tourism or inward investment. A number of regions, such as the West Midlands, have commissioned studies to demonstrate these benefits (Advantage West

Midlands, 2001). However, there was no attempt by government to recognise or build on bio-geographic or ecological regions (that is, regions defined by their role in terms of natural processes such as water catchments, or eco-systems).

2.3.4 Sustainable development justifications

In terms of individual objectives for sustainable development, therefore, there are uneven justifications for regional governance, but there may be a stronger case in order to achieve the integration between objectives which sustainability requires. The UK Sustainable Development Strategy gave the regional tier a remit in sustainable development:

... [a]t regional level in England, sustainable development will have a place in all strategic documents produced by public bodies. (Her Majesty's Government, 1999: 66)

However, it contained no discussion of the appropriateness of action at this geographical scale. The later guidance on the preparation of RSDFs states that:

... we believe the regional level is the geographical scale at which solutions can be found that will move all the indicators [of sustainable development] in the right direction. (DETR, 2000a: 8)

Again, the guidance is rather vague as to the reasons for this perspective. There was no explicit recognition of the environmental agencies operating at the regional level, such as the Environment Agency (whose regions reflect the large river catchments of its predecessor, the National Rivers Authority, in its regional structure of Thames, Severn–Trent etc). The environmental non-governmental organisations such as the RSPB and the Council for the Protection of Rural England also had a regional structure, but this was partly determined by their need to correspond to the boundaries of Government Offices.

Moreover, not only do ecological issues transcend local boundaries, but, for historical, political and geographical reasons, many of the key environmental infrastructure companies (in energy, water, minerals and waste) are constituted at the regional level. While many utility functions used to lie with local government (such as water and energy), their removal to regional bodies prior to privatisation significantly reduced the powers of local governance (Ward, 1994). It can therefore be argued that a regional tier of governance is necessary to provide the 'greater force and legitimacy to deal with such bodies', and to deal with the powerful central government agencies in sectors such as transport and agriculture (Marshall, 1997: 192), which are often following a very different economic agenda from those at the regional level. Central government and its agencies have promulgated a number of environmental policy schemes at the regional scale. In miner-

als, for instance, there have been long-standing Regional Aggregates Working Parties. The UK Waste Strategy has proposed a new principle of regional self-sufficiency in waste, and new Regional Technical Waste Advisory Boards (DETR, 2000b). The Environment Agency and water regulator OFWAT have reviewed water companies' water resource plans largely on a regional basis (Environment Agency, 2001). Renewable energy is also a policy being more strongly articulated at the regional scale, with the Department for Trade and Industry, and regionally-based Government Offices supporting regional assessments and targets for renewable energy (for instance, in the East of England region, described below).

Questions remain therefore as to what extent the region is a particularly coherent or obvious level at which to address sustainability issues, and to what extent (and how) the regional level articulates with other initiatives at the local level. These questions have been considered through studying the issue of climate change and the regional response to this.

2.4 Climate change

Climate change is a global issue that requires innovative responses at global, national, regional, local and individual level. The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its latest reports warns that the earth's climate system has demonstrably changed on both global and regional scales since the pre-industrial era, with some of the changes attributable to human activities (IPCC, 2001). Recent increases in temperature have already affected hydrological systems and eco-systems, and we are already seeing damaging socio-economic consequences in many parts of the world.

It is difficult to foresee future socio-economic conditions, but using a range of scenarios with different levels of greenhouse gas emissions, surface temperature increases of 1.4–5.8°C over the period 1990–2100 are expected. This is about two to ten times larger than observed warming over the twentieth century, and will have major global consequences.

The studies concluded that action is necessary to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lessen the rate and magnitude of warming and sea-level rise. Adaptation is a necessary strategy at all levels – local, regional and global. The IPCC concluded that the capacity of countries to adapt and mitigate can be enhanced when climate policies are integrated with national development policies including economic, social and environmental dimensions – a clear requirement of sustainable development.

This is exactly what the UK Government had attempted to do in its Climate Change Programme (DETR *et al.*, 2000). The Programme outlines the global response, such as the negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol on limiting greenhouse gas emissions. It sets out the measures for the UK to deliver its legally binding target for a 12.5% reduction from 1990 levels by

2012 in the basket of six greenhouse gases listed under Kyoto, and its (more demanding) domestic policy target of a 20% reduction in carbon dioxide by 2010.

The UK Programme argues that all sectors and parts of the UK should play their part in addressing the issue of climate change. Regions have a role in both mitigation (that is, reduction of greenhouse gases) and in adaptation to the unavoidable impacts of climate change. The UK climate has warmed by about 0.7°C over the last 300 years, with about 0.5°C of that warming occurring in the twentieth century. The climate models predict that global temperatures will rise by 3°C by 2100 under business as usual emissions; in the UK, scenarios commissioned by the government suggest a range of changes for the periods 2020s, 2050s, and 2080s. These suggest a mean temperature change under the medium high scenario for the 2080s of over 2.0°C (in Northern Scotland) and 3.5°C (in South East England) (Hulme *et al.*, 2002).

The Programme expects that Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks (RSDFs) will ‘add significant value at the regional level’ (DETR *et al.*, 2000: 36), and anticipates that their preparation will encourage regional groups to consider their regions’ vulnerability to climate change and to reflect the government’s objective to increase the use of renewable energy sources. The Programme argues that the range of stakeholders at the regional level – RDAs, regional chambers and assemblies, sustainable development groups, regional level businesses and community groups – have as important a role to play as local government.

2.5 Climate change as a regional issue

Despite the UK Programme’s endorsement of this regional role, there has been very little discussion about *why* regions might represent an appropriate scale at which to address climate change. Many of these reasons are the same as those discussed above for sustainable development, but there are some particular institutional and awareness-raising innovations which merit comment at this point: namely mitigation, adaptation, and institutional innovation and partnership.

2.5.1 Mitigation

Clearly, mitigation or reduction of global warming needs global agreement and decision-making, hence the Kyoto Protocol and the dismay by many governments at the refusal of the US, under the Bush administration, to sign the Protocol. However, other aspects of energy policy are already articulated at the regional level, the explanation for this lying in both historical-contingent, and bio-physical reasons. In the UK, many of the early studies

on renewable energy capacity were done at a regional level, such as the Energy Technology Support Unit's study of the North West region (ETSU, 1989). These regions corresponded to the Regional Electricity Boards and their successors under privatisation, the Regional Electricity Companies, created in 1989. More recently, new studies have been completed for the regions of North West (NWCG, 2001), East Midlands (LUC, 2001), South West (Terence O'Rourke, 2001), and East (Hams *et al*, 2001), which have made important contributions to the profile of energy in the RSDFs.

2.5.2 Adaptation

The UK Government recognised that efforts needed to be made to raise the profile of the adaptation of government institutions to policy making in response to climate change. The UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP) was specifically set up to co-ordinate and integrate a stakeholder-led assessment of the impacts of climate change at a national and regional level, and to help organisations plan for climate change. In its first three years it facilitated a number of sub-UK scoping studies, including ones for Scotland, Wales, the North West, part of the South East, and the East Midlands, and has since inaugurated studies for the South West, West Midlands, and East Anglia (UKCIP, 2000).

This focus on the regional level partly reflected the institutional networks which could be exploited both to identify different stakeholder organisations and to raise awareness within these of climate change. A further reason for promoting studies at the sub-national level was that, even at low levels of spatial resolution, estimates of changes in the key climate indicators such as rainfall and temperature show there are likely to be significant differences between the regions of the UK (including Scotland and Wales as regions) (Hulme *et al*, 2002). The analysis below examines how far each of the RSDFs built on the findings of the UKCIP scoping studies, in particular in relation to issues of institutional innovation and partnership.

2.5.3 Institutional innovation and partnership

The policy response to climate change is to some degree a revealing indicator of the models of partnership being adopted in the different regions. The critical factors in the take-up of the climate change issue by these regions seems to be the prior existence of regional institutions, such as (in the devolved administrations) the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Executive and, in two of the English regions, two very different organisations – Sustainability North West and the East Midlands Local Government Association (EMLGA). These regions were cited by the UK Round Table on Sustainable Development (UKRTSD) as implementing best practice on

sustainable development integration, through effective regional co-operation amongst Government Offices, local authorities and stakeholders. The UK Round Table report argued that:

A grass-roots approach, and an understanding of how issues affect people at a local level, can significantly assist in policy integration. (UKRTSD, 1999: 14)

Such stakeholders might include business, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the voluntary sector.

The role of regional round tables has been intriguing. As recommended in the government document *A Better Quality of Life* (1999), round tables are non-statutory groups set up to represent a range of agencies and interests to oversee the contribution to sustainability that plans and policies of regional structures are making. They have been established in a variety of ways – in some cases appointed by the Government Office, in others they are attached to a regional body (chamber or assembly), and in others to an independent trust (Hewett, 2001). The existence of such groups seems to have been more important than either a strong pre-existing sense of regional identity (such as might have been expected in the North East) or regional planning secretariats (such as existed in the South East). The West Midlands was the first region to set up a round table, and the first to publish its RSDF – although not one of the first to undertake a climate change scoping study. In the East Midlands, the EMLGA and the Regional Sustainability Round Table had considerable impact in creating effective policy integration (Aitchison, 2002). The Round Table considered that responding to climate change offered opportunities to deliver more sustainable development, and accordingly put resources into managing the climate change impacts scoping study. The region as a whole

. . . wanted to position itself to minimise the risks to the local environment, economy and well being of its inhabitants and those beyond its boundaries, to take best advantage of the opportunities that may be there, and to play its part in the UK's work on lessening the effects of climate change. (Shackley *et al*, 2001: 1)

The North West region has provided a different model for these partnerships or forums. A partnership to work on the framework had first been brought together by the Government Office in 1997. Sustainability North-west has been called 'Europe's first cross-sectoral partnership organisation dedicated to advancing sustainable development at the regional level' (Menzies, 2001: 36). Its Chief Executive describes the role of such organisations as:

. . . critical friends . . . working with the grain of regional machinery but independent of government and the regional chambers/assemblies, and whose role should be to challenge as well as to promote solutions. (Menzies, 2001: 42)

Menzies makes the point that ‘while partnership – the aerosol word – continues to be sprayed on countless initiatives’ (2001: 38), the North West has a long history of regional partnerships. In particular, the North West has another cross-sectoral, inter-disciplinary partnership grouping devoted to climate change, the North West Climate Group. This has a broad membership including insurance companies, central government departments and the Government Office for the North West (GONW), regulatory agencies such as the Environment Agency and English Nature, local energy and water companies, the North West Development Agency, the North West Regional Assembly, UKCIP, the National Trust (a major landowner in the region), and local universities. Led by Sustainability Northwest, it initiated the first regional scoping study on climate change (NWCG, 1998), and has commissioned regional level work on socio-economic scenarios. It has organised major conferences to reach the ‘movers and shakers’ in tourism and the built environment, and has published a groundbreaking regional inventory of greenhouse gas emissions (Mander *et al.*, 2000).

However, the existence of such partnerships does not necessarily mean consistency in regional strategic development, especially given the range of time-scales of the various strategies, and the different configurations of interests in the partnerships. Marvin shows how the climate change scoping study, the RDA’s Regional Economic Strategy, and the Regional Planning Guidance (RPG), all make very different assumptions about the key infrastructure required for water and energy, and work to a range of time-horizons with different assumptions about discounting future returns on investment (Marvin, 2002).

While the North West region has arguably been successful in innovation and action at the regional scale, the South West region illustrates some of the difficulties in regional articulation of these issues. The region is geographically very spread out, and does not represent a coherent biophysical region, stretching from Gloucester to Dorset to the Isles of Scilly. Some of the tensions have been revealed in the relations between the Government Office, the regional planning body, and other strategic authorities (Gobbett and Palmer, 2002). Similar tensions were shown in the holding of a conference to study the economic impacts of climate change for the region, which initially only covered the peninsular part of the region. Nevertheless, a regional round table was created. A very different model was adopted in the West Midlands, where the scoping study on climate change impacts has been undertaken by the Midlands Environmental Business Club and Severn Trent Water. It is the only project of its kind to be headed by business groups, and reflects long-standing business networking for promoting economic development in the West Midlands.

This range of partnerships and round tables across the regions represents a significant institutional innovation, but legitimate concerns remain about their lack of formal accountability (UKRTSD, 1999) and their tenuous links to local government, through bodies such as the local authorities’ network

of councils for climate protection (IDeA, 2001), or to community groups. These issues of lack of accountability are replicated in the partnerships involved in the Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks.

2.6 Purpose of RSDFs

This chapter turns now to the question of how the RSDFs have responded to these issues of climate change. Government guidance on these frameworks was issued in 2000 (DETR, 2000a), and this required regions to have RSDFs in place by the end of 2000. Consultation on the proposals in *A Better Quality of Life* had suggested that there was a perceived need for such frameworks to develop a regional approach to the wide range of issues in the strategy, involving a wide range of stakeholders. The guidance accordingly requires RSDFs to:

- set out a high-level vision for the region;
- define sustainable development objectives;
- set priorities through identifying indicators and targets;
- identify gaps where a regional approach would add value;
- point out key challenges and conflicts, and suggest solutions;
- set out appropriate proposals for monitoring and review;
- identify partnerships and other initiatives and strategies;
- be endorsed by the regional chamber. (DETR, 2000a)

The guidance provides a menu of current national policy initiatives for the frameworks to consider as background reference. On climate change, the guidance is thin. It asks that, 'insofar as RSDFs cover climate change issues', they should reflect the aims of the UK Climate Change Programme and assess how the region can contribute to national and international targets. All regions are requested to start to develop their own adaptation strategies, and reference is made to assistance from UKCIP in initiating such studies. It does not ask that regions develop wider Regional Energy Strategies, but they should elaborate a regional approach to renewable energy. The guidance further states that RSDFs should provide a regional vehicle for meeting the national renewable energy target, through helping to build consensus on how national targets can be taken forward in the region. However, some regions, such as the North West and the East Midlands, which have a particularly strong record of action at the regional and local level in this field, have commissioned work on more comprehensive regional energy studies, examining energy efficiency and conservation (NWCG, 2001 and LUC, 2001).

The guidance is therefore far from prescriptive on climate change, and allows a wide range of responses amongst the regions. The ways in which the RSDFs are addressing the issue of sustainable development, and within this the issue of climate change, are the subject of a research project by the

author, and the findings are explained in the remainder of this chapter. The research has involved the examination of the eight RSDFs that have been prepared by the regions, the most recent being published at the end of 2001. The review examines their scope and content, using the Government's objectives for the frameworks as a set of criteria, and taking the published frameworks as the primary data source. This research formed part of a wider project for the (former) DETR on land-use planning and climate change. The research was conducted over the period September 2000–September 2001, and will lead to the publication of guidance for local authorities and regional planning bodies in 2002. Details of the frameworks and the agencies or partnerships which prepared them are given in Table 2.1.

2.7 Partnership in RSDF preparation

Partnership is promoted in all the RSDFs. Table 2.1 shows the variation in the organisations formally identified as the authors or publishers of the documents; however each region stresses that its preparation involved consultation with a wide range of groups, and in many cases partnership in its actual production. In each region, those groups consulted or involved include the relevant regional assembly or chamber, the Regional Development Agency, and the Government Office for the region. Many of the groups which were involved in the sub-UK scoping studies were also instrumental in the preparation of the RSDFs, such as the round tables or similar organisations such as Sustainability Northwest. Other groups consulted included regional bodies from public, voluntary and private sectors, loosely representing sectors and sub-regions.

However, there are some significant variations which may be due to both the pre-existing regional institutions, and the perception of the sustainable development issues in the different regions. For instance, in the South East, production of the framework was guided by a Steering Group which included the National Health Service as well as the Regional Assembly, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), and the Environment Agency, with contributions from representatives from business, voluntary and environmental interests and organisations. The work was led by a secondee from the Environment Agency Thames Region (SEERA, 2001). The inclusion of health organisations reflected the concern with high levels of relative deprivation amongst both urban and rural populations in that region.

In the East Midlands, a different approach was followed. The lead was taken by the Integrated Regional Strategy Policy Forum (Shackley, 2001), which consisted of local government elected members, the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA), the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM), Trade Unions, representatives of different sectors of education (higher education and Training and Education Councils and

Table 2.1 Status of Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks (RSDFs)

| Region | Title | Prepared by | Date | Status |
|--------------------------|--|---|---------------|---|
| West Midlands | <i>Quality of Life: the Future Starts Here: A Sustainability Strategy for the West Midlands</i> | West Midlands Round Table for Sustainable Development Steering Group | February 2000 | Endorsed |
| North West | <i>Action for Sustainability: Framework for Action; Action Plan</i> | North West Regional Assembly and Government Office North West | July 2000 | Endorsed by Regional Assembly |
| East Midlands | <i>England's East Midlands Integrated Regional Strategy: Our Sustainable Development Framework</i> | East Midlands Regional Assembly | December 2000 | Endorsed |
| South West | <i>A Sustainable Future for the South West</i> | Regional Assembly and Sustainability South West (Round Table) | February 2001 | Endorsed by Regional Assembly March 2001 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | <i>Advancing Together: Towards a Sustainable Region. The Regional Sustainable Development Framework for Yorkshire and Humberside</i> | Regional Chamber for Yorkshire and Humberside; Regional Assembly; Yorkshire Forward; Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber | February 2001 | Adopted by Regional Chamber February 2001 |
| South East | <i>A Better Quality of Life in the South East</i> | SEERA in partnership with GOSE, SEEDA, EA and NHS | June 2001 | Adopted |
| East | <i>A Sustainable Development Framework for the East of England</i> | East of England Regional Assembly, and EE Sustainable Development Round Table | October 2001 | Adopted |
| North East | <i>Quality of Life in the North East: Towards a Regional Framework</i> | Sustaine (Sustainability North East) on behalf of North east Assembly, GONE and One North East | January 2002 | Endorsed by Regional Assembly |

their successors), health, business and voluntary sectors. The East Midlands Integrated Regional Strategy had four aims, both inward- and outward-looking:

- to develop a framework for sustainable development;
- to strengthen the regional partnership;
- to integrate regional policies and strategies;
- to maximise the influence of the region on central government and the EU.

This attempt at integration of all regional strategies has been regarded with interest by central government, and with some envy by other regions (as expressed by Jonathon Porritt from the perspective of the South West) for its ability to substitute an integrated strategy for a stand-alone framework. Elsewhere, the frameworks were prepared too late to guide the Regional Economic Strategies and Regional Planning Guidance, and therefore represent a somewhat back-to-front process (Smith and Sheate, 2001).

2.7.1 Regional knowledge and information

The development of RSDFs is based on some very uncertain assumptions about the justification for addressing sustainable development at that level. This raises the issue of knowledge and information bases at the regional scale. Despite the engagement of many regionally based agencies, much of the available information is currently fragmented, and not collected on any consistent time-series or spatial basis. Many regions are proposing Regional Observatories to assemble and co-ordinate the presently dispersed information held at the regional scale, and in some cases to have a role in monitoring performance. Some sectors are better served than others, for instance in certain regions, the Environment Agency has taken a significant role in leading studies of the environmental condition of the regions, drawing on its work on Local Environment Agency Plans, and its knowledge of the state of the environment for waste and discharge licensing, and water abstraction licensing. For instance, it led the study *Viewpoints on the East Midlands* (a state of the environment report), and a report on a set of regional sustainable development indicators (Environment Agency *et al*, 1999a and b). The energy sector is much more problematic. With the privatisation of electricity and gas providers, much of the knowledge on a regional scale of energy demand and consumption became commercially confidential, and regional agencies have been frustrated in their attempts to develop strategies in the absence of regional scale data. The East Midlands climate impacts study included a greenhouse gas inventory, but it was not possible to calculate the emissions using local data because of the absence of readily available data on actual emissions from the East Midlands region. National emissions data were therefore apportioned to

the region, using appropriate scaling factors (Shackley *et al*, 2001). Even so, this study, with its predecessor, the greenhouse gas inventory for the North West (Mander *et al*, 2000), represents considerable advances on knowledge and understanding of the different sectors' profile of emissions.

Despite this former information deficit on which to found the development of RSDFs, there is evidence of considerable institutional innovation at the regional level. How well have the RSDFs therefore been able to position themselves in this changing context? And how far have they been able to take on the emerging issue of climate change?

2.8 Treatment of climate change in RSDFs

Although the DETR's guidance was tentative about the inclusion of climate change issues, all the RSDFs reviewed cover them to some degree. It seems that they are issues with increasing salience. Government guidance is indicative rather than prescriptive, and so the RSDFs do not all follow a similar pattern, and there are significant variations in their treatment of the topic. The following appraisal of the RSDFs relates to the broad headings of the Government's guidance for the frameworks: vision, objectives, targets, challenges, monitoring, implementation and relations with other strategies. These are summarised in Table 2.2.

2.8.1 Vision and horizons

Most frameworks first set out an overall vision for sustainable development, from which they derive their objectives, before examining the issues in achieving that vision. Others start by describing regional problems and issues (including climate change), and from these develop aims and objectives. All the RSDFs offer visions for their regions, varying from the bland to the more distinctive. For instance, the South East's RSDF is extremely vague:

Our vision is of a prosperous region delivering a high quality of life and environment for everyone, now and in the future. (SEERA, 2001: 9)

The North East's document is distinctive in recognising the global context:

The north east will be a region where present and future generations have a high quality of life; where there is an integrated approach to achieving social, economic and environmental goals, and where global responsibilities are recognised. (Sustaine, 2002: 3)

Others refer more generally to sustainability in the long-term, or merely rephrase the Government's four elements of sustainable development – social, economic, environmental and resource issues. The primary function of the frameworks is to show how all these four key components of sus-

Table 2.2 RSDFs and climate change

| Region | Vision | Objectives | Targets | Challenges | Implementation |
|--------------------------|--------|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| West Midlands | ✓ | Yes | Transport, energy and water | Effects of economic growth | RPG and other regional strategies |
| North West | ✓ | Yes | Habitats, energy and emissions | Significant impacts | Biodiversity, Energy and HECA |
| East Midlands | ✓ | Yes | Renewable energy and emissions | Adapting while meeting social needs | RES and energy strategy |
| South West | ✓ | Yes | Renewable energy | National and global action needed | Many agencies identified |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | ✓ | Yes | Energy and emissions | Adaptation and mitigation | Many agencies identified |
| South East | ✓ | Yes | Energy emissions | Uncertain but significant impacts | RPG, RTS and RES etc local strategies |
| East | ✓ | Yes | None | Impacts greater than elsewhere | LA21, Community strategies and local climate change strategies |
| North East | ✓ | Only a GHG objective | Renewable energy | | (see Table 2.3) |

tainable development are to be met. To this end, all the RSDFs explicitly identify the links between their objectives; but they do this in different ways. Yorkshire and Humberside, for instance, provides a separate chapter on each aim, and undertakes a form of consistency appraisal, in bringing out the implications for each of the aims. The South West RSDF also explicitly links the theme of climate change to other themes such as health and poverty.

Whilst all the RSDFs state their vision for the region, they make little use of any of the scenario work (either on climate change, or on socio-economic scenarios) that has been done at national and regional level. Indeed, they provide little indication of what they might hope to achieve

within the short-, medium- or longer-terms, and offer no discussion of the possibility of changed future socio-economic conditions, such as different household or demographic patterns, consumer behaviour, regulatory regimes or global trade.

Moreover, they do not even make their time-horizons very clear. Where targets are time-specific, they are very short-term (up to 2010 or 2012). Only the North West looks any further ahead, distinguishing between short-term headline targets (to be achieved within one and ten years) and medium- to long-term aspirational targets (11–40 years). None of the other frameworks set out a time-horizon, or give any indication that sights have been set beyond the conventional planning periods of 10–15 years.

2.8.2 Climate change as an issue

The guidance on RSDFs encourages regions to develop policies which achieve sustainable development objectives in terms that reflect regional distinctiveness or special issues (DETR, 2000a: 7). Again, the RSDFs vary significantly in the degree to which they identify climate change as a current problem or future challenge. Those for the East, South West and South East regions point out that, even if greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, past emissions will still have an impact. There is recognition in the South East document that climate change is already happening, although it also mentions the challenge of uncertainty. The West Midlands RSDF suggests that the problems of climate change will accelerate as energy, transport and industrial activity grow, unless there is decoupling from resource use. Major economic growth trends in the East and South East regions (in particular their links with the global economy, high levels of consumption, with consequent high levels of imports and long distance trade) may conflict with actions on climate change. The East Midlands is concerned about how to plan for the impacts of climate change, especially flood risk, while meeting social and economic objectives, with existing development in areas at risk of flooding.

All but two RSDFs describe the anticipated impact of climate change in their region, with varying degrees of detail, such as temperature increases or sea-level rises (the East region anticipates that impacts in their region may be greater than others, with sea-level rise from climate change combining with isostatic changes). The two exceptions are the North East and the North West. This latter is surprising, given the amount of innovative work on climate change conducted in the region; but it may be that the RSDF was genuinely trying to add value and avoid repetition of other strategies and studies.

The policy areas most frequently mentioned are (in addition to energy and transport) forestry, water, tourism, habitats, waste, health and poverty and agriculture. As might be expected, agriculture features in the RSDFs of the South West, Yorkshire and Humberside, and East regions. Although

these are the most agriculture dependent regions, agriculture is the major land-use in all regions, therefore it might be expected to receive considerable attention in all regions. Flooding is indeed mentioned in many RSDFs, but other expected impacts such as erosion receive much less attention, while building subsidence is discussed only in the South East. No attention is paid to infrastructure generally, in terms of possible disruption to communications (such as transport links or electricity supply), or to water and sewage pumping and treatment plants. The full range of potential second-order impacts, such as water scarcity on water-intensive industries, is not sufficiently addressed.

2.8.3 Climate change aims and objectives

All the RSDFs except the North East's have an aim or objective specifically related to climate change – that is, one not only calling for reducing energy consumption or minimising greenhouse gas emissions, but addressing the wider implications, including adaptation to unavoidable climate change impacts.

Four RSDFs (South West, South East, East, and Yorkshire and Humberside) identify climate change as a key issue or over-arching theme. In the south west, it is given prominence as a theme, with objectives of:

- promoting efficient use of affordable energy while reducing energy demand;
- increasing the role of combined heat and power (chp) while reducing the adverse environmental impacts from other energy production;
- reducing the risk to society and the environment from climate change and sea-level rise.

The framework for the East region also sets out fairly prominently the issue of adaptation, under the heading *Living with Climate Change*. Its key objectives include accepting that change is happening, taking decisions, adapting lifestyles, and planning for and monitoring change. The North West has two headline objectives on climate change, one of which is to examine and reduce the impacts of climate change on the region.

2.8.4 Priorities, indicators and targets

While adaptation is mentioned as an objective, it is accorded a low priority in the indicators and targets chosen to measure progress towards sustainable development, which focus on mitigation. A number of indicators are proposed, such as low flows in rivers, and weather-related insurance claims, but few set specific targets (although the West Midlands recognises that water supplies may become uncertain, and proposes a water-conservation target that 50% of new buildings should incorporate grey-water systems by 2010).

Conversely, the responses to climate change mitigation are widely shared across the regions. All the RSDFs propose to reduce CO₂ or the basket of greenhouse gas emissions, and to increase the use of renewables and the amount or proportion of electricity generated within the region from renewable sources. Demand management (for energy and other non-renewable resources) is stressed in the North West, South East and South West, whereas the South East points to the need to change behaviour. A number look to the development of local products or services as a means of reducing the need to travel, and (in the South East) as a means of reducing vulnerability to the disruptive impacts of climate change. The frameworks are imprecise about the measures needed to implement such policies, but stress that they are frameworks, not strategies, requiring action by many people and organisations in order to implement these.

Some RSDFs propose specific quantitative targets with a target date (such as the North West and West Midlands, which are aiming to improve energy-efficiency in public and private housing by 30% by 2010). The only region to go beyond the Government's international target under the Kyoto Protocol (of 12.5% reduction of greenhouse gases), or the more ambitious domestic target (of 20% reduction in CO₂ by 2010 compared with 1990 levels), is Yorkshire and Humberside (whose target is expressed as 'greater than 20%'). This raises serious questions about the contribution of the English regions overall to achieving the national targets.

The ambitions for renewable energy are equally varied, although three regions propose to improve on the Government's target of 10% of UK electricity supplies. The South East aims for 15% of electricity from renewable energy by 2010, the South West for 11–15%, and the East for 14%. Renewable energy studies, or regional energy strategies, are underway or completed in most regions, but only three of the frameworks (South East, East Midlands, and South West) make reference to them. The government guidance on RSDFs states that it 'is keen for frameworks to build consensus on how the national policy and target for renewable energy will be taken forward in each region' (DETR, 2000a: 16). In this respect, therefore, some of the frameworks are in advance of government targets – although of course this may still not be enough to deliver the average national target.

The exception to the pattern of target-setting in the frameworks, and indeed at odds with the Government's guidance, is the document for the East region, which takes a different and potentially critical stance: it argues that targets would be too prescriptive for a framework document, and that '[i]t is for users of the framework to set their own targets' (EERA, 2001: 33). This raises the issue of the difficulties in shifting from strategy to policy implementation, as discussed below.

2.8.5 Added value at the regional scale

None of the RSDFs stress the importance of the region as the spatial scale at which climate change issues can be most appropriately tackled. The

South West argues that progress will be dependent on action at the national if not global level, and the East states that what happens elsewhere (such as reaching global agreements on greenhouse gas reduction) will have a major impact. None of the RSDFs suggest that the regional scale allows for bio-physical regions to be more consistently planned and managed, although there are references to the Environment Agency's catchment management planning.

Very different regional opportunities and strengths are identified across the regions. Most of the RSDFs lay more emphasis on the impacts of climate change as a threat than as an opportunity, but they nevertheless highlight some potential synergies. The opportunities they identify relate primarily to the bio-physical strengths of the region to offer flexibility or robustness with respect to uncertain change, and the features differ across the regions. Such features include woodland management traditions and skills in the West Midlands, with the potential for developing forestry for energy from bio-mass; good supplies of fresh water, and the scope for renewable energy of all forms, especially wind, in the North West; habitat creation in the East; and opportunities for new energy crops, CO₂ sequestration, and photovoltaics in the South East.

The perceived advantages to business and other interests are cited as:

- opportunities for business and individuals to reduce energy use in the East Midlands;
- the advantage (for all sectors) of being prepared for climate change in terms of minimising exposure to storm damage or flooding;
- helping to develop strategies for dealing with existing risks (such as North Sea surges in the East);
- the opportunity to extend the tourism season in the South West.

On the whole, however, the RSDFs do not focus on the potential benefits from climate change. On the contrary, they identify a number of barriers to responding to climate change. These include, in the South East, climate change impacts (such as increased storm events affecting water quality) themselves being a barrier to movement in the direction of more sustainable development, and the inability of the planning system to deliver habitat creation to meet bio-diversity objectives. In the East region's document it is stated that there are likely to be conflicts where coastal habitats are squeezed between flood defences and rising sea-levels, and difficulties in woodland creation in high value land around urban areas.

2.8.6 Data, monitoring and auditing

As explained earlier, the lack of information sources and reliable data for monitoring achievement of objectives and targets is an obstacle in most regions, especially with regional greenhouse gas data not yet being generally available. The North West and East Midlands have undertaken ground-breaking work to overcome this. In the meantime, proxy indicators such as

vehicle distance travelled (one of the headline indicators in *A Better Quality of Life*) are proposed (for instance in the North East and South East), and in the West Midlands an indicator for car-travel is suggested. The document for the East region proposes monitoring sea-levels, but monitoring other indicators of climate change (such as species or habitat changes) features little in the other strategies.

2.8.7 Implementation: links with other strategies

The RSDFs are intended to influence and guide other policies and strategies within the regions. They have the potential to allow other agencies and interests to buy-in to the vision of sustainable development, and to provide a common context for the sustainability appraisals of other regional strategies. At the regional scale, these include a wide range of strategies, from the regional economic strategies and regional planning guidance to health, cultural, skills and rural development strategies. However, while there is urgency in 'factoring in' climate change, it is not clear how quickly and effectively this can be expected to influence other regional or local strategies. As explained above, although some of the frameworks have set target dates, the RSDFs propose little by way of structured timetables for implementation.

The RSDFs are also intended to be used to set criteria to appraise Regional Planning Guidance (DETR, 2000c). In many cases, as noted above, they have been developed too late for this function. The current round of Regional Planning Guidance has been appraised against a variety of objectives from a variety of sources. The conclusion of a recent analysis by Smith and Sheate is that there have been some significant gaps in this process. They argue that it is to be:

... hoped that in future RSDFs will seek to ensure that those objectives not actively promoted by RPG or RESs (the principal vehicles for implementing RSDFs) are the focus of other policies, strategies or initiatives with ownership at the regional level. (Smith and Sheate, 2001: 743)

The RSDFs explicitly look to their RPG to assist with the pursuit of climate change objectives and sustainable development, particularly to assist in meeting the energy efficiency and renewables objectives, with high quality energy-efficient buildings, designs and materials, and spatial patterns. In the West Midlands, for instance, the framework states that the RPG should help to prioritise habitats, landscapes and urban green spaces, to promote strong energy and water efficiency standards, and to promote bold and radical land-use and economic development policies. It is of some concern, however, to note that increasing flood-plain capacity, which might be considered a worthwhile bio-physical issue at regional level, is only mentioned in the East Midlands and South East RSDFs.

2.8.8 Implementation: development plans, LA21 and Community Strategies

The frameworks vary in the degree to which they consider implementation at the local level. Some of them describe how their principles are to be filtered down to other stakeholders, for instance local planning authorities, developers and the public. How far the frameworks will directly influence development plans (as opposed to those framing the RPG) will become clearer over the next few years. The South West RSDF is unusual in spelling out very clearly the links with other agencies and processes (such as plans and strategies) for each objective. It includes a section for each objective under the climate change theme, showing examples of how this might be achieved. For instance, under the objective of reducing the risk to society, it suggests:

- setting land-use policies in RPG and development plans to avoid new developments in flood and coastal erosion risk areas, and encourage migration of housing and industries away from risk areas;
- managed retreat, habitat corridors, translocation;
- advice to farmers on soil erosion control, and promotion of alternative farming systems.

It identifies links to potential partners and processes, such as LA21 strategies. In addition, the RSDF contains a Sustainability Checklist asking whether ‘your decision/project will take into account the possible impacts of climate change’, and it gives Sustainability South West as the contact for further information or examples.

The Yorkshire and Humberside RSDF similarly sets out planned actions, in addition to broader aspirational objectives. They propose a range of measures including undertaking a climate change study, commissioning research, advising farmers and fisheries and promoting climate change issues in education and training. This level of detail is unusual: many of the documents emphasise their role in awareness-raising, but there is little indication of how the broad principles are to be disseminated to the general public.

The relationship of the frameworks to other local initiatives is less clear. While the regional partnerships have been preparing the frameworks, the Government has placed a requirement on local authorities to prepare Community Strategies, in order to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well being of their areas. The current government introductory text on the RSDFs suggests that they should draw on LA21 and Community Strategies, and that they should provide a link between local level targets set out in Community Strategies, and the move towards sustainability at the national level (DTLR, 2002). Those RSDFs developed more recently recognise that they should provide the context for Community Strategies. For instance, the North East region, in its guide to using the framework (reproduced as Table 2.3), matches local organisations, such as

Table 2.3 Implementation of the North East Regional Sustainable Development Framework

| Uses | Type of organisation | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------------------|--|------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| | Local | | | | Sub-regional | | Regional | | |
| | Community planning | District and unitary authorities | Community organisations/voluntary sector | Businesses | Sub-regional partnerships | Unitary and district councils | Regional networks | Statutory agencies | Regional Assembly |
| Benchmarking against other strategies | | | | | | | × | × | × |
| Monitoring regional sustainability performance | | | | | | | × | × | × |
| Reviewing regional strategies | | | | | | | × | × | × |
| Informing RPG | | | | | | | × | × | |
| Information to support bids for EU funding | × | | | | | × | × | | |
| Appraisal of structure plans/development plans | | | × | | | × | | × | |
| Appraisal of transport, economic development strategies and plans | | × | | | | × | | | |
| Informing business plans | | | | × | | | | × | |
| Inform content of LA21 | × | × | | × | × | × | | | |
| Track and compare progress on SD | × | × | × | × | × | × | × | × | × |
| Appraisal of working practices | | × | × | × | × | × | × | × | × |
| Better use of resources | | × | × | × | × | × | × | × | × |
| Identifying priorities/actions | × | × | × | × | × | × | × | × | × |
| Educate and inform employees and partners | | × | × | × | × | × | × | × | × |

Source: Sustaine (2002).

community planning, with uses such as informing the content of LA21 strategies. The frameworks are therefore intended to perform some potentially conflicting roles, both providing a context for other strategies prepared by democratically accountable bodies, and also setting out targets for regions to achieve. The expectation of the Government and of the regions is that this reconciliation will be achieved through consensus and partnership.

This approach is in line with the Government's preferred model for regional governance. The Government believes the partnership model is working:

All stakeholder groups and partner organisations are thinking and acting regionally to a far greater extent than previously. (DETR, 2001: 65)

Despite the RSDFs espousing this model, in practice partnerships are ephemeral and elusive entities, with insubstantial facets or joints. They have certainly provided evidence of successful working on various regional studies and scoping reports, identifying problems, and current and future challenges, and increasing understanding. Yet when difficult political choices need to be made, it is not clear how the partnerships will fare. Although the frameworks suggest a degree of integration of environmental considerations into other sectoral programmes, which some regard as a move up the 'ladder of sustainable development' (Baker *et al.*, 1997), implementation may throw up more evident conflict. The model of sustainable development being pursued in the frameworks is therefore still a weak one.

2.9 Skeletal frameworks

Progress towards a more environmentally sustainable form of development will be limited unless (as the East region argues) resource use and climate change come to be seen as key social and political issues:

These early initiatives show what can be done if a concerted effort is made to work together towards our common vision for a sustainable east of England. However, although in many cases policies and processes to promote sustainability have been out in place, it is hard to see any tangible real-world impact; and in some areas (for instance, traffic growth, new housing densities), present trends remain unsustainable. Much more action is needed. (EERA, 2001: 36)

The RSDFs represent only a beginning in raising awareness at the regional level of the significance and urgency of these issues, but they are far from fulfilling their more challenging tasks. They are generally more successful at identifying problems and broad objectives than concrete action; they

suggest some solutions, but are for the most part skeletal in how these solutions (especially ones requiring difficult political and social decisions) are to be achieved. The frameworks are, however, only a set of aims, objectives and criteria to set the direction for other regional and Community Strategies, and to provide criteria to be used in the sustainability appraisal of those strategies. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect them to be the fully integrated strategies to which some regions (such as the East Midlands) aspire. Some of the frameworks do recognise that policy integration will require some difficult decisions, and that there are areas where conflicts between the often competing aims of sustainable development need resolving in favour of the stronger interpretation of sustainability in which the environment and its capacities are the foundation of social and economic progress. If difficult choices are fudged or obscured at the framework level, the weaknesses are likely to be revealed at the implementation stage, with conflicts over resources and access to power undermining the strategic direction of the frameworks.

This judgement may be overly harsh given the relatively short time within which the frameworks were produced, the lack of data for calibrating regional indicators, and the need for the frameworks to avoid too much detail. But they all display evidence of the softening influence of reaching consensus amongst a range of competing interests. Within this more limited role of consensus building and partnership working, they may claim success. But it seems from studying the RSDFs that the issue of the extra value of the regional scale is hard to address even on more familiar issues than climate change. One would expect to see much more regionally distinctive visions and objectives to reflect the different regional interpretations of sustainable development.

2.10 Conclusion

Climate change is being 'factored in' to the elements of the Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks, but these frameworks still take a very short-term view of possible conditions and possible actions. Responding to climate change requires a strategic approach. It necessitates both short-term action and a long-term view of benefits to be derived, and costs to be avoided. Developing visions for the regions with a longer time-horizon than conventional strategies is one strategic field in which the regions could really make a difference. In this respect, the RSDFs have achieved little. It might be countered that central government itself has not yet published strategic guidance for thinking beyond the time-frame of the Climate Change Programme. Despite this, the regions have the evidence of the sub-UK scoping studies to draw on, in addition to significant work on scenario development, yet these do not seem to have permeated the thinking shown in the RSDFs.

Nevertheless, the frameworks do represent a significant innovation, with the potential both to cascade down to the local level challenging targets (such as for renewable energy), and to reflect locally distinctive characteristics and concerns through drawing on LA21 and Community Strategies. The achievement of their preparation and endorsement can be ascribed to the generation of enthusiasm for the regional project amongst some regional organisations, including NGOs, prepared to commit resources to the process. The weaknesses of the RSDFs can be ascribed to the Government's commitment to the needs of the economy and business as the strongest driver for the regional project, with corresponding resources and institutions (such as the RDAs). This has resulted in regional economic strategies being prepared in advance of the frameworks, and a tendency for the frameworks to represent the lowest point of common agreement amongst the many partners in the project. Placing environmental issues – even those such as climate change with clear social and economic consequences – at the heart of the regional agenda will require a considerable shift in the interpretation of sustainable development within the regions.

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3

Making the wrecker seem not all malevolent: re-regulating the UK's china clay mining industry

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3.1 Introduction

For over two centuries the UK's china clay mining industry has disfigured the moorland heaths of the Hensbarrow Downs which overlook the Cornish town of St Austell. Open cast mining has disgorged vast waste streams of quartz sand, granite rubble and mica residue onto the surrounding countryside. Village communities nestled within this clay district have had to wrestle with a precarious paradox; a livelihood dependent on the vagaries of global market demands for this specialised industrial mineral, which has to be literally dug out from the very environment in which they live (see Fig. 3.1).

More than any it was the poet and author Jack Clemo, who spent almost his entire life in one of these communities, who gave expression to the physical and emotional legacies of this paradox. He documented a landscape which both nurtured and restrained, an environment of 'bleak lyricism' and 'poignant beauty'. Writing about the destructiveness of the industry's production methods he describes an '... outcast soil moving softly and gently with its quiet menace to the rhythms of the breeding earth' and how the '... ubiquitous claywork scars added a harshness that was beyond Nature's – the ultimate quality of violent, calculated interference'. Like many in the clay district he witnessed the destruction of his birthplace, in both figurative and literal terms, as the expanding quarries of the clay industry pursued this valuable mineral resource:

*As a young schoolboy I scanned the farmhouse
With mild curiosity – then it vanished
Swallowed by a clay pit . . .*



Fig. 3.1 The village of Stenalees in the heart of the St Austell china clay area.

Which in turn created:

... the intense need to come to terms

Make the wrecker seem not all malevolent. (Clemo, 1986, 2000)

It may seem like a wild leap to move from the lyricism of Jack Clemo's poetry to the dry tones of the UK's land-use planning regime for minerals development. Yet, if the 'wrecker' is to be made 'not all malevolent', then recent changes to that planning regime may at last be offering the kind of psychological closure sought by Jack and his neighbours. As will be discussed below, throughout the post-war period the UK's planning regime has designated mineral resources as strategic national assets and sought to safeguard them for production. Landscape and environmental concerns have at best been of secondary importance, or often, as was the case with the St Austell china clay district, effectively non-existent. Now, however, a range of legislative changes and new policy directives, increasingly sensitive to new discourses of 'sustainable development', offer the potential of greater political leverage to environmental concerns and interest groups grounded in relationships not just of production, but also of landscape, leisure and amenity.

This chapter, therefore, seeks to document these shifts and explore their implications for local environmental policy. The regulatory framework for minerals planning is compelling interested parties to renegotiate existing

practices and institutional arrangements. However, whilst the broad parameters of this shift have been set by changes in national policy, which are discussed below, interpretation and implementation will be enacted within varied local contexts, with different configurations of geological circumstances, minerals producers, socio-economic circumstances and political-institutional cultures. Change at the local level cannot simply be read-off from some new script of 'sustainable development' but is grounded and negotiated within the needs and aspirations of distinctive local communities. Consequently, the chapter then seeks to inform an understanding of the wider dynamics of this process, through a section which pursues some forays into the conceptual insights offered by contemporary analysis of rural restructuring. It then returns to the UK's china clay industry to provide a case study of how strengthened land-use planning powers contend with the environmental legacies of earlier regulatory practices, the local economic importance of this resource, and the industry's responses to changing global markets for speciality industrial minerals.

3.2 The UK's planning regime for minerals development

Minerals have been afforded special consideration within the UK's post-war structure of land-use planning controls. A distinctive 'arena of regulation' has emerged, with its own body of legislation and policy (see Rydin, 1995; Murdoch and Marsden, 1994). Minerals extraction is the only land-use afforded such special consideration, a privilege founded on their status as strategic national resources, and the distinctive character of minerals exploitation as a form of development. By its very nature the extraction of mineral resources is a destructive activity which exploits and devalues land, rather than develop it. Deposits, moreover, have distinct geological features and they can only be worked where they are found. Planners, therefore, are in the difficult position of having to protect a national resource and secure the conditions and rights for their place-specific exploitation, whilst simultaneously responding to local environmental concerns and protests.

Whilst town and country planning legislation provides the broad framework for minerals planning, its distinctive status has been set by legislation such as the 1951 Minerals Working Act and 1981 Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act. Currently, the 1991 Planning and Compensation Act requires Minerals Planning Authorities (MPAs) to produce minerals local plans, guided by specialist policy advice contained within central government Minerals Policy Guidance notes (MPGs). MPAs have a duty to ensure that minerals resources do not become sterilised due to other forms of surface development, and have powers to attach conditions to planning permissions, on such issues as the duration of the planning consent, appropriate working practices, and environmental restoration and aftercare strategies.

Commentators have suggested that historically the operation of this planning regime has privileged the interests of minerals producers, who wield great power and enjoy close relations with the specialist sub-culture of minerals planning (see Lowe *et al*, 1993; Cowell and Owens, 1997). The development of minerals requires high levels of technical and financial investment. However, markets for minerals are cyclical. The industry, therefore, prefers a stable environment to justify the extensive costs and lead-in times associated with production. The increasingly monopolistic character of the minerals industry is one way of achieving this, since it facilitates economies of scale in production. It is also a means of minimising risk, to which the industry is averse, and of maximising flexibility in decision-making and continuity of production (Rees, 1985). In addition, however, the planning system has responded to this economic dynamic and sought to resolve tensions by guaranteeing regular- and long-term access to land.

With sand and gravel extraction, for example, national forecasts of market demands are allocated to Regional Aggregate Working Parties which in turn apportion them to MPAs for incorporation into minerals plans. Such forecasts have proved inviolate and non-negotiable, '... crucial in keeping MPAs locked into a system from which they might otherwise wish to escape' (Lowe *et al*, 1993). Environmental considerations, therefore, have been of secondary importance and the planning system has proved weak in extending controls beyond the initial granting of planning consent.

However, more recent shifts in policy, reflecting the growing strength of environmental and amenity groups and the impact of European Community Directives – for example, in respect of Habitats (1994) and Environmental Impact Assessment (1997) – are beginning to redress this imbalance. MPAs have begun to develop and attach more sophisticated restoration and aftercare conditions to new minerals planning consents (see Jewell, 1996). Moreover, new discourses of 'sustainable development' and 'environmental capacity' are increasingly filtering into MPAs. MPG 6, for example, stresses the need to:

- conserve minerals as far as possible, whilst ensuring an adequate supply to meet the present and future needs of society;
- encourage the efficient use of materials . . . and recycling of wastes;
- encourage sensitive working practices during minerals extraction and to preserve or enhance the overall quality of the environment once extraction has ceased.

Moreover, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his March 2000 Budget that a levy would be imposed on primary aggregate production in April 2002, with revenues raised being recycled through a Sustainability Fund to encourage the use of secondary and recycled materials.

Of particular relevance to this chapter and the case study of the UK's china clay industry below, are legislative changes introduced through the

1991 Planning and Compensation Act and the 1995 Environment Act. These Acts have imposed a new statutory duty on MPAs to review and modify existing planning consents for mineral development with a view to imposing new environmental and aftercare conditions. These new powers initially arose out of a concern with planning permissions granted prior to the 1947 Town and Country Planning legislation, specifically those under the 1943 'Interim Development Orders' (IDOs), which had no conditions attached to them commensurate with modern environmental standards. Since these permissions were still valid, the concern was that they might resurface in the hands of minerals companies looking for cheaper sites to develop. The 1991 Act, therefore, revoked all IDO permissions not worked 'to any substantial extent' and required any new proposals to be re-registered and subject to modern environmental conditions. The 1995 Environment Act then extended this by demanding a mandatory review of all mineral consents, both active and dormant, issued between 1948 and 1982. It also made changes to compensation arrangements to minerals operators which previously had proved a bar to any effective use of review powers by MPAs.

3.3 Re-regulating rural environments

As was discussed in the introduction to this chapter, it is one thing to outline the changing character of land-use regulation at the national level, but another to understand the challenges faced in implementing and constructing environmental strategies at the local level. However, rural researchers are increasingly engaging in a broad range of social science debates in order to comprehend processes of rural restructuring and change (Marsden, 1996). Such work is informing an understanding of how new structures of rural regulation and governance are emerging from, and contributing to, wider shifts in economy and society. This section, therefore, seeks to briefly explore some of this work in order to inform an analysis of the politics and regulatory practices associated with minerals development in rural areas.

One of the most interesting developments has been the use of forms of regulation analysis, in particular seeking to use ideas originating out of the French school of regulation theory. Cloke and Goodwin (1992), and in a later paper with Milbourne (Goodwin, Cloke and Milbourne, 1995), provide a useful entry point into this literature. They note that the central conceptual underpinning of regulation theory is a concern with how:

... the expanded social reproduction of capitalism is never guaranteed, but has continually to be secured through a range of social norms, mechanisms and institutions which help stabilise the systems inherent contradiction temporally around a particular regime of accumulation. (1995: 1247)

Put simply, the success and continuation of a particular *regime of accumulation*, that is, a macro-economic system capable of sustaining growth in both capitalist production and consumption, is dependent upon a parallel *social mode of regulation*, which describes the complex regulatory mechanisms, institutional structures and political practices, developed around collective norms, social networks, laws and customs, which together act to stabilise and ameliorate the conflicts generated by the accumulation regime.

The notion that we are currently witnessing a broad socio-economic shift from a Fordist regime of accumulation, characterised by mass production and mass consumption, to a post-Fordist regime of flexible and specialised production techniques servicing increasingly differentiated consumption markets (see Meegan, 1988; Amin, 1994), has been applied to rural environments by a number of writers. For instance, the changing technological and organisational character of agricultural production in the post-war period has been linked to the development of a Fordist economy of mass production and consumption, and the more contemporary 'crisis' linked to a transition to a new post-Fordist regime (Sauer, 1990; Kenney *et al*, 1989). Meanwhile, Marsden and Murdoch have examined the diverse roles rural regions are now playing in an internationalised post-Fordist economy. Some regions have become sites for new patterns of investment, such consumption spaces for rural housing markets, or as commodified leisure spaces, offering a packaged 'rural idyll' and sanitised construction of countryside history. Other rural areas, however, have suffered the effects of dis-investment, due to the restructuring of agricultural production, and declining public services due to the privatisation and deregulation of state provision.

Regulation theory, however, has principally been developed through studies of change within urban industrial areas. In contrast, in rural areas the classic Fordist labour process had limited geographical and sectoral impact (Page, 1996). Goodwin, Cloke and Milbourne, therefore, urge caution in applying regulation theory to rural contexts, because whilst it provides a vehicle sensitive to the multi-dimensional character of change, there remains the temptation to force the generality of rural change into a disputed notion of a wider transition from Fordism to post-Fordism (see also Sayer, 1989). They advocate a more modest use of regulation analysis, focused around the concept of 'mode of social regulation'. This approach concentrates on the complexity of regulatory strategies and their formation, which they suggest provides a more appropriate means '... through which we can interpret changes not only in rural production, but also in the living and thinking and feeling of life in rural areas' (Cloke and Goodwin, 1992: 325).

Moreover, '... although the broad parameters of a mode of regulation will be set by the actions of the nation state, we will in practice find a variety of regional and sub-regional sites of regulation which are articulated in different ways' (Goodwin, Cloke and Milbourne 1995: 1250). As Peck and

Tickell (1992) suggest, we can conceptualise *local* modes of social regulation, or as Cloke and Goodwin (1992) note, it can be linked to Harvey's (1985) notion of 'structured coherence', with the mode of regulation integral to the stabilisation of conditions for surplus value realisation and reproduction of labour power, often in localised forms linked to the strategies of dominant local historic and hegemonic power blocs.

These differentiated spaces of regulation will result from complex combinations of political, social and cultural relations. The state, therefore, is not the sole mechanism of regulation and it is the ability to conceptualise this which is the attraction of the intermediate concept of 'mode of regulation'. Nevertheless, the state is an important site and instrument of regulation, and not just the nation state. Sub-national agencies and regional and local states are the medium through which regulatory practices are interpreted and delivered.

Flynn and Marsden (1995) suggest that a number of key analytical questions emerge from this focus on the state. They follow Clark (1992) in suggesting that more attention needs to be given to the regulatory state, in particular processes of 'real' regulation, that being '... the administrative manner, style and logic by which the state regulates society in general, and the economic landscape in particular' (Clark, 1992: 616, quoted by Flynn and Marsden, 1995: 1184). The UK, for example, has seen in some sectors the erosion of more traditional regulatory styles, based upon notions of the public interest, in favour of markets and rights to consume. Similarly, as has been shown in the case of the minerals, environmental concerns have emerged alongside the economics of demand and supply within some sectors. The effects of such shifts need to be examined, as new representative bodies and interest groups, with differential powers and contrasting value systems, mobilise to fill new regulatory possibilities. Furthermore, regulatory styles will not only vary nationally, but across different economic and social sectors and within particular sub-state contexts. Comparative regulatory analysis must be sensitive to this.

Within rural environments the land-use planning system and its effects on the development process is a particularly important focus for examining change and a strategic sight for empirical analysis of how 'real' regulation is locally interpreted and translated into action (Munton, 1995). Indeed, in some senses neo-liberal policies of deregulation have not been implemented to the same degree as within urban environments. If anything, changes to the planning system have made rural environments subject to more regulation. The 1991 Planning and Compensation Act, for instance, removed the long standing presumption in favour of development with a strengthening of the power of the development plan as the paramount guide to development control decisions.

The production of Development Plans within rural areas, therefore, has become an increasingly important and contested site for negotiating change within the rural space economy. Social re-composition within rural areas

brings with it different conceptions of rurality and the environment, with new residents generating demands for living space, recreation and conservation. Such new 'discourses' increasingly challenge existing and hegemonic 'productivist' discourses (Marsden, 1995), and land-use planning issues are a focus for them. Analysis of such discourses, their construction and the purchase they have in different contexts, is therefore also another increasingly important way in which analysis of regulatory change in rural areas is progressing (see Woods, 1997).

Finally, analysis of differentiated spaces of rural regulation is also seeking to unravel new ways of understanding the linkages between the local, national and global. The use and development of actor network theory in particular has emerged as one potential means of examining how global processes become translated by actors into local contexts, a process which will vary across space. For instance, Lowe *et al* (1993) propose the notion of 'arenas of representation'. They suggest that actors in particular contexts '... are attempting to achieve outcomes commensurate with their aims. They *represent* themselves using whatever (economic, social and political) means are at their disposal in various arenas' (1993: 218). In turn, Murdoch and Marsden (1995) attempt to develop this by revealing how actors in local situations are tied into wider networks and associations. These *actor-spaces* are built up and mobilised as resources by competing groups in order to both enable and constrain action.

Such theoretical and methodological developments as those above are clearly underpinning more complex understandings of the relationships between local and national politics, together with the complex and uneven practices of regulation evolving within rural space economies. Equipped with such insights this chapter now returns to the UK's china clay industry in order to examine the impacts of regulatory change within the minerals sector upon local socio-political and geological landscapes.

3.4 Re-regulating the UK's china clay industry

Mr. Gilbert Paull: 'China clay is the most confusing industry I ever struck'

Mr. Justice Cassels: 'I am beginning to realise that'. (Record of the High Court of Justice, 1942, quoted in Hudson, 1970)

The UK is the world's largest exporter of china clay (or *kaolin*, its geological term) and it is the country's largest earning non-energy minerals based export industry, with an estimated annual value in 1995 of over £250 million. However, it is not a ubiquitous industrial mineral and is only found amongst a series of granite 'bosses' within the counties of Devon and Cornwall. These are known as primary deposits, formed by the alteration *in situ* of the parent granites. The feldspars in the granites have been transformed by

hydrothermal processes into kaolinite, whilst the quartz and mica, the other main constituents of the parent granite, remain unaltered. It is these which form the main waste products.

Current production amounts to some 3.4 million tonnes per annum. Most of this, some 3.0 million tonnes, is extracted from the Hensbarrow deposit adjacent to the town of St Austell in Cornwall. This is the largest deposit in Europe. The remainder derives from the Lee Moor area of Dartmoor National Park in Devon. Over 80% of production is exported, most of it to the paper industries of Finland, Sweden, Holland and Germany, where it is used as either a filler or as a surface coating, producing the smooth glossy finish necessary for high quality printing. However, it has a wide range of other uses, from its traditional role in the manufacture of fine porcelain china, to newer markets in ceramics, pharmaceuticals, and as a pigment extender and filler in the paints and polymers industry.

There are only three operating companies producing china clay in the UK. By far the largest, controlling over 80% of output, is Imerys. This is a French based multi-national industrial minerals conglomerate, which in 1997 took over the formerly dominant English China Clays International. The other smaller companies are the Goonvean and Rostowrack China Clay Company Ltd, which only produces in Cornwall, and Watts, Blake, Bearne and Co plc which operates in the Lee Moor area.

Together these producers make a significant contribution to the local economies of Devon and Cornwall. For example, within the St Austell area the industry directly employs over 3000 workers, with significant indirect employment with local contractors and suppliers and an estimated input to the local economy in 1995 of £130 million (Cornwall County Council, 1996). The economic importance of the industry is compounded by the fact that the Cornish economy more generally is characterised by high unemployment and low wage rates, a situation recently acknowledged by the European Union's designation of Cornwall as an Objective 1 area for regional financial assistance.

However, alongside the national and regional economic importance of the industry lies its dramatic environmental consequences. China clay is extracted from vast open cast mining sites. It is washed from quarry faces using high powered monitor hoses (see Fig. 3.2) and then proceeds through a series of sedimentation processes to extract other water borne impurities. Crucially, however, every tonne of china clay produced generates over ten tonnes of waste, comprising overburden (soils and subsurface rock), quartz sand, micaceous residues and 'stent' (unkaolinised rock). This waste is then disposed of onto the surrounding landscape, although in different ways for each type, giving rise to a series of distinctive landforms. Sand is mainly tipped by conveyor, forming steep sided, layered or benched tips, whilst stent and overburden are tipped by dumper trucks (see Fig. 3.3). Micaceous residues are disposed of in specially constructed dams. Annually, 25 million tonnes of waste has to be disposed of in this manner. Since the beginning



Fig. 3.2 View across Melbur pit. China clay washed from the working face, using high pressure monitor hoses, enters a pumping and sand separation plant.



Fig. 3.3 The distinctive visual and environmental impact of a multi-lift benched waste tip from Goonbarrow China Clay Works.

of the industry in the late eighteenth century it is estimated that well over 600 million tonnes of such china clay waste has been somewhat unceremoniously dumped over local landscapes, making it the UK's largest single area of industrial despoliation (Wardell Armstrong, DoE, 1993).

As Hudson (2000) has suggested, people within the mining districts traditionally have accepted that environmental degradation is an unavoidable cost of production, externalised by companies and borne by local people and their environment in exchange for employment and the jobs and the wages that flow through local communities. For much of the post-war period the UK's china clay mining area was no different in this respect. Now, however, the changes to the UK's minerals planning regime outlined above, are necessitating a new form of reconciliation between economic and environmental costs and consequences.

Cornwall County Council, the MPA for the St Austell clay production area, which will provide the main focus below, has signaled its response to this new planning regime in its 1996 Minerals Local Plan. For the county as a whole the Plan's primary objective is:

To ensure the stable long term production of the Cornish mining and quarrying industry in order to provide for an adequate supply of minerals to meet the needs of society in a sustainable and environmentally acceptable manner and within a framework for the safeguarding of Cornwall's minerals resource. (Cornwall Minerals Local Plan, 1996 – Executive Summary, Cornwall County Council, 1996)

Whilst in terms of the St Austell china clay area the plan states that:

The County Council acknowledges the importance of the China Clay Industry to national and local economy and supports the continued development of the industry to meet market demand within a policy framework which seeks to protect and enhance the environment, community and amenity, and provide for a long term tipping and restoration strategy'. (1996: 45)

It is evident that the new policy discourse of sustainable development lies at the core of the County Council's new planning framework. However, to fully appreciate the challenges now faced in enacting such a shift, and to understand the local circumstances within which it is being framed, it is first necessary to understand the historical development of the industry and the environmental and political legacies of earlier regulatory regimes.

3.4.1 Discovery and early development of the Cornish china clay industry, 1746–1914

China clay was first discovered in Cornwall in 1746 by William Cookworthy, a Quaker apothecary based in Plymouth. The industry expanded rapidly

over the nineteenth century, production rising from 11 000 tons in 1827 to 860 000 tons in 1912, over 75% of which was exported (Barton, 1966).

Whilst by the early twentieth century the industry had a near monopoly within world markets (Hudson, 1970), it was in practice fragmented, inefficient and characterised by a series of structural weaknesses. Because start up costs for producers were low, price competition was prolific, with over 70 different producers operating a total of 120 china clay pits. There was no co-ordination over marketing or quality, nor research and investment into product development. Wage rates, the principal basis of competition, were depressed, and working conditions some of the worst in the country. Profit levels began to decline as production levels exceeded world demands. Moreover, the effect of so many china clay pits operating within a relatively small area, each of which dumping waste deposits on adjacent land, was to sterilise and deny access to some of the more viable clay deposits.

3.4.2 The inter-war years: partial regulation and 'unstructured coherence'

World War I, and the subsequent inter-war period, witnessed the first attempts to regulate the inherent problems of the industry, as a number of pit owners recognised the economic logic of merging together and forming inter-firm agreements in order to rationalise production, control prices and consolidate clay deposits. Faced with labour supply problems during the war, as many workers left for more lucrative earnings in the army, an early move was the setting up of an Employers Federation to discuss wages and working conditions, and later, in 1917, a joint trade association – Associated China Clays Ltd – to set prices and production quotas. With the end of the war there then followed some significant mergers; notably the three largest producers forming English China Clays Ltd in 1919, placing 50% of capacity in one company, which thereafter proceeded to rapidly absorb smaller clay producers.

Such moves, however, realised only partial success. By 1924 the trade association had collapsed, was reformed in 1927, only to fragment again by 1929. Stagnation continued as local producers were unable to co-ordinate their activities, and the economic recession in the early 1930s created a further slump in both wages and production. Although new technological innovations to improve efficiency and competitiveness were available, capital for investment was not. The previous logic of merger and association, and the coherence this might achieve, was then reawakened in 1932. Initially this was due to intervention from outside the area, as the National Federation of British Industries, concerned with the failings of self regulation in the area, provided the impetus for the formation of a new China Clay Federation. The second move came locally, as the directors of the largest producer, English China Clays Ltd, recognised that:

. . . if the separate companies refused to discipline themselves for the common good, the only sure and permanent solution was to absorb sufficient of them to produce a major unit powerful enough to be able to impose a sense of logic, order and forward thinking on the industry as a whole. The acquisitions made hitherto had not gone far enough; producers were too set in their ways, and insufficient capital was available to allow mechanisation, on the scale needed, to make mass production possible and so to reduce prices on both the home and overseas markets. (Hudson, 1970: 64)

Consequently, in October 1932, English China Clays Ltd merged with its two largest rivals, Lovering China Clays Ltd and H.D Pochin & Co Ltd to form English Clays Lovering Pochin & Co Ltd (ECLP). The new company sought to consolidate the advantages of an increased scale of operations by continuing to acquire smaller operators, by rationalising production facilities and through the purchase of freeholds on china clay pits. Nevertheless, on the eve of World War II the industry remained in recession due to depressed markets conditions, both internationally and domestically.

3.4.3 A new ‘structured coherence’: post-war regulation and mass production

Cloke and Goodwin (1992) in their attempts to conceptualise countryside change, suggest that up to the 1960s most rural areas in the UK exhibited ‘*localised* structured coherences’ wherein ‘. . . powerful elites represented historic blocs which exerted hegemonic influence over the social structures and competing social forces in rural society’ (1992: 327). Whilst noting (from Newby *et al*, 1978) that these were principally founded on the ‘property, paternalism and power of landed agrarian interests’, they note the existence, in some more restricted areas, of the central position of fishing, forestry and, of relevance here, mining. In so doing, Cloke and Goodwin provide a useful characterisation of the position of Cornish china clay producers over the initial post-war period. In particular, it points to the way in which the post-war consolidation and expansion of the china clay industry was underpinned by the interaction of a new more interventionist national scale mode of political regulation, influenced by Keynesian economic philosophy, with the development locally of the social-hegemonic and monopolistic economic power of the industry’s dominant producer, English Clays Lovering Pochin & Co Ltd (ECLP). This was a period when the industry secured what might be termed a favourable corporatist relationship with the institutions of local politics and land-use planning, which helped secure a period of more successful local regulation and structured coherence.

The outbreak of World War II witnessed the first moves and hinted at the role national economic planning frameworks and structures of intervention would play in realising such structured coherence. In 1940 the china

clay industry, along with many others, was requested by national government to devise a scheme for concentrating production. Again, however, local producers were unable to reach agreement and consequently the Board of Trade used powers of compulsion to close over 50% of the pits. Moreover, the inter-war moves toward monopolisation of the industry were strengthened through the national designation of nucleus firms, which were to receive special favours regarding access to materials and labour supplies, together with the expectation that they would take over the interests of their competitors. This was resented by some smaller local producers leading to a legal challenge in 1942 by one such aggrieved company, accusing complicity between the Board of Trade, the Ministry of Labour and local clay producing elites, notably ECLP, in using the concentration scheme to squeeze out local competitors. The case, although unsuccessful, was important in that:

... it exposed real weakness in the organisation of the industry and in its ability to negotiate with Government departments, and it showed the absurd over-dependence of clay production on sheer numbers of men. Its productivity was low, its image was old fashioned, its internal politics were suicidal. (Hudson, 1970: 82)

These moves continued after the war. With over 60% of industry outputs being exported it inevitably came under the attention of national government economic planners. Board of Trade Working Parties, set up in 1945 and 1946, sought to consider means of improving the organisation and production of the industry and the steps necessary to ensure the long-term stability of such a nationally important industry. Reports traced the failure of earlier china clay trade associations, the technical backwardness of the industry and the absence of adequate welfare provision for its workers. There was insufficient capacity to meet export demands and an urgent need to expand the workforce and utilise new technologies. Interestingly, the lack of radical local political consciousness was cited as one reason for insufficient industrial modernisation in the past.

It was suggested that a crucial means of achieving this modernisation was to consolidate the existing fragmented mineral rights under single ownership. The nationalisation of mineral rights for china clay was one possibility, whilst another was to acquire these by statute and administer them under one company representing all producers. However, both moves were resisted and instead a new Advisory Council was set up to represent the interests of the industry, a step back from establishing a more powerful Development Council under the 1947 Industrial Organisation and Development Act, which was strongly opposed by local producers and the China Clay Association.

That more radical moves were resisted was in practice grounded in a recognition that by this time ECLP was by far the dominant producer. Only the war had prevented it pursuing further acquisitions and mergers to

achieve monopoly power, and these soon resumed when the war was over. Faced with the threat of nationalisation and growth in world competition from deposits in the USA, ECLP had also responded to new realities, producing a Post-war Development Plan in 1943 which contained a series of recommendations to ensure genuine mass production of china clay, including the concentration of production and refining, and use of new extraction technologies.

In combination these moves set the framework for post-war expansion of the industry. ECLP consolidated its economic power through acquisition, industrial reorganisation and investment in new production technologies. Output expanded rapidly, more than doubling over the 1960s, and with it the scale of local employment.

However, what was also important to the consolidation of the industry's position during this period was the way in which the industry secured land development rights to win and work china clay across the St Austell production area. In the 1960s, for example, two very extensive 'blanket' planning consents provided such permission for an area covering almost three-quarters of what is at present considered to be the natural boundary and china clay development area. Moreover, it appears that these permissions were almost completely devoid of any working restrictions or environmental aftercare and reclamation conditions. As will be seen below, the existence and character of these permissions have assumed central importance to contemporary attempts to re-regulate the industry's environmental performance.

However, as is recognised by the insights of regulation theory, the construction of a successful local mode of regulation stretches beyond institutional politics to embrace wider social and cultural processes. It is here, for example, that one finds the broader context within which the activities of the industry and local planning decisions construct their legitimacy. In this respect, it is important to recognise the manner in which important threads of clay country society – such as the Methodist chapel, village brass bands and choirs, and the patronage of pit-owning families – were closely intertwined. The early clay producers were paternalistic, providing housing for their workers, fostering long lines of family employment, and sponsoring village entertainments and facilities. The close and cohesive social networks of the clay communities formed a distinctive and enclosed industrial sub-culture, particularly when juxtaposed to surrounding areas of agriculture and fishing. Over the post-war period ECLP continued this tradition, supporting community activities and developing a welfare programme for its workers. A recent oral history conducted in the St Austell china clay district to record the recollections of its inhabitants captures the structure of feeling that was engendered:

It was a very similar thing to how they used to work in the coal mines. If you worked for the company, they provide you with a house, provide

you with a job – and then during the sixties and seventies they had this fantastic welfare department to look after their employees. It was on the philosophy, from cradle to the grave. They would nurture and care for you, to an extent, right the way through.

If you had a problem, you saw your works captain. He would know you, he would know your father, he would know your history. If 'twas financial problems you was in, you see your manager. He would sort things out with John Keay House [*ECLP's headquarters office in St Austell*], whether 'twas your rents or mortgage, or you was behind with your debts . . . That was how ECLP run. They would bend over backwards to make sure their employees was OK. (Turner, 2000)

Unsurprisingly, labour relations within the industry were good and industrial disputes rare. Similarly, it is perhaps understandable that this social environment was one which was unlikely to generate political opposition to the clay producers production techniques and landscape practices, either from within clay communities, whose living was dependent upon it, or from surrounding communities, who were largely content to let these socially and geographically remote clay communities carry on in the manner they always had.

These circumstances, therefore, contributed to the consolidation of a coherent localised structure for successful accumulation and growth. In terms of land-use regulation, the operational demands and associated production based discourses of the clay producers became increasingly embedded within local statutory planning frameworks. In the early 1970s, for instance, the China Clay Association – a body representing all clay producers, although dominated by ECLP – produced an 'Industry Long-Term Strategy, 1974–2024', which sought to estimate the development of the industry over the next 50 years, including the land it would need to occupy for production and tipping. A subsequent series of Short-Term Development Plans then sought to refine these land requirements in the light of existing world market demands for china clay. These industry forecasts were then incorporated, with little opposition of modification, into local planning frameworks, such as Cornwall County Council's 1974 'Statement of Policy for the China Clay Area' and the 1981 'Structure Plan for Cornwall'.

3.4.4 Constructing a new environmental planning regime for china clay

This post-war planning regime and mode of social regulation for china clay production in Cornwall created a favourable environment for industrial expansion. ECLP, the dominant clay producer, evolved into English China Clays International (ECCI), in turn part of English China Clays plc, the world's largest producer of speciality minerals, reaching a turnover of £877.6 million in 1994 and a worldwide production complex covering five continents. However, the mode of regulation can now also be viewed as

embodying a set of contradictions, the emergence of which have lead subsequently to the search for a new framework of political and land-use regulations for the industry.

Since the late 1970s the traditional trade-off between employment and environment, as detailed above, has begun to unravel. This is partly attributable to an increase in *local* political resistance to the industry's production techniques and partly reflective of legislative changes to the *national* planning framework for minerals production. However, as will be seen below, these seemingly different scale political shifts are in practice more closely aligned. The local challenges faced in re-regulating the Cornish china clay industry have influenced shifts in national policy, which in turn have facilitated a realignment in local political influence.

A good starting point is to investigate those contradictions within the old mode of regulation, which have, somewhat paradoxically, emerged to undermine its stability. Put another way, the old regime became a victim of its own success and for a number of reasons the traditional political legitimacy of the industry has increasingly been called into question.

The first element of this is the increasing scale of the industry's operations. For example, enabled by the post-war planning framework, clay production expanded dramatically over the 1960s, from 1.5 million tonnes per annum in 1960 to 2.8 million tonnes in 1970. Thereafter, production levels have remained high, although they have been more varied, reflecting more unstable global market demands and increasing international competition, ranging between 2.4 million tonnes in 1982 to 3.4 million tonnes in 1995.

The local result, however, of this successful period of industrial expansion has been a dramatic increase in the sheer physical presence and environmental impact of the industry since the 1970s. New production techniques have lead to the amalgamation of smaller pits into new super-quarries, which in turn generate increasingly prodigious waste tipping requirements.

Local communities, therefore, have had to contend with a significant increase in the industry's encroachment upon their living space. Part of this impact has been physical, including such things as increases in vehicular traffic on local roads, levels of noise and dust emissions from production sites, and the changing topography of the landscape which has influenced the area's micro-climates, affecting wind and precipitation patterns, and in some places even reducing the number of hours of direct sunlight received by clay villages. However, this highly dynamic and changing rural landscape has also had psychological impacts, in the manner alluded to by Jack Clemo's poetry at the beginning of this chapter. The continual expansion of pits and tipping areas leads to the disappearance of local landmarks, such as roads, wood and moorland areas, small hamlets and artifacts from the industry's past, which in turn are important sites to the individual and collective memories and identities of local people.

Compounding the effects of this encroachment upon local communities have been the economic consequences of strategies of corporate restructuring and technological innovation by clay producers responding to increasing global competition for china clay. Whilst the industry remains the mainstay of the local economy, labour demands have fallen significantly and unemployment increased in local pit villages. Moreover, the industry has increasingly 'hollowed-out' its structure, disposing of in-house plant and engineering services to sub-contractors. As a result traditional inter-generational recruitment patterns and apprenticeships structures have declined, undermining the post-war corporate paternalism and local 'embeddedness' of the company. One such symbolic moment in this respect was the decision in 1988 by a new chief executive of ECCI to relocate the company's top management to Theale in Reading, away from its traditional local base in St Austell. The increasing sense that the industry is no longer run by local people who know the clay area is an important local sentiment. This process reached another important local landmark in 1997 when ECCI was taken over by Imerys, a French owned industrial multinational conglomerate. However, they have at least restored the importance of the St Austell office complex.

Another important factor that has repositioned the clay industry has been the process of social re-composition within local 'clay' villages. As job opportunities have declined, so too have the links between local residents and the industry. For those still in employment in the industry the relatively high wages often enable relocation to villages outside the immediate clay district. Meanwhile, the lower house values in the clay communities have become attractive to newcomers, something expressed by one resident in Turner's (2000) local oral history:

It's changing now. There's not a lot of Cornish people left. There's a lot of up-country ones even in our block here. They sell their house up the country for big money, so they can buy something cheap down here.

As a consequence such communities now have large populations with no direct economic dependence on the industry, nor deference to its industrial traditions and landscaping practices. They also bring with them a different set of aesthetic values and landscape concerns.

Such shifts as these have set the socio-political preconditions for regulatory change to occur, and a particular catalyst in this respect was the election in the early 1980s of a local activist, standing on a political platform concerned with the industry's environmental record, onto both the local district and county council (where she eventually secured chair of the planning committee).

However, initial attempts to challenge the environmental consequences of the industry were undermined by the legacy left by earlier land-use planning decisions. As the later 1993 Cornwall County Council Interim Minerals Plan noted:

Much of the area proposed for future development of the China Clay Industry already has planning consent. In one instance a single blanket planning permission for winning and working china clay covers 2400 hectares without any environmental safeguards, landscaping requirements or restoration. It can be seen therefore that the planning authority has little opportunity for requiring environmental works, much of it being undertaken on a voluntary basis by the industry. The existence of these permissions has had a significant impact on the development of the area and limited the way in which planning policy has been able to influence environmental considerations. (Cornwall County Council, 1993: 18)

In theory, the 1981 Minerals Planning Act established the principle that there should be a regular review of old minerals permissions, with a view to imposing new environmental and landscaping conditions onto such development rights. However, the compensation requirements of this act in effect meant that such rights had to be bought back from the industry. In Cornwall, as elsewhere, the financial costs of this proved prohibitive for the MPA and the legislation was therefore unworkable.

Moreover, within the china clay area this situation was at first further compounded by a lack of minerals planning expertise within Cornwall County Council. For example, in the early 1980s it did not have a separate minerals planning division, nor any dedicated enforcement officers for the china clay mining area. It did not even have any maps or records of the blanket minerals permissions it had previously allocated to the industry in the 1960s, nor knowledge of decision notices, operational boundaries and conditions attached to these consents.

In the mid-1980s an important step in terms of breaching these implementation deficits was the appointment by Cornwall County Council of new dedicated minerals planning personnel, bringing with them minerals planning expertise formed in other locations. In turn, this new expertise offered the ability to tap into networks of 'actor spaces' (see Murdoch and Marsden, 1995) for the minerals planning profession and thereby to lobby central government ministries of the need for new planning powers. In addition, there was now in place the staff resources and expertise to fully survey the china clay district and negotiate with the industry to establish the full extent and boundaries of existing planning consents.

Further attempts to re-map the china clay district can also be interpreted as significant interventions. Maps are important discourses within any policy context, since they affect how value is constructed within a particular space. During the mid-1980s the statutory planning framework for the clay district remained based on the industry's Long-Term Development Strategy, which contained little by the way of environmental considerations and in effect had commodified the landscape solely for minerals development. Alternative mappings, therefore, such as those conducted by the Cornwall

Archaeological Unit (1991) and Cornwall Nature Conservation Trust (1991) were important steps in re-valorising the landscape in terms other than its economic return.

Equally significant in this respect were the first attempts to re-imagine how the local landscape could look subject to radically different landscaping and restoration practices. Whilst the industry had for many years voluntarily adopted a range of remedial landscaping techniques, such as the hydro-seeding of its steep sided bench shaped waste tips, there was no blueprint for what a long-term sustainable regeneration and landscape strategy might comprise and how it would fit in with the industry's long-term mining and tipping requirements. However, in 1985 a DoE inspector to the St Austell Area Local Plan had recommended the need for such a strategy, aimed at 'reconciling tipping capacity with beneficial after use and with aesthetic considerations' (quoted in Cornwall County Council, 1993). This prompted minerals planners within the County Council to produce such a pilot study in 1986, and in turn, after intense lobbying of the then DoE, the commissioning of a research project conducted by Wardell Armstrong (minerals and environmental consultants) and Crocker Landscape (landscape consultants). Published in 1993 (Wardell Armstrong/DoE, 1993) it laid the foundations for what a long-term sustainable landscaping strategy might look like.

Whilst these policy advances were significant, given the scale and legacy of the industry's existing planning consents and development rights, they still remained unenforceable and dependent upon voluntary agreement with the industry. More recent circumstances, however, have begun to further redress this imbalance, compelling the industry to re-engage with the machinery of local planning and development control.

The first element in this reconfiguration was the updating of the County's minerals planning framework. Such were the challenges presented by the china clay district that Cornwall County Council produced in 1993 an Interim Minerals Plan, specifically focussed on the St Austell clay area. Its function was to provide a strategic and symbolic document to undermine the authority of the industry's Long-Term Development Plan, which had remained up to this point a material planning consideration. It laid the foundations for more demanding conditions to be attached to new planning consents and provided a new strategic planning vision for the industry. This new approach was then embodied within, and superseded by, a new county-wide Minerals Plan in 1996, which has sought to provide a comprehensive statement of local planning objectives for minerals development, consistent with national planning guidance and contemporary environmental expectations.

The second important development was the impact of the 1990 Planning and Compensation Act and 1995 Environment Act and the review of old minerals permissions (the ROMPS process) embodied within this legislation. These acts, as noted earlier, amended the weakness of earlier

legislation, notably the 1981 Minerals Act, which had undermined the ability of MPAs to review and modify historic planning consents to any meaningful extent. Under new provisions the operator is not entitled to compensation if restoration conditions are imposed. Moreover, these acts now place a duty on the operator to re-apply for such consents, since failure to do so results in existing permissions becoming void. Consequently, in the clay district this process has begun to provide the mechanism whereby the local planning authority can progress its restoration and aftercare strategies over that land already in possession of development rights, and to negotiate new working practices, with regard to issues such as noise, dust and traffic, across all production sites.

In particular, the new legislation has led to the development of a new Tipping and Restoration Strategy for the china clay area. Partly funded by a grant from the European Social Fund it has involved detailed negotiations between the industry and minerals planners, using state-of-the-art geographical information systems, to explore how new landforms might accommodate the industry's future tipping requirements, whilst at the same time embodying new landscaping and restoration techniques as outlined in the earlier Wardell Armstrong report.

The industry, however, has not been a reluctant partner in such negotiations. Indeed the reverse is now true, with the industry playing a very active and willing role, since there is now a much clearer relationship between what it requires and the operation of the planning system. Underpinning this realignment of the industry to the planning system is its pressing need for new tipping areas. Thus, whilst the industry still has extensive development rights across the china clay district, continued production has become dependent on securing a set of new land releases, necessary to meet the industry's tipping requirements. As one minerals planner put it:

They now see the Tipping and Restoration Strategy as the key to the future and if I was them I would too. It is absolutely crucial to their future . . . it is the key to them finding their lifeblood, which is tipping capacity . . . Without that they are going to have great difficulties, because all this land they had back in the 70s has been cleaned up, that's the problem. (Minerals Planner, Cornwall County Council in interview with Pinch, 1998)

However, some of these locations have the potential for political controversy. One of them, for example, would cover one of the few remaining natural heathland areas of the Hensbarrow Downs, along with a Bronze-age burial mound. It is now clear, therefore, that such land releases, if they are to carry legitimacy with the local planning system and adjacent communities, need to demonstrate sufficient environmental restoration and aftercare strategies.

This new reality was brought home to the industry in 1995 by the reaction it received to a proposed new 50 million tonne capacity super tip to

the west of the china clay district at Galvriggan. The original planning application was rejected by the County Council on the grounds that the industry was unable to demonstrate sufficient need for the tip, and because it did not include a detailed programme of landscape restoration and after use. However, when resubmitted with a full environmental impact assessment and restoration programme, together with a statement of need based upon calculations of waste outputs and existing tipping capacity constraints for this part of the clay district, which formed part of the evolving Tipping and Restoration Strategy, the application was then approved.

Increasingly the industry, therefore, has become adept at deploying new discourses of environmental management and restoration – a form of latter day rural ‘stewardship’ – alongside the traditional discourses focused on the economic benefits the industry brings to this area.

However, this attempt to reconcile the industry's productive needs with environmental concerns and construct a new socio-political legitimacy, faces a number of challenges. As Marsden and Arce (1995) suggest, a major issue for studies of rural regulation is to examine how ‘... international economic processes and policies become embedded in local production systems, and what degree of ‘room for manoeuvre’ do local actors have?’ (1995: 1263). The china clay industry is particularly revealing in this respect, with local minerals geology combining with market demands and production strategies to limit the ‘room for manoeuvre’ of environmental planning.

Tipping costs, for example, are expensive – accounting for over 25% of total production costs – which explains the traditional operational logic to maximise tipping capacity and dispose of wastes in large steep sided tips constructed on engineering principles. However, in environmental terms such tips have a dramatic visual impact, which current cosmetic landscaping practices – such as hydro-seeding – find difficult to obscure. More preferable are re-profiled tips with much more subdued tipping angles, because these are more sympathetic to existing landforms, easier to landscape and more amenable to productive aftercare land-uses. However, these then generate their own problems since they expand the tip ‘foot print’, consuming much more land in the process. This increases the risk of resource sterilisation, which planning seeks to resist, and also increases demand for more tipping space in areas currently untouched, which in turn generates local political opposition. Such tips also increase production costs because waste materials have to be transported much further.

This contradiction is compounded by a further conflict between operational considerations and environmental strategy. The issue here is that of the ‘back-filling’ of pits. One obvious logic is to dispose of waste materials in disused pits or worked-out areas of active pits. However, this also conflicts with the operational requirements of the industry in respect to international competitiveness. For example, an interesting geological feature of the ‘massive’ form china clay deposits in the UK is their varied nature across production sites and indeed even within a single pit. A key part of Imerys’

market position, faced with competition from cheaper but poorer quality 'seam' formed deposits at other locations, is therefore founded on its ability to blend clays from a range of pits and working faces and provide specialist mineral products tailor-made to consumer demands. Back-filling of disused or working pits undermines the company's ability to do this, a situation compounded by the fact that many dormant pits are flooded to meet the industry's voracious appetite for water, used in refining and extraction processes (see Fig. 3.4).

Nevertheless, despite such challenges, shifts in the minerals policy regime for china clay, in combination with the localised socio-political changes outlined above, are beginning to result in a range of new landscaping features and operational practices. One particularly symbolic site lies to the east of the china clay district on Carloggas Downs. Here a former steep sided bench waste tip has been re-profiled, landscaped and opened to the public as a recreation area. It now provides a demonstration of what may in future be achieved more widely across the area, and coincidentally just happens to overlook the house of the councillor and former chairperson of the County Council's minerals planning committee, whose relentless political campaign against the industry played such an important role in calling to account the industry's environmental record. Another example lies with a major project set up in 1999 by English Nature, using the Heritage Lottery Funds, to



Fig. 3.4 The former Carrancarrow pit, now used as a water reservoir, overlooked by two traditional conical waste tips, constructed by wagons running on inclined rail tracks.

reclaim heathland areas from across the clay district and restore such habitats onto the industry's re-profiled waste tips. The Government's new proposed tax on the production of primary aggregates has also had significant effects, leading to a dramatic increase in the recycling of the industry's waste materials. It has always been recognised that the quartz sand and granite rubble produced by the industry could act as a major supply of aggregates across the UK. However, feasibility studies in the past have always suggested that the high transport costs involved have made this uneconomic, and its use has been restricted to local markets for road and building materials. Now, however, this equation has begun to change. Imerys are beginning to form partnerships with major aggregates companies and recycling is increasing dramatically. There are also proposals to use Objective 1 funds to expand local port facilities so that such materials can be exported to regional markets beyond the South West.

Finally, the economic potential of creative uses of abandoned china clay workings has been dramatically demonstrated by entrepreneur Tim Smit's recently opened Eden Project (see Fig. 3.5). This has transformed the former 60 metre deep Bodelva pit into an internationally famous visitor attraction, comprising giant covered conservatories, or 'biomes', which recreate the climate and vegetation of humid tropical and warm temperate environments, and seek to promote awareness of bio-diversity and environmental sustainability. With over a million visitors in its first year of opening, the Eden Project has already had a significant impact on the



Fig. 3.5 The giant biomes of the Eden Project in the former Bodelva pit.

Cornish tourist industry, local employment and the profile of the county (Mornement, 2001).

3.5 Conclusion

Mining is a long established user of rural space, but by its very nature it is a destructive activity which does not rest easy with widely held conceptions of the character and appropriate use of countryside. As a result it has become an increasingly contentious issue in debates over use of rural space (Murdoch and Marsden, 1994). Moreover, new environmental discourses, such as notions of sustainable development and environmental capacity, now increasingly provide the political terrain upon which such contrasting interpretations are negotiated.

This chapter has sought to trace the impact of these shifts for the UK's china clay industry and has revealed a complex set of challenges to local structures of governance and the accompanying regulatory mechanisms, practices and politics of land-use planning. Focusing on the St Austell clay production district in Cornwall it has shown how a post-war period of successful growth and expansion within the clay industry was underpinned by the coherence of a particular mode of regulation and set of associated institutional and customary practices. It was a form of regulation wherein the allocation to the industry of unhindered property and development rights, over very extensive landholdings, coalesced with a pro-growth local political consensus to result in a rural space pervasively configured for minerals development and exploitation.

However, over the last 20 years this regulatory regime and underpinning structure of property and development rights has been subject to modification and a new set of regulatory and institutional practices have begun to emerge. Local political and institutional resistance to the industry's traditional working and landscaping practices has grown. In essence, such concerns represent the heightening of public rights and environmental property rights claims over the industry's existing private land and property rights. Armed with new powers, the machinery of local planning has been able to negotiate a new regulatory environment, more sensitive to local concerns over issues such as vehicle traffic flows, dust and noise emissions. New tipping practices are emerging, which are more sympathetic to the indigenous pre-industrial landscape, and offer new recreational uses to local communities.

Yet, at the same time, it is important to realise that this remains a landscape configured for minerals development, and the true depth of change to traditional patterns of interest group representation remains questionable. The primary purpose of the planning regime and its interpretation of sustainable development is that of protecting access to, and development

of, this strategic national mineral resource. The productive needs of the china clay industry, in particular, tipping capacity and associated land releases, still lie at the core of key contemporary regulatory policy documents, such as the county-wide Minerals Plan for Cornwall and the Tipping and Restoration Strategy. Industry forecasts of future demands for china clay, and the associated tipping requirements, are the starting point in both instances, thereby establishing a minimum political threshold and the agenda to which land-use planning is responding. Notions of environmental or community based capacity constraints, and other discourses of sustainable landscape reclamation, may increasingly be sufficient to prevent new land releases at certain locations. Moreover, the existence of detailed landscape surveys now provide the knowledge to underpin such arguments. However, their potency is ultimately relative to the industry's needs being accommodated at some location. Moreover, the fact that this mineral resource is non-ubiquitous in character, unique to an otherwise impoverished local economy, further ensures that mineral operators will continue to occupy a strategic position within the land development process.

Elsewhere across the UK, however, outcomes are arguably more varied. Cowell and Owens' (1997, 1998) analysis of sand and gravel extraction in Berkshire is similar in that new planning discourses, related to concepts of environmental sustainability and environmental capacity, were shown to be unable to challenge the estimates of market demand allocated to the MPA. Alternatively, some mineral producers have been shown to have underestimated the impact new planning controls may have over land releases which they had anticipated securing from MPAs (see Munton, 1995, and the recent rejection on environmental grounds of a new 459 hectare super-quarry on the Isle of Harris by the Scottish environment minister (*Planning*, 2000)).

The European Commission (2000) has recently announced its intention to promote sustainable development across the EU non-energy extractive industry, improving its environmental performance whilst simultaneously maintaining the international competitiveness of this sector. The implication of this paper is that to be successful such a strategy will inevitably be drawn to the property rights which lie at the heart of processes of rural regulation. However, the modification of such rights, alongside the incorporation of new discourses of environmentalism into the policy process, may have a disruptive effect on the politics of land-use planning and established structures of rural governance and interest group representation. It will demand increasing precision in the definition and uses of rural space, reducing the scope for traditional practices of 'trade-off' and heightening the potential for political conflict (Cowell and Owens, 1997). Outcomes will be dependent upon an uneven geography of regulation, sensitive to a complex and varied set of local historical and socio-economic circumstances, minerals geologies and international market conditions.

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4

Local Agenda 21 and the shift to 'soft governance'

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Despite its enigmatic title, Local Agenda 21 has become an important and arguably the most influential output of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro 'Earth Summit'. Emerging from the Summit Prepcoms as the policy embodiment of the green mantra to 'think globally, act locally', the agreement to LA21 at Rio was the result of a much more pragmatic realisation that if the proposed global plan for sustainable development, Agenda 21, was to have any chance of implementation, it would be necessary to mobilise action at the level of local communities and local government. The task in hand was simply too vast and complex to be left to national governments alone.

Although LA21 has its roots in environmental sustainability, and the clear need to combat pollution, resource and energy waste, environmental degradation and destruction of the global commons, from the very start, LA21 was more than this. Chapter 28 of the Rio Agenda 21 agreement shows very clearly how the authors saw the need to link the local sustainability agenda to questions of political participation, mobilisation and democracy.

As the level of governance closest to the people, local authorities play a vital role in educating, mobilising and responding to the public to promote sustainable development . . . Each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organisations and private enterprises and adopt 'a Local Agenda 21'. Through consultation and consensus-building, local authorities would learn from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organisations and acquire the information needed for formulating best strategies.

(United Nations, 1992)

This extract from *Chapter 28: Local Authorities' Initiatives in Support of Agenda 21*, agreed at Rio, makes explicit the link between the processes of *governance* and the drive for *sustainability*. In the context of LA21 and Chapter 28, the two are indivisible. What has become known as 'soft governance' – the process of securing more co-operative forms of local government activity, which is inclusive, participatory and democratic – is at the very heart of the LA21 project.

This chapter seeks to assess the extent to which this search for 'soft governance' has been achieved in the decade since Rio. Drawing upon recent European research, the progress that has been made in securing 'new ways of working' at the level of local government as a result of the LA21 initiative shall be assessed.

4.1 The evolution of LA21 in Europe

Chapter 28 of the Rio Agenda 21 agreement runs to two or three pages, depending on which version you read. It is a brief but nevertheless influential agenda which has evolved during the last decade into a sophisticated and comprehensive statement of principles and processes for local sustainability which has permeated local government in Europe and worldwide.

Local government, in co-operation with local organisations and communities and local government networks within individual countries, has both defined and implemented the LA21 process, aided and encouraged by organisations such as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) at the global level and in Europe by the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign.

Two key documents enshrine the principles of LA21 in Europe. In 1998 as part of its global LA21 campaign, ICLEI identified five principles that were seen to characterise the LA21 initiative worldwide. At the European level, the Aalborg Charter (emanating from the 1994 European local government LA21 conference in Denmark, at which the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign was established) represents a more substantial interpretation of the local sustainability project, building upon Chapter 28 and the five ICLEI characteristics.

The ICLEI characteristics and Aalborg Charter Commitments are complementary in the sense that they are both deeply rooted in a common understanding of the LA21 project and the role of local government and local communities in the process. However, they have been constructed for slightly different purposes. The ICLEI definition of the five characteristics of LA21 is a statement of the 'spirit and purpose' of LA21, derived in large part from an interpretation of Chapter 28 and as such it represents a broadly accepted perspective upon the LA21 project. The 13 Commitments of the Aalborg Charter are similarly widely accepted and are again based firmly in the vision embodied in Chapter 28. However, the Charter

Commitments also represent a *statement of intent* given by the signatory municipalities to work towards local sustainability.

The ICLEI characteristics were defined in 1998 as part of the process of evaluating progress towards LA21 worldwide, and according to ICLEI, a Local Agenda 21 is characterised by:

- The integration of issues: environmental objectives are linked with economic and social objectives;
- The integration of interests: in a culture of dialogue and participation, all groups in society are to be involved;
- Its long-term character: measures and projects are based on long-term objectives keyed to the precautionary principle;
- Its global dimension: impacts of local action on global development are measured, ways of counteracting the global unequal distribution of consumption and wealth are identified. The local contribution to global sustainability is an explicit goal;
- Sustainable management of resources: utilisation of natural resources is based upon the rate at which new resources are formed; substance inputs into the natural regime are based on its capacity to degrade them. (ICLEI, 1998)

The Aalborg Charter was written and approved by participants at the 1994 European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns, held in Aalborg, Denmark. By signing the Charter, municipalities both participate in the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign, and adopt the 13 Commitments of the Charter (see Box 4.1). As with the ICLEI characteristics, the central themes and principles of LA21 form the basis of the Charter. However, these Commitments also operationalise the characteristics, in that they are specific policy principles for sustainable development. By the beginning of April 2001, over 1100 local and regional authorities across Europe had signed the Charter, and a year later this had increased to over 1500.

The processes of citizen participation and civic engagement are deeply ingrained in both these interpretations of the LA21 project as key elements of ‘soft governance’, and it is to these central components of LA21 that we now turn.

Box 4.1 The Aalborg Charter

Notion and principle of sustainability

The idea of sustainable development is to achieve social justice, and sustainable economies, without overburdening nature and destroying natural capital. Our standard of living and way of life should therefore reflect this.

Box 4.1 (continued)

Local strategies towards sustainability

Sustainability will not be achieved by an ad-hoc approach. It requires the incorporation of sustainability principles into all the policies and practices which affect the operation of a city or town.

Sustainability as a creative, local, balance-seeking process

The wide-ranging activities of a city constitute its overall eco-system. The activities inter-relate and create an organic whole.

Resolving problems by negotiating outwards

The town or city should attempt to find environmentally sustainable solutions within its own boundary. However, if the town or city is unable to resolve problems or imbalances itself, it works together with other municipalities, or the wider region or nation to develop sustainable solutions.

Urban economy towards sustainability

A clean and healthy environment is a prerequisite for investment and for the future economic development of a city or town. If the natural capital of a city/town is reduced or destroyed, economic sustainability will not be guaranteed. How is the natural capital maintained or preserved in the light of new forms of economic development?

Social equity for urban sustainability

The basic social needs of citizens, such as access to water, food, housing, healthcare, education and employment are essential if sustainable forms of society are to be maintained in towns and cities.

Sustainable land-use patterns

Land-use planning provides a mechanism to ensure that new developments are designed with sustainable concepts at their core. At the same time, the land-use planning system considers the relationship between the city, the rural hinterland, regional and national planning.

Sustainable urban mobility patterns

The need for less congested and polluted cities is a key objective for a more sustainable city. A less congested city is a more efficient and cleaner place and also ensures a healthier living environment.

Responsibility for the global climate

Climate change is a serious concern for the future of the planet, and its causes are varied. The local level has a key role to play in ensuring that adverse climate change is decelerated and ultimately reversed.

Prevention of eco-systems toxification

Prevention of the pollution of eco-systems and human health toxification.

Local self-governance as a precondition

The sustainable development of cities and towns is largely the responsibility of the individual city or town, therefore the necessary powers and

Box 4.1 (continued)

opportunities are needed at the local level if appropriate decisions for a sustainable future are to be made.

Citizens as key actors and the involvement of the community

A consensus on the future sustainable development of the town or city requires that all sectors work together and recognise their individual responsibilities in delivering their local objectives for sustainable development. This also requires education, training and access to information for all sectors.

Instruments and tools for urban management towards sustainability

In developing strategies and actions for sustainable development it is also necessary to be able to assess their success/failure and to measure whether sustainable development is being incorporated within the overall urban management of the city or town.

4.2 Participation and civic engagement in local sustainable development policy making

A number of commentators on LA21 and local government policy making have rightly emphasised the importance of participation in policy making for local sustainable development, and this concern has often been conceptualised in terms of wider discourses on the nature of local democracy (both at an academic and a policy level). Lafferty (2001), for example, argues that participation is functional because it contributes to the quality of decision-making but also, the greater the degree of consensus for a plan of action, the easier it should be to realise the goals. Others emphasise the importance of participation as empowerment and learning. Young (1999), for example, comments on the increasing interest at policy level in new approaches to participation since the mid-1990s, particularly through the promotion of participation by organisations such as the Local Government Management Board in the UK (now IDeA) as an integral part of LA21 policy processes. He suggests that the interest by individual local authorities in developing participatory approaches could be for a number of (or combination of) reasons, according to a 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' perspective. A common argument is that top-down local government approaches often do not relate sufficiently to local peoples' perceptions of the problems. The solution is to ask local people to define the problems as they perceive them, and thus produce relevant and innovative solutions. This view does however simplify the relationship between local policy makers (and the 'expertise' that they are meant to possess in specific areas of policy making) and civil society, as it assumes prior knowledge and

understanding of often complex policy issues, and also a wish to engage in policy making, which in practice is only by a small minority of (usually white, middle-class) people.

A contrasting perspective holds that there are benefits for local people and for local government in a partnership and a more 'bottom-up' approach to policy making. Parker and Selman (1999) consider the notion of 'civicness' in relation to LA21. They emphasise the need for engaging whole communities in sustainability initiatives, so that they can take collective responsibility for quality of life and environmental issues. Following Putnam (2000), they suggest that the denser the social networks in a community, the higher the possibility of collective participation in sustainability projects. They do recognise however that the reality is more complex, with, for instance, a weak relationship between levels of community awareness and actual civic activity.

There does in practice seem to be a tension between attempts by local authorities to communicate more effectively with local people, for example through the decentralisation of policy making, improved consultation and feedback processes, and the continuing problem of what is sometimes regarded as a 'disillusionment with local democracy' or, as Putnam argues, a continuing process of 'civic disengagement' whereby younger generations in particular are less involved in political and social organisations and processes.

A related issue is raised by Buckingham-Hatfield and Percy (1999) who comment that the central principle of LA21 – participation and the capacity of individuals and local communities to have an impact on decision-making processes – is based on an assumption that these individuals and communities either have the potential to, or should have such an impact. Their argument draws on Marvin and Guy's (1997) critique of 'the new localism', which these authors argue assumes the power of local communities and governing institutions to create local environmental sustainability with little reference to different scales of political, institutional or commercial activity. They emphasise that participatory processes must reinforce, rather than undermine, the legitimacy and authority of local government. However, as Parker and Selman (1999) note, local government itself needs to put in place mechanisms of support for community participation – their research highlighting the dangers of excessive reliance on participation, especially in the absence of adequate structural support mechanisms.

The United National Conference on Environment and Development of 1992 emphasised the importance of education as a way of promoting and improving the capacity of people to deal with sustainable development issues. 'In addition, through the principles that underpin LA21, such as subsidiarity by increased democratisation and decentralisation, empowerment and capacity-building, the role of community development also becomes critical to the LA21 process' (UN, 1992: 7). A central element of such

capacity building is enabling people to participate in decision-making – but there is still no clear ‘best’ approach to achieving this, for instance, which organisations or sectors need to be involved and how this can occur. Moreover, as Selman (1998) notes, new methods for participation can still be unrepresentative and do not necessarily lead to greater democracy.

4.3 Evaluating LA21: the nature and level of civil society engagement

The discussion now focuses on the European research undertaken between March 2000 and October 2001, on the development and implementation of LA21 strategies across European local authorities. This chapter considers in particular the participatory dimensions of LA21 within the context of debates on the shift by local authorities towards ‘soft governance’ approaches to decision-making.

The European research involved an extensive survey of local authorities in the European Union and candidate countries known as the Local Authorities Self-Assessment of Local Agenda 21 (LASALA) (LASALA, 2001; Evans and Theobald, 2001a; Joas *et al.*, 2001). This evaluation of LA21 in Europe has helped to identify the responses of local authorities across Europe to the requirements of LA21, and the tools and mechanisms employed to encourage and increase participation by different ‘stakeholders’ within a locality. Before explaining the LASALA project in more detail, it is useful to briefly describe the background to this research.

There has been considerable interest amongst both academics and policy makers across Europe in the development of Local Agenda 21 during the last eight years. To date, over 4000 European municipalities at local and regional level are engaged in a LA21 process of some description (Southey, 2001). Although there are distinctive national and local contexts, it is becoming clear that there are substantial commonalities in terms of influential factors in the development of LA21, approaches to local sustainable development and the problems encountered. A considerable amount of research has been conducted on the European LA21 campaign and most of this has been what Sayer (1992) would describe as ‘intensive’ in character. That is, it has focused on particular case studies or countries, in order to catalogue progress or to evaluate the conditions that have either supported or restricted the development of LA21. In contrast, there has been no extensive research on LA21 across a large number of local authorities in all the constituent countries of the European Union and the aspirant states, although there are a number of comparative studies at the level of nation-states (Lafferty and Eckerberg, 1998), or regionally delimited local level studies (Joas, 2000). More general studies on sustainable develop-

ment have also been carried out (Joas and Hermanson, 1999; Lafferty and Meadowcroft, 2000), and on environmental policy capacities (for example Jahn, 1998; Andersen and Liefferink, 1997).

Whilst most studies have tended to focus upon policy outcomes (for example, assessing the number of LA21 programmes launched) it has become increasingly clear that not only the *progress*, but also the *process* of LA21 needs to be examined. The LASALA project was in major part a response to the need to evaluate both the progress and the process to date of LA21 and, more broadly, local sustainable development policies, across a range of national, regional, political and socio-economic contexts. LASALA has addressed these issues, both through its research aims and objectives, and through the particular innovative methodology of self-assessment by local authorities.

The LASALA project had a distinctive perspective on LA21. The project was not only concerned to provide a common framework for the evaluation of LA21 across Europe but it also had a remit to assist and support local authorities in the evaluation of their own work in this area. The aim was therefore to seek to identify European-wide trends and processes, and to link these to the building of an effective common European framework for the evaluation of LA21 and local sustainability processes. Approximately 230 local authorities were recruited from across Europe to participate in LASALA. These local authorities undertook a self-assessment of their LA21 processes, through the completion of two distinct, yet linked, Exercises with both closed and open questions. The first Exercise was an in-depth questionnaire to be completed by the LA21 co-ordinator on behalf of the local authority. The second Exercise required the setting up of a workshop in which a range of stakeholder groups would discuss and record their perspective on the local authority's LA21 process, and progress, within the context of the 13 Aalborg Charter commitments.

The 'extensive' approach to the research provided a broad analysis of the process of LA21 across a geographically diverse area, and has permitted an exploration of the complex contexts within which local authorities respond to the demands of sustainable development. The self-assessment was intended to assist the local authorities themselves in reflecting on the progress of their LA21 plans and policies as well as providing an invaluable database for evaluating the development of LA21 across Europe. The Evaluation Report of the Self-Assessment Method from the project (Evans and Theobald, 2001b), available on the LASALA website, explains the methodology of self-assessment and the evaluation process in detail.

The central purpose of LASALA was to assess the extent to which European LA21 initiatives have encouraged moves towards new forms of governance in terms of the changing relationship between local governments and their communities, but also in terms of changes to local

government practices, approaches and procedures in order to secure eco-efficient urban management. The project was thus framed around themes of eco-efficient urban management, and new models of urban governance. Eco-efficient urban management is a term used to refer to the use of effective management instruments, processes and practices, in the pursuit of urban environmental sustainability, in particular the thrifty use of natural resources. This approach to environmental sustainability requires integrated and holistic approaches to policy making, which may involve the erosion of traditional administrative and professional boundaries. Such changes are necessary to take account of emerging mechanisms for formulating, implementing, and evaluating policies, such as environmental capacity, sustainability indicators, impact analyses and ecological foot-printing.

New models of urban governance refer to the importance of developing approaches to governance (as opposed to government) which incorporate and include those individuals and groups who have been largely excluded from policy decisions. In particular LASALA sought to assess whether new models of urban governance, for instance in the form of improved participatory mechanisms, inclusion of citizens, and the continuous flow of information between local authorities and stakeholders, can provide improved political, cultural and methodological conditions for effective, eco-efficient city planning and resource management systems.

The criteria which were used for analysis of the self-assessment by local authorities and stakeholder groups of the local LA21 processes, were both the ICLEI characteristics of LA21, and the Aalborg Charter Commitments. The LASALA findings were thus an attempt to identify *progress* towards local sustainable development according to these principles. As was noted earlier, a recurrent theme of LA21 and of both the ICLEI characteristics and the Aalborg Charter is the commitment to move to 'soft governance', and it is to this part of the LASALA findings which we now turn.

4.4 LASALA and 'soft governance'

The LASALA research investigated a series of issues which contribute to the process of 'soft governance'. The responses to the two Exercises were grouped to provide data on the process of knowledge and awareness raising both within local authorities and amongst stakeholder and community organisations; the inclusion of stakeholders in the decision-making process and the development of participatory approaches; and the involvement of community organisations and the private sector. The responses were also grouped into four pre-defined 'regions' of Europe: Central and Eastern Europe (CEE); Western EU; Southern EU; and Scandinavia.

4.4.1 Knowledge and awareness raising within local authorities

The LASALA findings indicate that local authorities have made some steps towards integrating LA21 into the policy process. Much of the work being carried out is within a specific department or committee, or within a cross-departmental group with representatives from different departments, and increased knowledge of sustainable development issues would arguably assist this. Specific obstacles to the raising of awareness which were identified within local authorities were the lack of knowledge, awareness and training on LA21 objectives, in addition to problems of bureaucracy, transparency, co-ordination, participation and departmental conflict/tensions.

The proportion of officers and elected members trained on sustainable development issues in each local authority is disappointingly low. Of those local authorities that provided training, 20% said that around 50% of board/committee members and officers received training, and 71% said that only 10% received training. Moreover, only 41% of respondents measured the impact of this training.

4.4.2 Inclusion of stakeholders and citizens in local decision-making processes

It is important to note that the terms 'stakeholder' and 'citizen' are sometimes used interchangeably in the LA21 literature, although they refer to different forms of involvement. 'Stakeholder' involvement in the context of LASALA refers to the formal or informal groups established within the community, and to the statutory and non-statutory agencies working with local government in the delivery of services. 'Citizens' refers to the individual persons living or working within the local authority boundary, as opposed to individual representatives of a group. Some responses included both in their perspective of 'the community', but where possible this analysis attempts to separate the notion of 'stakeholder' and of 'citizen', as their experiences regarding LA21 and the level of engagement in the process may be very different.

Local authorities were asked about the nature and extent of both stakeholder and citizen involvement in different aspects or stages of the LA21 process – in terms of setting priorities, targets, budgets, and actions. In terms of determining *priorities* for policy development, the involvement of stakeholders was perceived as high or very high. In terms of setting *targets*, all regions had similar proportions citing the involvement of stakeholders as high (around 40%, see Fig. 4.1).

Figure 4.2, however, shows that for *budgets*, the level of involvement was notably less than for other aspects, which is perhaps to be expected since in the vast majority of, if not all cases, it is local authorities that ultimately have the finances and systems in place to deliver policies for LA21.

One point related to this that came from stakeholder workshops was the need for local authorities to be more explicit about the nature and

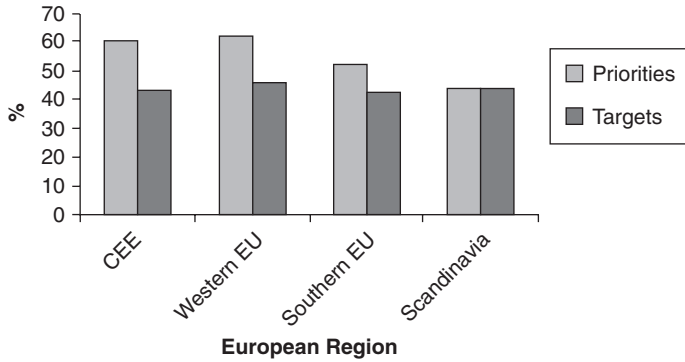


Fig. 4.1 Percentage of respondents citing high involvement by stakeholders in aspects of LA21 Plan (priorities and targets).

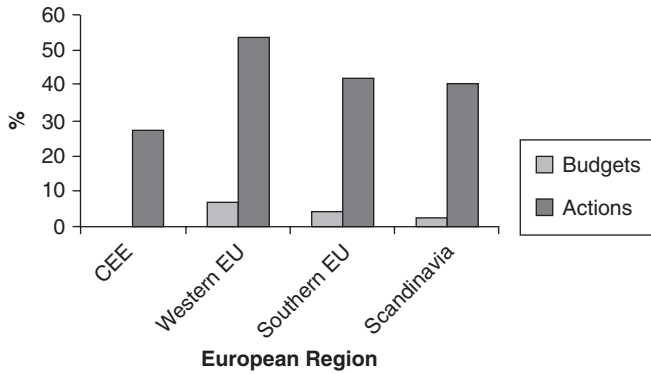


Fig. 4.2 Percentage of respondents citing high involvement by stakeholders in aspects of LA21 Plan (budgets and actions).

outcomes of participation, and about the different impacts of participation by organised groups, as opposed to individual citizens. This is an important point to consider, in terms of how to engage both in decision-making processes, the nature and quality of information that citizens and groups receive regarding LA21, and the role that individuals and organised groups play in the process.

4.4.3 Development of participatory approaches by local authorities

In the LASALA stakeholder workshops, participation (and related to this, knowledge and awareness) was perceived as a key aspect of local sustain-

able development. Particular methods of involving stakeholders were also perceived as the most innovative aspect of LA21 processes by a number of the stakeholder workshops. This finding reinforces those of the ICLEI survey of LA21 (ICLEI, 1998).

The ICLEI survey (ICLEI, 1998) found that Local Agenda 21 processes in Europe had led to innovations mainly in the ways and manner of organising local development, and that they had proven a valuable addition to local politics in introducing new forms of communication and, particularly, of co-operation. The survey found that new co-operations were developing both between individual departments in local administrations as well as between the administrations and other local stakeholders such as associations, business, churches or between individual groups and institutions outside the local administration. The LASALA findings reinforce this to some extent, however they also raise the issue that it is necessary to examine the nature of partnership between local authorities and different sectors of the local community.

4.4.4 Private sector involvement

There are a number of issues raised by the LASALA findings, such as resources for and from the private sector, private sector agendas, and the obstacles to participation raised by private sector organisations. The LASALA evaluation does, however, show a degree of progress in this area with stakeholder workshops in the four regions suggesting that their local authority worked to some extent with the private sector to address certain aspects of sustainable development. Several cases in the Southern EU and CEE regions perceived that the relationship was working very well. Despite this, the tensions between economic development and protection of the environment are evident. Moreover, as Lafferty (2001) notes, the level of engagement by both business and industry varies considerably. He also suggests that there has been no real discussion of the role that the private sector in general should be playing in this arena, in terms of where they sit within civil society and how they relate to local government institutions.

4.4.5 Community groups

The local authority responses indicated that most stakeholder groups had a low level of activity in the LA21 Forum or LA21 process generally. Groups that were identified as having the lowest level of involvement were those representing disabled people, ethnic minorities, women, and young people.

In terms of disability groups, a fairly high proportion across Europe (57%) reported no involvement or only a passive role for these groups. In the response on women's groups' involvement, 54% of local authorities said that the formers' involvement was non-existent or only passive. For ethnic

minorities, 65% cited the level of involvement as non-existent or passive, with 12% citing involvement as high or very high. In the case of young people, the level of involvement was higher than that for women or ethnic minority groups, with only 26% suggesting there was no involvement or only passive involvement. For unemployed people the level of involvement was the lowest of all the community groups listed, with 72% of local authorities citing either no involvement or passive involvement (see Fig. 4.3).

Clearly a local authority's approach to incorporating a range of groups into the decision-making process is one aspect of the move to 'soft governance' and the changes in the relationship between local government and the people it represents. One way of achieving this may be through the development of tools that are meaningful to citizens as well as to local authority officers and members. A number of stakeholder workshops emphasised the need for long-term projects involving local people in relation to a number of policy areas for sustainable development. These concerns echo the earlier findings in the ICLEI survey (1998) that, in Europe, it is mainly short-term projects that are being carried out under the banner of LA21. This was due to the constraints of public participation processes that the ICLEI report suggested is much easier to realise for the implementation of projects with a limited time-frame and visible results than for longer-term plans and objectives. A further, related, issue was the availability of funds – which are, at both European and national levels, almost exclusively linked to specific, short-term projects.

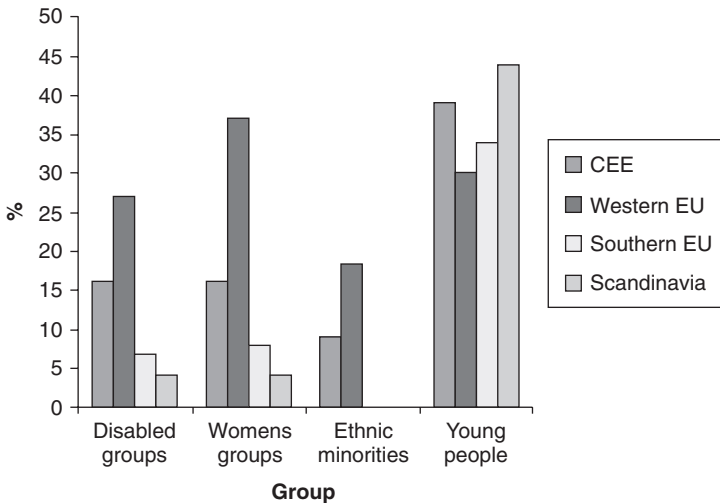


Fig. 4.3 Percentage of respondents indicating active involvement by community groups in the LA21 Forum.

4.4.6 Awareness raising measures

As noted above, a guiding principle of LA21 is the need for local authorities to develop and implement appropriate mechanisms for the community to participate in local policy processes. The ICLEI survey of local authorities (1998) found that, in the course of Local Agenda 21 processes in Europe, new forms of public participation were being employed that went beyond the legally required minimum level. It was noted, however, that the adoption of participatory approaches occurred within a context of how participation was viewed and according to whether there was a tradition of participation in policy making within a country. Responses to the LASALA exercises reflect this to some extent. These indicate that a range of approaches and techniques have been used for broad awareness raising on LA21. Responses from LA21 co-ordinators on the methods employed by local authorities to encourage participation show that there were four main approaches, illustrated in Fig. 4.4.

Across all the regions, a total of 63% of respondents indicated that they had established an LA21 Forum (although, as Fig. 4.4 shows, the proportion in each of the four regions varied between just over 40% and 75%). Regionally, over 60% of respondents in all regions (except the Southern EU region, which was lower) cited the establishment of working groups. Working in or with schools (although it was not specified whether primary or secondary level) was also cited by a high proportion of respondents, in particular in the Western EU region, and Scandinavia. Workshops and seminars were the most popular approach in all four European regions, with an average of 80% of respondents using these methods.

Figure 4.5, illustrating awareness raising measures of LA21, shows, of all the responses across Europe, 74% of LA21 co-ordinators indicated that information spreading to the wider public occurred to some or a high

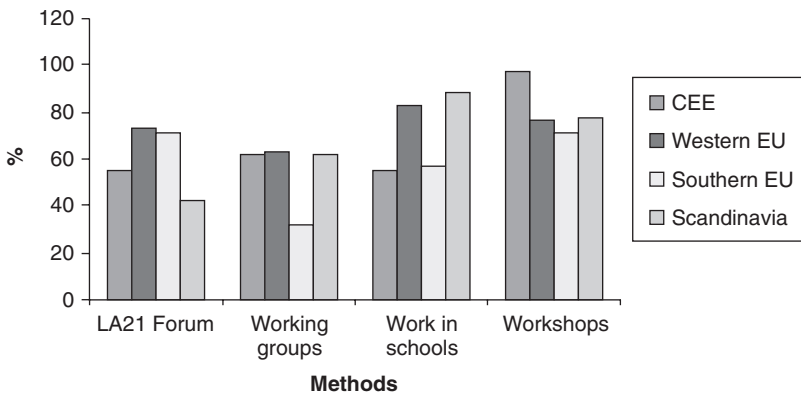


Fig. 4.4 Percentage of local authorities citing different methods used to encourage participation.

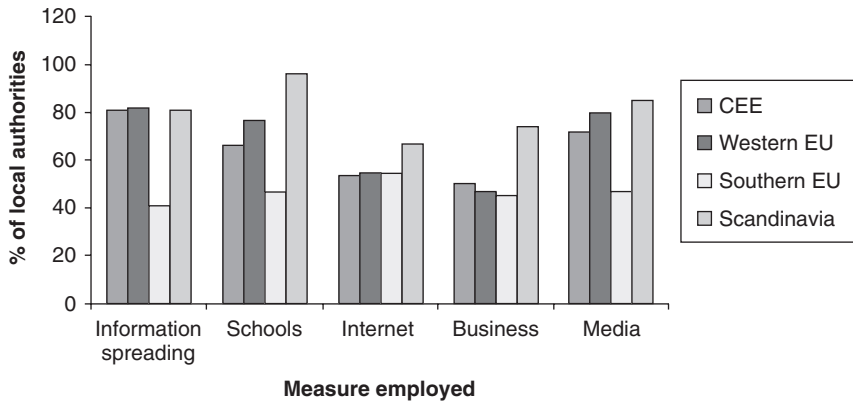


Fig. 4.5 Measures adopted for public awareness raising of LA21 (by defined European region).

extent. 72% used the media to some or a high extent, and co-operation with schools or day care was cited by a large proportion – 72% used this measure to some or a high extent. 56% said the Internet was used to some or a high extent, reflecting the developments in technology, and the opportunities presented by the Internet to access a range of groups and individuals.

In terms of raising awareness amongst different ‘stakeholders’ in civil society, co-operation with business and civic sectors was cited as occurring ‘to some extent’ in 53% of cases. However responses to related questions revealed that in practice, the level of involvement by business and by voluntary groups was low, with environmental NGOs and local authority officers and elected members having the highest level of representation.

LA21 co-ordinators were also asked about the extent of information sharing by the local authority with the LA21 Forum. According to the responses, the level of information sharing across local authorities in the four regions was fairly high. In terms of the procedures established by local authorities to disseminate LA21 outcomes to all citizens for feedback, a significant number had procedures in place (59%) although the remainder said these did not exist.

However, according to responses in many of the stakeholder workshops (which in most cases included members of the LA21 Forum) there appeared to be a lack of knowledge regarding the way in which the local authority policy process operates, and it was noted in several cases that the council was not trusted. The picture is therefore of a rather ad-hoc approach in some local authorities, with insufficient dissemination of information to stakeholders regarding the nature of the policy process and their role in it.

The extent to which LA21 co-ordinators felt that decision-making processes were influenced by recommendations or proposals from the

multi-stakeholder group (LA21 Forum) was fairly high, with 73% saying that this occurred either to 'some extent' or a 'high extent'. However, this tends to contradict the perceptions of stakeholders, and moreover, the level of evaluation of the 'success' of these awareness raising measures was very low, or non-existent. In practice, as noted below, the level and extent of involvement of key sectors such as business and community organisations was low, and indicates a mis-match between the perceptions of local authorities about the nature of 'partnership' with external agencies, and the reality of this relationship.

This evaluation of LA21 has highlighted the organisational and attitudinal obstacles to responding to the sustainable development agenda. In particular, these are a lack of political commitment, an ad-hoc approach to policy making, and a lack of awareness and knowledge within local authorities of sustainability issues. Conversely, where these conditions are present, progress with LA21 appears to be more rapid and successful.

4.5 LA21, the 'integration of interests' and the move to 'soft governance'

It is important to reflect on how the issues raised by these findings correspond with the principles of LA21 as set out in the ICLEI characteristics, and the corresponding Aalborg Charter Commitments. The second ICLEI characteristic: 'the integration of interests', is for many the essence of LA21. It refers to the process of encouraging an open process of dialogue, consultation and participation between all groups in society in order to work towards sustainable development. More broadly, it also implies the development of more open forms of 'soft governance' through which local authorities can develop more open and participatory relationships with local stakeholders and citizens.

The objective of securing greater citizen involvement in policy formulation and implementation is central to LA21, and it is not surprising therefore that virtually all respondents to Exercise 2 gave prominence to the aim of increasing citizen involvement and to the mechanisms adopted to achieve this. It is noticeable, however, that stakeholders and municipalities tended to refer to the participation process in their responses, even when this was not requested, indicating that participation has assumed a pre-eminent position in the LA21 process, perhaps to the exclusion of other objectives. In part, this could be viewed as a transitional problem: if LA21 is a process for securing greater democratisation and for building local capacities, a focus upon public involvement would be expected and desirable in the early stages. However, it has to be recognised that the process of participation may also serve as a way of deferring decision-making on more controversial issues. Also, there is a danger that participation may become the principal objective of the LA21 process, rather than being just one part of it.

The majority of LASALA local authority respondents did not differentiate between the participation of citizens as *individuals*, and the participation of *organised interests*, such as local NGOs, pressure groups or representatives of business. Clearly both are stakeholders in the general sense, but each group is likely to approach LA21 in a different manner, and to require different processes to encourage and facilitate involvement. In general, individual citizens do not seem to be involved in the European LA21 initiative to any significant degree, and although this may not be surprising – most studies of public participation have recognised the difficulties in securing the involvement of individual citizens as opposed to organised interests – given the emphasis within LA21 upon the involvement of *communities*, this does require some consideration. As might have been predicted, historically excluded groups – particularly black and ethnic minorities, young people, disability groups and women – continue to be poorly represented, although many municipalities are aware of this issue and are seeking to address it.

As noted above, in the case of organised interests, there is a clearer pattern of involvement. Although there is some evidence of the involvement of business, commercial and industrial interests, these tend to be limited to particular situations (where there is one major industry or employer for example), and in general, the participation of business and commerce in LA21 across Europe appears to be very limited. In contrast, local authority involvement by both officers and local politicians is substantial. A review of all the Exercise 2 Stakeholder Meetings indicates that local authorities contributed the majority of attendees at most meetings. Given the central role of municipalities in the LA21 process, this is not surprising. However, it does indicate that there will need to be greater investment in opening up the LA21 process to a wider range of interests.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which a ‘culture of dialogue and participation’ is developing across Europe in the context of LA21. Certainly, most of the LASALA participant municipalities demonstrated a commitment to the principles of dialogue and participation, and the majority exhibited an awareness of shortcomings in the process. However, certain groups tend to dominate the dialogue process – mainly those organisations with a particular concern for a broad environmental agenda. The challenge for local authorities will be to demonstrate to as yet uninvolved social groups and organised interests, particularly the business community, that this process has relevance to their lives and circumstances.

The concept of ‘the integration of interests’ is not unproblematic in that it tends to imply a potential for consensus which is perhaps over-optimistic. On the basis of the available survey evidence it is not possible to suggest that there has been any substantial movement towards an integration of interests. However, the evidence does suggest that local authorities are beginning to open up their processes of decision-making and policy for-

mulation in response to the LA21 initiative, and that in the main they see this as a positive and progressive process.

The LASALA findings have therefore emphasised the complexity of participation in local government policy processes by both individuals and different stakeholder organisations. This is related to the capacity of local authorities to take on board the changes that are needed in order to achieve a more fundamental shift to addressing the requirements of local sustainable development. The LASALA findings have also highlighted the necessity of advancing understanding both at academic and policy level of the conditions for successful 'governance' for local sustainable development. By the same token, it is crucial that the obstacles and barriers to 'good governance' at local level are acknowledged and investigated.

There can be little doubt that LA21 has been influential in introducing changes in attitudes, values, understandings and approaches to policy making at the local level across Europe. The LASALA research demonstrates very clearly that there have been significant changes in the 'ways of working' of local authorities in the last decade which suggest a move towards the principles of 'soft governance'. However, it is equally clear that there is still a long way to go, and that many local authorities who did not participate in LASALA (and who are not signatories to the Aalborg Charter) may have been largely unaffected by these developments.

The European Commission is committed to a reform of European governance, emphasising the principles of openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence – principles which underpin the concept of 'soft governance' (European Commission, 2001). The LASALA research indicates that the LA21 initiative can make a substantial contribution to nurturing and supporting these principles at the local level, and with the European Union's commitment to pursue LA21 as part of the Sixth Environmental Action Plan, more progress may be made.

At the time of writing, the Prepcoms for the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development are well advanced, and it seems likely that there will be a further international commitment to extend the LA21 initiative – perhaps renamed as 'Local Action 21'. The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives claims that LA21 has been a 'success story', and the LASALA evidence supports this. The next decade will be an opportunity for European countries to build upon the experience of LA21 since Rio, to work towards more effective policies for sustainable development at the local level, and to build more democratic mechanisms for effective 'soft governance'.

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Combating social exclusion: focus groups, local empowerment and development: a Preston case study

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5.1 Introduction

The study discussed in this chapter has sought to investigate issues surrounding social exclusion and barriers to participation in the labour market faced by a range of disadvantaged groups in a particular case study setting. While some of the chapters in this book focus on local informal responses within the framework of local sustainable development, this follows what may appear as a ‘top-down’, public agency led approach to understanding ‘problem’ or ‘excluded’ groups in relation to employment. A shift to more inclusive employment policies, as with sustainable development, requires genuine forms of participation and is undermined if policy rhetoric promotes a different agenda, or if it presents the fiction of local accountability or empowerment, yet denies effective individual or community action. While this study is small-scale and exploratory, and findings are at best tentative, the underlying ethos of participation in decision-making is important, and it has a potential beyond simple gathering of information. This may distinguish it from some of the larger-scale, long-term research into social exclusion.

This chapter emphasises the importance of finding ways of learning from groups characterised as ‘socially excluded’. Their opinions about unhelpful official and institutional behaviour are valid, and directly involving them in the process of enquiry may reduce or eliminate some of the causes of social exclusion. Participation in focus groups enhances or changes the status of participants and the groups they represent. This opens up lines of communication that may lead to new, more sympathetic and more effective forms of inclusion, if decision-makers permit this to occur. It may also challenge

official, professional and media assumptions about socially excluded groups in ways which facilitate a wider range of policy options, and which address the fundamental causes of social exclusion.

The chapter builds on a study of social exclusion in Preston, north west England, at the end of 1998. This study was carried out by a small group of public sector employees, assisted by consultants, under the direction of a limited life partnership of local public and voluntary sector organisations, with assistance from European Union funds. It benefited from the participation of representatives of a number of groups which have often been identified as experiencing social exclusion. Though the terminology is usually applied in rural, developing world situations, this chapter, in effect, explores some of the implications of 'rapid appraisal' techniques, in this case focus groups, in an urban context. Of particular relevance here is their immediate value in informing policy and practice; and their wider potential, through actively promoting engagement, inclusion and mobilisation.

The chapter raises some of the questions that need to be acknowledged by any study that relies on citizen participation to help understand, and address at the local and neighbourhood level, matters of distributional equity and social welfare. From the Preston study it would appear that the concept of social exclusion and the 'inclusionary' tool of a focus group have immediate practical application. However, this does not address the extent to which attempts to promote social inclusion deny or restrict viable and legitimate alternatives to current traditions of policy making.

The use of focus groups to study and address issues related to social exclusion raises a number of questions, namely:

- can the contribution of a focus group go beyond an enhanced understanding of social exclusion/inclusion, to inform policy, and actively promote social inclusion?
- can people who are excluded help themselves by determining their own issues and priorities, or is there a flaw in this (as in other 'self help' mechanisms) as the means at their disposal are insufficient to overcome their circumstances?
- does focus group based research add to an understanding of these issues?
- what are the limitations of this type of research?

5.2 Defining social exclusion

It is useful at this stage to consider the concept of social exclusion in more depth. Social exclusion is causing increased concern for politicians and policy makers across Europe. It is particularly evident in urbanised areas and is high on the agenda of national governments and other social and economic intervention-based organisations. Essentially the term recognises

the existence of persistent and systematic deprivation within certain areas, or social groups, and how social processes compound this. The result is significant sections of the population playing little, or no, role in day-to-day social and economic activity.

In terms of the causes of exclusion, Parkinson has outlined the following economic and spatial reasons:

Rapid changes in the economic environment caused by internationalisation and industrial and corporate restructuring have transformed the character of local economies. They have brought a more fragmented labour market, a decline in manufacturing and a rise in the service sector, high levels of structural unemployment, an increase in part-time, insecure and low-paid employment, a shift in the balance of male and female employment and a growing gap between the highest and lowest incomes. (1998: 1, 2)

In the late 1990s, the terms 'Social Exclusion' and, linked to this, 'Economic Exclusion', were often employed by politicians and practitioners dealing with social 'problems', especially those concerning poverty, forms of criminal activity such as vandalism, street crime and drug dealing, and the possibility of tension between distinct ethnic or other groups, especially where different groups are concentrated in one place.

By 2001, rural disadvantage in the UK was also being addressed in these terms. This wider application may be seen as part of a process of dilution and normalisation of policies addressing social exclusion, which possibly reduces the status, and available resources, for initial priority areas.

A useful definition was provided in a UK-specific context:

Social exclusion is a broader concept than poverty, encompassing not only low material means but the inability to participate effectively in economic, social political and cultural life, and, in some characterisations, alienation and distance from the mainstream society. (Duffey, 1995: 8)

Alternatively:

Social exclusion is the process of becoming detached from the organisations and communities of which the society is composed and from the rights and obligations that they embody. (Room, 1995: 243–6)

The idea of social exclusion is not new. The 'agitator, activist and independent scholar' Ben Reitman produced a 'Social Geography Map of Outcast Islands' to illustrate a lecture in New York on 17 November 1910 (Cresswell, 1998: 209). Contemporary use of the term social exclusion can be traced back to French Socialist governments of the 1980s. Social (especially cultural and ethnic) diversity was perceived to threaten the social order. A guaranteed minimum income was intended to *insert* excluded groups within mainstream society. Delors, at the European

Commission, changed the concept's focus to promoting social and economic *cohesion* with a local focus because:

. . . groups who are affected by social exclusion are spatially concentrated within urban areas. (Allen, Goran and Madanipour, 1998: 13–14)

The Countryside Agency, an official body with responsibility for developing and promoting rural policy in parts of the UK, provides a more recent definition, which has wider salience than the context for which it is intended:

What is social exclusion? The result of a number of factors which combine to prevent individuals from benefiting from the opportunities which most of us take for granted . . . These factors include low income, poor health, inadequate housing, lack of education and training, difficulties reaching services and no involvement in decisions which affect their future. (Countryside Agency, 2000/2001: iv)

Social exclusion points to *individual* rather than wider (for example, class, ethnicity, area, age, sex) reasons for a person's experience of, and chances in, the labour market. Some theorists draw on regulation theory to explain this (Lipietz, 1986; Swyngedouw, 1999), and to explain changes in the way that capital exploits labour. These include the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, with its associated processes of globalisation, in which the security of local trading relationships and employment opportunities are replaced by rapidly changing, often long-distance, business transactions and flows of goods and services. It may be argued that the way that globalised capitalist enterprise exploits local distinctiveness is just one possible, undesirable, outcome of a high speed, spatially unconstrained and largely unregulated global economy:

The Fordist 'dream of everlasting prosperity' has evaporated as high unemployment, poverty, and homelessness have become more acceptable with the advent of post-modern culture. A new 'common sense' about social policy has emerged throughout the [European] Community . . . a more diverse and expanding group is likely to experience more entrenched exclusion from the mainstream of civil society as the 'code of relief' is toughened and there is growing reference to 'workfare' rather than welfare. (Kennett, 1994: 29)

A more optimistic perspective argues that both local and global dimensions should be acknowledged, and that there is great scope for community democracy:

Decentralised and disjointed democracy will become the muddled medium for accommodating global–local relations in the future. Here social–local identity can become a most important medium for

ensuring that those whose needs must properly be met by sustainability can be identified and empowered. The key to this prospect is the role of devolved democracy in translating social exclusion into meaningful social cohesiveness and solidarity. (O’Riordan, 2001: 238)

Critiques of social exclusion include the idea that it is a:

... chaotic concept that denies more sensitive understanding of the way in which marginalisation plays itself out in particular European contexts. (Samers, 1998: 123–6)

Samers therefore suggests that:

... we require a hermeneutic understanding of ‘social exclusion’ (from the perspective of those supposedly ‘socially excluded’) ... [we should] adopt a more dialectical understanding and appreciation of ‘social exclusion’ and ‘integration’ ... [and] the distinction between exclusion and inclusion is far more ambiguous than implied by liberal academics and policy makers. (1998: 123–6)

Thus, existing approaches to and understandings of social exclusion at policy level may miss what actually causes poverty at a local scale, give too much attention to paid work, ignore various forms of resistance or coping, including organised labour and the ‘black economy’, and also ignore the wider issues: the case for redistribution of wealth, and social justice, and the need to understand (and counter) ‘how “social exclusion” is produced by capitalism’ (Samers, 1998: 123–6).

5.3 Policy approaches to address social exclusion

Under the Labour Government at the time of writing, the Social Exclusion Unit was established, and is based in the Cabinet Office at the heart of UK Government, with high-level ministerial and prime ministerial involvement (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). Its work has a neighbourhood focus, and seeks to:

... address the key causes of social exclusion rather than just dealing with its effect ... It will ensure that dynamic local leaders have the power and resources to turn their communities around.

One of the Unit’s key objectives is:

... that policies reach effectively into the very poorest neighbourhoods; the most intractable ‘joined up’ problems of poor neighbourhoods are tackled; and policies reinforce each other and add up to a coherent strategy. (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998: 2)

Links can be made between the Unit's work and continuing anti-poverty initiatives from local government, with a shift from "a "provider culture" to an "enabling culture" within the planning and delivery of local services" (Alcock *et al*, 1998). Criticism of what may however be seen as a 'disabling' process is countered by the adoption and implementation of various forms of locally focused 'capacity building'. For example, according to the Local Government Association (LGA):

Community planning has seen a move towards more effective (and genuine) forms of participation by 'local people, local businesses, public and voluntary bodies . . . in identifying objectives, preparing strategies and in delivery/implementation'. This 'shared vision' entails development of 'capacity building within local communities and organisations in understanding and identifying local issues and priorities'. (Local Government Association, 1998: 3–4)

Early academic work on social exclusion in the UK included a major Japanese funded research centre at the London School of Economics and a large Economic and Social Research Council funded research programme at Liverpool University geography department. Their Cities' Project: 'Pathways to Integration: Tackling Social Exclusion of Merseyside', was intended to engage with individuals in 38 'pathway' areas of the city region where social exclusion is at its highest and environmental quality at its lowest (ESRC, 1999). This work involved participant observation, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. For the purposes of this discussion it is useful at this point to consider further the use of focus groups in policy processes.

5.3.1 Focus groups

Focus groups are a mechanism used for both applied market research and social science research. They have been developed to serve a particular purpose and have been adapted by a wide range of organisations. These have included social scientists who, arguably remote from the market research central to politicians' and opinion surveyors' use of focus group findings, essentially adopt the same technique to gather data, and then use the data for their own purposes.

Catterall and Maclaren (1997: 1) provide a useful outline of the development of work with focus groups, and include both market research and academic strands in their discussion of how the resulting data are best analysed. Coote and Lenaghan provide a useful definition:

Focus groups are a feature of qualitative research. They are usually conducted in sets, each group comprising eight to ten individuals recruited to represent a section of the population and lasting for about 90 minutes, during which time one or more topics are discussed. While some information is provided, this is strictly limited and the purpose is

to probe uninformed opinion in more depth than can be achieved by opinion polls. As with the latter, the organisation commissioning focus groups controls the agenda and decides how to interpret and deploy the results. (1998: 204)

The idea that focus group members may have a degree of 'ownership' of the issues they are asked to discuss is not explored by Catterall and Maclaren (1997). However, a Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' (DETRs) focus group based study of barriers to participation indicated that group members showed a high level of understanding of the matters raised. This finding may contradict the idea that focus groups are of value because they offer a non-specialist, popular perspective. This is reinforced by Catterall and Maclaren's suggestion that:

The focus groups show that citizens are most likely to participate in initiatives which address their stated priorities (with an emphasis on practical concerns rather than abstract 'issues'); mobilise and work through local leaders (informal as well as formal); and exploit the potential of inviting or actively recruiting participants, rather than waiting for citizens to come forward . . . citizens are deterred from participation by negative views of the council; a lack of awareness and information about opportunities to participate; assumptions that the council will not respond to their concerns; and a perception that initiatives are dominated by certain groups. (1997: 5)

A further issue in the use of focus groups is the way in which the data are used to inform understanding on the benefits of focus groups for both the participants and researchers. Catterall and Maclaren argue that 'we know very little about how focus group data are analysed and interpreted' (1997: 8). They suggest that:

. . . programs cannot replace the analyst's core role . . . to understand the meaning of the text, but may help support his or her own intellectual processes. Analysis may miss the sequence of events in focus group discussion, especially interaction between group members. (1997: 8, 5)

5.3.2 Limitations of focus groups

Other reasons to question the wisdom or validity of a focus group approach include matters of selection, organisation and the choice of issues to be discussed. In work on social exclusion, an important consideration is whether all categories that are 'excluded' have been identified, and whether it is actually possible to obtain representative participation. Bias may be introduced by 'delegates', either as 'strong' individuals or because they represent particular interest groups or assumptions. Moreover, the researcher or facilitator who is leading the discussion may be imposing their own

perspective on participants, and thus influencing the outcome. The choice of questions/areas to discuss is also important, as there could be an undue bias on employment and other aspects of self-help or other individual reasons for exclusion. Such an emphasis may also miss other important dimensions of exclusion, such as leisure, health, diet, and other relevant aspects.

Finally, caution should be applied concerning the validity of focus group based recommendations. There is a need to consider whether policy should be driven by its target population, and if so, policy makers require an understanding of, and engagement with, the people they seek to influence or benefit, even if the motivation is to contain a 'problem'. This raises further questions about the level of influence by excluded groups on policy making (Walker and Pratts, 1995), and ties in with 'bottom-up' approaches to policy implementation, which actively engage the client:

Now the lowest levels of the policy chain are regarded as the makers of policy and the higher level of decision-making is seen as circumscribing, albeit in important ways, the lower level policy making context. (Weatherley and Lipsky, 1977)

This consideration of the validity and influence of focus groups' recommendations for policy does not diminish their importance as a type of qualitative methodology, but does raise questions over how they can be used in a manner which is participatory, whilst also providing some form of democratic legitimacy. Having considered the role of focus groups in policy making processes, the chapter now sets out the findings from a case study on the use of focus groups involving those people 'excluded' from the labour market, in Preston, Lancashire.

5.4 The Preston study

Preston is a large town in North West England, an hour's drive north of Manchester or Liverpool and between one and two hours from the Cumbrian Lake District. At the time of the study it was still classed as a 'borough', but in 2002 it acquired 'city' status. It has a population of approximately 135 000 and, despite many advantages, such as good transport links and being an important administrative and commercial regional centre, in the late 1990s (and still today) it had some significant concentrations of unemployment (Sector 3 Foundations, 1998: 6). Preston is the main administrative, business, services, and retail centre for Lancashire. However, while these sectors have been developing, the town's manufacturing and productive sectors have declined, with the loss of several thousand jobs since the 1970s. During this period, pockets of deprivation and social exclusion have become more acute, particularly in the inner-urban wards: a situation

borne out by figures in 'Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal' (Social Exclusion Unit, September 1998). This government document points out that 44 local authority districts have the highest concentrations of deprivation in England. Of these, Preston was ranked as the 44th most deprived local authority district, out of a total of 353 according to the 1998 Index of Local Deprivation.

Some wards in Preston have had unemployment rates well above the rate for the town as a whole. These wards are noted as unemployment blackspots by Lancashire County Council and in October 1998 had unemployment rates of between 6% and 12%. In areas characterised by high unemployment, clusters of severe disadvantage can emerge. There is also the possibility that high levels of unemployment can become entrenched within particular sub-groups of the population and in specific geographic areas. In the longer-term, areas of increasing unemployment at the micro level become progressively less attractive as places to live. Those people that can secure employment and move out of such areas tend to do so, leaving behind a residual population, as has happened in Preston. As a result the most deprived inner wards are characterised by high unemployment, high elderly populations and high minority ethnic populations.

In 2000, the DETR produced a revised Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The IMD measures deprivation in a more complex and thorough way by using domains of deprivation. There are six domains (relating to income; employment; health and disability; education, skills and training; housing; and access to services) and each has a series of indicators within it.

The ranking of Preston, in relation to all other English lower-tier authorities within the IMD is as follows (each ranking is out of 353 local authorities).

| Domain | Rank |
|------------------------|------|
| Employment scale | 85 |
| Income scale | 86 |
| Average of ward scores | 70 |
| Average of ward ranks | 95 |
| Extent | 46 |
| Local concentration | 46 |

Source: DETR, 2000.

The 1988 and 2000 measures of multiple deprivation in England essentially measured different aspects, which makes direct comparison between them inappropriate. Nevertheless it is clear that Preston has continued to be an area with significant levels of deprivation.

5.4.1 Addressing social and economic exclusion in Preston

Sector 3 Foundations, a partnership of Preston based organisations supported by funding from the European Social Fund, was established in 1998 to develop the capacity of community and voluntary organisations (CVOs) to assist economically excluded groups and individuals participate in the labour market (see Box 5.1). It drew largely on the resources of voluntary organisations and the public sector in seeking to provide this assistance. Lancashire Area West Training & Enterprise Council (LAWTEC) was a locally based publicly funded training and enterprise agency, one of 78 regional Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in the UK (now known as the Learning Skills Council and Small Business Service networks). LAWTEC was particularly interested in Section 3 Foundations' work because it was expected to inform, and hopefully improve, its training and business support programmes. The case study research described below was primarily carried out by a LAWTEC research team (including the authors of this chapter) working jointly with Sector 3 Foundations and a range of community and voluntary organisations (CVOs).

The work was co-ordinated by LAWTEC and carried out within the operational framework of Sector 3 Foundations. Sector 3 Foundations was funded through Objective 3, Priority 4 of the European Social Fund. The funding ran from summer 1998 to 31 December 1999, and a co-ordinator for Sector 3 Foundations was seconded from Preston Borough Council's community development team for the duration of the funding period. The ultimate aim was that beyond the period of European Union funding the CVO sector would be able to play an enhanced role in combating social exclusion in Preston.

Box 5.1 The Sector 3 Foundations partnership

The Sector 3 Foundations partnership consisted of the following organisations:

- Preston Borough Council
- LAWTEC (Lancashire Area West Training & Enterprise Council)
- Business in the Community
- Collingwood Housing Association
- Preston Council for Voluntary Services
- Preston Tenants and Residents Associations
- Lancashire Co-operative Development Agency
- Preston College
- Lancashire County Council
- Preston & West Lancashire Racial Equality Council

The aim of this project was to undertake an analysis of the various issues and experiences associated with training, employment and education across different sub-groups of the population in Preston. This kind of qualitative information is not readily available elsewhere and was to be used to inform local decision-makers in designing training and employment programmes. It was also to be used by CVOs as they develop their own organisations and tailor their particular approaches to tackling social exclusion in Preston.

5.4.2 Methodology for focus groups in Preston

The LAWTEC co-ordinated study was more than an information gathering exercise. From the outset, an essential component was the inclusion of a broad range of local CVOs, and as part of this approach, local representatives of these groups were asked to run local focus groups. One of the expected outcomes of this approach was a higher participation rate in the focus groups. Similarly, it was deemed important that the focus groups be held in familiar surroundings for each group. Representatives from participating CVOs were asked to act as ‘gatekeepers’ who would allow official agencies access to the range of required target groups. Additionally, this approach was favoured in order to develop a sense of ownership within the CVO sector. A full day training session was provided for representatives of CVOs on how to set up and run focus groups. Two sessions were held in November 1998 and attended by representatives from the following groups: substance mis-users, unemployed people, disabled people and minority ethnic groups (South Asian, Black Community and Asian Women). After completing the training they conducted focus groups with individuals from their own client group. Participants in the focus groups were accessed via existing networks and by word-of-mouth.

The selected groups were intended to be representative of the groups identified by the European Social Fund (ESF). Focus groups representing the following people were conducted:

- ex-offenders;
- substance mis-users (Alcohol & Drug Services);
- substance mis-users (Drugline);
- unemployed people;
- ethnic minority (Gujerat Training & Resource Centre);
- ethnic minority/social care (VOISE);
- ethnic minority (Unity Community Centre);
- disabled;
- women (Preston Women’s Refuge).

Established organisations or lines of communication were used to locate potential participants, where these were available. This raises questions about how representative the groups were of their specific populations, and

of the extent to which individuals who were willing to be representatives could be relied upon to speak for other members of a particular group. It became evident that professional and voluntary sector participation to some extent attracted 'the usual suspects', such as local graduates with previous experience of community based projects. Whether this tendency also applied to the 'lay' representatives, or delegates, was not clear.

Other groups that the research intended to target, but which were not represented at the training sessions, included those with low levels of literacy and numeracy, ex-offenders, lone parents and young people. Through contacts developed at the training sessions, further efforts were made to link with representatives from these groups. Subsequently, focus groups were held with ex-offenders, an existing women's group, and substance misusers. A focus group with small businesses was also held to get some input from employers.

The research team felt that a structure was needed for the focus groups, although it was important not to make the discussions too formal as this could stifle debate and might prevent people from elucidating on particular issues and experiences. To resolve this, a list of guiding points was distributed to each focus group leader prior to the event. The individuals who attended the focus group training sessions produced the list, the purpose of which was to serve as a tool for the focus group facilitator to use when initiating and guiding discussion and debate. It was also for use by the facilitators to clarify the main points for their group to discuss.

Once the focus groups had been completed the findings of these were collated and fed into a draft report. Upon completion of the project, copies of the draft report were passed to each group that participated, and to other interested parties. This was conducted through a dissemination event held in January 1999. The report was then finalised following the event, which permitted the researchers to incorporate any further issues raised by participants at this meeting.

5.4.3 Themes emerging from the focus groups

The focus groups have been important in helping to recognise the distinctive and informed opinions held by members of the various target populations. Perhaps their most important role has been to indicate the benefits of forms of participation that go beyond structured forms of questioning and consultation. At the outset of this piece of work it was envisaged that a range of different barriers and issues would be identified by each focus group. We found that this is not necessarily the case. A range of emergent themes can be identified which indicate that the barriers and issues surrounding socially excluded groups are broadly applicable, and are not necessarily restricted to particular groups. The main themes arising from the research into social and economic exclusion in Preston are outlined below.

1. *Organisations and agencies.* A lack of understanding exists between public agencies and groups or individuals. Closer contact between agencies and representative groups could develop a greater understanding of the barriers and issues faced by a range of groups within the local community. Securing and maintaining employment can be viewed as the joint responsibility of the individual, the employer and relevant agencies. As such, having placed a person into employment, agencies could maintain closer links with the individual and the employer to ensure sustainable employment.
2. *Individuals.* Individuals may feel they are not presented with opportunities to discuss and explain their situations. Many feel they have a lot to offer in terms of skills, experience and willingness to work, but are the victims of prejudice and preconceptions. More specific issues are highlighted below:
 - It is de-motivating for individuals to go on course after course collecting numerous certificates without actually attaining employment. After time away from the labour market a lack of confidence, assertiveness and work experience are often apparent.
 - The initial impressions presented by those seeking work are important. This includes filling in application forms properly, attending an interview on time, dressing appropriately at interview and communicating clearly with potential employers.
 - For those whose first language is not English, this can be an obstacle to gaining employment.
 - Being able to utilise existing and non-UK qualifications is an issue for some groups; some ethnic minority groups may have overseas qualifications not recognised in the UK. Conversion courses could be made available to address this problem.
 - Ex-offenders pointed out that the skills and qualifications they attain in prison are not utilised, as they find it difficult to gain employment on leaving prison.
 - Housing can be an issue for certain groups. Finding a permanent home can be a problem, particularly for the under-25s and ex-offenders.
 - Lifelong learning is a national government policy objective, but there are relatively few places for more mature people to continue studying and learning.
3. *Employers.* Childcare facilities are often inadequate at workplaces. This is an issue for many groups, but especially so for women returning to work after some years of childcare. Discrimination in the workplace is viewed as a barrier against full participation in the workforce by various groups, for example:

- Older unemployed men consider their age to be discriminated against.
- Women from some ethnic minority groups feel discriminated against for several reasons, including being expected to wear uniforms, for instance in banks and other high street businesses, which are not adaptable to their traditional dress.

The view of employers on why they choose to employ, or not employ, certain groups in society is crucial in understanding and alleviating social exclusion. Some employers' perceptions about certain groups clearly impact on their employment opportunities. Age may be a barrier as employers in some instances may opt to recruit younger people. As a result, older people's skills and experience are not always utilised. Focus groups suggested that employers should look for key attributes such as good attitude, a sense of responsibility, punctuality, honesty and good communication skills. Employers, however, feel that communication skills are lacking, especially in young people, and this is perceived to affect people's ability to perform well at interviews, take and pass on instructions, and deal effectively with customers.

4. *Training courses.* Responses included the following points:

- Because of childcare requirements many people cannot attend courses that run on a daily 9 am to 5 pm basis. More courses in the evening, at weekends, or on a part-time basis would be beneficial.
- There was a lack of awareness about the range and type of training courses on offer, and about projects to develop skills in a less formal setting.
- There is a need for communication-based courses. These range from English as a second language to basic English, literacy and numeracy.
- Training on interview skills and presentation skills is needed and this could be linked to confidence and assertiveness courses.
- The pace and level of courses could be tailored to meet the needs of the particular group being trained. This is especially important in areas such as information technology.
- Women may feel more comfortable on women-only courses, especially where they are taking their first steps into training and employment.
- Support at college would assist certain groups, for instance through the existence of a designated person to whom students could talk about their problems or experiences, and who could assist them in getting the most out of their time in training. It would help if the designated person was from the same background as the group they are to relate to.

5. *Publicity and awareness.* A lack of awareness about the financial incentives available for training programmes may be a problem for certain

groups in accessing training. Similarly, any publicity associated with projects that are operational may not be as extensive as it could be. In order to raise awareness and publicise events and courses they could be advertised in the places that those seeking employment or training frequent; i.e. community centres, doctors' surgeries, job centres and schools. It was suggested that better information on what specific courses involve should make it easier for people to access the range of training available. Courses within community buildings, accessible by public transport, may be more appropriate for those without access to private transport. Communication by employment and training agencies needs to take account of the barriers to accessing employment. Publicity and awareness material could be provided in a range of formats including community languages, Braille and large print. The use of 'role models' could help to raise the profile of training and employment programmes. Individuals may relate to a person from their own background who has been on a particular programme, and they are also more likely to relate to the experience of such a role model. This could effectively increase the participation rate of socially excluded groups within current and future programmes.

6. *Support and aftercare.* Establishing trust and building motivation amongst those who are socially and economically excluded are believed to be key elements in tackling exclusion. Closer and more productive links with employers are also important as this would help to provide individuals with improved employment opportunities and a greater likelihood of sustaining that employment. Trial periods in employment, prior to individuals taking up permanent positions could also form part of a support and aftercare framework. These may be more appropriate for specific groups such as ex-offenders or substance mis-users who are returning to the labour market after long periods of absence.

5.5 Conclusions on the use of focus groups

As a research tool for collecting the type of information highlighted above, focus groups are clearly valuable. They are more productive when set up and run by recognised members of each particular community or client group. In order to ensure that the focus groups were run efficiently and effectively, a one-day training course was offered to individuals from local groups. This worked well and had the added benefit of providing a training and development opportunity for these individuals. Several individuals also commented that setting up and running a focus group had given a boost to their confidence.

An interesting finding from this work has been the use of a themed approach to the issues affecting socially excluded groups. Barriers and issues are not necessarily exclusive to a particular social group or a

particular geographic area. Those experiencing social exclusion are likely to have quite similar experiences regardless of their social group or area of residence. To some extent this contradicts the traditional approach to regeneration that favours policies applied on an area-by-area basis. It also poses new questions about how to develop policies and approaches that tackle social exclusion in a holistic and all-inclusive way, rather than concentrating on particular social groups or geographic areas. While this would appear to contradict current policy approaches, it does give scope for developing more effective area-based approaches, particularly in inner-urban areas where high concentrations of social exclusion are often found.

Differing degrees of social exclusion exist depending on an individual's experiences. A continuum can be identified between absolute exclusion at one end (for instance, people who have never worked), and those who have been excluded for short periods of time (such as those who have recently been made redundant). Different approaches will be needed to assist individuals depending on their own particular circumstances. In this respect the advice and information that people receive from agencies is crucially important if it is to assist them in alleviating the problems and barriers of social exclusion, and to optimise their participation in the labour market.

5.5.1 Informing future policy

The findings from the research process were fed into the operational systems of Sector 3 Foundations and LAWTEC in order to inform the development of future activity to assist CVO development and the provision of education and training to individuals. Unfortunately, little substantive change was introduced, primarily for reasons of broader organisational change, as outlined below:

- Sector 3 Foundations effectively came to an end on 31 December 1999 when the ESF money ran out. At the same time the co-ordinator left to take up a position elsewhere, thereby removing the main agent for implementing the findings.
- LAWTEC implemented a massive reorganisation programme during 1999, which involved a major restructuring of the organisation and around one-third of the staff being made redundant. Consequently, the ideal environment did not exist for introducing new programmes based on the research findings of the study.

Nevertheless, an underlying commitment to tackling social exclusion has been apparent within Preston Borough Council. In 2000, the Council was instrumental in establishing the Inner Preston Regeneration Partnership, which acts as an umbrella body for addressing social exclusion issues. The Partnership has four forums; community, voluntary, public sector and private sector, which are continuing the process of citizen participation to identify issues and barriers to participation, and developing solutions.

5.6 Further case study examples of the use of focus groups in policy making

Focus groups have become firmly entrenched as a tool for canvassing opinions on a range of policy areas, and it is useful at this point to describe other initiatives that have employed focus groups to inform policy making. Focus groups have, for instance, become a very useful tool for evaluating the myriad of short- to medium-term funding programmes established to deliver area regeneration and remove barriers to participation. Below are three examples where focus groups have been used as part of the programme evaluation process, but where specific topics of exclusion have been the subject. These examples also reinforce the findings of the Preston study – that ultimately the decision-making processes may not in practice take account of the concerns raised in the focus groups.

5.6.1 St Hilda's estate, Middlesbrough

St Hilda's estate is within St Hilda's ward in Middlesbrough and located between the docks on the River Tees and Middlesbrough town centre. It has a reputation within Middlesbrough as a 'problem' estate yet the residents remain fiercely loyal and committed to the area. In 1995 the estate was successful in attracting Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) Round One funding and the SRB Programme was evaluated in 2000 (Enterprise plc, 2000).

The evaluation of the Programme involved a number of focus groups with local service deliverers and local residents. A key concern running through the focus groups was that the estate had no future; the local authority was allowing the estate to dilapidate over time before they bulldozed the houses and sold the land to a developer.

The residents felt excluded from the rest of Middlesbrough and the area was locally referred to as 'Over the Border', setting it apart from the rest of the town. The feeling from within the estate was that the local authority was winding down service delivery on the estate (the primary school had recently closed). A classic case of planning blight was occurring. People were concerned about living in deteriorating conditions; vacant houses were subject to arson attacks, and stolen cars were left burned out on the streets.

Thus, a residential area of a large town appeared to be excluded from the mainstream. This situation was extremely difficult to rectify within the scope of a short-term SRB Programme. What is interesting in relation to this paper is that focus groups provided a useful vehicle for the local residents to make their feelings and perceptions known.

The evaluation team, in their conclusions and recommendations, set out the issues raised in the focus groups and listed a range of options that the regeneration partnership could pursue. The options raised from 'do nothing', to 're-launch and revitalise the regeneration effort'. The latter was

the favoured option of the evaluation team but there was a realisation that longer-term funding and commitment from strategic agencies would be needed, and that this was unlikely to be forthcoming – as a result the exclusion felt by residents would be likely to continue.

5.6.2 Focus groups of young people in North East Lincolnshire

North East Lincolnshire is located to the south of the Humber estuary and has Grimsby as its main town. The area has experienced a gradual decline in its economic fortunes as the traditional fishing industry base has been eroded. Consequently, unemployment has risen and the economic prospects of young people in the area are limited. Given these circumstances, in 1997 the area was successful in securing SRB Round Three funding for a regeneration programme targeted at the 16–24 age group. The SRB Programme was evaluated in 2001 (Enterprise plc, 2001).

The evaluation process involved several focus groups to gather information and perceptions from two angles – the service providers (the statutory agencies) and the beneficiaries of services provided (the young people). The fundamental issue, from the standpoint of service deliverers, is that without adequate economic prospects young people are likely to leave the area when they grow older. Allied to the economic situation was a range of other youth issues, i.e. rising numbers of teenage pregnancies, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, vandalism and disenfranchisement.

Young people participating in the focus groups were able to identify a similar range of issues. However, they were quick to point out that issues such as teenage pregnancies, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and vandalism were not problems for all young people, nor were they problems for all areas of north east Lincolnshire. The main issue that affected all young people, wherever they lived, was a lack of money and difficulty in acquiring a place on a training course that would lead to the type of job they wanted.

Some of the young people were very happy with the training and job placements they had received, others were less happy but continued to stay on the placements because they were receiving some income. This suggests that not all the courses are suitable and the type of delivery may be excluding some young people from participating. This remains a difficult area for those designing training courses.

A common thread throughout the focus group sessions with young people was the recognition that large numbers of their contemporaries were, in effect, voluntarily excluding themselves from the mainstream by their own 'antisocial' actions. Of further concern to local policy makers were the various statements by young people about their intent on leaving the area as soon as they were skilled enough to do so. Essentially, two sub-sets of young people were identified through the focus group process: those that were participating in the Programme, but intended to leave the area for one

with more attractive prospects in the longer-term; and those that did not participate in the Programme but instead excluded themselves from it.

5.6.3 The Key Loan Fund, Birmingham

The Key Loan Fund (KLF) was established in 1999 as a pilot community development finance initiative. The pilot phase ran until December 2001 and was funded by £400 000 from the West Midlands European Objective Two Programme. The KLF is primarily aimed at social enterprises in Birmingham that cannot access start-up or development finance from other sources. It offers loans of between £5000 and £40 000 at favourable interest rates, with repayments going back into the fund.

By June 2001 a total of seven loans had been approved and drawn down (made use of). The external evaluators undertaking an intermediate evaluation of the Fund ran a focus group with the loan recipients in June 2001 to gauge their perceptions and thoughts on the value of the Fund. From the focus group session it was clear that all of the recipients had been rejected by High Street banks before applying for a Key Loan. It was also clear that this financial exclusion had spurred the recipients on to ensure that their project ideas would be fulfilled by funding from another source.

The KLF recipient organisations offer employment opportunities to people with mental health problems, recovering substance abusers, and homeless people from inner-city Birmingham. It is clear that, without assistance from the KLF, around 300 individuals in Birmingham would not be benefiting from the opportunities they now have to improve their quality of life, and remove some of the barriers to participation in the labour market and in other areas of social life. In this instance, a focus group was a useful way of speaking to a range of different organisations or individuals that had overcome their financial exclusion and, as a result, were in a position to offer opportunities to improve the quality of life for a significant number of people.

5.7 Conclusions and wider questions

The Preston study's context, and rapid time-scale, when compared with longer-term 'academic' research, has provided particular benefits. A study which seeks to have an immediate effect on policies that are acknowledged as problematic, and which draws on established social and community networks, is at an advantage when compared to a situation in which external researchers or consultants come into an area of which they have little prior knowledge.

The Preston study may be seen as symptomatic of wider issues and, perhaps, of progress in policy making to address aspects of social and economic exclusion. The study has made a small but important step in terms

of providing information to the public agencies and institutions which attempt to provide training and services to assist people in enhancing their ability to compete in the market place for work. Moreover, by directly involving some of the people whose opportunities and quality of life are limited because of their status 'outside' the mainstream, it could enhance their ability to cope with this situation.

At an individual level it may also help reinforce the networks, information systems and mutual support and trust which can be vital in finding work. More important is its role in keeping inequality on the political agenda, and in providing a set of priorities to support intervention and redistribution when these are politically appropriate. It also recognises the ability of local community action to make a significant difference in areas that may be 'written off' as chronic, or as the preserve of public sector professionals.

The views presented above are entirely those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of any of the organisations mentioned.

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6

Retailing and sustainability: exploring connections using the example of a local town market

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6.1 Introduction

The retail sector has experienced dramatic changes in the past 30 years. Retailing has become central to Western economies and cultures and has played a significant role in the shift associated with a move from an industrial to a post-industrial age (Thomas and Bromley, 1993). Not only is it an important sector of employment, it also exerts a considerable influence on the morphology of urban landscapes, represents an increasingly important leisure activity and is central to the construction of personal and group identities. This chapter focuses on a renaissance of local retailing systems, in parallel with the emphasis of Agenda 21, on local action to instigate and maintain sustainable development. Specifically, it focuses on local markets to investigate the possibility that they may be sustainable alternatives to the more formalised retail systems in shopping malls and high streets.

This chapter has four key sections. The first section explores the reasons why retail geographers have largely neglected the issue of sustainability, despite the emergence of the so-called ‘new’ retail geography. In particular, retail geographers have ignored alternative retail practices and consumption patterns, such as those embedded in local markets, and failed to compare and contrast their sustainable qualities (though there are some notable exceptions (Gregson and Crewe, 1997)). The main body of the chapter argues for retail geography to engage with the issue of sustainability. A tentative framework is outlined for addressing the potential of alternative consumption spaces as a sustainable retail system, by linking critical areas of contemporary retail geography with the basic concepts

of sustainability. Following this, the local street market is shown as an example of an alternative form of urban retail development. This section reveals a form of retailing that plays an important symbolic, economic and cultural role in urban retail development, but one that is largely un-researched by retail geography. Finally, the chapter identifies key themes that require further research. The case will be made that street markets are an important gap in the existing body of research on retail environments.

6.2 Skewed meanings: neglecting sustainability

Recent geographical research, which has focused on the retail sector in the developed world, has largely neglected issues of sustainability. The limited work which has addressed the links between retailing and sustainability, has focused on two main themes – the location of retail facilities and the ‘greening’ of retailers and consumers (Garside *et al.*, 1999, 2000). Both these literatures have adopted a very narrow theorisation of sustainability constructed around discourses of environmental degradation and resource management. For example, research on the location of retail facilities has drawn attention to the increased environmental problems associated with the development of out-of-town shopping centres. This work has tended to be conducted by urban geographers and planners in their quest to explore the idea of sustainable cities and has centred around the environmental concerns of pollution and energy inefficient forms of urban transport (see Mazza and Rydin, 1997; Thomas and Bromley, 1993). The latter set of literature focuses on ‘green consumerism and retailing’ from the perspective of both the customer and the retailer (Eden, 1993; Harris and O’Brien, 1993). This work has focused on sustainability solely in terms of the detrimental impacts on the environment, rather than sustainable development as encapsulated by the interface between the political economy, socio-cultural activities and environmental eco-systems.

There are perhaps three main reasons why geographers, particularly those who would align themselves with retail geography (whether old or ‘new’), have, by and large, ignored issues surrounding the (un)sustainability of retail systems. The first relates to the nature and focus of the sustainability debate which has been commandeered by geographical research focused on natural resources in the developing world and by environmental policy discourses (Nelson, 2001; Middleton, 1995; Barrow, 1995). As a result, the second reason is that debates surrounding sustainability and sustainable development have had far less impact on researchers interested in the production systems and consumption choices of the Western world, and those researching issues which would not necessarily fall under the auspices of environmental geographies. This has led to the third reason which is that this situation is exacerbated by the nature of retail geography which has

been accused, in the past, of being insular and 'oblivious, indifferent and occasionally hostile to changes outside its self-contained and applied loop' (Blomley, 1996: 238).

While the reasons outlined above certainly play an important part in explaining why retail geography has neglected issues surrounding the (un)sustainability of retail patterns and practices in Western economies, the focus of retail geography to date has also acted to obscure the links between sustainability and retailing. Below are listed three facets of retail geography research which have obscured these inter-relations.

Firstly, retail geography's neglect of issues of sustainability rests with the fact that production and consumption (loosely termed) systems have tended to be researched separately. As a result, retail geographers have failed to appreciate the entirety of retail processes as (un)sustainable systems. It has only been relatively recently that geographers have begun to explore the complex commodity chains (or, perhaps more realistically, commodity webs) which connect production, distribution, marketing and consumption. These issues have been addressed most notably in the case of the work on the internationalisation of the food industry (LeHeron and Roche, 1995; Whatmore, 1994). For example, the work of Cook (1994, 1995) is exemplary in uncovering the gross inequalities surrounding the labour relations in the production of exotic fruit in Jamaica and how these are starkly contrasted to the way in which these products are marketed in British supermarkets. By adopting an approach that explores the inter-relations between production and consumption, retail geographers can not only gain some insight into the environmental degradation caused by farms producing goods for Western markets, but also shed light on the ex/inclusiveness of the social relations of production, the marketing strategies adopted and the consumption patterns. In this way, understanding the linkages between the different stages of retail operation is essential to reveal its contribution to sustainability.

The second facet of retail research, which explains retail geography's neglect of issues of sustainability relates to the fact that it has tended to focus on the globalisation of retail systems at the expense of detailed case studies at the local level. With attention being focused on the increasingly global economy, the micro-geographies of retail relations have been overlooked in academic research. As a result, there is a lack of detailed knowledge on the complex inter-relations between local suppliers, retailers, policy makers and consumers and their embeddedness in specific spatial contexts (see Crewe and Forster, 1993; Crewe and Lowe, 1995 for exceptions). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to engage with the contemporary concept that globalising tendencies have led to an increased homogeneity in retail production and consumption. However, for more detail, see the arguments of Crewe and Lowe (1995), who call for a 'finer grained approach' to the study of retailing.

The third aspect centres around the fact that the analytical focus of retail geography has been on large corporate retail systems, dominated by multinational companies and high street multiples. This has obscured alternative retail systems which operate in different spaces to those dominated by 'big capital' (Gregson *et al*, 1997). This situation is perpetuated by the fact that research, which has an in-depth look at retail sites, has focused almost exclusively on formal shopping malls and department stores (Wrigley and Lowe, 1996). Indeed Jackson and Thrift point out that much of this work has concentrated on one particular mall, West Edmonton Mall in Canada, which has 'drawn geographers like moths to a flame' (1995: 209). By focusing almost exclusively on retail spaces dominated by 'big capital', retail geographers have neglected retail spaces such as street markets, flea markets, car-boot sales and jumble sales. Such places may offer more environmentally and consumer sensitive approaches to retail delivery, and, as such, may provide interesting insights into alternative, perhaps more sustainable, retail systems.

Recent research has begun to investigate the nature of production and consumption practices in less formal retail spaces (see Gregson and Crewe, 1994 and 1997 on car-boot sales). This recognition is an important shift away from the recent focus on the global homogeneity of retail space in favour of a focus on the complexity and differentiation of retail spaces (Crewe and Lowe, 1995). Indeed, it has been recent work documenting consumption practices in the less formalised consumption spaces of car-boot sales that has touched on issues of sustainability, both in terms of environmentally-(non)friendly consumption practices and the inequitable and exclusionary nature of contemporary retail systems. For example, Gregson and Lowe (1994) note that retail geographers interested in issues of consumption have focused exclusively on the first cycle of consumption, rather than on the second-hand market. Although this work focuses on the ways in which the act of purchasing is culturally encoded and not on issues of sustainability *per se*, the authors are bringing the importance of recycled commodities to the attention of retail geographers.

In this way, retail geography is beginning to become aware of the fact that there are alternative retail systems in place in Western society, some of which are more 'environmentally friendly' than others. In addition, retail geographers are beginning to recognise the interplay between dominant retail systems and social exclusion, and in particular, the fact that not everyone shares equal access to retail systems. In fact, retail geographers have unwittingly espoused the consumption practices of those groups in society who use these mainstream retail spaces, namely the middle classes. As Gregson and Crewe (1994) argue, retail geography's focus on the more formal retail environments of the shopping mall and the High Street has celebrated the 'consumption communities of the middle classes and exclude[d] those who cannot participate . . .' (Gregson and Crewe, 1994: 262). This is

a crucial issue if we are to consider social equity as a central tenet of sustainability.

Thus far, this chapter has endeavoured to explain why the nature and content of retail geography has neglected the interplay between retailing and sustainability and, perhaps more importantly, the lack of any assessment or comparison of the (un)sustainability of different retail systems. The next section outlines the reasons why retail geography should take the issue of sustainability seriously. The analysis shifts away from retail geography *per se* and focuses instead on understanding the term sustainability, and its relationship with contemporary production and consumption practices.

6.3 Towards a new sustainable theory of consumption

Some argue that the concept of sustainable development arose during the 1970s (Barrow, 1995) and at this point its focus was on maintaining ecological processes, as represented by the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN, 1980). However, it could equally be argued that this was only a phase in the long-term evolution of sustainable development theory, which could be traced back to the writings of Reverend Thomas Malthus. Malthus' focus was to consider a simple equation of population growth and finite natural resources. During the 1970s this approach became more sophisticated; including concepts of genetic diversity and life-support systems, promoting 'harmony among human beings and between humanity and nature' (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

As the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) outlines, virtually all concern with contemporary sustainable development is focused on environmental impacts and the need to alleviate the suffering of the worst affected by world poverty. Even though a link has been made between utilising natural resources (including those modified by human action) and the need to develop an economic ethic in advanced nations, the critical focus is still upon raising the standard of living of the poor on a global scale, with a clear emphasis on tackling the problems caused by uneven development in the third world (report of the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life, 1996).

Early sustainable development policy omits cultural issues from accepted frameworks of sustainable theory, particularly in advanced economies. The early focus on the impacts of production neglects the role of consumption in sustainable development theory. Integrating the issue of consumption into this policy would address cultural practices, and would directly engage with individual rights and quality of life issues in advanced economies. This is something which is still taboo for civil leaders, whose policies focus on the waste products of large-scale production processes, large-scale environmental issues and aid to third world development. Fundamental issues of consumption are therefore ignored,

particularly those affecting lifestyle and what could be considered private individual rights of choice within advanced capitalist societies.

These issues can be addressed at a fundamental level in the construction of sustainable theories, by incorporating a cultural awareness into the building blocks of sustainable approaches. It is widely argued that these building blocks should be wide ranging to take into account the breadth of human activities which process environmental elements as part of productive activities. However, if these are adapted to accept additional cultural values, then it may be possible to develop an approach capable of dealing with consumption processes in advanced economies. An initial conception of this reworked sustainable theory is best displayed in diagrammatic form, and builds upon the work of existing development theorists (Fig. 6.1).

This integrated conceptualisation of sustainable development clearly defines three overlapping spheres of activity and the need to account for all the areas within a central focus if sustainable issues are to be seriously engaged. This suggests that any research or development action should

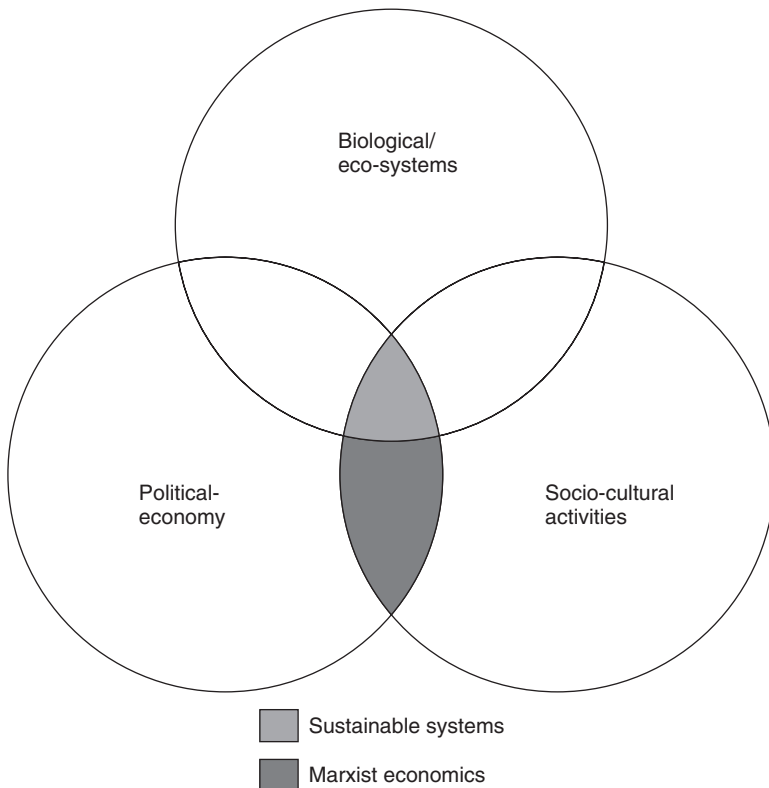


Fig. 6.1 Conceptualisation of the elements of sustainability.

adopt a multi-disciplinary approach, incorporating relevant aspects from each of the areas. In previous conceptions of sustainable development, this type of approach has been advised, but the significant issues of consumption and culture have been ignored. An omission which is equally important for developed and developing nations, considering the effects of consumption cultures in advanced societies on their own present and future development, as well as the exploitative links between global consumption and production practices.

The main thrust of the sustainable development literature has progressed with little understanding of the basic alternatives to existing dominant food consumption patterns in the West. The result is the drive for bigger and more efficient retail distribution to cope with the mass consumption of imported goods, culminating in the constant expansion of international retail giants. At a very basic level this type of investigation is critical because it continues to explore the exploitative link between third world producers and first world consumers. But there are also more sophisticated claims as to why alternatives to this pattern of consumption need to be developed within a sustainable framework.

There is a series of neo-colonial arguments that focus on the poorer nations, due to the sheer size and dependency of the cultures which link into this production process. They argue that such countries are locked into the provision of mass-produced food supplies and therefore cannot afford any level of sustainable development, because this would result in the decline of basic economic development in parts of the globe already at the brink of disaster. However, these arguments do not take into account the need to develop sustainable strategies in advanced and developing nations, because their future development is symbiotically linked to the adoption of endogenous development projects. Neither is it possible for existing consumption patterns in the West to continue promoting the economic fragility of export based systems in the third world, which contributes to the degradation of their social fabric, the spiralling demands of welfare provision and environmental decay.

The extent of the production processes associated with consumption levels in the West, and the infrastructure which supports them, cannot be allowed to constantly develop under current conditions. The reason is that they do so in the face of what might appear to be polemic claims but are actual realities concerning the problems of 'limits to growth' and the carrying capacity, both perceived and real, of the environment. Only now are activist groups starting to engage with this continuing problem of international commercial trade, which supports the consumption patterns and neo-liberal ethics of the first world, by questioning the need for such an expansive infrastructure incorporating air, sea, road, rail and human capital. But, while criticisms abound of an increasingly insecure service based economy which offers little for future sustainable strategies, there is a dearth of quests for plausible alternatives.

Finally, the capital and operations of mass retail consumption are an obvious market area becoming monopolised by distinctive market retailers, whose policies establish and reinforce socio-economic processes of inclusion and exclusion. Civil society and its culture operate in a reflexive process with the consumption patterns it generates. This in turn embeds itself within the processes of development and perpetuates uneven development, discrimination and labels/codes of status. These processes operate within and promote the lexicon of contemporary consumer service development, defining the status of groups and individuals in spaces of consumption. They also spill over into every facet of social interaction for all ages, constructing the consciousness of the silent as well as the audible. The myths and traditions of social construction in urban areas revolve around access to consumption, conspicuous or otherwise. For example, when the insults of children in a Liverpool neighbourhood can wittingly incorporate the phrase 'Netto-ed' (referring to the supposed humiliation of those who shop at *Netto*), whilst the social tailoring of more exclusive retail food outlets continues, then the full spectrum of retail consumption culture needs addressing.

This type of cultural issue touches on key aspects of sustainability, such as social equality, community participation, social inclusion and opportunity of access. These aspects tend to be ignored in the mainstream sustainability literature and are not related to sustainability in the retail geography literature. Therefore, the connections need to be established here also, so that it will be possible to start exploring alternatives which have the potential to offer different pathways for development, taking into account the plethora of contributory influences which define a sustainable strategy.

Sustainability, therefore, is not just about economic, environmental and social development; cultural aspects are critical. These have not been addressed in the context of the first world in any systematic manner in relation to theories of sustainable development (Cohen, 1995). Some contemporary sustainable development theory may challenge the economic oxymoron of development without growth (Daly, 1987, 1993), but the solutions tend to offer Marxist economics combined with genetic diversity (Barrow, 1995: 67). Unfortunately, this relies upon a long-term global approach to restructuring the current dominant mode of production, whilst, realistically, short-term local urban strategies for the first world rest upon greening the environment under projects such as Agenda 21.

Within dominant approaches to sustainable development there are growing concerns about waste management (DETR, 1998), and the ability of individuals and companies to become more efficient at utilising energy resources and disposing of the unwanted end products. Whilst this is also a worthwhile endeavour, it operates within the remit of the public domain, based upon the ability of public policy to offer people greater choice of disposal methods. It does not challenge or address the cultural issues of consumption which are embedded within social reproduction based upon the

concept of individual rights/freedom of choice to consume. Alternative options for consumption need to be established which do not overtly have (misconstrued) connotations of restricting civil liberties. There needs to be a plausible alternative offered, which moves away from the negative traits of mass international production, based upon environmentally sensitive processes and without the cultural overtures exhibited by contemporary systems of large-scale retail distribution.

The critical challenge for this study is to marry together some of the basic concepts underpinning the delivery of sustainable development with an upgraded critique of retail geography, therefore providing a cross fertilisation of theories, inserting cultural awareness into the sustainable discourse and setting more traditional retail investigation within a broader, more flexible and more dynamic sustainable perspective. This can then be used to explore alternative forms of urban retail development which might provide some plausible solutions to sustainable development in the first world. The matrix in Table 6.1 best illustrates some of the main points that might be incorporated into this new framework.

It is the purpose of this research project to apply the cells within the matrix to marginal forms of consumption. This will ascertain the potential of these alternative pathways to offer consumption spaces which deviate from dominant spaces, and which sit well with the new theoretical conception combining contemporary critical retail geography and sustainable development theory. The following sections will focus tentatively on the role and function of the 'street market'. Whilst it is realised that such spaces have become a commodified part of the urban environment and a victim of post-modern reconstitution of past cultures, the following section explores why this type of consumption experience may offer a potential solution to the problems raised in this section.

6.4 New approaches to old forms of retailing: the sustainable potential of street markets

Research into open-air markets has so far tended to focus on historical studies into the role of markets in Europe or markets in present day developing countries (Findlay *et al.*, 1990). Some historians have compared present day and historical 'primitive' markets (Hodges, 1988). The implication is a modernist perspective on open-air markets, suggesting that they are anachronistic to modern mass market economies and they are only significant in the past histories of developed economies or in present day developing economies as a kind of remnant of old systems of exchange. An extensive literature search on street markets in mass consumption economies therefore yields a relatively limited body of work. Research on consumption practices in developed economies focuses on dominant regimes of retail, such as supermarkets, multinational brands or High Street

Table 6.1 Working matrix to explore alternative sustainable forms of urban consumption

| Critical areas for contemporary retail geography | Basic concepts underpinning sustainable development | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| | Participation | Resource management | Self-sufficiency |
| Labour and technical practices, and social relations of production | Labour and consumer exclusion and inclusion patterns, gender roles and division of labour, dismantling traditional social relations | Management of human capital, exploitation and labour relations, acknowledge human/environment interface | Levels of equality and trust, relationships between consumer and retailer, covert information, and labour market benefits |
| Consumer space and consumption image | Image and aesthetics of location, use of consumer space, openness and accessibility (perceived and real), limit social stratification | Organisation and planning of consumer space, urban economic activity – consumption of the environment, cultural tradition of labour value | Link wider image and use of consumer space to urban environment, challenge cultural norms and expectations and construction of values |
| Structuring capital and supply chain links | Role of products as a service to dependent community, community linkages and local involvement, ownership and local networks | Providing alternative sources of commodities, sourcing, transport, packaging, and maximising local benefit | Local/global source of supply, upstream demand, downstream supply, ability to buy and education, and maximising local potential |

outlets. However, markets play a significant role in the lives and lifestyles of different European countries and among different social or ethnic groups within these countries. There is a small, but growing, body of work which identifies such markets as increasingly important to so-called 'post-modern' values.

Miller *et al* (1998) provide evidence that concepts of 'rurality' and 'environment', which are important to the sense of identity held by some north London shoppers, influences consumption patterns. For example there are many brands which use rural images to sell produce as healthy, wholesome, traditional or pure. May (1996) takes this a little further, arguing that there

is evidence of a new consumption class in inner-city Britain that seeks 'alternative' or 'ethnic' foods. The location of purchase, such as open-air markets and stalls, appears to be an important element in this experience. Sullivan and Schuette (in McCann, 1996) argue that the 'connectedness' of return trade between consumers and retailers is important. However, the review of the literature on street markets, mentioned above, highlights the fact that little is known of the relation between alternative retailers and their consumers. Sullivan and Schuette argue that consumers can be categorised according to three main motivations: those seeking produce at a reasonable price, those seeking unique or quality produce and those seeking a 'taste of nostalgia' or purchasing as a tourist. In their experience, the three groups are roughly evenly balanced. These categories equate with preliminary observations made by the authors in local street markets.

This theme is developed by Goss (1992), who identifies a clear segmentation in the built retail environment in Bridgewater, New Jersey. He finds three distinct sections of the retail centre catering for quite distinct class-based markets, and a common theme of open-air markets catering for the demand of nostalgia for the traditional marketplace.

There may be an argument that the survival of local markets relies to an extent on resistance to contemporary relations and control, which is paralleled in a number of other cultures of consumption that have been identified elsewhere. For example, allotment gardening (Crouch and Ward, 1997; Saunders, 1993; see also Chapter 9 of this volume), 'pick-your-own' farms (Cook, 1994), consuming 'exotic' foods (Cook, 1994, 1995; May, 1996), fears about food safety (Nygård and Storstad, 1998) and Local Exchange Trading Schemes (Purdue *et al.*, 1997; see also Chapter 8 of this volume). These examples all suggest that the conceptualisation of culture and identity are to an extent bound up in the practices of consumption. This may provide a rich area of focus for future research on the role of consumption in sustainable development.

Nygård and Storstad (1998) argue that an understanding of the cultural context of food consumption is key to the understanding of consumption practices. It is this cultural understanding of consumption that they believe to be the key to changing consumption practices. In the case they examined, that of a sudden rise in public concern about food safety in Norway, economic incentives rarely influence purchase decisions. This is something that has to rely on a reconstruction of the public image of the particular commodity. While they do not discuss street markets, there is an implication that location and the experience of purchase is a key element in the consumption experience that requires further analysis.

Most studies on contemporary open-air markets are focused on tropical environments where they occur in greater frequency than in developed economies. There are arguments for linking research in developed economies with what is taking place in developing economies (Bromley, 1998; Findlay *et al.*, 1990) beyond a simplistic developmentalist model of

progression from the street to the shopping mall. This chapter has documented a small but growing interest in open-air markets at the heart of advanced economies, while Bromley (1998) finds evidence of street market growth in Latin America despite the development of modern retailing outlets with international links.

Past approaches to the role of markets in developing economies have tended to fall into one of four main approaches. The first focused on economic aspects of markets, in particular empirical measurement of market activity based on price and commodity value, including the function of markets to promote economic development to nearby areas (Jones, 1972). The conclusions of such approaches view open-air markets as informal economies at the beginning of the developmentalist model, ultimately to be superseded by the development of capital-intensive retail outlets dominant in mass consumption societies. A second focus has been mainly on the social implications for particular groups of the operation of the market, in particular on the implications for the poorest trading and living in the area (Hill, 1963; Lado, 1988; Wilhelm, 1997). This perspective views the market as outside the control of government and not necessarily beneficial to the population in general and the most vulnerable in particular. A third preoccupation has been with the market as a cultural phenomenon, studied from an anthropological interest, to reveal the role of the market within local communities (Bohannon and Dalton, 1962). There is a tendency for this approach to take markets at face value, rather than considering them as linking other elements of society. Finally, a number of researchers have applied spatial techniques to analyse the location of markets in relation to each other, including a number of studies on the way in which traders use both time and space to focus market activity on periodic markets (Hodder, 1965). These latter studies have tended to remain focused on the spatial patterns markets and, in particular, periodic markets create, at the expense of the significance of the markets to their economy and society. Guyer (1987) and Paddison *et al* (1990) both argue that these single discipline approaches miss important aspects of the complexity of the markets concerned. Lynch (1992) argues for an integrated approach making the case that each lends to our understanding of the role and significance of the market in its society. This kind of approach is clearly adopted in the transformation of retail space in developing economies in work such as that of Dewar and Watson (1990), Bromley (1998) and as reported in Findlay *et al* (1990).

Modern – or ‘modernist’ – retail space can be associated with supermarkets as having large-scale capital-intensive operations employing economies of scale, where marketing is a key element in survival. Shopping malls have been written about as post-modern, bringing together a range of market segments, providing a variety of smaller-scale outlets and often employing pseudo-historical architectural features. Each are connected to international capital and represent aspects of the processes of globalisation, with global brands being represented in shopping malls and global mergers

and acquisitions in the supermarket sector. For example, Wal-Mart, a US company, recently purchased ASDA, a UK supermarket chain. Sainsbury's, a UK supermarket chain, has opened outlets in a range of different countries, but a recent outlet opened in Cairo prompted controversy with local traders calling on Islamic leaders to declare a *fatwah* against the company. Such resistance by local retailing modes is paralleled by the case of the so-called 'market martyr', a Sunderland trader whose continued use of imperial weights prompted Trading Standards officers to impound his weighing scales. A court case in February 2001, where the trader was fined £5000, resulted in the trader's case being adopted by the UK Independence Party (UKIP), who have formed an ongoing campaign, which highlights the resistance of a number of local traders, dubbed by the UKIP the 'metric martyrs', to the introduction of global weights under EU legislation. At the time of writing the group had lost their appeal in the High Court and were appealing to the Lords. Such examples show evidence of the divergence between the local circuits involved in the street market and the global circuits involved in mass market regimes.

Such cases suggest that an integrated approach to the study of open-air markets in developed economies is the most appropriate. A focus on the economic dimensions will miss out key understandings of the cultural constructions of consumption, while a focus on the sociological dimensions will miss key issues of economic viability and competitiveness of open-air markets in relation to dominant retail outlets. This chapter therefore argues that while market outlets represent a relatively small proportion of the retail industry there is scope for exploring the patterns, structure and processes of such markets in developed economies. Finally, the re-emergence of street markets in developed societies and their resilience in developing economies, suggests that the 'developmentalist' model is erroneous and that the street market provides a role that is far more than simply the sum of its economic transactions.

More complex approaches are required to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a highly complex arena of economic, social and spatial exchanges. There is a small but documented growth of open-air markets in advanced economies. These can be divided into car-boot (or 'tailgate' in the US) sales (Gregson and Crewe, 1994), farmers' markets (Brown, 1998) and open-air urban markets (Sullivan and Schuette, cited in McCann, 1996). Car-boot sales and farmers' markets provide direct producer-consumer relations, spacing out the market days in order to market transactions more efficiently in a similar way to the periodic markets of West Africa mentioned earlier. This is known as 'temporal arbitrage' and happens where daily markets are not economically viable. Urban retailer markets, however, tend to be daily and focus on the sale of fresh foods, some of which are seasonal, some of which are tropical.

Earlier in this chapter three key concerns were outlined which require greater emphasis in a consideration of retail environments in general and

open-air markets in particular. The focus of labour practice and the social relations of production will involve the exploration of the employment culture of the marketplace, the perception of the market participants and the extent to which the inclusive potential of the marketplace impacts upon marginalised local groups. Secondly, a focus on consumption places and consumer perceptions will involve the study of the marketplace in relation to the other activities taking place within the urban area. For example, there has been some evidence put forward suggesting that open-air markets can represent a significant economic contribution to an urban area, both in terms of turnover and as a multiplier for more formal, capital intensive retail outlets, located nearby (Morales *et al*, 1995). Finally, the economic relations between the market participants and through which they relate with the rest of the economy, particularly through the sourcing of commodities in supplier–retailer links and the structuring of capital is vital to our understanding of the role of markets in the local, national and international economy. For example, Morales *et al* (1995) argue that ‘social scientists are only beginning to appreciate the sociological and economic significance of flea markets and street vending’ (1995: 307).

Cross-cutting these themes, we have also identified a range of concerns arising from the sustainability discourse which include the contribution these markets make to the local labour market, the role they play in the construction of place identity, and more specifically as focal points for visitor attraction, supply and demand side activities and the dynamics of place management and market administration.

6.5 Kingston market – a sustainable market culture?

Kingston-upon-Thames has enjoyed a long history as a commercial centre, stretching from the construction by the Romans first of a ford and later a wooden bridge, through its political importance as the location of the coronation of seven Saxon kings and the medieval home of the Bishop of London when ‘out of residence’ (Janaway, 1994). Its position as a commercial centre was largely the result of it being the only reliable crossing point between the Chiltern Hills and London Bridge until the seventeenth century, and this was confirmed in 1628 when Charles I issued a Royal Charter to the market (Everson, 1995). During this period it grew into the largest settlement between London and Oxford and became a major trans-shipment point. However, the arrival of the railway confirmed Kingston’s commercial position resulting in a doubling of the population between 1851 and 1881, with the establishment of a commuting culture.

The market (shown as it appears today, in Fig. 6.2) was the centre of Kingston town centre, serving as both a wholesale and a retail market until the mid-eighteenth century. The nature changed as Kingston changed, with the producer–retailers gradually giving way to full-time traders. Records of



Fig. 6.2 Kingston Market. The ease of access for wheelchairs, and the historic buildings of the market square, are illustrated.

the time indicate that the established retailers included milliners, hatters, jewellers, furriers and a department store. In 1888 Kingston became the county town of Surrey, making it an important administrative, as well as commercial and transport centre. During the nineteenth century many of the traders in the market were also Thames Valley producers. Gradually, as Kingston grew as a settlement, the demand meant that the market days increased from two per week to six and trading became a full-time occupation. Until the 1920s the council used the market building for their meetings and it also served as the magistrates court for a time.

During the twentieth century the market became increasingly busy with the main route from Surrey and the south west entering the market square from the south and the main road to London passing just north of the square from Kingston bridge west. The 1980s saw a change as an inner relief road was constructed, effectively diverting much of the passing trade around the market square rather than through it. The result was a shift away from the market square to the north and east, in spite of the protests of the market traders. The courts, the council chambers and shopping centres were located away from the square. The centre of gravity of retailing shifted to the north, while the legal, council and business activities shifted south and east from the square. The market experienced a period of decline, with the closure of a number of shops, the number of stallholders reduced from 43 to 25, the majority being sellers of bric-a-brac, wool and



Fig. 6.3 Kingston Market, looking north towards the market building and the parish church. The café seating is clearly seen as an important development in the atmosphere of the market square.

T-shirts, and a decrease in fish stalls from four to one over a period of 15 years. The market declined to its core of food retailing with a small number of other consumer goods, such as clothing, cards and wrapping paper, household consumer goods and videos.

The borough council has more recently invested in the market square. New stalls and shelters have been provided for the market retailers, which can now be locked to provide safe overnight storage, and the market building has been refurbished. The reduced number of stalls has left space at the south end of the market where two cafés have been allowed to set up tables and chairs (see Fig. 6.3) and at the weekend periodic licences are sold to stallholders selling items such as fashions, crafts and at certain times, specialist stalls, such as Christmas gifts and French produce. A new development close to the market square, called Charterhouse Quay will bring 300 upmarket flats, together with a theatre, restaurants, redeveloped shops and pubs. This will connect the square to the river front. The Town Centre Management Company sees the rejuvenation of the market as a way of developing the image of Kingston as a retailing centre. This is exemplified by the Borough promoting Kingston as a ‘historic market town’.

Empirical research on Kingston Market has been so far relatively tentative and based on informal interviews with shoppers, market retailers and town centre management officials (Garside *et al*, 1999, 2000; Farrell, 2001).

Empirical research suggests that shoppers are predominantly female and spread over a wide age range, though mainly in the older age categories. In one small survey 70% were female and 60% over 55 years old (Farrell, 2001). Most travel to the market on foot or by bus and up to 25% return to the market each week, 51% within a fortnight. Many of the shoppers questioned used the same stalls each week. The market shoppers appear to hold a very strong view that the market produce is of both a higher quality and a lower price than nearby supermarkets. Those shoppers questioned about the other reasons for shopping at the market cited issues such as the 'friendly atmosphere' and the fact that shopping at the market involved meeting people. Most shoppers indicated that their main criteria for selecting the market for shopping was price, with quality of produce and friendly atmosphere also being considered. This suggests that the market is providing an important service to older and female shoppers who are concerned about finding fresh market produce at an affordable price. A number of the older shoppers, who were interviewed in-depth, had deliberately waited until the end of the day and were able to get their produce for cheaper prices as the stallholders sold off the last of their stocks.

With regard to the labour force in the market, most stalls are family-run businesses. The traders are characterised by key informants repeatedly as a 'close-knit' community, operating on the basis that all stalls benefit from attracting shoppers to the market. As such, the labour force is dominated by men. The majority of stallholders are male – there are only two known female stall licence holders – but the structure of labour in the market is such that the staffing is largely made up of family and also by stallholders covering for each other. Many of the stallholders' families have been in the business for over 100 years and some have links with stallholders in other south London markets. The result is that wives and children and in some cases elderly parents of licence holders may cover the stalls. Traditionally, the retailers would source their produce from Covent Garden and Billingsgate Fish Market, but more recently the main source for retailers is the Western International Wholesale Market at Heathrow. Wholesalers at this market source from all over the country, and indeed all over the world, suggesting an international supply chain which parallels the supermarket structure. All traders buy their own produce, as no suppliers deliver to the market square. One stallholder used to travel to Amsterdam twice a week, but has since given this up as it was a high cost operation which rarely paid back. The Council's Local Agenda 21 strategy emphasises local sourcing of produce where possible. However, interviews with traders and others make it clear that this would increase transaction costs and use market channels that do not benefit from the economies of scale that are present in buying from Western International. Among the traders there are concerns that the market trade is in decline, and so anything that is likely to increase transaction costs will adversely affect marketing margins. From the production side, Surrey County Council has, as part of its Economic Development

Action Plan, established a ‘Surrey Hills’ brand to support local farmers in creating a business to process, market and distribute high quality Surrey products. The Council is also encouraging the establishment of farmers’ markets, including the proposed appointment of a co-ordinator, but there is as yet no evidence that this is an economic source for traders in permanent markets.

The Council and the Town Centre Management Company are very keen that the market traders enhance the quality and range of their produce, for example encouraging the stocking of more unusual and high value produce. However, there is reluctance among the traders – who are, after all, small businesses. One trader experimented by stocking up with organic produce, but this experiment lasted only five weeks. The traders focus on what sells to consumers and, unlike large-scale operations such as supermarkets, do not have the economies of scale to take risks with their operations, such as experimenting with more exotic or unusual produce. It is the small size of operation that also restricts the traders’ ability to explore alternative sourcing of their produce. Such initiatives as the Surrey Hills brand or the introduction of specialist stalls or of a farmers’ market, could be promoted by the borough or the Town Centre Management Company – particularly where the market as a whole may benefit from the enhancement of the town’s reputation as a market town. Indeed, such experiments have been tried on a relatively small scale, such as the invitation of market traders from Normandy to run a one-off French market and the All Nations Fair which incorporated ethnic food, music and dance. These may attract new shoppers to the market.

There is therefore evidence that the market mode of retailing is catering for some groups of the population, while at the same time providing a boost to the image of the town centre. The small scale of the businesses restrict the traders’ ability to experiment should they want to do so, however, the interest of the borough and the Town Centre Management Company suggests that they may have an incentive to facilitate such developments. The issue of enhancing sustainability, is similarly only likely to come about as a result of initiatives supported by the management and policy makers.

6.6 Research themes: possibilities of a research agenda applying the working matrix

The argument presented in this chapter makes a case that future analytical activities should address a number of issues which have been neglected or overlooked by existing debates. Examples of this include the policy networks underlying the development of the market and its control. This will draw from the community power debate and rational choice theory to uncover the critical influences guiding the development of the market at a policy level. This includes an exploration of who makes the decisions as to

the operation of the market and who sets the policy environment for the urban area. The issue of who manages the market and for whom can be raised in relation to the interests of place marketing and Kingston's image representation. This raises issues about the manner by which aesthetics are translated through policies to establish an operating framework for the market. For example, in the market's recent history a number of controversial issues have been debated in the local press about the issue of the acceptability of certain aspects of the market. One designer clothing retailer has complained about the smell emanating from the fish stall especially in the height of summer. Complaints have been made about 'choice' language used by some stallholders. It is interesting to note that in the latter case the stallholders agreed at a meeting to self-police this issue as they recognised this as being an issue that affected their business. However this clash between the formal shops and the market stalls is not new. *Boots* had one of its first outlets located in Kingston's market square. A complaint from the manager at the beginning of the 1900s that sheep kept wandering into the store led to a debate which eventually resulted in the banning of live-stock selling from the market in about 1906 (Janaway, 1994).

This framework, setting the function, built environment and image of the market, links directly to the visual representation of the market, the characteristics of the labour force, urban management, the production systems supporting the market and the consumption patterns in the area.

6.6.1 Social economy and alternative consumption patterns

During the 1990s many urban analysts suggested there were sections of the community becoming excluded from the mainstream capitalist economy. Irrespective of location, social exclusion for certain groups has brought not just unemployment, but associated health, diet and social problems. Attempts to include these groups into mainstream activities have been succeeded by new attempts to generate a social economy, based on linking supply and demand in local economies without capital accumulation. As the market is a source of fresh produce and intensive labour demand, it is critical to explore if there is potential for this resource to offer opportunities to excluded groups within the local community. This could be manifested in terms of alternative trade patterns, subsidies through the local authority, or production of goods for the market to develop credit alternatives.

6.6.2 Labour markets and economic development

There is limited research focusing on the potential of street markets to generate primary and secondary employment, and the multiplier effects of income generated in the area. Morales *et al* (1995) attempt to quantify the contribution of a Chicago street market to local economic activities and suggest a positive contribution. Pretty (1999) argues that there is evidence

that farmers' markets can attract more foot traffic and increase visibility for other retail outlets. Such attention will require focusing on networks constructing the working environment of the market and the economic benefits offered by the market.

6.6.3 Sustainability and consumption

As already argued, the focus of sustainability research in the western world has been on managing waste produced, reducing resource depleting consumption practices in the public arena and minimising pollution. And, while local street markets may offer alternatives to existing dominant retailing outlets, their potential sustainable qualities have not been empirically assessed. A number of key issues require investigation. A market study should focus on seasonality of the produce market – set against environmental costs of year round produce – which relates to transport issues (freight in the UK, air travel, international production systems) – set against local sources and local produce. Street markets are at the centre of the new sustainable approach (advocated by, amongst others Sustain (1999)), offering alternative production and consumption patterns, but there is also the potential that they are socially embedded within local communities and generate accessible levels of participation for a wide variety of consumers and producers (Langdon *et al*, 1990).

Since street markets are poorly researched, little is understood about the marketing channels supplying open-air marketplaces with their goods. Questions remain on the channels that originate beyond the marketplace. For example, do these markets stock seasonal crops? Does this result in a greater degree of retailing of locally produced goods? What are the implications relating to sustainability and local circulation of capital (Sullivan and Schuette in McCann, 1996)? How important is seasonality in sourcing produce, and the relationships between retailers and wholesalers? In addition, the linkages between consumers, retailers, wholesalers and producers are poorly understood, though there is some research on related themes which may be helpful in providing lines of investigation (Barrett and Browne, 1996; Jaffee, 1993; Porter, 1993). This work raises questions concerning the extent to which these factors influence the workings of the local market from the 'culture of the market place' to the successful planning and management of a market place.

Recent research in the US (McCann, 1996) identified the characteristics of successful urban markets as:

- the importance of vendor administration;
- a complementary mix of produce providing a spectrum of purchase decisions;
- markets that are part of planned enterprise zones and which fit into the community's development plans;

- ‘Spirit of place’ must be present and the market must be active and dynamic.

Successful street markets can therefore contribute to the development and regeneration of urban centres. Given the scale of most street markets this suggests a level of economic and social benefits beyond the face value of the market transactions. There are, however, questions about the extent to which these findings are transferable.

6.7 Conclusion

As made clear from the start of this chapter there is a limited existing body of empirical or theoretical work that explores the issues relating to street markets in the advanced economies. This chapter has therefore set out to tentatively examine related and parallel theoretical and empirical work which could help shed light on the analysis of street markets.

This chapter has argued that recent changes in theoretical approaches to retail analysis, concerns about environmental sustainability and a refocusing of urban regeneration strategies make the investigation of street markets timely. The review of retail geography has found that it focuses largely on dominant retail modes, overlooking economically smaller, but culturally significant modes of retailing and consumption. The growing dissatisfaction with existing modes of retailing has prompted consumers to seek alternatives. Motivations for these changes include concerns about future environmental sustainability, concerns regarding food safety and health, and growing consumer concerns about ethical trading issues.

This chapter has been written to bring a radical perspective to the analysis of retailing, as it has been detected that street markets in particular, and alternative retail outlets in general, have been overlooked by classical retail analysis. It is only recently, since retail analysis has begun to explore cultures of consumption, that opportunities for examining retail outlets other than the dominant ‘modern’ and ‘post-modern’ have been more easily available. At the same time retail analysis has begun to focus on cultures of consumption as consumers have begun to become dissatisfied with dominant retailing modes. There is evidence of increasing segmentation in retailing and consumers are increasingly looking for alternative modes of consumption for a variety of reasons. It is within this context that this chapter proposes that more work is required to explore the potential contribution of street markets.

Finally, a tentative assessment of a case study in the form of Kingston-upon-Thames’ street market has been examined. The results of initial empirical research suggest that there is considerable potential for the analysis of street markets to develop an understanding of the sustainable development of urban places. It also demonstrates the significant omission of

street markets and other alternative retailing systems from existing research. This analysis has helped suggest approaches that may be adopted in the analysis of alternative retailing systems.

6.8 References

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7

Waste minimisation strategies

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7.1 Introduction

The growth of waste throughout the world poses significant problems for policy makers seeking to achieve environmental sustainability. Such pressure is focused at the local level, where municipal waste from households provides waste managers with the dilemma of having to reach sustainability targets whilst processing increasing amounts of household waste. The argument presented in this chapter posits that individual households and their attitudes towards waste management have a major role to play in alleviating the waste problem. The chapter will introduce the theme of municipal waste and outline the related challenges that face the UK at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The argument will then proceed to examine the various policies enacted to manage waste more sustainably within the UK and examine the efficacy of integrating the social element within the classical ‘environment–economic’ dialectic. A case study of this approach is outlined and the policy recommendations that can emanate from the integration of social elements into waste policy are examined. In essence, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that individuals are the real decision-makers with regard to municipal waste and that ignoring their impact will reduce the efficacy of policies to manage waste more sustainably. Although the chapter title refers to strategies for minimising waste, the approach used provides an account of waste minimisation in the context of waste management behaviour as a whole in order to demonstrate the need for policy makers, as well as academics, to actively differentiate between alternative types of environmental behaviour.

7.2 Municipal waste in England and Wales

Waste is a significant problem throughout the world and although global and regional institutions have attempted to tackle the issue, the challenges of managing ever-increasing amounts of waste are fundamentally localised. Chapter 21 of *Agenda 21* (UNCED, 1992) outlines the severity of the problem arising from increasing amounts of all types of waste. One significant, if small, area of waste production is material produced at the community level. Termed 'municipal' waste, this material comprises primarily household waste, whilst refuse from civic amenity sites and special collections is also included in this definition. In 1998/9, England and Wales produced 28 million tonnes of municipal waste (DETR, 2000). This poses a significant challenge to local sustainability since waste is collected, disposed and controlled at the local authority level. Indeed, as will be argued below, municipal waste provides an ideal opportunity to examine the influence of individuals in the waste process.

Of the 25.1 million tonnes of household waste produced annually, 82% is sent to landfill, with just 9.5% being recycled and 8.5% being incinerated with some energy recovery (1998/9 figures; DETR, 2000). Such statistics can be misleading when placed in local context. For example, the amount of material sent for recycling varies considerably between local authorities as well as the range of materials collected. What may be termed the 'classic' recyclables, such as paper, cardboard, glass and aluminium cans, are those recycled the most. 'Marginal' items, such as plastics and steel food cans, suffer from very low rates of recycling. The reasons for these differential recycling rates pertain partly to the ability of local authorities to collect and recycle them and partly to the factors, that will be alluded to below, which relate to individual household factors. The amount of household waste is increasing by approximately three per cent per annum and is expected to continue to do so for the foreseeable future (DETR, 2000). Whilst this increase in waste and its seemingly inevitable fate within landfill can be seen as morally distasteful, more pressing concerns face environmental managers at the local level. Global targets for the reduction in methane emitted from landfill, in accordance with the UK strategy to reduce so-called 'greenhouse' gases, along with a paucity of physically suitable locations for landfill, have all meant that waste management is now a rising concern in local government. The UK has agreed to reduce greenhouse gases by 12.5% of 1990 levels by 2008–2012 and given that 60% of waste going to landfill is biodegradable and therefore produces methane, reducing such waste going to landfill is vital in order to meet international obligations (DETR, 1999). Indeed, such difficulties are exacerbated by vocal opposition to the placement of landfill sites in almost any locality. This 'NIMBYism' (or 'not in my back yard' syndrome) has the cumulative effect of providing local planning officers with fewer and fewer options for locating space to dispose of waste.

The management of household waste is clearly a diverse problem. Conventionally it has been portrayed as a purely environmental issue. Yet although landfilling is environmentally regressive on the local and global scale, as well as being a disastrous example of how to manage resources, it can also be seen as a shifting social phenomenon. Landfill is now socially unacceptable in many people's eyes. The perceived reduction in local environmental quality associated with a landfill site can activate a significant amount of social opposition that may be a mixture of genuine environmental concern as well as a blatant or disguised attempt to shift the problem elsewhere.

7.2.1 Waste management targets

Whatever the reason given for landfill's fall from grace, the UK Government, as well as the European Union, has attempted to resolve the issue of waste disposal and, more specifically, the landfill issue, with reference to a number of specific targets. The European Union has energised the debate with the Landfill Directive that sets out key targets for the reduction in the amount of biodegradable waste sent to landfill (DETR, 1999). As the major producer of methane from landfill, biodegradable waste (comprising food, garden, paper and paperboard waste) has been singled out by the EU for attention on global environmental grounds. The Directive states that by 2010 biodegradable waste sent to landfill must be 75% of the level in 1995, and no more than 35% by 2020.

Such optimistic targets have in turn been a significant driver for UK policy regarding household waste. In particular, in its *Waste Strategy 2000* (DETR, 2000) the UK Government set out targets for an integrated waste policy for England and Wales, centred around a growing reliance on waste recovery and recycling and consequential diversion of this waste from landfill. The policy is based on the BPEO (Best Practicable Environmental Option), regional sustainability, the proximity principle and waste hierarchy (see Box 7.1).

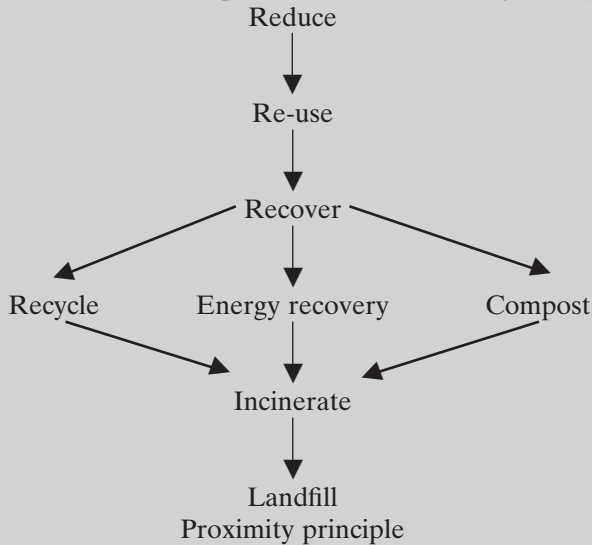
The waste hierarchy represents a series of options for dealing with waste that become progressively less desirable. Ideally, waste should not be produced at all (minimisation), but where this cannot be avoided, such materials that are produced should be re-used (with no energy use). Where materials are used and cannot be re-used easily, energy should be recovered from the waste, by recycling it into another product, composting the material or recovering energy from burning the material. Finally, at the bottom of the hierarchy, waste can be landfilled.

Use of this hierarchy has informed government policy on waste management such that by 2005 40% of municipal waste should be recovered, with 25% of this recycled. This rises to 67% recovery and 33% recycled by 2015. The divergence between recycling and increases in recovery has led

Box 7.1 Principles of government policy relating to waste management in the UK

Best practicable environmental option
Best outcome for the environment, weighing costs and temporal factors

Waste hierarchy
(from most to least preferable, in descending order)



Dealing with waste locally to enhance regional sustainability

Source: *Waste Strategy 2000* (DETR, 2000).

to speculation that a large number of new incinerators will be needed nationwide to reach these targets. Nonetheless, a figure of 33% recycling by 2015 is exceptionally optimistic since currently (1998/9) the rate is 9.5% (DETR, 2000). The Government has introduced statutory recycling targets for all local authorities based on their current recycling level in the hope that these firm but realistic targets can be met. Nonetheless, it can be seen that reliance is heavily placed on reducing waste that has already been produced. The importance of minimisation and re-use has been somewhat overlooked and thus the weighting given to individual elements of the waste hierarchy cannot be said to be equal.

Waste management, therefore, provides a significant local environmental and, to a lesser extent, social problem that deserves attention from those

interested in integrating environmental, economic and social criteria. The next section deals specifically with the relationship between household waste and economic instruments before demonstrating the potential for the addition of social criteria as a means to reduce the waste problem in the UK.

7.3 Individuals and sustainable waste management

7.3.1 Economic instruments and waste management

As stated above, UK Government policy towards waste management has largely been based on an economically grounded regulatory framework, towards the negative end of the Gilg/Selman Spectrum of policy options, ranging from exhortation at one extreme to public ownership at the other (Gilg, 1996). Since the publication of the Conservative Government's waste strategy *Making Waste Work* (DoE, 1995) a number of economic measures have been introduced with the intention that waste would be reduced and recovered. In terms of waste reduction, the EU Producer Responsibility for Packaging Regulations (94/62/EC; Official Journal of the European Communities, 1994) has sought to hold commercial producers of packaging responsible for the waste that results from disposal by individuals and businesses of this waste. A further incentive to both reduce and recover waste can be seen with regard to the Landfill Tax scheme that has operated since 1996. Under this scheme, landfill operators collect a charge for every tonne of waste sent to them for landfilling, currently set at £12 per tonne and set to rise by one pound each year until at least 2004. This charge, levied on Waste Disposal Authorities by the landfill operator, acts as an incentive to find and utilise other forms of waste disposal, and also minimisation. The revenue from the tax is used by the landfill operator to assist in the support of local recycling schemes.

Finally, the Recycling Credits scheme acts to provide a means by which local recycling schemes can be bolstered by the interaction of Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs) and Waste Disposal Authorities (WDAs). For every tonne of waste diverted from landfill disposal by the WCA, the WDA provides a 'credit' for reducing the amount of waste being sent for burial. The financial inducement therefore provides an incentive for the WCA to promote further recycling, enabling more waste to be dealt with using processes higher up the waste hierarchy.

These three measures provide a means by which municipal waste is dealt with locally. The Recycling Credits scheme is being phased out as more WCAs and WDAs merge, but taken together they provide a set of fiscal mechanisms with which to divert waste from landfill and provide encouragement to move waste up the hierarchy presented in Box 7.1. However, the extent to which these policies act to prevent waste from being produced in the first instance is questionable.

7.3.2 Individual environmental action

There is a fundamental difficulty with attempting to resolve the waste issue primarily with the use of economic instruments, not least because markets for recyclable material are fragile and variable. The dilemma does, however, reach further than this. The implicit assumption in the policies outlined above is that economic incentives or penalties are primarily the drivers of behaviour. However, these economic policies may have little effect since they are not aimed at consumers but local authorities and businesses. Hence, unless these bodies pass on the costs to the consumer, the effect will be minimal. There is, conversely, strong evidence to suggest that, as the primary managers of household waste from purchase to disposal, individuals have a large role to play in creating a more sustainable future.

Central government has indeed recognised that individuals are important, for example, in the *Waste Strategy* it states that:

Individual consumers and households have a vital role to play in achieving sustainable waste management. We can all help by:

- buying products which will produce less waste and those made from recycled materials;
- separating our wastes for recycling and composting kitchen and garden waste;
- participating in local debates about how best to manage our waste. DETR (2000: 51)

Yet the means by which such laudable aims are sought are focused almost solely around awareness campaigns (e.g. the Government's *Are You Doing Your Bit?* (DEFRA, 2002) campaign) that reiterate the doomsday scenarios of declining landfill space and are not based on an in-depth analysis of how and why different people behave in different ways. It is argued that an understanding of the reasons for individual commitment to a given action are crucial to understand if the waste problem is to be tackled successfully. Not least there is a need to understand how waste management behaviours are framed by individuals and what differing motivations and barriers enable and prevent effective action.

Research into the determinants of waste management behaviour has been lacking within the UK and mostly draws on the work of social psychologists and environmental sociologists in the United States and Canada. An exception to this rule is the work of authors such as Coggins (1994) and Tucker (1999). Work on the characterisation and explanation of individual waste management behaviours has generally been with the use of quantitative techniques and focuses on the explanation of action with regard to pre-determined theoretical models or the aggregation of a given number of predictor variables. Consequently, a large number of models, frameworks and variables have all been used to explain waste management behaviour.

A good review article for those new to the subject is provided by Schultz *et al* (1995), although the focus of this article is solely on recycling, a behaviour that has taken an unhealthy precedence over minimisation and re-use in the empirical literature.

Barr (2002) has identified three key sets of variables that have been used to explain waste management behaviour. First, environmental values that comprise underlying personal orientations towards the environment, have been found to influence waste management behaviour. In particular, those individuals with a more eco-centric set of values tend to be more proactive in managing their waste more sustainably. Second, a series of what can be termed situational characteristics have importance. This group of variables comprises factors that gauge the social context in which an individual is situated, their socio-demographic status and their awareness and experience of waste management. Third, a series of what can be termed psychological variables influence waste management behaviour. These are people's personal perceptions that affect their overall behaviour.

In regard to environmental values, results have been somewhat mixed. There has been compelling evidence that individuals who were more environmentally active (for example, those who recycled) scored higher on environmental value scales relating to notions of a 'spaceship earth' and 'limits to growth' (Steel, 1996). Such values relate to what has been termed the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP), developed by Dunlap and Van Liere (1978), which is conceptualised in direct opposition to the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) of continued growth and limitless resources. Thompson and Barton (1994) have shown that those who take a more eco-centric position are far more likely to recycle their waste, along with performing other environmentally sustainable actions.

Situational variables affect environmental action in a range of ways. At the most fundamental level, the range of service and availability of facilities to enable individuals to act in the desired manner is of crucial significance. Debate is ongoing in the academic literature regarding the interaction of service levels with other variables and the extent to which a desire to act (for example, recycle) can overcome the constraints posed by lack of, for example, recycling provision at the kerbside (Derksen and Gartell, 1993; Guagnano *et al*, 1995). Socio-demographic variables have also been related to environmental action. Although crude, a stereotypical characterisation of the environmental activist would be a young, female, educated, wealthy homeowner with liberal political views. Evidently, this is a crass generalisation, but it does appear that although the effects of demographics are sometimes blurred, there is evidence to support this generalisation in a number of studies (Hines *et al*, 1987). Thirdly, knowledge regarding both environmental problems and awareness of how to behave in an environmentally sustainable way is of importance. Schahn and Holzer's (1990) study of recycling behaviour in Germany distinguished between these 'abstract' and 'concrete' levels of knowledge. Generally, it has been found that the latter provides more scope to predict recycling and

other environmental behaviours (Barr *et al*, 2001b). Finally, an individual's involvement in other environmental actions is of importance. For example, Daneshvary *et al's* (1998) study of textile recycling in New York found that those who had taken part in domestic paper recycling were more likely to recycle their clothes.

Psychological factors relate to personality and perceptual traits of individuals that determine their overall attitudes regarding environmental behaviour. In regard to waste management, a number of variables have been found to be of significance when determining attitudes towards managing waste more sustainably:

- Recycling has been characterised as 'altruistic' (or 'helping') behaviour (Hopper and Nielsen, 1991). Individuals may be pre-disposed to recycle if they understand that there is a problem that has to be addressed and that they can be given responsibility to help alleviate the problem.
- De Young (1986) has argued that recycling is also driven by what he terms 'intrinsic motivation'. Individuals who find recycling enjoyable and derive inner satisfaction from helping the environment are more likely to both initiate and continue with pro-environmental behaviour.
- Gamba and Oskamp (1994) have stressed the importance of subjective norms in influencing waste management behaviour. Their study of kerbside recycling found that respondents were heavily influenced by those who placed their recycling bin out for collection. The extent to which significant others can influence people to recycle, given the activity's visual nature is therefore of great relevance.
- Concern for the environment and, in particular, the threat that this may pose to individuals has been found of significance when examining a range of environmental actions (Baldassare and Katz, 1992). The personalisation of an environmental problem may urge individuals to act as a matter of self-interest so as to avoid harm.
- The extent to which individuals feel competent and able to perform a given behaviour (self-efficacy) as well as their perception that such action will have a tangible positive effect (response efficacy) is of importance (Arbuthnot, 1977; Chan 1998).
- Related to self efficacy, there are more practical issues relating to the extent to which individuals believe they have space to store recyclable material and can easily reach recycling sites (logistical factors).
- As Selman (1996) has argued, the issue of 'environmental citizenship' is of importance. He has argued that individual efforts regarding sustainability are likely to result from a combination of individual environmental rights reciprocated by notions of environmental responsibilities.

7.3.3 Conceptualising waste management behaviour

It can be seen that there are a large number of influences that act to determine waste management behaviour. As has been mentioned previously, the

past research into this area of environmental planning has been from a wide range of disciplines and as a result the literature lacks uniformity and clarity. However, it is possible to conceptualise the various influencing factors into an overall framework.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) have described a theory of social behaviour that they termed the 'Theory of Reasoned Action' (TRA). They used this model of social behaviour to demonstrate the intrinsic links between expressed intention to act and actual behaviour. This is an important relationship to examine with regard to environmental behaviour since there is often a reported difference between what individuals state that they want or intend to do and what they actually undertake to do. In the TRA, Fishbein and Ajzen argued that behaviour was a direct result of an expressed intention to act. Intention was a product of a person's attitude towards the behaviour and their subjective norms (described above). Attitude comprised an individual's anticipated consequences of an action as well as the evaluation of these consequences. Subjective norms comprised an individual's awareness of a norm to act and the acceptance of this norm.

Tests of this framework of social behaviour (Olsen, 1981; Taylor and Todd, 1997) have revealed that although the model is a useful analytical tool, many other factors apart from attitudes and subjective norms affect behavioural intention and that the relationship between intention and behaviour was also variable. Nonetheless, the relationship between intention and behaviour is a core area of study when examining why people state that, for example, they are willing to recycle, but do not. Evidently, examining this relationship provides a useful angle for policy makers as well as academics, since if a clearer understanding could be attained for determining what intervenes to affect the intention-behaviour relationship, policy could be focused more finely on these factors. Indeed, given that other authors have argued that many different variables are likely to affect the level of intention expressed by an individual and the intention-behaviour relationship, it is worth examining the efficacy of the TRA as a framework to organise and conceptualise the diverse variables examined above. Figure 7.1 gives the author's conceptualisation of environmental behaviour as derived from the literature review given above.

The intrinsic relationship between intention and behaviour as posited in the TRA is crucial within the framework given in Fig. 7.1. However, the predictors of intention relate directly to those identified above. As found by previous research, it is likely to be the case that behaviour is influenced not merely by behavioural intention, but also by the situational and psychological factors given above. The core relationship within the framework relates to the process from environmental values to intention and behaviour. It is contended that environmental values logically form the basis for environmental action. In other words, whether one recycles or saves energy should logically depend on one's view of the environment and how to resolve ecological dilemmas. However, in recognition of the unreliability of

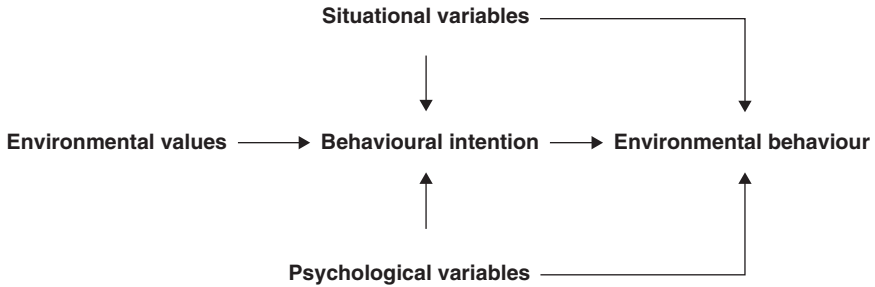


Fig. 7.1 Conceptualisation of environmental behaviour.

this relationship, situational and psychological factors are also posited to influence both intentions and behaviour. As will be seen later in this chapter, the operationalisation of the framework means that the most significant influences can be alluded to and thus provide both academics and policy makers with insights into possible behaviour-change strategies.

7.4 The importance of individuals: waste management in Exeter

To examine the premises given above regarding the efficacy of individuals and the likelihood that useful policies could be gained from a study of individual attitudes and behaviour, a survey of individual behaviours and attitudes towards waste management was undertaken in Exeter, a medium-sized city in the south west of England.

7.4.1 The city of Exeter

The study area of Exeter city is surrounded by rural areas and has a population of around 90 000 (OPCS, 1992–93). It is geographically split by the River Exe with three-quarters of the city lying on high ground to the east of the river, whilst the remaining quarter lies on floodplain land to the west. The main economic bases of the city are focused around services and tourism and the University. Housing stock is mixed, with the centre dominated by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century terraced housing, whilst the peripheral areas contain a mix of local authority and privately owned dwellings constructed within easily definable ‘estates’. Due to the lower wage economy than is representative for the rest of southern England (ONS, 1998), Exeter has fewer executive residential areas than cities of a comparative size in other areas of Britain. The city has a main shopping complex centred on the High Street in the centre of the city and has a number of local centres (e.g. St Thomas, Heavitree, Whipton). Overall, there

is agreement amongst residents that Exeter has a good quality of life, relating mainly to the local environment and the proximity of areas of natural beauty such as Dartmoor and the south Devon coast. The city council has recently played on these attributes in a bid to encourage investment within the city with its 'Exeter: it's a Capital City' campaign. This is aimed at selling Exeter as a regional centre with an unrivalled quality of life. Having said this, the city faces the challenge of attempting to maintain this level of environmental quality whilst realising the prospect of large housing developments on the outskirts which will inevitably place strain on the somewhat under-developed infrastructure.

The city council is responsible, like all district authorities, for the collection of municipal solid waste. In its function as the Waste Collection Authority (WCA) the council must ensure that all domestic wastes are collected and sent for disposal by the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA, in this case Devon County Council). However, WCAs have responsibility for the collection of that waste which is deemed possible to be recycled and recycling that waste accordingly. The WDA acts as the last resort in the context of the waste hierarchy (Box 7.1). Hence, Exeter City Council acts to deal with all the recyclable waste that it collects.

The city council currently has an enviable recycling rate, compared to other UK local authorities, processing 21.8% municipal solid waste for recycling (1998–99) (Exeter City Council, 2000a), which is a little below the original target of 25% set by the previous Conservative Government for national recycling by 2000 (DoE, 1995). The council has made provision for enhanced recycling with the construction of a new waste reclamation facility on the Marsh Barton Industrial Estate in the south of the city. The authority has sought to encourage waste minimisation, re-use and recycling by publicity campaigns and internet use (Exeter City Council, 1997, 2000b).

The city has made progress on provision for recycling in recent years and approximately half of the city is covered by a 'Recycle from Home' scheme. This allows residents to place any recyclable material in a special green wheeled bin (junk mail, plastic bottles, newspapers/magazines, food tins, drinks cans, foil, textiles and cardboard, but note *not* glass) for collection at the kerbside. In the context of this scheme, recyclable material is collected every fortnight, with ordinary waste being collected every fortnight also and sent to landfill (this waste being stored in a grey wheeled bin). The introduction of this 'Recycle from Home' or 'Twin bin' scheme has enabled the council to accelerate its recycling rate significantly, although by using such a commingled recycling scheme the council has to sort recyclable waste manually, a practice that is not universally popular with collectors and those who sort the waste at Marsh Barton, the council's waste reclamation facility. The city council also maintains static recycling sites throughout the city. These take varying amounts of items and the majority of sites only take a few items (usually glass, paper and cans). These are normally located at supermarkets and public amenity sites.

7.4.2 The survey

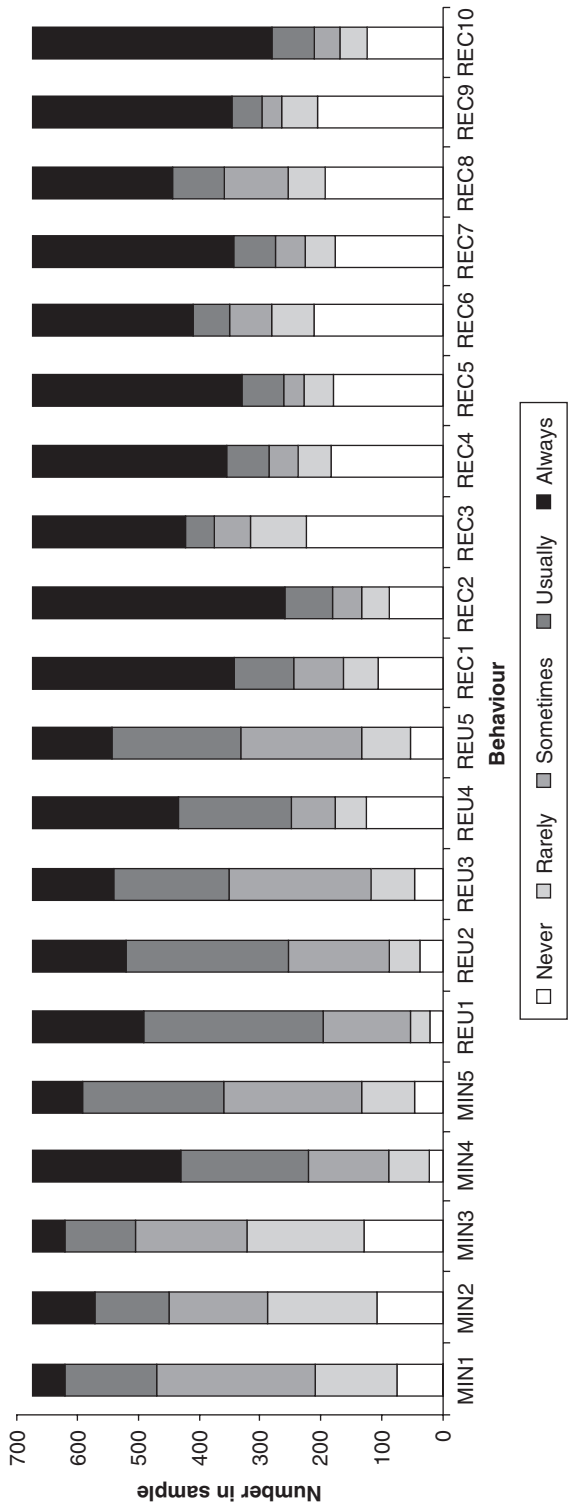
One of the defining elements of waste management is that everyone has to be involved. There are no specific segments of the population or particular interest groups that can be identified that could represent a given set of behavioural circumstances. Rather, waste management involves decisions by every household about what is purchased, what is re-used, recycled and thrown away. Given this premise, a study of attitudes and behaviours must seek to represent as clearly as possible the opinions and actions with regard to the general population as far as possible.

The research was grounded in a primarily quantitative survey questionnaire that sought to examine the process outlined in Fig. 7.1. The study instrument consisted of a 12 page questionnaire which was hand delivered and collected by the author in the autumn of 1999. Respondents were asked to complete a section on the back page of the questionnaire regarding their views on waste management in Exeter and this information proved significant for refining policy recommendations (see below). The elements within Fig. 7.1 were all measured using Likert or yes/no responses and items were strongly grounded in previous research as well as the measurement of behavioural data pertinent to local policy makers.

7.4.3 Descriptive results

The response rate for the study was 69%, with a total usable sample of 673 questionnaires. Of those sampled, 54% had access to the 'Recycle from Home' scheme, thus providing a representative sample of provision with which to work. All the socio-demographic indicators were also representative of the wider population within a ten per cent boundary (Oskamp *et al*, 1991). Given this result, the statistics presented below provide representative attitudes and behaviour towards waste management attitudes and behaviour in Exeter, providing of course for the health warning always applied to statistical inference.

Figure 7.2 provides a diagrammatic representation of reported behaviour within the sample. As can be seen, recycling is the most definitive behaviour, with minimisation and, to a lesser extent, re-use, being more variable and undertaken with less frequency. Analysis of the different variables involved provides useful insight. If recycling is considered first, it can be seen that nearly one-third of the sample never recycled food cans, whereas this falls to under one-seventh for newspaper. However, despite these differences, the actual variability within recycling at other levels is limited – most people tend to recycle always or not at all. This is in direct contrast to re-use and, to a certain extent, minimisation behaviour, where those 'sometimes' and 'usually' acting are more prominent. That said, the actual commitment to these behaviours, especially minimisation, is somewhat lower than for recycling with a small minority always reducing packaging and taking a non-plastic bag when shopping. On an individual, rather than



Key:

- MIN1 Buy produce with as little packaging as possible (2.97)
- MIN2 Use my own bag when going shopping, rather than one provided by the shop (2.91)
- MIN3 Look for packaging that can be easily re-used or recycled (2.67)
- MIN4 Buy fruit and vegetables loose, not packaged (3.88)
- MIN5 Buy products that can be used again, rather than disposable items (3.38)
- REU1 Try to repair things before buying new items (3.94)
- REU2 Re-use paper (3.72)
- REU3 Re-use glass bottles and jars (3.44)
- REU4 Wash and re-use dishcloths rather than buying them new (3.5)
- REU5 Re-use old plastic containers, like margarine tubs (3.48)
- REC1 Recycle glass (3.78)
- REC2 Recycle newspaper (4.05)
- REC3 Recycle food cans (3.06)
- REC4 Recycle drinks cans (3.54)
- REC5 Recycle junk mail (3.56)
- REC6 Recycle foil (3.19)
- REC7 Recycle cardboard (3.52)
- REC8 Recycle textiles (3.21)
- REC9 Recycle plastic bottles (3.39)
- REC10 Recycle magazines (3.86)

Scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = always). Means are given in brackets alongside each statement.

Fig. 7.2 Reported waste management behaviour.

behavioural, level, further analysis demonstrated that there were at least four clusters of individuals with different behavioural characteristics, with each group of respondents varying according to their waste minimisation, re-use and recycling behaviour (Barr *et al.*, 2001a). Suffice to state the three behaviours were descriptively very different. This pattern was repeated for behavioural intention, where, as might be anticipated, responses were more positive, although far fewer demonstrated a willingness to always reduce and re-use waste than recycle it. However, although more individuals were willing to recycle more waste, there were still those who stated that they were very unwilling to recycle all types of waste, as opposed to none who stated that they were very unwilling to reduce waste.

In terms of environmental values, scores were generally positive towards a 'strong sustainability' perspective whereby environmental protection is emphasised, but this is within the context of human development. The two statements espousing a halt to human economic development (eco-centric) were not well supported, and nor were either of the techno-centric statements referring to environmental apathy.

Knowledge of global environmental and local waste issues was good, but awareness of sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 was poor, with only 15% claiming to have knowledge of the latter. As might be expected, those with a kerbside recycling collection were most aware of what could be recycled in their bin. Knowledge of local static recycling services was, however, much poorer. Of those with a kerbside collection of recyclable materials, 60% had recycled before its introduction. Of the psychological variables, positive support was found for most of the items, apart from questions relating to environmental citizenship, where respondents felt that local decisions regarding the environment were undemocratic.

7.4.4 Influences on waste management behaviour

The data collected in the questionnaire were used to determine what factors were significant in influencing waste minimisation, re-use and recycling behaviour. This involved multiple regression analysis where the influence of a large number of variables on a dependent variable can be examined. Figures 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5 show the salient results of this process. All of the behavioural, intentional, value and psychological items were empirically tested so that the author's grouping of these factors could be examined. As Figs. 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5 show, certain groupings altered.

The thickness of each arrow in the figures reflects the predictive power of each variable. The first point to make is that the framework developed above has utility. Intention is the best predictor of behaviour in all three cases. However, the extent to which the other variables have an effect varies considerably between behaviours. Minimisation behaviour has a diverse set of predictors. Environmental values are important, reflecting both those with a concern for the environment and related human development.

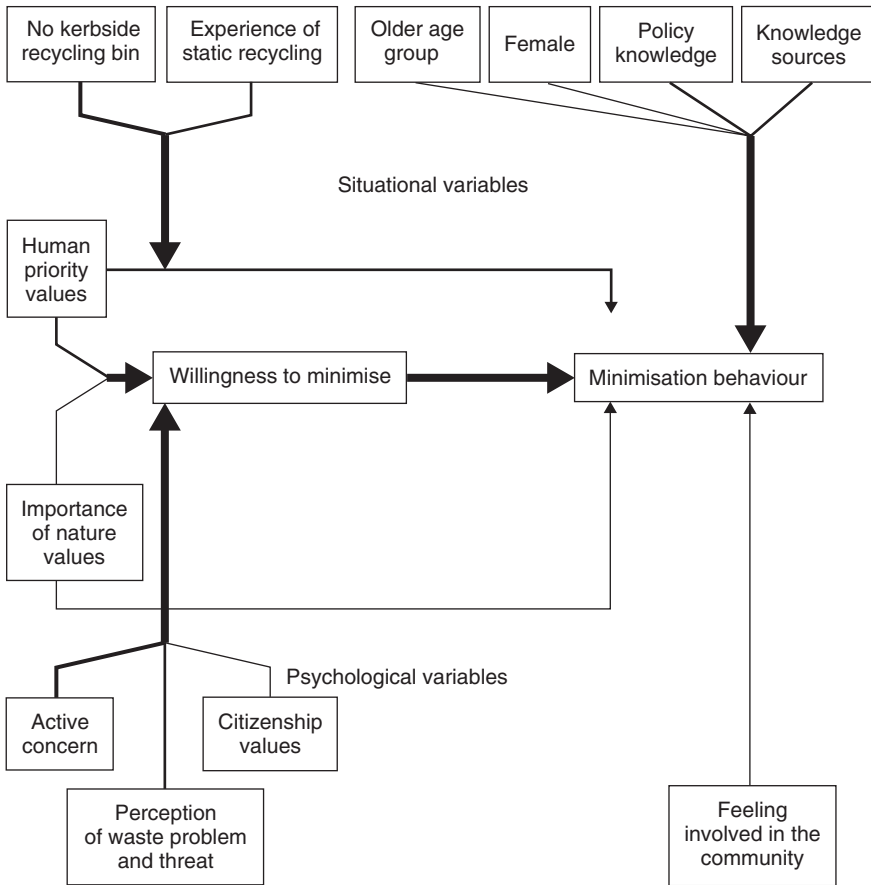


Fig. 7.3 A framework of minimisation behaviour.

Concern for the environment, a perception of the waste problem and a belief in environmental responsibility play an important role. However, numerous situational factors are of significance. Lack of access to kerbside recycling may reflect a deeper trend in the data in that those with a kerbside bin are probably less likely to recycle. However, those with experience of previous recycling, who now have access to kerbside recycling, are more likely to be willing to minimise waste, thus demonstrating the importance of behavioural experience in one realm (recycling) and its impact on another (minimisation). The extent to which people knew about sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 ('Policy Knowledge') was important and the fact that so few were aware of these issues may point to the effect of such campaigns on minimisation activity. This may also be reflected in the amount of knowledge sources used. Hence, a wider knowledge source base

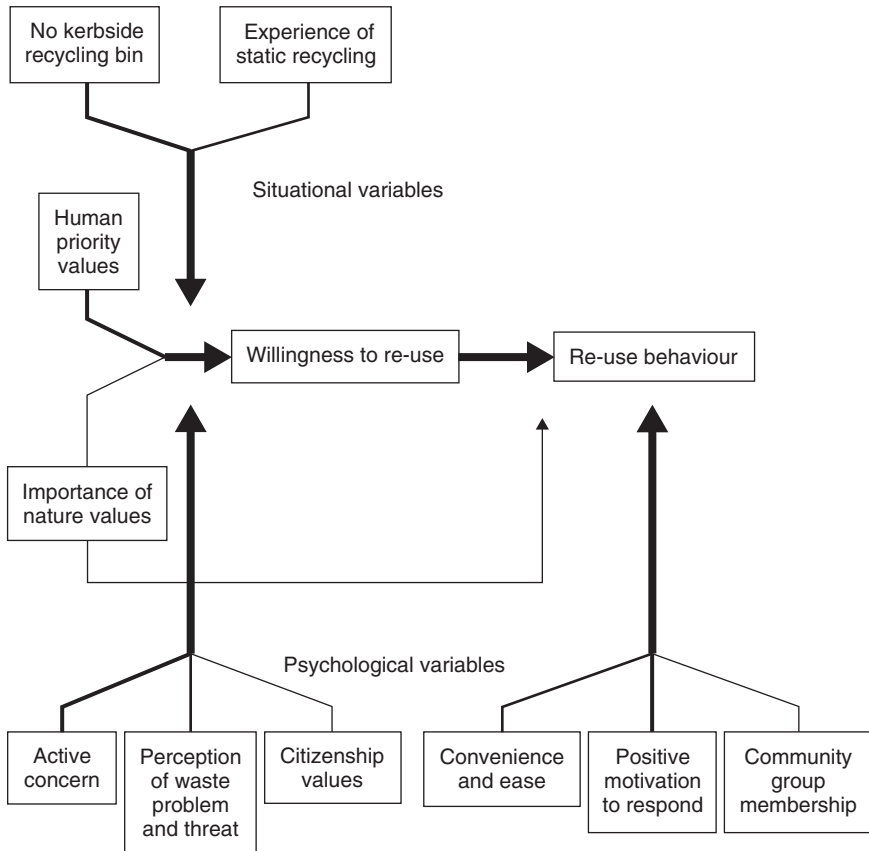


Fig. 7.4 A framework of re-use behaviour.

may make people more aware of certain initiatives. Finally, being in an older age group and being female had positive effects on minimisation behaviour. These probably reflect the impact of an adherence to a time when waste minimisation was essential for survival, and domestic shopping activity, respectively.

Turning to re-use behaviour, the determinants of an intention to re-use are the same as those for minimisation, reflecting the similarity between the two types of intention alluded to by the multivariate analyses. Nonetheless, the direct determinants of behaviour are different. No situational variables are significant and environmental values have lost some predictive power. Yet, three new psychological variables are of significance. It appears that notions of convenience and ease are of importance here, reflecting a feeling that for some people, having space to store re-usables and the convenience

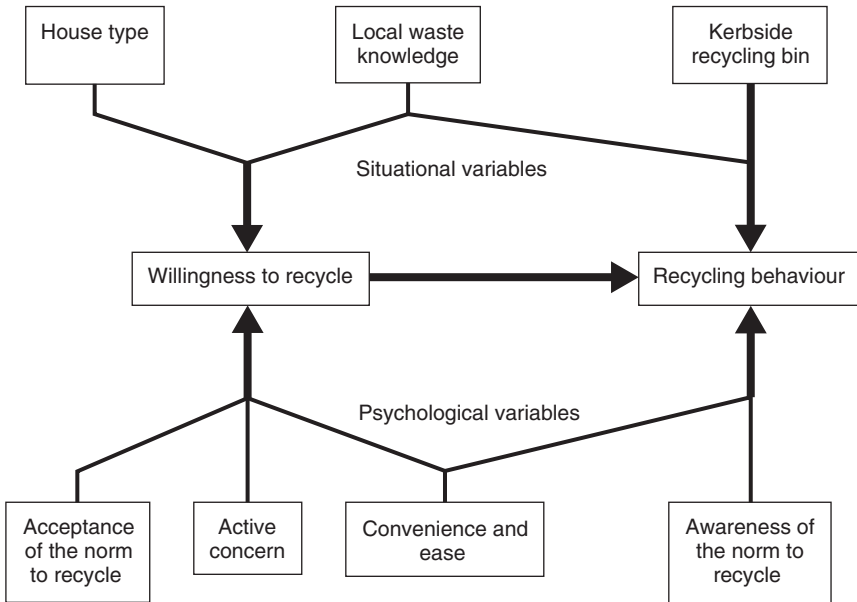


Fig. 7.5 A framework of recycling behaviour.

to put them to good use makes re-use more acceptable. Having a positive motivation to respond is important and reflects the fact that those who derive satisfaction from re-use and, therefore, intrinsic motivation, along with a belief that such actions are efficacious, will enhance behaviour. Finally, membership of a community group, measured as a form of active citizenship, shows that those active in the community are more likely to re-use, reflecting the importance of community involvement for active environmental behaviour.

Recycling behaviour is, however, in sharp contrast to minimisation and re-use activities. First, environmental values are insignificant in the prediction of either intention or behaviour. Second, there are far fewer predictors of importance. Recycling can be characterised as fundamentally normative behaviour, based upon the favourable situational circumstances of a kerbside collection bin and awareness of local recycling services. A larger house also seems important. It might be argued that a larger house provides more space to store recyclable material. However, it is also likely that in Exeter, those with larger homes tend to have the 'Recycle from Home' scheme. The argument that recycling is fundamentally normative is supported by the fact that both the acceptance and awareness of the norm to recycle predict behavioural intention and behaviour, respectively. As was noted above, this

is the inverse of what might be anticipated. However, it is logical to expect that people might reflect the fact that they are willing to change their behaviour with reference to proposed intention, rather than actual behaviour. Nonetheless, it appears that an awareness of other people's recycling behaviour does positively affect recycling. Perception of the convenience of recycling and storage space to keep recyclables also enhances both intention and behaviour to recycle.

What this brief summary of the results of the research shows is that the descriptive differences between minimisation, re-use and recycling behaviour are borne out by multivariate analysis of their respective predictors. Thus, recycling can be characterised by those who have good recycling provision, awareness of the services, a perception of convenience and an awareness of others recycling. Conversely, minimisation and re-use behaviour are, by their descriptive variability, much less defined and by no means normative. Environmental values, citizenship variables, active concern for waste issues, perceptions of the waste problem, along with various situational characteristics, define these behaviours as being those undertaken by fewer people, less often and for reasons that are fundamentally value and knowledge based.

These findings are important for those policy makers interested in promoting sustainable waste management. First, they confirm what was proposed earlier in this chapter; waste management behaviour is different according to the sub-behaviour examined. This is reflected in the determinants therein. Such a conclusion would imply that promotion of waste management within the household should address these key behaviours differently. Second, the study has demonstrated the utility of examining attitudes towards waste management in order to define the salient determinants of behaviour. This is crucial, since as can be seen from the results, the situational characteristics of a household, the values held by its individuals and the perceptions of those people can play a vital role in shaping what happens to material from the point of purchase to the point of disposal. The next section examines some policy outcomes that can be gained from such an analysis and demonstrates the utility of the types of methodology employed for achieving real policy outcomes (examined in more detail in Barr, 2001). Recourse is made to the qualitative data provided at the back of each questionnaire (Barr, 2001) which proved valuable in refining policy recommendations.

7.5 Policy recommendations

Key to formulating any policy response is the recognition that it is no longer acceptable to treat waste management as one behavioural domain. Thus, this section deals with some possibilities for enhancing minimisation, re-use and recycling behaviour separately.

7.5.1 Minimisation and re-use

Encouraging a willingness to reduce and re-use

As can be seen from Figs. 7.3 and 7.4, the predictors of an intention to minimise and re-use waste were the same. These are dealt with together before proceeding to discuss strategies for behaviour change separately. Environmental values are evidently crucial when considering minimisation and re-use intentions. Changing environmental values is not simple! However, since the individuals questioned here emphasised the importance of nature and human reliance on nature when considering future development, it was considered vital that existing campaigns, such as Local Agenda 21, were strengthened to bring home the general message of environmental sustainability issues. Again, it was recommended that these be kept separate from campaigns looking at the problem of waste to avoid confusion over general and specific messages. Nevertheless, value change is very gradual, but significant progress on internalisation of sustainability messages will eventually play its part in changing intentions towards waste minimisation and re-use. Given this prediction, awareness campaigns about the importance of minimising and re-using were recommended as the priority.

Two major situational predictors of minimisation and re-use intentions are 'experience of static recycling' and 'no kerbside recycling bin'. This finding pointed to a situation whereby those without recycling bins were more likely to be willing to minimise and re-use waste than those with such a facility, yet those with experience of recycling before gaining their kerbside bin were also more likely to reduce and re-use waste. Since this proportion was small, it was concluded that the overall effect of access to a kerbside recycling bin was negative. The reasons for this may relate to the compensatory nature of some environmental behaviours, whereby, in this instance, those who recycle may not feel obliged to reduce and re-use their waste as well. Hopefully, as the 'Recycle from Home' scheme expands, those with recycling experience will minimise and re-use more. However, for those for whom this will not be the case in the near future, and those already with a kerbside recycling bin, there are crucial considerations that have to be made about how to change intentions to reducing and re-using waste. It was clear that a focused campaign, similar to the general awareness one outlined above, needed to be recommended. This would focus on those on the 'Recycle from Home' scheme, as well as those about to enrol on it. Focus in particular would be on the importance of reducing and re-using waste, perhaps with the overall benefit of reducing the rubbish being kept in the bins. Emphasis on the fact that recycling is a last resort for rubbish, and that reducing waste is easy was crucial. Because this campaign would be more focused, more detailed information could be sent concerning how to minimise and re-use. The messages promoting these two needed to be distinct.

A primary psychological predictor of minimisation and re-use intentions is an 'active concern' for waste issues. A publicity campaign, using shock tactics and emphasising personal environmental responsibility was

required. However, this needed to be aimed specifically at each behaviour; minimisation, re-use and recycling. Given that a major finding of this research was that the determinants of the three behaviours were different, publicity campaigns were required to play generally on the waste problem, but most crucially deal with only one behaviour at a time and emphasise how that can help. Mixing the behaviours would ensure that only the most basic of messages got through, leading to little or no intentional change. Indeed, emphasis needed to be placed on the fact that it is far better to reduce waste than produce it and then recycle it.

There was more scope with minimisation and re-use intentions, however, to emphasise the need for action and personal responsibility. Figures 7.3 and 7.4 clearly show that perception of a 'threat' from poor waste management was a crucial predictor of a willingness to minimise and re-use, as is the 'citizenship' factor, emphasising rights and responsibilities towards the environment. Hence, since minimisation and re-use behaviours are so much less developed than recycling behaviour, and also since they are neither normatively nor contextually based, it was recommended that a much larger effort be put into these campaigns on awareness and responsibility. It must be borne in mind at all times that the intention and behaviour base is much lower than for recycling.

Minimisation behaviour

Recourse to Fig. 7.3 demonstrates that there are a large number of intervening variables between the intention of individuals to minimise waste and actual behaviour. Both sets of environmental values are important, and were dealt with as outlined above. Four situational variables have an impact, with the most important appearing to be age, as those in older age groups reduced their waste more. Linked to this is another situational variable, gender. Females appeared to minimise a lot more than males. Hence, a key policy recommendation was that the awareness campaign outlined above be focused, where possible, at young male audiences. This might not be possible in the sense that one cannot simply send information to young males. However, the messages can be tailored, specifically on minimisation, to that audience by appropriate marketing and communications techniques.

The other two situational variables that appear to be important are 'policy knowledge' and 'knowledge sources'. This demonstrates that those who minimised more tended to be more aware of Local Agenda 21 and sustainable development, and used a diverse knowledge base to get information about waste issues. As discussed above in relation to environmental values, knowledge of LA21 and sustainable development should filter through slowly and via LA21 campaigns by local authorities. However, in terms of using more knowledge bases for information about waste, this could be achieved by the awareness campaigns outlined above. The use of various media would therefore broaden the knowledge base people receive and look for information about waste.

One psychological variable had a direct effect on minimisation behaviour. 'Feeling involved in the community', measuring inclusion in local decision-making on environmental issues and community spirit, appears to show that those who perceived a vibrant community and an active democratic framework tended to minimise more. It was recommended that effort be made to investigate local social networks that were not necessarily the first stop for an environmental awareness campaign in order to broaden the appeal of the messages being disseminated.

Re-use behaviour

Recourse to Fig. 7.4 demonstrates that one environmental value variable intervenes to have a direct effect on re-use behaviour, along with three psychological factors. The same sentiments as expressed concerning environmental values and minimisation behaviour can be used as above. However, the three psychological variables are important here.

First, the 'convenience and ease' scale is important, and poses somewhat of a problem from a policy point of view. Making recycling more convenient is quite simple. However, because re-use is not a structured or municipally controlled behaviour, making it more simple and convenient is not as clear cut. It was recommended that within the campaigns on awareness disseminated to the population and those with kerbside recycling bins, there should be the inclusion of advice on how to re-use (e.g. the use of old Christmas cards for other purposes as promoted in the *Wise up to Waste* campaign (Devon County Council, 2002) in Devon in December 2001) and where re-used material could be taken (e.g. clothes, furniture, bags, etc to charity shops being a prime example). The second psychological factor is the 'positive motivation to respond' scale which emphasises the response efficacy of acting. This would hopefully be brought out in the awareness campaigns, but special emphasis on the value of re-using was recommended within the re-use campaign. Finally, those in community groups appeared to re-use more ('community group membership'). As above, this justified making the campaigns as wide as possible, so to reach all those in the city, not just those in environmental groups.

7.5.2 Recycling

Willingness to recycle

A large situational influence on willingness to recycle is 'local waste knowledge' (Fig. 7.5). This of course has effects on both intention and behaviour, but will be dealt with here. According to the comments received from respondents, there was difficulty both in knowing where to recycle goods and also how to recycle them as this example shows:

We don't know enough about it [recycling]. We would like to. I am not certain what should go in our 'green bin' so I put everything (except glass) which has a recycling sign on it.

Figure 7.5 shows that this uncertainty was likely to reduce a willingness to recycle and also act as a barrier for those who wanted to recycle. Clearly, the local authority needed to move beyond issuing information on where to recycle and deal with how each material must be presented for recycling. More technical information such as this could be posted on official letters and documentation, such as Council Tax bills. Space could also be used in local free newspapers, such as *The Leader*, which is delivered to every home in the city. Because this would entail considerably more information than snappy messages about the need to recycle, use of radio, TV and general print media was thought inappropriate for this publicity. Nevertheless, the information was required to be concise and above all clear, as there was considerable ambiguity about exactly how to recycle waste items.

Figure 7.5 shows that a major psychological determinant of a willingness to recycle was the 'active concern' scale. This scale contained items from the questionnaire that emphasised a concern for waste issues and an obligation to manage waste carefully. It therefore followed that making people feel more willing to recycle would involve more awareness of the waste problem and more importantly, a message that it is everyone's responsibility. Ensuring that this can be done would not be simple, since, as was found within the comment section of the questionnaire, some felt that it was solely the local authority's place to deal with waste.

I feel Exeter pays lip service to the issue of waste disposal since it is currently politically correct. I do not feel obliged to jump on this particular bandwagon and would resent having to sort and store refuse on the council's behalf . . . the 'twin bin' scheme is a deterioration in service levels resulting in only half my waste being collected each week and me having to store and sort it in [the] meanwhile. But Council Tax continues to rise, doesn't it?

A key policy recommendation, therefore, was to enhance existing publicity campaigns to go beyond exhorting participation, by informing residents that recycling is important, perhaps by using shock tactics and outlining predictions of the likely outcome of not managing waste effectively. Of course, such techniques may have short-lived effects, but might be stimuli for behaviours that could be maintained by other predictors of behaviour, such as intrinsic motivation. In terms of encouraging personal environmental responsibility, continued emphasis on the efficacy of each person's action, with examples of how this has been achieved, would begin to engender more responsible intentions. Whether this has been achieved in the DETR (now DEFRA) *Are You Doing Your Bit?* campaign (DEFRA, 2002) is uncertain, but these tactics are the same as being recommended here. In terms of dissemination, and this stands for all areas in this section when publicity is discussed, the use of local press, TV, radio and posters was

recommended in order to capture as wide an audience as possible and to convey a uniform message.

A further psychological variable that had an impact on both intentions to recycling and actual behaviour is the 'convenience and ease' scale. This scale contained items in the questionnaire that dealt with the convenience of recycling, the space required to store recyclables and the difficulty perceived in recycling. There were a number of recommendations that were made here. First, a large predictor of this scale was access to a kerbside recycling bin, and therefore a key recommendation of this research was to ensure city-wide coverage of the 'Recycle from Home' scheme as soon as practicable. Second, in recognition that this may not be forthcoming in the near future, other recommendations were given for those without access to such a bin. It appears from the comment section of the questionnaires that people still found recycling sites rather inconvenient. This was for a number of reasons:

I'm a single parent with two young children and find it a pain in the neck to get to the recycling bins with rubbish (have to cross two busy roads).

I find it difficult to find bins for a complete recycle of waste goods like cardboard, plastic items, tin cans, etc.

I would like to see more recycling containers, as people like myself without the use of a car, have to walk a fair distance.

The banning of vehicles over a certain height at the [recycling] site will also lead to an increased dumping problem and is unfair.

Overall, it was recommended that the council should look at enhancing convenience further by introducing uniformity across the static sites. For example, ensuring that all supermarkets take all recyclables, reviewing the height restriction at Marsh Barton recycling centre (alluded to in the last quotation above) that excludes many with taller vehicles, and ensuring that all recycling sites have a minimum of, for example, three recyclables that are uniform across the city (e.g. glass, newspaper and drinks cans). Many people were evidently confused about the diversity of the service offered. A uniform system would help greatly, and would not engage extra funds, but rather tighten up the system. Third, and related to the issue of local waste knowledge discussed above, promotional literature needed to be very clear about where such sites are and exactly what can be recycled.

Finally, it is seen that the 'acceptance of the norm to recycle' has a large impact on recycling intentions. This is dealt with below in relation to the 'awareness of norm to recycle', but suffice to state here that norms were envisaged to be reinforced by the visibility of recycling as an activity and would be supported by the recommendations made above.

Recycling behaviour

Having dealt with intention, it is of course necessary to look at behaviour. As mentioned above, 'local waste knowledge' and 'convenience and effort' in Fig. 7.5 have important direct effects on behaviour, and the recommendations above dealt with this. However, it is seen that access to a kerbside recycling bin is almost as important in predicting behaviour as intention itself. As well as this scheme being extended, however, it was recommended that there should be consideration of other changes regarding the implementation of the scheme. Data from the comment section of the questionnaires suggested that the frequency of collection of the black bin in this scheme (collecting non-recyclable rubbish, such as food waste) was too infrequent, and that a weekly collection, especially in the summer, was needed (13 days of food waste in hot temperatures was considered a health risk). Indeed, because of the variation in household size and the problem mentioned above, it was considered worth examining grading the size of the bins more subtly, so that an elderly person would have a small size, and a large family could have larger bins. This would also help those residents who found the bins too bulky to wheel about and find space for. In terms of extending the scheme to the entire city, which of course includes terraced houses and flats, the council was recommended to consider a different system of collecting recyclables. The suggestion by respondents that communal recycling bins could be used was a logical one and worthy of examination. As a further recommendation for the extension of this scheme, it was argued that the local authority examine the idea of infrequent glass collections (which cannot be placed in the green recycling bin) for those who do not find getting to a bottle bank easy.

Finally, there is the issue of the 'awareness of norm to recycle'. Clearly, people who were aware of those around them recycling felt more compelled to do it themselves. This should be operationalised by simply seeing the growing number of people recycling. However, one suggestion from Hopper and Nielsen (1991) is the use of community representatives, or 'Block Leaders' to enhance behaviour. Dissemination of information and the social example set by the leader has been shown to improve recycling in the United States. However, how this would work in a British context is not clear. The council could examine this prospect, but given the efficacy of the other factors in the recycling framework, this might be unnecessary.

A note should be made here about the suggestions put forward in the comment section of the questionnaires that are not recommended. The use of variable charging schemes, fining for mis-use and taxation to increase recycling rates are all regressive. They reduce the intrinsic motive to recycle (De Young, 1986) and above all they do not appear to be necessary. By imposing an extrinsic incentive to recycle (e.g. a lower tax bill) the behaviour is not necessarily internalised, but is somewhat begrudged. As shown in this research, people who are willing to recycle generally do. Therefore, emphasis needs to be placed upon awareness of waste issues and making

recycling simpler to do. These regressive economic actions are strongly opposed by the findings of this research.

7.5.3 Policy implications: conclusion

A summary of the policy recommendations of the Exeter study given to the city council in August 2001 is presented in Table 7.1. Following these suggestions, the University is currently working on a wider study of environmental behaviour in close co-operation with all of the local authorities in Devon which should provide recommendations for a range of other actions (e.g. water saving, energy conservation and green consumerism).

Overall, this section has demonstrated the need to move beyond a unified message of waste management to diversify according to the behaviour in question. Different localities will have alternative levels of activity in all three behaviours and policy should reflect this. However, it cannot be stressed enough that understanding who does what and why is crucial. Once this Rubicon has been crossed, there is perhaps more hope for waste management policy. It has been shown successfully here how a study of attitudes and behaviour can provide useful data for formulating and implementing policy. Campaigns should seek to reach a target audience so far as one can be identified and utilise methods that play on exactly the messages that have been derived from an analysis of attitudes and behaviour. Nonetheless, it must be stated that whilst recycling behaviour may be relatively simple to encourage, minimisation and re-use behaviour will rely on fundamental value change as much as any structural alternations. Thus, the right messages, aimed at the right people, are crucial to achieve long lasting behavioural change.

Table 7.1 Policy recommendations

| Behaviour | Policy/Campaign | Focus | Instruments/Actions* |
|-----------|--|--|---|
| Recycling | <i>Recycle to help Exeter</i> campaign | General public: the waste problem if we don't recycle; the need for everyone to recycle; the positive effects of recycling | TV, radio, press, posters, council literature, leaflets** |
| | <i>Recycle Easy</i> campaign | Where and how to recycle | Council Tax bills, posters, leaflets** |
| | Uniformity in recycling sites | Minimum of three 'core' recyclables per site | Adjustment of sites** |
| | Recycling site changes | All supermarkets have all recyclables | Supermarket – Local authority negotiation* |
| | Kerbside bins | Increase as practicable | Local authority negotiation with waste collection company** |

Table 7.1 (continued)

| Behaviour | Policy/Campaign | Focus | Instruments/Actions* |
|--------------|--|--|---|
| | Collection time of kerbside bins | Increase to weekly in summer | Local authority negotiation with waste collection company**; publicise changes** |
| | Change bin sizes | Graduated sizes | Investigate* |
| | Glass collection | For all residents/ proportion who need it most | Investigate* |
| | Communal recycling | For areas of terracing/flats | Investigate* |
| | Block Leaders | For areas of low recycling | Investigate* |
| Minimisation | <i>Help Exeter Reduce Waste</i> campaign | General public, but messages for young men especially: the threat of waste if we don't reduce it; the responsibility of everyone to reduce waste | TV, radio, press, posters, council literature, leaflets** |
| | <i>Reduce Too</i> campaign | Those with kerbside recycling bins: the need to reduce waste; the benefits of reducing waste; how to reduce waste | Targeted address leaflets from local authority** |
| | <i>Local Agenda 21</i> | General public: importance of environmental sustainability | Strengthen existing campaigns** |
| Re-use | <i>Help Exeter Re-use Waste</i> Campaign | General public: the threat of waste if we don't re-use it; the responsibility of everyone to re-use waste; the positive effects of re-using products; how and where to reuse | TV, radio, press, posters, council literature, leaflets** |
| | <i>Re-use Too</i> campaign | Those with kerbside recycling bins: the need to re-use waste; the benefits of re-using waste | Targeted address leaflets from local authority** |
| | <i>Local Agenda 21</i> | General public: importance of environmental sustainability | Strengthen existing campaigns** |

* Local authority should investigate the possibility of this action.

** Local authority should seriously consider this action.

7.6 Conclusion

Individuals within the waste management process clearly have importance. Whilst most government measures with regard to municipal waste management operate before materials reach the household or after they have left the home, what happens to that material in transit through the household is of vital importance in the search for a sustainable future. The research presented here shows the variability in different behaviours and the effect of different antecedents on action. Clearly a major avenue for research and consequent policy making at the national and local levels will be how to deal with the human use of resources within the household. The effects of sustainable use of resources could be significant. Minimising the amount of waste produced is by far the most crucial priority. Reducing the use of packaging, plastic bags and disposable containers are all actions that every shopper can make. Similarly, re-using containers that are purchased and making use of items requires little more than inspiration. Recycling, with the correct level of investment in service provision, could take off significantly.

Current policy needs to realign to challenge the alternative barriers to behaviour. The research presented above indicates that re-use and minimisation are little more than marginal activities undertaken by a minority of people who hold certain core values and attitudes that favour a more frugal and thoughtful lifestyle. Recycling has the great potential to become integrated into everyday life since those that do recycle perceive it as socially normative behaviour. Yet, for those with no kerbside collection, recycling is inconvenient and difficult.

What this research demonstrates is a desperate need for policy makers to redirect their messages on waste to give them a sharper point and a more defined target audience. Focusing on the young, those who feel that the behaviour is ineffectual or those who already feel they are 'doing their bit' is required. Similarly, being clearer on what action is required and, with respect to recycling, being absolutely clear on what can and cannot be recycled is vital.

The approach taken towards this type of research also deserves mention. This chapter has set out a clear argument for studying attitudes towards waste management in a way that can be simply standardised. As stated above, this methodology has disadvantages, not least that the data are stripped of local context to a certain extent. Nonetheless, the large body of psychological research in this area suggests that an analysis of waste management behaviour in the way undertaken above can satisfactorily allude to major determinants of behaviour. Statistical inference can never explain all data, nor should it aspire to. Rather, salient trends within data give both the scholar and practitioner the means by which to make informed decisions on the basis of a representative and random sample.

Such data can be gained through the employment of relatively inexpensive survey techniques and computerised statistical analysis. As can be seen from this chapter, the data provided and analysis undertaken can provide clear evidence of the determinants of a given behaviour. Using the framework outlined in Fig. 7.2, a clear conceptualisation of behaviour can be used to add or withdraw variables as is locally appropriate. Each area will have different recycling facilities and alternative promotion strategies. Hence, measures and questionnaires can be designed and adapted as appropriate. However, the framework offers a way of organising the seemingly anomalous variables associated with waste management behaviour into an existing theory of social behaviour (the TRA) that makes the crucial distinction between intention and behaviour. Often termed the 'value-action' gap, this is an important relationship to understand, since, as Figs. 7.3–5 show, there is a definite difference between intention and behaviour. It is argued that this framework of behaviour offers policy makers an opportunity to examine the differences between different behaviours and promote different strategies to suit each one. The framework and general approach do, however, have much more utility. It is possible to use the framework as a means to investigate other types of environmental behaviour, such as water conservation, energy saving and green consumerism. Given its flexibility, it can provide a framework in which to examine the situational, psychological and value-based influences on the intentions of individuals towards various environmental behaviours.

At numerous meetings, conferences and presentations, speakers discuss the need to reduce, re-use and recycle waste. Yet, whatever the legislative, fiscal and administrative environment, the waste problem will only be resolved when the majority of people make small but consistent changes to their lifestyles that will make a difference. The integration of lifestyle issues and choices into the wider economic and environmental framework, for too long a dichotomy, is the only means by which local waste management and consequently local sustainable development will progress. Examples throughout this text demonstrate the need to examine all three of the key elements in sustainable development. Yet despite this, it is still the case that environmental problems are still seen as solvable by economic instruments and technological development. It is, nonetheless, human beings by their very actions, that create environmental problems and it is only by shifting fundamental attitudes towards sustainable development that we will begin to see tangible change.

7.7 References

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8

Trading places: geography and the role of Local Exchange Trading Schemes in local sustainable development

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8.1 Introduction

The present consumer way of life we take for granted in rich countries is totally unsustainable. (Trainer, 1995)

It is with this premise that Ted Trainer begins the first chapter of his fascinating polemic *The Conserver Society: alternatives for sustainability* (1995: 2). He, along with many others today, is convinced of the imminence of a global environmental crisis if the currently dominant forms of economic and social processes continue unchanged. He argues persuasively that the solution lies with the adoption of new environmentally sustainable economic and social systems, and makes a strong case for the creation of small-scale, self-sufficient communities. Following Jane Jacobs (1984) he notes that ‘national currencies stifle the economies of regions’ (1995: 101), and so it is not surprising that included amongst the many and varied examples of alternative ways of living that he promotes is the idea of creating separate local alternatives to national currencies. Trainer and many others (Burman, 1997; Douthwaite, 1996; Williams, 1996c) hold that non-interest bearing forms of local currencies possess several advantages over formal national currencies, and it is certainly the case that historically various forms of localised means of exchange have been adopted at different times and in different places for a wide range of purposes – cultural, economic, social and environmental (see Greco, 1994; Tibbett, 1997; Williams, 1995, 1996b). However, the most recent widespread example of the adoption of local currencies has been through the establishment of Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS). From their inception in Canada in the early 1980s, this particular form of local currency has been promoted internationally

as a means of facilitating sustainable development at the local level (Linton, 1986).

LETS go by a number of different names including: Local Employment and Trading Schemes, as they are referred to by Trainer, and Local Employment and Trading Systems, as they are called by Michael Linton, one of the originators of the LETS concept. Originally the terms 'scheme' and 'system' were used interchangeably but they now usually denote two relatively distinct forms of LETS organisation ('system' is used particularly in the USA). Other, less significant variations in the names include the substitution of the word 'trust' or 'transfer' for 'trading' and/or the substitution of 'enterprise', 'energy', or 'exchange' for 'employment'. The name Local Exchange Trading Schemes is used here because the case studies referred to were designed using the 'scheme' approach, and because this form of the name makes it clear that trading (in a wide variety of goods and services as well as employment) is facilitated by the use of a distinct local means of exchange. In the UK the creation of LETS has been strongly encouraged by the concerted voices of community activists (Boyle, 2000; Croall, 1997; Lang, 1994) and academics (Pacione, 1999; Thorne, 1996; Williams and Seyfang, 1997), as well as by national government departments (DETR, 1998; Social Exclusion Unit, 2000), local authorities (Robbins, 1997), and local and national newspapers and magazines (Bennett, 1993; Ellwood, 1996; Gosling, 1994). Until relatively recently, however, there have been very few critical analyses of LETS performance in practice (but see Aldridge and Patterson, 2002; Stott and Hodges, 1996; Williams *et al.*, 2001).

The primary purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the extent to which LETS have contributed to local sustainable development in the UK, and within that context to suggest some reasons why some schemes have proved more successful than others. The evidence presented below is taken from a number of extensive national surveys as well as from intensive qualitative case study research on two LETS established for different purposes in contrasting places (one in the Gloucestershire market town of Stroud, and the other in the London borough of Hounslow). The choice of these two schemes as case studies is significant: Stroud LETS, one of the first schemes to be set up in the UK, was established by a group of 'grass-roots' environmentalists and is generally considered to be one of the most successful LETS in the UK; Hounslow LETS, on the other hand, was established several years later by the local authority explicitly as part of an anti-poverty strategy, and has since been wound up. An examination of these schemes and the characteristics of their members can help explain their different trajectories. Before that evidence is presented, however, it is useful to introduce the LETS concept more fully and then, in order to provide a context for later discussion, the literature promoting their potential role in environmentally sustainable local development is examined to reveal the reasons why this form of local currency has been promoted so strongly as a means of facilitating local sustainable development.

8.2 Cranes, favours, harmonies and thanks: using LETS currencies

LETS are ‘community orientated trading organisations’ (Lee, 1996: 1378), which aim to develop and extend the extent to which goods and services can be traded within a group of people, and thereby to facilitate and re-localise the provision and exchange of goods and services. LETS members usually advertise the goods and services they are willing to provide through the scheme in a newsletter or directory, together with a contact address, and usually a telephone number or an email address. Members then contact each other directly to make the necessary arrangements and to fix a price for the transaction. LETS trading is often mistakenly likened to barter, however, rather than work being reciprocated directly on a one-to-one basis, work commissioned through a LETS is paid for using a local currency. The local currency may have no tangible form (in the sense of coins or bank notes), but each transaction is normally recorded by the scheme’s administrator who credits and debits the members’ accounts accordingly. The means of notifying the administrator may simply be a telephone call, or may be in the form of a ‘cheque’, which is sent to the administrator for processing. The recipient of the goods or services does not go into debit with their individual trading partner, but instead is deemed to be ‘in commitment’ to the scheme as a whole: there is a general expectation that they are prepared to do work or provide goods to this value for any member of the scheme at a later date. Within LETS the terms ‘debit’ or ‘commitment’ are generally used in preference to the term ‘debt’ because, as Seyfang puts it:

Being a net debtor is as beneficial to the system as being a net creditor: both are necessary to make the system work because a LETS currency only has value when it is circulating. (Seyfang, 1996: 44)

However, as is discussed below, despite this significant feature, not all LETS members can readily overcome their traditional reluctance to incurring debt, and this can be a serious constraint on the development of trading through LETS (Aldridge and Patterson, 2002; Douthwaite, 2001).

In Canada where the LETS concept was first developed, and in the USA, local currencies are usually known as Green Dollars, and in France, where LETS are often referred to as *Systemes d’Echange Locaux* (SEL), local currencies are generally known as *grains de sel* (grains of salt). By contrast, in the UK the name of the local currency is often derived, sometimes playfully, from a distinctive local feature, for example in Hounslow the name chosen was ‘crane’. The name is taken directly from that of the local river, but it was also chosen because it would remind members that the LETS was meant to act, metaphorically, like a mechanical crane – to lift them out of poverty. More simply, and rather prosaically by comparison, in Stroud the currency is called ‘the stroud’, but elsewhere many schemes have used

names like ‘favours’, ‘harmonies’ or ‘thanks’ for their local currency to reflect the positive values that are associated with the LETS.

A LETS local currency has three distinctive features: first, its use is restricted to members of the local LETS; secondly, it is created only through the exchange of goods or services, not issued by a central authority; and thirdly, no interest is charged on debits, nor paid on credit. LETS currencies, therefore have no intrinsic value, so there is no advantage to be gained from accumulating stocks of the currency. As the above quotation from Seyfang makes clear, unlike capitalist forms of currency, the value of LETS currency lies only in its ability to facilitate transactions. LETS are intended to enable members to exchange labour, goods or services where cash shortages may otherwise prevent trading from taking place. Thus LETS have been promoted as a new method of community self-provisioning, re-localising the provision of goods and services, and also as a means for people to re-negotiate their working lives. For example, members could combine, in various proportions, formal forms of employment (work paid for in pounds sterling) with work organised and paid for through the LETS; perhaps developing new skills and abilities in the process. Similarly, LETS have also been described as providing the opportunity to incubate a small business, as they may enable payment for the initial set-up costs to be made using the local currency prior to formal self-employment (see below).

8.3 LETS development in the UK

The LETS concept was first developed by Michael Linton in 1983 on Vancouver Island, Canada. Shortly afterwards, in 1985, the first UK LETS was established by a group in Norwich, however, as Lee notes, despite that example of early adoption of the concept in the UK, LETS ‘showed little sign of diffusing . . . until the onset of the 1990s’ (1996: 1379). Indeed, even seven years later, at the start of 1992, only four additional LETS had been established in Britain. These early adopters of the LETS concept were based in Findhorn, Stroud, Totnes, and West Wiltshire (Lang, 1994), indicating that the early development of LETS in the UK took place mainly in well-known centres of ‘alternative’ or ‘Green’ culture. By the end of 1992, however, a further 35 LETS were thought to be operational, and 60 more were believed to be in some stage of development. Over the next few years there was a flurry of developmental activity across the country, and a great many new schemes were launched: LETSLink UK (1995, 1998) estimated there were 275 LETS in operation by 1994, 350 by mid-1995 (when Williams (1996d) estimated the total membership to be about 30000), and 450 by 1998 (see Table 8.1).

However, it is difficult to obtain precise data on the activities of small-scale voluntary organisations and it seems likely that some of the later estimates exaggerated the total number of LETS in existence. Lee (1996),

Table 8.1 UK LETS development, 1985–1999

| Year | No of LETS | Estimated membership |
|------|------------|----------------------|
| 1985 | 1 | |
| 1991 | 5 | |
| 1992 | 40 | |
| 1994 | 275 | |
| 1995 | 350 | 30 000 |
| 1998 | 450 | |
| 1999 | 303 | 21 800 |

Source: LETSlink UK (1995, 1998); Williams (1996d) and Williams *et al* (2001).

drawing upon UK LETS Development Agency data, estimated that there were only between 200 and 250 schemes in operation by 1995, with a total of fewer than 20 000 members. Moreover, during a comprehensive national survey conducted in 1999, Williams *et al* (2001) were able to identify only 303 operational schemes with an estimated total membership of 21 800. However, whatever the precise figures, it is clear that a major increase in the number of LETS occurred during the 1990s and that this expansion took LETS well beyond the early ‘Green’ adopters in the rural market towns and into new areas, including major cities, where the members had quite different socio-economic characteristics, and quite different reasons for joining the schemes. Before examining the characteristics and experiences of LETS members in more detail, it is useful first to examine the arguments of those that have promoted the development of LETS as tools for environmentally sustainable economic development.

8.4 LETS and sustainable development

As mentioned above, LETS have received a considerable amount of favourable attention, and have been widely promoted as a tool for community development as well as sustainable local economic development. The following claim by Ryrie is typical of the scope of the claims made by LETS activists:

LETS are certainly fun, but they have a serious side. They have enormous potential for tackling the widespread unemployment, poverty, social and environmental decay we see today. (Ryrie, 1995: 3)

Attracted to this perceived potential, it appears that many cash-strapped local authorities became convinced that LETS could provide an inexpensive solution to the problems of deprivation and social exclusion being experienced by people in their localities. Boyle explains that this was the

reason why, when developing their Local Agenda 21 strategies, so many local authorities were keen to support LETS and why some were prepared to take the initiative themselves by establishing LETS in their areas:

... about 50 British local authorities have supported local currency schemes, mainly as a cheap solution to tackling poverty and to make places less dependent on outside imports: they are often introduced as a key result of Local Agenda 21 deliberations. Councils like Hounslow, Calderdale and Stockport have even set up their own LETS schemes. (Boyle, 1997: 13)

It was the idea that LETS would act as a stimulus to the local economy that made such schemes particularly attractive, but it was also seen as important that LETS promised to contribute in ways that were environmentally benign:

Environmentally, LETS are good news in that they encourage the local production of goods – whether it be fruit or veg, chairs or cabinets. In this way you aren't supporting the current goings-on which has lettuces being lugged halfway across the world with all the attendant waste of fuel and resources. Plus you can be sure that you're not supporting some wicked multi-national mega-buck supermarket chain. (Fish, 1993: 21)

As the authors of *Making 'LETS' work in low income areas* observed, the apparent scope of the advantages associated with the establishment of LETS was huge:

The concept of what constitutes a sustainable local economy tends to be rather vague. Despite this, LETS are one of the few areas of activity that are almost invariably associated with the idea. This is partly because, by facilitating local trade and control over local currency, LETS could potentially offer areas some insulation against the fluctuations of the global economy. In addition it supports community building and the development of individual skills, as well as trading based on making best use of local skills and resources (rather than the use of finite resources and long distance transport). (Hudson *et al*, 1999: 8)

However, once Hudson *et al* move on from their consideration of the *potential* of LETS and begin to examine the *reality* of LETS operations, their rhetoric becomes more restrained. Reporting the results of Williams' (1996f) national survey of trading through LETS, which suggests that the average turnover per member per annum equated to £70.16, they observe:

This is undoubtedly a relatively low figure, and suggests that across the country the average economic impact of LETS on trading members is not great. (Hudson *et al*, 1999: 12)

Drawing upon a later national survey, Williams *et al* (2001) estimate the total value of LETS turnover nationally to be the equivalent of £1.4 million/year (which is about £64.50/member/year on average). However, the use of these averages conceals considerable variations both between schemes and between members within any single scheme. There is also an additional problem with the concept of 'turnover' which consists of total expenditure plus total income, and is the conventional way of reporting the value of LETS trading. It is a form of double counting which overstates the true value of LETS trading. However, the convention has been adopted here in order to maintain consistency with other work on LETS. At this point it is useful to turn to the two case studies to see how operating a LETS has been experienced in practice in two distinctly different places: Stroud and Hounslow.

8.5 The case studies: Stroud and Hounslow LETS

Stroud and Hounslow LETS make interesting case studies because they serve to exemplify the differences between the kinds of places where LETS were introduced early on, and those that came to the idea later. Stroud LETS is based in a relatively affluent self-contained market town in Gloucestershire with a low rate of residential turnover and a predominantly white population of 109 500 (see Table 8.2). The town has a history of radical politics that dates back to the nineteenth century Labour movement as well as a more recent history of green activism: it has numerous environmental groups, several Green Party councillors, and seems happy with its reputation as a 'Green town' (see Severn, 1990).

Hounslow LETS, by contrast, was based in an outer London borough (which straggles 13km from the edge of Hammersmith in the east to the

Table 8.2 Population by ethnic group: Stroud District Council, London borough of Hounslow and Great Britain

| | White | Black ¹ | Indian | Pakistani | Bangladeshi | Chinese | Other ² |
|----------------|-------|--------------------|--------|-----------|-------------|---------|--------------------|
| | % | | | | | | |
| Stroud DC | 99.27 | 0.28 | 0.07 | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.08 | 0.25 |
| Lb Hounslow | 75.6 | 2.7 | 14.3 | 2.6 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 3.9 |
| Great Britain | 94.5 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 0.9 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.9 |

Notes: 1 Includes: Black Caribbean, Black African and Black Other

2 Includes: Asian Other and Other

Source: Gloucester County Council (2001); Government Statistical Service, Government Office for London, and the London Research Centre (1996).

boundary of Heathrow airport in the west), with greater evidence of deprivation, a high rate of residential turnover and a multi-ethnic population of 209 500 (Table 8.2). Within the borough it is still possible to distinguish several of the formerly separate towns that were amalgamated to form the borough in 1976. These include the relatively poor areas of Cranford and Feltham in the west, Hounslow, Heston and Isleworth in the centre, and Brentford and Chiswick in the east. The Labour Party runs the council with a substantial majority. With the exception of the more prosperous parts of Chiswick, and one or two other tiny enclaves, the London borough of Hounslow is not a fashionable part of London, and is unlikely to be gentrified.

Stroud LETS was established in 1990 by a small group of local people with strong green ideals. As it was one of the first LETS to be established in the UK, it received a considerable amount of media attention (Beard, 1995; Carter, 1991; Dibben, 1991; Fewins, 1992; Harrison, 1993; Riches, 1991). For instance, in April 1992 an article about the scheme appeared in the *Financial Times*, documenting 'a self-help group that deals in its own currency' and describing Stroud as a place where the "green pound" is flourishing' (Fewins, 1992). Stroud is often held as an exemplar within the LETS movement and the founder members have played a crucial role in disseminating ideas about LETS development.

Hounslow LETS developed in quite a different way: it was initiated in 1994 by the London borough of Hounslow, the first local authority in the UK to fund LETS development explicitly as part of an anti-poverty strategy (LETSLink, 1997). In the early 1990s very little was known about LETS, as the first national survey was not undertaken until 1995 (Williams, 1996a, b, c, d, e), however success stories of the Stroud scheme had been reported in national newspapers (see above) and on television, and it was on the basis of these reports that the idea for the Hounslow scheme was conceived. As the former lead member for economic development in the London borough of Hounslow explains:

I found out about Stroud and what went on there with the stroud currency, and I thought that there was an opportunity to put LETS into our anti-poverty strategy. (interview, December 1997)

Hounslow recruited a full-time member of staff, who was appointed in August 1994, to work for a year to develop both a LETS and credit union in the borough. At the same time a health worker was appointed to develop a 'good neighbour' scheme in the west of the borough, and the two officers worked together to develop Hounslow LETS. The London borough of Hounslow identified the main advantages of LETS as being 'easy to start' and 'low risk' (LbH, 1994a: 3); and also that the LETS could help people 'develop new skills, tackle poverty and build new community links' (LbH, 1994b: 4). Thus, although environmental aims were not explicitly outlined in the initial anti-poverty strategy reports, they were implicitly

recognised, as Hounslow's former lead member for economic development explains:

The aims were multiple . . . there's a lot of community development in it, so there's a lot of people meeting each other through a need if you like; there was the recycling aspect of skills and of materials, so there was an environmental aspiration if you like. But it was also in the back of my mind that it was really a way of doing something that would test the system, wind the system a bit, a bit of iconoclasm there if you like. It was about doing something different . . . we were quite excited about doing something innovative. (interview, December 1997)

Furthermore, by 1996 the potential environmental contribution of LETS, in terms of stimulating sustainable local production and consumption (and thereby reducing travel and pollution), was explicitly recognised in Hounslow's Local Agenda 21 Plan, which stated there was a need 'to set up, promote and encourage the expansion of LETS' at the borough level (LbH, 1996: 19). However, given the tight financial and structural constraints that British local authorities were, and indeed still are, operating under (Patterson and Theobald, 1996, 1999), it is not surprising that Hounslow was looking for what was then perceived to be a cheap and low risk option that could be implemented as part of the LA21 process.

One way in which to understand the contrast between the origins of this pair of LETS is in terms of the different 'environmental imaginations' that underpinned their inception (O'Riordan, 1981). Stroud LETS could be considered as the product of a 'dark green eco-centric' paradigm which was shared by the majority of the founding members: a truly grass-roots initiative; whereas Hounslow LETS was created with what might be considered, at best, a 'light green techno-centric' perspective, and one which was being imposed upon the local community from above by the local authority. The next two sections of this chapter examine each of these LETS in turn in order to explore their membership characteristics, the types of goods and services traded, and the level of trading activity experienced in the two schemes.

8.6 Case study 1 – Stroud LETS

The data presented here draw upon ethnographic research with Stroud LETS members, conducted during an eight month period in 1998–99. This included a series of in-depth interviews and focus groups, as well as a membership survey and a review of the trading figures as reported in the Stroud LETS Newsletter (1998a, b; 1999).

By April 1999 Stroud LETS had a total membership of 320, and their characteristics were similar to the average for such schemes in the UK (Williams *et al*, 2001). That is, most members were female (61%),

middle-aged (72% were aged between 30 and 59 years), and well educated (69% at least to degree level). However, a significant area of development where Stroud LETS has been more successful than most other schemes is in attracting organisations to join: small businesses constitute four per cent of the membership, and voluntary and community sector organisations make up a further two per cent. The total number of transactions conducted through the LETS in 1998 was estimated to be 2924, amounting to a total expenditure of 64133 strouds. Thus, the estimated annual turnover per member is 394 strouds. Although this is a small amount when compared to the total volume of trading in the formal economy, this figure is almost six times higher than the national average figure for LETS turnover (65–70 units/year as reported in the two national surveys referred to previously). Therefore, it is clear that Stroud LETS has a high economic impact relative to other UK LETS, and it is worth exploring the reasons for this. Further distinguishing characteristics of the Stroud LETS membership include the relatively high proportion of members (48%) who categorise themselves as self-employed, and the distinctive political orientation of most Stroud LETS members. Here, environmentalism is the dominant political ideology: in total, 71% of the membership described their views as either environmental or Green (37%), Socialist–Green (23%), or Liberal–Green (11%).

Given these statistics, it is understandable that O’Doherty *et al* (1997) should describe Stroud LETS members as constituting an ‘alternative milieu’. During the interviews conducted for this research, LETS members often described Stroud as a particularly ‘green’ place and linked this to a particular type of LETS membership. For example, as one put it:

It’s a very green chunk of the country . . . I think that people who are green minded, they will go along with local initiatives like LETS, so I think that’s a reason why it happens here. It does mean of course that you are going to get a lot of the membership consisting of . . . ‘middle-class trendies’, you know, people who are joining for intellectual reasons rather than because they need it or it makes any difference to their lives. (interview, December 1998)

There was also a strong sense that these motivations shape the kinds of trades that members offer on the LETS. Another member explained how:

[Stroud] particularly attracts the type of person who is questioning the present conventional economic set-up. Stroud has got a large constituent of people who, I would say, are recycled 1960s people . . . [the LETS] particularly attracts them. It attracts the up and coming therapists and people into more holistic approaches to life. (interview, November 1998)

Green or ‘alternative’ ideological motivations for joining Stroud LETS were also reflected in the responses to the membership survey. When asked their main reason for joining the LETS, typical responses included: ‘good

idea in tune with community and Green living' and 'I believe in barter as a means to empower people and counter corporate globalisation'. However, social reasons were also a popular motivation for joining the scheme, and several members expressed a desire to 'meet new people', 'get involved in the community' and 'get to know other people'.

There was also a small group whose main reason for membership was to promote their business: these members thought the LETS was 'a good way of getting clients' or, for example, that it would 'help start my craft stall'. In an interview one member explained how she had used the LETS to set herself up as a self-employed massage therapist:

... I became a LETS member and used the LETS as a source to advertise my services, and from this I have managed to go self-employed. All of my customers are coming through the LETS and my business is slowly building up. The LETS has been extremely important in this development both financially and the community support it provides – I get childcare paid for through the LETS which enabled my business development. LETS has enabled my survival. (interview, December 1999)

It appears therefore, at least for some people in Stroud, that the LETS works as a cheap form of local advertising for self-employed people and might even be helping to construct niche markets for particular types of goods or services.

In thinking about what kinds of niche markets may be developing it is useful to look more carefully at the type of trading that occurs. Here the widespread perception that Stroud LETS facilitates the exchange of alternative therapies, as suggested by some of the quotations above, was reinforced. The largest single category of transaction was in health and personal services (19%). This figure rises to 33% for self-employed members. In an interview a member explained how she thought that:

You can't get away from the fact that Stroud is a very alternative town ... a lot of members ... are people practising alternative health therapies ... you know, sort of highly professional homeopaths. (interview, December 1998)

The second most popular category of trading for all members was business services (ten per cent), followed by arts and crafts (nine per cent), educational services (seven per cent), building and house maintenance (seven per cent), and gardening and horticulture (seven per cent). Interestingly, except for arts and crafts, all of these transactions are in services rather than goods. Despite the prevalence of self-employed members selling services through the LETS, there was a general acknowledgement that manual trades were not readily available:

There is a lack of plumbers or gas fitters or everyday sort of services like that. It's quite hard to find somebody who is quite willing to do

that on part-LETS, I think that is a bit of a problem. (interview, November 1998)

This suggests that, although the LETS is used to promote small businesses, in Stroud it is most often used in this way by people who share a ‘Green’ or ‘alternative’ ideology, and whose business activities also reflect those interests.

Such evidence invites us to question the extent to which Stroud LETS is actually contributing towards local sustainable economic development. To consider this question it is necessary to examine the levels of trading activity amongst Stroud LETS members. Nearly half (44%) of the survey respondents described their LETS trading activity as ‘occasional’, 19% described their trading as ‘regular’, and only 13% as ‘committed’. However, amongst self-employed members the percentage of committed members rises to 46% suggesting a different relationship to the LETS amongst this group and therefore potentially higher levels of activity. This was also reflected in data collected from the membership survey indicating that 50% of self-employed members had traded more than ten times in the previous year, whereas the equivalent figure for all members was 40%. However, as Fig. 8.1 illustrates, the position is not clear-cut because when the results are examined further, a smaller proportion of self-employed members (12%) traded more than 50 times compared to all members (16%), and a slightly higher proportion of self-employed members did not trade at all (eight per cent) compared to all members (seven per cent).

Comparing trading levels within Stroud LETS with data obtained about trading levels on other schemes suggests that Stroud is a relatively active LETS. For example, Pacione’s (1997) study of West Glasgow LETS reported that 36% of the 50 members had never traded and only seven per

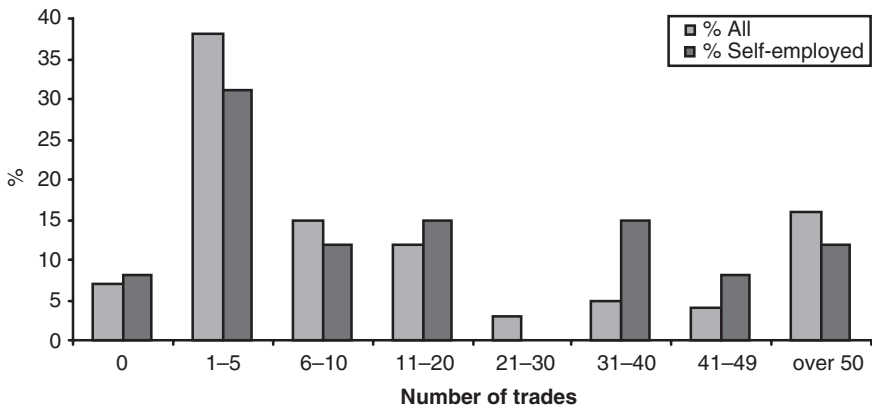


Fig. 8.1 Levels of trading on Stroud LETS, 1998. Source: Membership survey, 1998.

cent had traded more than ten times, and Seyfang's (1998) research on KwinLETS (King's Lynn and West Norfolk) reported that 31% of the 107 members had never traded and only 20% had traded more than ten times. This supports the data from the national surveys that show that the average amount of trading conducted through LETS nationally is typically low and that the trading that does occur tends to be confined to a very small proportion of the total membership. Stroud LETS, however, has a larger than average proportion of members that trade fairly frequently. This suggests that Stroud LETS is a good example to use to assess the potential impact that LETS can have on locally sustainable economic development. Certainly, the majority of members (68%) felt that the LETS had enabled them to buy more locally produced goods and services. However, only about one-third (35%) felt that membership of the LETS had enabled them to live a greener lifestyle.

In thinking about the constraints Stroud LETS faces in fulfilling such a role, one of the key issues that arises concerns the informal nature of the organisation. This was partly linked to a sense of unpredictability that surrounded finding a member that was actually willing to provide the particular good or service they had listed in the directory. This problem was caused because many members would frequently change their minds about what they wanted to offer, perhaps because their personal circumstances had changed or because at that time they had enough customers paying in cash. One member explained what this meant in practice:

It is more difficult to trade on LETS than it is to pay cash: general hippy unreliability really, which I don't know if that's a function of the LETS system or a function of Stroud . . . Are they actually in when you phone and, you know, can you actually get them to do the service that they've advertised, as quite often the Directory is completely out of date, and you say 'Can you do this?' and they'll say 'Well I actually stopped doing that about six months ago' . . . and will they do it to time, to a deadline, you know, as professionally as they would do LETS work really? (interview, December 1998)

The unreliability of the directory can lead to additional costs for the 'purchaser' in terms of both the time and money used in making several telephone calls. Another aspect was that the unregulated nature of the scheme meant that there are rarely any guarantees for the services or goods provided, or that the 'provider' would actually turn up at the time agreed. However, this informality was an integral part of Stroud LETS, and therefore, of course, of the way in which the scheme was promoted locally: typically by word of mouth. Therefore information about the scheme tended only to be passed on to people with similar beliefs to the originators. This, of course, was part of the reason why the scheme was as successful as it was, as it improved the level of trust between members; but it also

made it very difficult to make the scheme inclusive of other communities living in Stroud but which were not connected to the 'Green' social network.

In summary, compared to the national situation, Stroud LETS is a relatively large active LETS with a large proportion of self-employed members that share the ideals of environmentalism. In principle, therefore, within the UK this is a scheme that is most likely to be able to demonstrate the capacity of LETS to contribute towards local sustainable economic development. However, the restricted nature of the goods and services offered through the LETS, and the informal nature of its organisation, while being attractive to most of the current membership, presents a number of problems that make the scheme unreliable and unattractive to others. Although the volume of trading in Stroud LETS is amongst the highest in any LETS in the UK, that level is tiny in relation to the total amount of trade conducted in the locality through the formal economy, therefore it is unlikely that the scheme presently contributes towards sustainable economic development in any significant way.

8.7 Case study 2 – Hounslow LETS

The original data presented on Hounslow LETS in this case study were collected during an 18 month period of intensive research from 'within' this scheme, which combined participant ethnography (see Aldridge, 1997) with semi-structured interviews, and an analysis of LETS trading accounts.

Membership of Hounslow LETS reached its peak of 130 in March 1997, however the following year the scheme was formally wound-up, and almost no trading took place in the final 12 months. Before discussing the particular reasons for this failure, it is useful to examine the membership characteristics and trading levels of this scheme. In Hounslow 62% of the members were female (similar to Stroud), 25% male, three per cent were joint accounts, one per cent were small businesses, and nine per cent were voluntary or community organisations. Compared to Stroud, Hounslow LETS had a lower total membership but otherwise, on these measures, the characteristics of the two schemes were very similar, the key differences being that Hounslow LETS had a lower rate of business participation and a higher rate of voluntary and community group participation.

Over the active lifetime of Hounslow LETS, from October 1994 to March 1997, the total turnover was recorded as 8176 cranes from 372 transactions. Average annual turnover was 3270 cranes, which means that members had an average turnover of only 25 cranes/year (less than 40% of the national average, and about one-sixteenth of the level in Stroud). However, there was great unevenness between members in terms of the trading levels within Hounslow LETS, and therefore the average value is not a good representation of the situation for most members. During the whole two and a half year period, 85% of members engaged in fewer than

five transactions, and of these more than half (53%) never traded at all; only eight per cent of members engaged in more than ten trades. Thus it was clear that only a small core of members had actively participated in the system. The LETS trading of two of the most active individual members of Hounslow LETS was mainly conducted just between themselves, and included many favours that they would have done for each other as friends even had the LETS not existed (see Aldridge and Patterson, 2002). Therefore, by incorporating ‘trades’ that would have been conducted informally between friends or neighbours in the absence of the LETS, LETS trading accounts overstate the ‘added value’ that the schemes create.

The majority of members of Hounslow LETS were dissatisfied with their trading levels (see Table 8.3), and participation in the scheme had not met the expectations of the majority of the members. It was also clear that most people had joined the scheme for economic rather than for broader social reasons.

As was observed in the case of Stroud, most of the trading through Hounslow LETS was in the form of services (see Table 8.4). However, there were striking contrasts between the types of services traded – in Hounslow these were predominantly hire services and community work (reflecting the role of community organisations as major traders in Hounslow LETS), rather than health and personal services, and arts and crafts that were commonly traded in Stroud. Trade in second-hand goods (25% of turnover), however, also represented a significant proportion of the transactions in Hounslow but this form of trade was tiny in Stroud.

Just over one-fifth (21%) of the total number of transactions conducted through Hounslow LETS, involving a turnover of 2647 cranes (32% of the total turnover), was by organisations, and just one organisation, the Cranford Good Neighbours (CGN), was responsible for most (62%) of this trading. The CGN is a voluntary group that used the LETS to set up four

Table 8.3 Hounslow LETS members’ evaluation of their trading

| Statement | Agree | Disagree | Don’t know |
|---|-------|----------|------------|
| | | | |
| I am satisfied with my current level of trading | 0 | 67 | 33 |
| I see my involvement in Hounslow LETS as an alternative way of creating work for myself | 89 | 0 | 11 |
| Being a member of Hounslow LETS has not met the expectations I had when I joined the system | 78 | 22 | 0 |
| The social aspect of being involved in Hounslow LETS is more important to me than trading | 33 | 56 | 11 |

Source: Interviews with Hounslow LETS members (1997–98).

Table 8.4 Goods and services traded through Hounslow LETS

| Category | Value (cranes) | Proportion of total spending (%) | Number of transactions | Average value per transaction |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Purchasing goods | 895 | 22.0 | 53 | 16.8 |
| Hiring equipment or accommodation | 740 | 18.0 | 6 | 123.3 |
| Mother Plus group | 425 | 10.0 | 7 | 60.7 |
| Training | 359 | 9.0 | 27 | 13.3 |
| Health and complementary therapies | 268 | 6.5 | 8 | 33.5 |
| Administrative services | 238 | 5.8 | 4 | 59.5 |
| Unidentified services | 217 | 5.3 | 19 | 11.4 |
| Transport provision | 193 | 4.7 | 11 | 17.5 |
| Lunch club cooking | 150 | 3.7 | 1 | 150.0 |
| Legal/financial services | 118 | 2.9 | 2 | 59.0 |
| Specialist food production | 108 | 2.6 | 3 | 36.0 |
| Home repair/decoration | 74 | 1.8 | 2 | 37.0 |
| Entertainment (TD) | 73 | 1.8 | 27 | 2.7 |
| General labour | 72 | 1.8 | 6 | 12.0 |
| Donations | 60 | 1.5 | 1 | 60.0 |
| Childcare | 43 | 1.0 | 3 | 14.3 |
| Vehicle repair | 24 | 0.6 | 1 | 24.0 |
| Personal services | 19 | 0.5 | 3 | 6.3 |
| Crafts/sewing | 12 | 0.3 | 2 | 6.0 |
| Total | 4088 | 100.0 | 186 | 22.0 |

Source: Analysis of trading accounts, 1997, by authors.

small sub-groups: a group for expectant mothers, a Mother Plus group (for mothers and babies), a women's support group, and a lunch club for older people. Apart from the pay of a formally employed CGN worker, who was employed by the Health Authority, all the other costs involved in the development of these sub-groups were met through Hounslow LETS. These included the hire of meeting rooms, payment of a nursery nurse to look after children at the Mother Plus group, and payment of a chef who provided dinners for the lunch club.

Clearly the CGN was very important in stimulating trading through Hounslow LETS during the period 1995–1996 by identifying and using a number of different service providers. It presents an interesting example, showing a range of possible ways that voluntary groups can use LETS to reward workers. However, the CGN worker was only employed until early 1997, and since then all four of the sub-groups have folded, so it obviously also raises the issue of how to sustain these activities in the absence of a full-time formally employed worker.

Whilst the use of LETS was effective for CGN in the short-term, during interviews with individual LETS members a range of constraints

to LETS trading was described. These constraints can be classified into three broad categories: fiscal constraints, organisational barriers, and community and scale effects. The fiscal constraints category included problems associated with the perception of debt within LETS, as mentioned previously, and the cash costs involved in LETS trading. Organising a LETS trade can involve telephone, transport and childcare costs, meaning that it can often require a member to spend money (i.e. pounds sterling) to engage in LETS trading. A number of Hounslow LETS members, mainly those who were on low-incomes or benefits, highlighted these costs as a significant constraint to their use of LETS, for example, as one member explained:

I wouldn't phone anyone speculatively about trading because I couldn't afford the prices of calls on my phone-bill; it's too expensive. (interview, December 1997)

There is an obvious irony here: although LETS have been widely promoted as part of local authority anti-poverty strategies, poverty itself can exclude participation in LETS. In fact, many members of Hounslow LETS did not even get to the point of actually setting up a LETS trade, because of their fear of getting into debt in the first place. As previously discussed, in LETS the accounts of new members are normally set at zero, therefore for an initial trade to take place a member must be willing to go into debit on their LETS trading account. Even though no interest is charged on negative balances in LETS accounts, many members were reluctant to allow their account to go 'into the red' describing this as 'a very real barrier'. Many LETS members appeared to transfer the concept of indebtedness from the formal cash economy to LETS, and considered a LETS 'debit' to be just another form of debt or overdraft. This perception of debt seriously reduced many members' willingness to initiate trading.

The second category of constraint identified was that of organisational barriers. Although in the case of Hounslow, a community worker was employed to facilitate the initial development of the scheme, LETS typically rely on a committee of volunteers (often referred to as the 'core group'), who undertake a number of organisational and administrative tasks central to delivering an effective scheme. This includes preparing the LETS directory of members 'offers' and 'wants', administering members' accounts, updating statements, and marketing and advertising the scheme. These tasks are time-consuming and require a high level of commitment from the committee. However, most of the people that became members of Hounslow LETS' committee were also heavily involved in a number of other local organisations, and therefore there were many other calls upon their time. As one committee member described the situation:

The problem is that people on the committee have all got other things to do, the usual problem with voluntary organisations . . . I mean

there's six people on the committee, and we haven't been able to get together for a committee meeting over the course of 12 months. It's not good enough, we need to be more in the forefront, we need to be offering more trading days, or themed meetings. (interview, December 1997)

This problem was exacerbated by the lack of sufficient members willing to get involved directly in the day-to-day organisation of the scheme; instead members complained that the committee 'needed to organise it more'. This was indicative of a wider problem within Hounslow LETS that was associated with the perception of 'ownership' of the scheme: few members felt a personal responsibility for the running of the LETS, and this may have been because the scheme had been initiated by the local authority, rather than emerging from a 'grass-roots' group as in Stroud.

The third category of constraints to engaging in LETS trading focuses on community and scale effects, which are closely interconnected. The diversity of communities within the borough of Hounslow was identified by several members as a key problem in developing trust in the scheme because members lacked personal acquaintance with each other, and so other members were seen as 'strangers' with whom they shared few common bonds, as one member explained:

It's too diverse an area, it's too big, it's very sad, I've tried setting up groups before and it's impossible. It's just not a community, geographically and demographically it's too diverse, and that's a problem for developing groups, it might work in small pockets. (interview, January 1998)

This lack of trust resulted in some LETS members being reluctant to organise trades with other members who they had not previously met because in many cases this would have involved them coming into their homes. The lack of guarantees about the expertise of the people involved and the quality of the services they could provide reinforced these problems. This resulted in a heavy reliance on organised 'trading events' to stimulate LETS trading, thus increasing the workload on committee members.

The lack of trust between members also relates in part to the scale at which Hounslow LETS was developed. Discussions prior to establishing the scheme had addressed the issue of the most appropriate scale of operation for the LETS. Establishing the LETS at the level of local housing estates had been considered but rejected: the large-scale borough-wide approach being preferred in order to permit a 'good mix of people' to be involved in the scheme in order to bring a wide range of skills and needs; and to avoid the unnecessary labelling of the scheme locally as something only for 'people on low incomes'. However, over time many members argued that the scheme needed to become more localised in order to build on existing

community links and common bonds, and – with many members finding trading at the borough-wide level expensive in terms of time and other associated costs – to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme; as the following examples indicate:

I think it should become more localised, because I personally wouldn't go all the way over to Hounslow say, for a massage or for someone to baby-sit for me, you know, I would rather trade within my local, very local community. (interview, December 1997)

I think we need a pan-Hounslow LETS but with separate groups in the different 'villages'. I just think the whole thing's too big, you can't build a community that is too large and this is all about building community networks. (interview, January 1998)

Although Hounslow LETS was formally closed in August 1998, within the borough a smaller-scale scheme was established in Brentford the following year.

8.8 Conclusions

The case studies of Stroud and Hounslow LETS have been presented here because of the lessons that can be learned from the similarities and differences they present. These case studies indicate that the types of LETS activities that occur and the specific limits to individual LETS, are closely related to the particularities of place, the scale of operation, and the social groups involved in establishing the scheme initially. Trading through Stroud LETS, in terms of both volume and value, indicates a relatively successful scheme, which is, however, used only by specific groups, and thus is predominantly providing a niche market for those adopting an alternative lifestyle (as wittily illustrated in Fig. 8.2). For this group the LETS is very useful; however Stroud LETS, as an informal bottom-up form of organisation, appears to be limited by the number of like-minded environmentalists that it can attract. Moreover, the informal nature of the promotion and regulation of the scheme causes problems for those who would wish the membership of Stroud LETS to become more inclusive.

In contrast, Hounslow LETS tried to be socially inclusive from the outset with borough-wide promotion. However, it failed to establish itself, at least in part, because it did not come from grass-roots, and so its members were not known to each other and had no sense of common responsibility for the scheme. For a short period Hounslow LETS provided a way of facilitating the development of a number of small-scale community activities; however even this small-scale contribution to the voluntary and community sector proved to be unsustainable. The failure of Hounslow LETS was the result of a number of interconnected factors. These included the lack



Fig. 8.2 LET'S get together. Source: Chris Garratt.

of common bonds and trust between members (who could live many kilometres apart), and a lack of any strong sense of shared ownership of the scheme, reflected in the perception by some members that the LETS was 'a scheme for us organised by them'. Simply, there were insufficient community resources to enable the effective organisation of the scheme; even though it was supported initially by the local authority (and indeed, perhaps because of this). This, in turn, meant that the sterling costs associated with participation in the scheme were high – because of the unreliability of the directory and the long distances that members might have to travel to undertake a trade; and the fiscal barriers associated with the psychology of debt that could not be overcome because there were few members prepared to explain the workings of the scheme and to encourage new and non-trading members to 'test the water'.

These contrasting case studies suggest that the successful launch of a LETS may require the involvement of a group with common bonds and a pre-existing sense of community. Stroud LETS works more effectively than most LETS because it actively builds upon the interests of a local community with shared 'green' ideals. On the other hand, Hounslow LETS failed because it did not have roots into any specific community with shared values. The case studies have highlighted some of the limits to LETS, including the extremely small proportion of local populations participating in LETS; the low levels of trading typically involved; and the availability of only certain types of goods – with the most basic necessities, including food and essential repairs and maintenance, being extremely difficult to obtain. It is for these reasons that the impact of LETS on local economic development is negligible. However, the case studies outlined in this chapter also highlight how some LETS are having a greater impact than others, and it is instructive to examine the reasons for this in a little more detail.

Much of the existing published research on LETS suggests that it is the longer established LETS that have larger memberships and higher trading levels (LETSlink UK, 1995; Seyfang, 1994; Williams, 1996a, b, c). The conclusion that almost all of the early researchers came to was that the main reason for this disparity was the age of the scheme, and that given time the newer LETS would also achieve higher levels of membership and trading activity. For example, as Williams, reporting the findings of a postal survey of UK LETS, puts it:

[LETS] vary significantly in size, according to the length of time they have existed. Older LETS not only have larger memberships but also higher turnovers, a product of the time which they have had to establish themselves in their locality. So, given that 80.2% of all LETS responding were formed only in the two year period before the survey, and are thus in their infancy in formal business terms, it can be assumed that LETS are likely to continue to expand during the next few years. (Williams, 1996d: 1401)

However, this conclusion is based on extensive (primarily descriptive) survey-based research, rather than intensive (explanatory) research and therefore the evidence provided cannot support the argument. Rather it is possible that those LETS that started earlier had distinctly different characteristics to most of those that were established later, and that it is these characteristics that explain the differences in size and activity levels rather than this simply being attributable to the relative age of the schemes.

The results of Williams' national postal survey provide some useful indications: initially LETS were very much the preserve of people with strong environmental values. Indeed, almost all (95%) of the members of the first two LETS established in the UK identified themselves as 'green'. However, as the LETS concept spread beyond these early adopters, the percentage of LETS members in later schemes that characterised themselves as 'green' decreased to about half (see Table 8.5).

Table 8.5 LETS membership profile, by year of establishment

| Year established | Number of LETS | Percentage of members who are: | | |
|------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| | | Women | Not in employment | 'Greens' |
| Pre-1991 | 2 | 53.0 | 22.0 | 95.0 |
| 1991 | 6 | 54.6 | 24.7 | 73.7 |
| 1992 | 8 | 58.1 | 27.5 | 74.8 |
| 1993 | 29 | 59.5 | 27.5 | 70.3 |
| 1994 | 29 | 59.6 | 30.5 | 67.5 |
| 1995 | 7 | 62.6 | 32.7 | 51.0 |

Source: Williams (1996a, d).

The concentration of people sharing a 'green' viewpoint in LETS is not only a reflection of how LETS can be thought of in terms of environmental aims, but also a result of the promotional methods used to raise awareness of LETS and increase membership sizes. In the early 1990s, LETS were principally advocated by new economics thinkers and the Green movement. As Sallnow puts it:

. . . much of the inspiration for LETS comes from the Green movement, although organisers stress that their networks are non-political. (Sallnow, 1994: 9)

In the UK the New Economics Foundation, a Green think-tank, promoted LETS nationally, both through their magazine and through seminars (particularly in the south west of England). Williams' (1996f: 260) research shows that 'most LETS set up by groups, for example, have arisen out of either environmental groups or 'alternative' organisations such as Steiner schools'. Wilding too was quite clear where LETS was coming from:

LETS is a citizen's initiative reflecting the Green ideal of community economy – lifestyle politics par excellence . . . and an excellent way to introduce growing numbers of people to the Green political project . . . [It] is a local action that inspires confidence in a 'Green' social idea of global application. As a bonus LETS subscribers can re-use goods more easily (by getting someone to repair them) or be encouraged to purchase cruelty free and environmentally friendly goods. (Wilding, 1991: 16)

Furthermore, the most typical method of LETS promotion is usually through their network of connections with other 'green' groups. Williams, for example, notes this and describes it as following 'the line of least resistance' (Williams, 1996f). However, the consequence is that this appears to result in the unintentional exclusion of other groups and communities of interest. One result of this was that by the mid-1990s it was noted:

A common complaint about LETS is that they can supply services such as aromatherapy and holistic massage, but not much plumbing. Liz Shephard, who co-ordinates LETSLink, the national LETS development agency, concedes that they have been 'lumbered with a New Age image' and blames a surfeit of 'Green movement jargon and woolly administration'. (Nicholson-Lord, 1995: 35)

As noted above, almost all of the early schemes were established in small market towns (e.g. Stroud and Totnes) with a homogeneous majority of middle-class members that shared a 'green' philosophy, whereas later schemes were established in a much wider range of urban areas (including, for example, the London boroughs of Greenwich and Hounslow, and the cities of Liverpool and Leicester) with ethnically and class diverse memberships that did not share the same 'green' philosophical approach.

Moreover, in many cases the members did not know many of the other LETS members at the time that the scheme was initiated. As Lee observes:

It is easier to set up and sustain LETS in a well-defined geographical centre of consciousness than in the more diffuse rural areas, suburbs or edge-of-town estates. In any event, some form of pre-existing social formation involving '*communities of philosophy or identities of place*' ... is a vital prerequisite. (Lee, 1996: 1388)

Lee concludes his discussion of LETS on an optimistic note, by stating that:

... their wide representation in the media as an alternative but complementary middle-class lifestyle ignores their potentially emancipatory and participative qualities (Lee, 1996: 1393)

and by claiming that LETS are also:

... able to offer a series of social multipliers in undoing the damage and pathologies of exclusion. (Lee, 1996: 1393)

This rather rosy picture of LETS is not one that we can share, or that is borne out by the weight of the evidence presented in this chapter. Certainly we can agree that LETS 'demonstrate that alternative economic geographies are possible' (Lee, 1996: 1393) but they also demonstrate that the dominant economic and social forces of the mainstream capitalist economy are not easily transformed. Rather, LETS appear to work best in those areas and for those groups that already benefit from the currently prevailing socio-economic processes. Perhaps then the media representation of LETS is the correct one, and LETS *are* currently best considered as 'an alternative but complementary middle-class lifestyle'.

We began by citing the work of Trainer and it is only fair to note that he promoted LETS as only one amongst the many possible elements of an alternative sustainable future – certainly the evidence suggests that if LETS are to be truly successful in this way, and move beyond their comfortable middle-class niches, they need to be part of a much broader package of strategies. However, the types of bottom-up community led approaches that are typical of the early schemes are unlikely to be inclusive of all members of a locality. As the Stroud case study suggests, Stroud LETS is identified with a particular section of the local population that is often described as 'green' or 'alternative'. This image, alongside the type of goods and services this population offers, serves to make Stroud LETS simultaneously attractive to people who are happy to identify with such values and unattractive to those with other priorities. At the same time, however, a local authority led top-down approach, such as that in Hounslow, also has its limitations. Therefore, at least in their present form and in the current economic context, LETS have only a marginal role to play in the move to more environmentally sustainable forms of local economic development.

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Allotments and community gardens: a DIY approach to environmental sustainability

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9.1 Introduction

Allotments are small tracts of land generally rented from a local authority (though not always) for a nominal rent and usually worked by an individual, a family or a small group of friends. They have a long history in the UK, originating in social movements from the seventeenth century in response to the privatisation of land. Community gardens have a more recent history in the UK and generally incorporate a more collective endeavour. For example, individuals or households are more likely to share the use and working of the plots, which may be integrated more fully with other facilities, sometimes incorporating other leisure uses, such as parkland.

If allotments had not existed in 1992, Local Agenda 21 would have had to invent them. Allotments represent the epitome of what LA21 is, at its best, attempting to do, in fusing the economic, social and environmental in a mutually productive relationship, as Fig. 9.1 summarises. This threefold advantage will be used as an organising principle for the chapter as it develops an argument in defence of allotments and community gardens (see also Howe and Wheeler, 1999).

Further, this chapter will argue that allotments and community gardens are in the process of becoming re-radicalised in that increasing numbers of plot-holders are seeing them as an alternative to the formal marketplace, and others are using them to empower disadvantaged social groups (such as the homeless, offenders and refugees), or to create a safe food growing environment which offers an alternative to contemporary chemically and genetically modified practice. Local Agenda 21, at its most effective a hybrid organisation, linking local government and civil society, is in a good

| |
|---|
| <p>Economic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides a healthy diet at an affordable priceReduces food poverty |
| <p>Social</p> <p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Physical exerciseHealthier dietBenefits of open spaces <p>Community building/empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Approaching neighbours as equalsSharing, and the gift relationshipCollective organisation (from buying materials to self-management)Community days – opening gardens to local peopleEncouraging those who would not think of gardening into allotments and community gardens (ACG) (e.g. Bangladeshi women in the Wapping Women’s Garden) <p>Educational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Informal projects where children welcomed onto ACGsSchool community gardens, allotments <p>Healing/rehabilitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">e.g. work with vulnerable groups such as the mentally ill, physically disabled, refugees and asylum seekersWork with prisoners and offenders |
| <p>Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reclamation of derelict landReduction of consumption of food milesIncreased bio-diversity (particularly where organic methods are used) |

Fig. 9.1 Benefits of allotment and community gardening.

position to harness these energies, but local authorities need to be careful not to over control the activities. Rather, they can learn from the ‘cutting edge’ of radical urban food growing projects to ensure that their efforts are not blocked (for example, safeguarding the provision of land), to utilise prototypical examples and to support projects which are likely to have wider benefits in the longer-term.

It is not, of course, unusual for policy to emerge from a vanguard of radical political action (see, for example, the suffragette movement in the early twentieth century, or the environmental movement from the 1970s). *The Land is Ours* is a campaigning organisation for ‘peaceful access to land, its resources and the decision-making processes affecting them, for every-

one, irrespective of race, age or gender'. What *The Land is Ours* is campaigning for today may seem beyond the capacity of policy to respond to, and yet if its concerns remain in the public consciousness it is possible, in time, to gain public acceptance, whilst the cutting edge continues to move forwards. Neil Carter provides a useful context for the place of radicalism in policy change in his discussion of environmental activists (Carter, 2001).

Despite these arguments in their favour, however, allotments are in decline. According to The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, there are currently 36291.8 acres of council-held allotments in England and Wales, comprising 305 116 plots on 8025 sites. According to this figure, there appears to have been a slight increase since 1996, in which year was recorded the lowest number and acreage since 1970, representing a drop in provision between 1970 and 1996 of almost 43% (NSALG, 1999). In a recent UK Government response to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee's (ETRAC) report *The Future for Allotments* (ETRAC, 1998), it is acknowledged that allotment land is the principle category of urban green space which is being eroded (DETR, 1998). It is under particular pressure from house building, which must increasingly take place in urban areas now that there is a presumption against building on 'green-field' sites, particularly those on Green Belt land. The government does not accept that there is or will be an increase in demand for allotments, quoting the English Allotments Survey as identifying 33 000 vacant statutory plots in England. However, this disguises geographical variations since the nature of allotments and community gardens is such that they are only viable if close to the home of the plot-holder. In one London borough, which is not short of homes with gardens, although there were 78 recorded vacant plots on three sites, there was a waiting list of 155 for plots on just half of its sites (the remaining sites carry their own waiting lists). The NSALG estimate that there are 13 000 people registered on waiting lists for allotments (1999).

An earlier government report (popularly known as the Thorpe Report, HMG, 1969) had been charged with the task of updating the role of allotments as leisure facilities, to counteract declining popularity. Whilst urban allotments started as a form of poor relief to compensate rural to urban migrants who had lost their right to farm the diminishing common lands, government in the mid-twentieth century sought to disassociate itself from this history and to rework the allotment as a space for recreation. Wiltshire, Crouch and Azuma (2000) argue that protection for such a privatised yet subsidised form of activity would be currently unsupportable and would be difficult to use against developers' arguments for urban infill development. They suggest that the community garden is a more effective reworking for the early twenty-first century in that the collective benefits are more widely and readily felt. However, the ways in which allotments are being used and certainly the potential they have for reducing food poverty, developing environmental education, improving the environment and for their therapeutic value have significant benefits for society as a whole.

This chapter argues that this decrease in allotment provision is particularly poignant at a time when there is an increasing need to make our cities more environmentally and socially sustainable. Allotments and community gardens offer manifold social, environmental and economic benefits to individuals, families and communities. In particular they benefit those people disadvantaged by low income, poor housing and recreational opportunity, weak community networks and environmental incivility, characteristics of which often combine within neighbourhoods to create a general climate of disadvantage. Moreover, allotments have wider environmental benefits in that they provide valuable 'green lungs' in urban areas and are havens of bio-diversity. Indeed, Jac Smit (2002) has argued that, in the third world context, urban agriculture projects have increased civic stability and overall energy conservation, reduced traffic congestion, improved air quality and given the enterprising, unskilled poor a way to start making money. Whilst this chapter's discussion focuses on first world urban agriculture, these are potentially relevant points which are likely to have a universal impact, although the nature of this impact will differ from place to place.

In this chapter, a number of UK, and some North American and European examples are used to discuss the potential of allotments in local community development policies. Allotments and community gardens occupy a conceptual middle ground, both between the public and private worlds of the political and the domestic and between the public and private economy. What Young (1997) defines as the 'social economy', which encompasses recycling schemes, credit unions and LETS could also include allotments and community gardens. These intermediate (to borrow Horelli's term which denotes space between the fully private-domestic and the fully public (Horelli and Vepsa, 1994)) spaces and functions require a degree of legislative protection, but essentially thrive on the energies and inputs of participants.

One of the strengths of allotments and community gardens is that, whilst they are often facilitated by local government, their existence and benefits are very much the product of synergies between local people, community groups and local authorities. In many respects, although there are commendable exceptions, allotments and community gardens function and thrive often despite the role played by local government in their maintenance. Indeed, some of the most vibrant allotments and community gardens have opted for self management, although this is by no means an answer for all sites and could be counterproductive for some. One of the most important things that local authorities can do is to protect urban growing spaces and work with the local community to maximise their use. In an unpublished survey of allotment holders, carried out by the London boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond, the largest response to the question asking whether, because of vacant plots, allotments should be 'rationalised' was that if they were promoted and advertised effectively then more people

would take up allotment gardening. Respondents clearly felt that the reason for the vacancies was that people are not aware of the benefits; if they were then they would be taken up. There was also a strong feeling that because vacant plots were not maintained or cleared, taking on one becomes a very daunting prospect. Indeed, this research suggests that there appears to be local support for extending allotment use in the community, including to schools and refugee groups.

This chapter now proceeds to consider the threefold economic, social and environmental benefits which underpin, and emerge from, allotment and community gardening. It should, however, be noted that there is frequent overlap between these three categories, as will be evident in the following discussion.

9.2 Benefits of allotments and community gardens

9.2.1 Economic benefits

It is estimated that in the UK 18% of households are currently on low income (where low income is defined as 60% of the median disposable income). Some of these live in such a degree of poverty that they lack food security, which can result in hunger and malnourishment. For example, in 1994 Kempson *et al* reported that half of all mothers living on, or just above, the income support level regularly went without food to feed and clothe their children. The NCH Action for Children (in Brimacombe, 1995) reports that half the parents in a study they conducted had gone short of food in the previous year to ensure that other family members had enough to eat, whilst a Joseph Rowntree funded project revealed that six per cent of adults interviewed were unable to afford to have family and/or friends round for a meal (Social Trends, HMG, 2001). It has been estimated that £5 a week represents the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy food basket (Brimacombe, 1995). Brimacombe also reported that 'low income families spend less than £10 a week per person on food, making up more than 35% of their household expenditure' (1995: 13). The UK Family Expenditure Survey (HMG, 1998/9) demonstrates that the proportion of income spent on food rises the poorer a household is (from 13% of income of the highest earning quintile, to 22% of income of the poorest quintile). There is sufficient concern for this that, at the time of writing, a 'Food Poverty (Eradication) Bill' has been introduced into Parliament and has been tabled as an early day motion, with a view to gathering cross-party support. Gottlieb and Fisher (1996) argue that food security represents more than an absence of hunger. Applying the development studies literature to the United States context, they suggest that 'all persons [should be able to obtain] at all times, a culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through local, non-emergency, sources', which may include 'urban greening initiatives such as community gardens, edible landscape plantings . . .' (1996: 196).

In the USA, some community gardening initiatives are incorporated into food poverty alleviation programmes. For example, the Tucson Urban Gardens have been created to enable low income families (mostly Hispanic) to grow food, where the surplus is sold at cost through the adjoining food bank supermarket. Plots are gardened by local people, but also by youths who have been excluded from school (see Fig. 9.2). Associated programmes involve the collection of product surpluses notified to the project by farmers and other gardeners and, through this, youths are also developing food preparation skills as they learn to make lemon curd and pecan pies which are then sold in the onsite supermarket. Whilst this project is in its inception, it is hoped that it will not only contribute to improved food availability for low income families, but also skills development for socially and educationally excluded young people (Thompson, 2002).

Interviews with allotment holders in the UK report that plots can provide a significant proportion of a household's fruit and vegetable needs, significantly cutting the cost of food provisioning for low income households (Brimacombe, 1995; Higgins, 1998). Examples from the third world suggest that a significant proportion of a family's food needs can be provided by urban gardening. For example, Smit (2002) has identified families in Valparaiso in Chile who secure more than one-third of their food needs from under half a hectare, whilst Cuba's well publicised urban gardens have



Fig. 9.2 Tucson Urban Garden, Tucson, Arizona.

begun to be used to provide virtually all the food needs for their residents since the state farms were dissolved in 1993.

In the UK, allotment agreements generally preclude food being offered for sale, although this is not the case for community gardening or urban farms, which Howe and Wheeler's research suggests has an impact on reducing food poverty to a limited extent (1999). However, one non-market form of exchange – the gift relationship – characterises allotments, whereby produce and seed surplus is frequently distributed amongst neighbouring plot-holders.

In St Petersburg, Russia, rooftop community gardening is being experimented with to try to overcome shortages of basic foodstuffs. Using roofs built to support heavy burdens of snow, it is estimated that 2000 tons of vegetables may be grown in a year. Vegetables grown on rooftops have also demonstrated health benefits as they were shown to have less heavy metal contamination than those grown at ground level in the city (Gavrilov, 1996).

9.2.2 Social benefits

Health

The provision of community gardens and allotments offers individuals and households the potential to grow their own food, with control over what produce to grow and what (if any) chemical inputs to use. This control is valuable to all people, given that the prevailing food regime relies heavily on chemical use at all stages of the food supply chain, from fertilisers and pesticides in the growing of food, through to the use of chemicals and irradiation to preserve food once harvested. Increasingly, consumers rely on multinationals for the majority of their food requirements, for example, 78% of UK food purchases are made from the ten largest food retailers (Watts and Goodman, 1997), which are sourced from increasingly remote locations, adding to the already unnecessarily high number of food miles travelled. Growing food close to where it will be consumed reduces these food miles with a concomitant saving of greenhouse gases, particulate emissions, congestion and other problems associated with transportation. Whilst it is unlikely that one urban household will be able to provide all its food from one allotment or community garden, some examples have already been given which illustrate what production can be achieved on urban garden plots. Irvine *et al* (1999) have noted that one small, carefully cultivated urban plot can supply enough vegetables to provide one family's needs, thereby making a significant reduction to the amount of fruit, vegetables and herbs that need to be bought. Individual health benefits are noted from the physical exercise required to dig, plant, weed and harvest, as well as the stress relief of gardening. The ETRAC report on *The Future for Allotments* (1998) has particularly noted benefits to people over 50, traditionally the mainstay of allotments.

Community building and empowerment

Although some argue that a geographical, or place based, community is an outmoded concept in the twenty-first century (Bauman, 2001), there is some evidence to suggest that an activity grounded in the earth or land has the power to salvage and nurture bonds which can underpin a locally based community. In particular, community gardens which incorporate small plots in a more intimate arrangement on communally held land are thought to strengthen communities, as the case study of the food growing groups supported by the Women's Environmental Network (WEN) shows. The WEN's *Cultivating the Future* project aims to help groups of economically disadvantaged women, particularly those from ethnic minorities, to produce their own organic food and to develop expertise in community composting (reported in WEN, 2000, 2001, 2002). The rationale behind this project is that it will enable women from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds to maintain or learn food growing skills, which are a staple of many of the countries from which the first generation immigrants emigrated. The creation of food growing groups helps the women share and value these skills, while at the same time reclaiming derelict spaces in their communities. For example, the Wapping Women's Group in east London, comprising mostly women of Bangladeshi origin, has secured funding from the local council and through the WEN to clear and cultivate a space between three blocks of low-rise flats, which had previously been used as a dumping ground for unwanted tyres and old bikes. Here, around 20 raised beds have been constructed which individual women now work (see Fig. 9.3). Other neighbouring groups, such as the Coriander Club and the Jagonari Centre, have established courses on organic food growing, composting and horticultural therapy. By request of some of the gardeners, there is also an initiative to incorporate English language teaching since many of the Bangladeshi women have poor English speaking skills (Rycroft, 2000).

Rycroft's (2000) evaluation of these projects has identified social reasons as the main spur for membership of the expanding groups. Membership gives women the opportunity for making friends and working together which their culture, one that puts a premium on the seclusion of women, has made difficult on moving to the UK. The second most cited motivation was health, both in terms of exercise and diet. The third reason given for participation was that these women, who mostly had no access to a garden, valued the opportunity to work in a garden and to value the space and planting. Some Bangladeshi women felt that growing food (including Bengali vegetables) gave them an important link with their 'home country'. Whilst these projects are not free from problems (such as limited resources and management issues that have to be resolved), their success can be measured from growing waiting lists for the plots and from the comments which stress the ways in which this initiative has reduced their sense of isolation. In addition, these gardens have contributed to an improved environment in some of the most disadvantaged areas in the country.



Fig. 9.3 Wapping Women's Centre Community Gardening, London.
Source: Women's Environmental Network (WEN).

Allotments also encourage sharing – of produce, seeds and manual labour – and the development of the ‘gift’ relationship. Howe (1999) believes that urban food growing has the capacity to bring the local community together by involving marginalised groups and by encouraging the expression of ethnic identity, which the Tucson project (Fig. 9.2) and community gardens in Boston, USA (Figs. 9.4 and 9.5) exemplify. As Boston's South Side Community Gardens illustrate, ethnic identity is expressed and celebrated in the design and planting of gardens and in the signage, which clearly designates the multi-ethnic nature of these spaces. The grass-roots involvement of communities in the setting up of community gardens has been found to strengthen those communities, as can be seen in the Alex Wilson Community Garden in Toronto (Irvine *et al*, 1999) and the Whitehawk Community Food Project in Brighton (Maryon, 1998),



Fig. 9.4 Community Garden, Chinatown, Boston.

which, whilst not their main aim, involves the bringing together of different ethnic groups.

One well established way of developing community in, and community ownership of, local neighbourhoods, is to involve local people in decision-making about their neighbourhoods. This is an important element of any successful Local Agenda 21 and is illustrated well by the recent Bankside Open Spaces project in London. This has involved local people (including children) in the (re)design of open spaces which is resulting in the transformation of ‘open spaces’ into gardens. Examples from this project, which illustrate the potential for community building, include gardening help given by men staying in a local shelter for the homeless, and Bengali families gardening on balconies who cook curries for collective gardening events (Richardson, 2002). Communities can also be empowered by such projects as they develop knowledge of environmental systems, and particular skills such as permaculture (see Holmewood Estate Project in Bradford, in Roslin, 1995).

Environmental education

An effective way of developing skills, empowerment and sharing within the community is by making allotments available to children through educational projects. One of the express requirements of (L)A21 as formulated and agreed at Rio de Janeiro in 1992 is to involve children and young people



Fig. 9.5 Community Garden, Hispanic neighbourhood on Boston's South Side.

in environmental decision-making (Chapter 25 of Agenda 21). Although environmental education has a long history and currently is required to be taught as a cross-curricular theme, there are heavy constraints upon its effectiveness. For example, geography is no longer compulsory for schools to teach post-14, and its success is largely contingent upon the enthusiasm of whoever holds the brief for delivering the cross-curricular theme. Nevertheless, in 2000 the DfEE (now the DfES) set up an initiative to link schools more closely with farming, food growing and the countryside, and the *Growing Schools* project now offers workshops and support for teachers wanting to develop such projects. *Growing Schools* is organised by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (DfEE, 2000).

Community Gardens are an increasing feature of schools that are committed to environmental education and these are supported by *Learning*



Fig. 9.6 The 'Panther Garden' in a school in Tucson, Arizona.

through Landscapes (an organisation concerned with the development of school grounds for educational purposes), which claims that up to 50% of the curriculum can be taught outside in the open air (*Learning through Landscapes*, 1999). Indeed, OFSTED is increasingly interested in how school grounds can be used to develop the curriculum. Interviews with teachers undertaken in west London suggest that a wide range of subjects can be addressed ranging from literacy (reading seed packet instructions and writing gardening diaries), numeracy (measuring plots), design and technology (building the plots), geography (identifying how different plants come from different areas), science (eco-systems, weather and soil conditions) and environmental issues (such as recycling) (Watts, 1999). The 'Panther Garden' in Tucson is an extension of the gardening project described earlier in this chapter which was initiated to work with young people excluded from an early age, in practical food growing projects. Children are being involved in the construction of the garden, from transporting earth to painting murals, under the supervision of a volunteer expert in horticulture (Fig. 9.6). The Black Environmental Network in the UK (BEN) has also worked with a number of schools in multi-ethnic areas to develop 'cultural garden projects' in which students can learn about each others' cultural heritage from the food different people eat, to different cultures' attitudes towards nature.

Healing

Allotments have been used in a number of ways to help marginalised groups and individuals. For example, the *Natural Growth Project* (Grut in White, 2002) attempts to rehabilitate severely traumatised refugees through working with soil and the land, in a one-to-one relationship with a professional therapist. This has been found to have significant therapeutic value for people who have been severely traumatised. In St Petersburg, community gardening has been found to have therapeutic as well as dietary and environmental value; for example, the Artificial Limb Institute rehabilitates amputees from Chechnya, partly through helping them develop gardening skills (Gavrilov, 1996).

Increasingly, interest is developing in the provision of allotment plots for groups of refugees which enable them to apply the skills they may have brought from their home country (particularly if from a rural area), to provide food in circumstances in which their income is extremely limited, and to provide a meaningful occupation whilst their application for asylum is being considered (White, 2002).

Community gardening has been shown to have positive benefits both for prisoners and for neighbourhoods plagued by crime. The ‘Gardening Angels’ in Detroit, USA have created 200 gardens in the city which are driving out drug abuse and gang activity, and providing produce for homeless groups. This project has involved a diverse group of people including prisoners and drug and alcohol rehabilitation patients (Roseland, 1998). This also speaks to the restorative nature of gardens for their gardeners as a place to escape pressures of everyday life, a benefit noted at Brighton’s Whitehawk project (Maryon, 1998), which is now being picked up by Groundwork Trust in the UK in their work with offenders given community service sentences on allotments. On this ‘Healing Gardens’ project, offenders, according to their skills, are partnered with people who are no longer able to manage gardening because of illness, disability or frailty – a sentence which has a wider social and environmental benefit as well as acting as a punishment or remedial sentence for the offender (Groundwork Trust, in White, 2002). Likewise, in Russia, in the largest prison in St Petersburg, two gardens which contribute food for 10000 inmates are found to offer meaningful and valuable employment for some prisoners.

9.2.3 Environmental benefits

This chapter has already indicated some of the environmental benefits of allotments and community gardens where they contribute to urban food growing. Through the last decade, Sustain, (formerly the SAFE Alliance) has campaigned against the increasing food miles generated by transporting foodstuffs over long, unnecessary distances. They estimate that food transportation constitutes around 25% of freight travelling by road, with concomitant environmental pollution (Sustain, 2002). More food growing

in cities also provides an outlet for organic waste which can be composted rather than returned to landfill. This capacity for recycling materials has been identified in the ETRAC report as an environmental benefit of allotments – from composting to the re-use of materials such as carpets for mulch and plastic bottles as scarecrows and cloches. ETRAC also cites the opportunity for bio-diversity offered by allotments and community gardens. Third world urban agricultural gardening has been reported as using more recycled material than common rural food production methods, as well as fewer inputs (such as water and chemicals). This and the fact that it produces a greater variety, higher quality of food and between three and 15 times the yield per hectare suggests that there may be benefits to expanding urban agriculture in the first world as well (Smit, 2002).

Reclamation of derelict land

In the UK there are currently 19340 hectares of derelict land and buildings, 6970 of which the government considers suitable for housing development. Much of this land will be contaminated from previous industrial land-uses and will need to be decontaminated before it can be developed, although some land will be contaminated to a degree that will prevent it being used for food production. However, there are both local and international examples of the use of allotments and community gardens as a viable and productive use of such land. One of the most dramatic examples of a conversion of a derelict site to much more productive, although temporary, social and environmental use was enacted in Wandsworth (an inner London borough) in 1997 when a group of political activists occupied the site of an abandoned gin factory to protest its proposed sale for a supermarket and high income housing. Although later evicted, the group constructed a ‘sustainable village’ on the site, incorporating permaculture beds for crops and gardens (Halfacree, 1999).

Halfacree has argued how this ‘Pure Genius’ campaign represented a particularly unstable, or fluid, form of protest or alternative practice. *The Land is Ours*, which co-ordinated the action, campaigns for a fairer distribution of land and its more environmentally sustainable management, which sits interestingly alongside the transient nature of its protest. Such campaigning has been styled ‘DIY culture’, but notwithstanding its association with political activity on the margins of society, it is a helpful way of conceptualising much of the work that goes on in allotments and community gardens, and this point will be referred back to in the conclusion to this chapter.

Crouch and Ward give examples of a number of local authorities which have reclaimed small sites from unused waste spaces, such as The Culpeper Garden in Islington, North London. Here, small growing plots have been incorporated into a park through which weave paths open to all (1997: 236, 248). During the 1990s, there were a number of initiatives on UK council housing estates which attempted to transform the surrounding open

land, such as the Holmewood Estate in Bradford which was funded through the City Challenge Government programme to create allotments and a community garden, and the Appletree Court Estate in Salford which cultivated the roofs of apartment buildings on which now stand permaculture tunnels full of tropical fruit and vegetables, creating a 'productive and pretty landscape in what was a bleak environment' (Randall, 1997).

In North America, Roseland (1998) has used a number of initiatives to advocate the creation of environmentally sustainable cities including the 'Green Gorillas' of New York City (who cleaned up an empty, derelict site, known locally as 'Bums' Row' on the Lower East Side and now grow fruit, vegetables and flowers, as well as having bee hives), and the 'Gardening Angels' in Detroit. Finally the Alex Wilson Community Garden in Toronto exemplifies the potential for rehabilitation (Irvine *et al.*, 1999). This was designed as a memorial for a local environmentalist, and incorporated strong landscape design principles (one of the neighbouring buildings housed a design consultancy which helped sponsor the project), which incorporated plots gardened by a variety of people, from a local restaurant owner who grew fresh herbs, to social services outlets. The site occupies previously derelict land between two blocks and the local community was involved in its development. Elsewhere in Toronto there are now over 200 community gardens, which occupy spaces between apartment buildings, on rooftops and beneath power lines. Food is produced to be consumed by the gardeners themselves, as well as to go to community kitchens and food banks.

Unfortunately, the tenure of these spaces is often fragile. Community gardens in New York City (of which there were over 700 in 1998) have recently been transferred under a Mayoral order from the protection of the Parks Department to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development in order to free the spaces for housing development (Glenn, 1998). Whilst Glenn questions the community gardens' capacity to significantly diminish local social and environmental injustices, he argues 'they give the city desperately needed green space; they allow citizens to work on collective projects that aren't directly regulated by the government or by the market; and most of them bring together people of different classes and races, and thus make the city seem a little bit less like a terrifying caste society' (1998: 128).

9.3 Conclusions

Notwithstanding the association of 'DIY Culture' with political activity at the radical edge, this is a helpful way of conceptualising much of the work that allotment holders and community gardeners do. As suggested in the introduction, urban gardening projects are motivated by a variety of impulses and different degrees of radicalism, which can include a concern

for inequitable wealth and land distribution, social exclusion, and the environment. There is even something of the resistance movement in traditional plot-holding and community gardening, whether it be towards twenty-first century consumerism, supermarket shopping, or the dominance of our disposable society, which finds resonance in Ted Trainer's 'Conservator Society' with its practice of bricolage and re-use (Trainer, 1995). It is often a quiet, dogged, protest which provides individual and collective benefit, but without the media pyrotechnics employed by newer groups. To survive and thrive, the practice of allotment and community gardening needs to be secured by local authority involvement and would benefit from some minimum maintenance and protection. The movement as a whole, and individual projects in particular, need to be supported in nuanced ways so that the projects flourish, and so that allotment and community gardening can continue to be invigorated by innovative projects which can, in turn, inform mainstream practice and provision. To enable this to happen requires local authorities and the programmes which aim to develop local environmental sustainability (such as Local Agenda 21 and Community Plans) to (1) facilitate, (2) support and (3) provide (where provision does not yet exist) allotment and community garden food growing spaces, depending on the needs of individual groups.

Research in an outer London borough has identified recurring complaints that the local authority does not promote allotments enough, has insufficient resources to provide basic maintenance (including, for example, rubbish collection and security), and neglects discussing issues with plot-holders. This is an area in which participation in decision-making and/or management could thrive, and, indeed, a number of authorities are looking at self-management of plots as a way forward. (Although, as has been pointed out by respondents, such a move would have to be well supported with regard to resource transfer.)

That groups like the Wapping Women's Group and the Coriander Club have survived in one of the poorest areas of London, and likewise the Green Gorillas and the Gardening Angels in the most disadvantaged areas of American cities, demonstrates the existing environmental and social need, as well as the value that can accrue from using small spaces in urban areas to grow food. It is clear from these examples that it also accomplishes much more, supporting Smit's claim presented earlier that urban gardening can contribute to greater civic stability. All the examples portrayed show the potential at a range of scales: from individual self-help, to greening the city, to the much broader level at which they can help us to rethink our relationship with food so that as a society we begin to challenge the prevailing food regime with its contorted logic of transporting food thousands of miles, when it can be grown on our doorsteps at a fraction of the social and environmental cost. When revitalising and redeveloping urban areas, provision should be made from the design stage, for small-scale opportunities for local food growing, whilst current derelict spaces (provided they are not chemi-

cally contaminated) should be considered for their potential to 'Green' the city.

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10

Local economies, trade and global sustainability

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Bio-regional and ‘ecological economics’ theory describes the growth of local economic linkages as vital to move post-industrial economies in the direction of sustainability. This involves expanding local stewardship over environmental and economic resources, so that progressively more production for local needs can be done within the community. Far from existing solely in the realm of theory, this is a pattern which is becoming more and more familiar in many parts of North America and Europe. The blossoming initiatives to create local, community-centred economies can be understood in light of the long history of environmental challenges faced by people living in industrialised countries, and the double economic blows of recession and trade liberalisation/globalisation exemplified by the passage of GATT and NAFTA and the development of the EC in the 1990s.

This chapter discusses the dynamic relationship between globalisation and local economic development from both theoretical and practical viewpoints. It provides examples from Toronto, Canada of the synergy among environmental awareness, community organising and ‘alternative’ employment creation (e.g. in environmental remediation and energy conservation activities) which can accompany recession or trade-induced worker layoffs. The resulting local economic patterns tend to be ‘greener’ and more socially sustainable than the globally-tied economic linkages they replace.

10.1 Introduction: economics and ‘local economies’

Economics as a discipline has traditionally been only peripherally concerned with the spatial distribution of economic activity. Some examples of

the types of spatial interests addressed in the economics literature include the location of industries in relation to markets, market size and economies of scale, natural resource endowments and specialisation in international trade, and firms' location decisions in relation to raw materials and other production inputs. However, such important issues as the overall spatial relationships between raw materials, production plants, consumers, and waste disposal/recycling facilities are seldom addressed. Neo-classical economics' rise to preeminence has coincided with technological changes in transportation and communications which have facilitated the movement of money, goods and ideas; economists have regarded the actual location of production, distribution, and consumption in relation to each other over the face of the globe as something which the market can easily mediate efficiently and well.

The spatial distribution of economic activity is receiving new attention from economists, however. Phrases like 'economies of proximity', 'industrial ecology', and 'agglomeration economies' are emerging in the literature, and some economists are attempting to come to terms with the limitations of market theory (or the need for its expansion) in explaining economic relationships 'on the ground'. Paul Krugman, for example, has developed new theoretical approaches to international trade which supplement 'comparative advantage' by emphasising historical patterns of industrial development as determinants of regional specialisation (Krugman, 1990, 1997). Institutional economists like Douglass North recognise social, political, regulatory and other factors as crucial to understanding the economic development of a region (North, 1989).

Economic Globalisation itself leads to at least two spatially-related conundrums: first, the technologies vital for fast long distance transportation of goods, 'just-in-time' inventory control, and global corporate management depend largely on an accelerating use of fossil fuels and other minerals which arguably cannot continue indefinitely; and second, global sourcing using the cheapest primary materials and labour inevitably leaves large amounts of (only marginally less attractive) labour and resource inputs unutilised. While this may not be a 'waste' within the rationale of the individual corporation or industry, it imposes tremendous costs from the viewpoint of a community, region or nation (Sachs, 1993; Shiva, 1993; Altvater, 1993; Shuman, 1998).

'Local economics', or the analysis of economic processes from a relatively small-scale community/political economy perspective, addresses both of these conundrums. By focusing on the spatial relationships between production and consumption while emphasising the importance of production process choices and what happens to wastes, 'local economics' lays the groundwork for understanding what may become of economies if globalisation indeed proves to be technologically, politically, and ecologically unsustainable. In the present, 'local economics' also highlights and examines the situation of those workers and potentially useful primary

inputs which are deemed superfluous or underutilised by the global market.

In principle, community-centred economic and social networks are advantageous on a number of fronts. They teach and foster democracy because local political decision-making happens in a decentralised way. The environmental effects of public decisions are clearly apparent to residents familiar with local ecological constraints, so decision-making tends to be 'greener'. It may also be easier at the local level to see benefits instead of drawbacks in social and ecological complexity and diversity. Short-distance trade and food networks are healthful, reduce climate change stemming from transport, create local jobs, keep money within communities, and can meet particular tastes and demands efficiently. People may be less resistant to taxation when they can see and benefit directly from the results of government spending. The theory and practice of community-centred social and economic networks are discussed by a growing number of authors (Boswell, 1990; Forsey, 1993; Dobson, 1993; Lappe and DuBois, 1994; Morrison, 1995; Norgaard, 1994; Nozick, 1992; Roseland, 1997; Shuman, 1998; Pierce and Dale, 1999; Hofrichter, 2000; Cox, 1997; Bernard and Young, 1997; Hines, 2000; Hannum, 1997; Beatley, 2000; Barker, 1999; Carrel, 2001).

The phrase 'local economics' is used to mean the spatial relationships between production, consumption, inputs and waste products, in the context of a specific ecological, social, political and geographic environment. Whether or not production, consumption, inputs and wastes are measured and denominated in money terms, it is their 'local-ness' which is crucial from this perspective; efficiencies in the use of labour and inputs are evaluated from the viewpoint of the whole local economy, not the regional, national, or international economy. The boundaries of the local economy thus need to be defined carefully – what is meant by 'local' will differ in each particular case. Territorial distinctions can be the source of potential conflicts where different groups of people have opposing spatial interests or claims. But in many places around the world, people have come to terms with and reached a collective understanding of the overlapping political jurisdictions, ecological or bio-regional areas such as watersheds or geologically-distinct regions, and historically-derived land-use divisions, which together determine the area of a 'local economy'.

10.2 Trade and community

The insidious effects of trade on human communities and on local economies have been documented and commented upon by a number of writers. Marcia Nozick, for example, points out that

diversity and uniqueness of place is lost in the process of economic globalisation (the replacement of local markets with global markets). We forget who we are and where we come from . . . Rootlessness, transitoriness and dispossession are the fall-out of an increasing trend

toward globalisation and global competition . . . Many industries are viable within their local regions, yet they are being shut down because of global management. (Nozick, 1992: 3–6)

She lists five major ‘pressure points of community breakdown’ as economic de-industrialisation, environmental degradation, loss of local control over communities, social degradation and neglect of basic human needs, and erosion of local identity and cultural diversity (Nozick, 1992: 7).

How does this process happen?

As a community is seduced into wanting the products of another region they will become dependent on those products and give up, often unknowingly, the control over their community. The economic surplus created within a community is then sent out of the community to buy the wanted goods. If the surplus were spent in the community it would be much more prosperous. (author unknown, ‘Introduction to Bioregionalism’, 1991: 4)

Herman Daly makes the similar observation that trade ‘sins against community by demanding more mobility and by further separating ownership and control’ and that it ‘sins against distributive justice by widening the disparity between labour and capital in high wage countries . . . against macroeconomic stability . . . and also against the criterion of sustainable (economic) scale’ (Daly, 1993: 129).

The Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA), in a report on the environmental implications of NAFTA and other trade agreements which it prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy, documents some of the negative environmental impacts of trade liberalisation and provides evidence from Canadian experience (CELA, 1993). Among other things, agreements like NAFTA can undermine local and provincial environmental standards, create political pressure for non-enforcement of environmental regulations, speed and exacerbate the depletion of natural resources, and shift the policy debate in anti-community and anti-democratic ways (Nader *et al*, 1993; Hines, 2000).

Admittedly, there are good reasons for some amount of trade. The dissemination of ‘ideas, knowledge, art, hospitality, travel’ – to use the words of John Maynard Keynes – enriches people’s lives in countless ways (Moggeridge, 1993). Medical devices and drugs produced in some places should be supplied for humanitarian reasons to those who need them worldwide. Foodstuffs may need to be traded in time of famine, and exchanges of minor food and craft items satisfy people’s attraction to the unusual and new. As a contribution to diversity – which is an essential part of many definitions of sustainability – such limited trade could be a positive factor (Daly, 1993: 1–2).

Nonetheless, it seems to be trade’s propensity to grow, and feed on itself and keep growing, which is its most dangerous characteristic – both for human communities and for the environment (Ponting, 1991: 154). Trade

activates and stimulates a number of 'positive feedback' mechanisms which help keep its scale increasing. For example, a corporation that avoids paying for pollution-control equipment may reap higher profits, which allow it to buy out another firm and 'rationalise production', putting some people out of work, which forces them to move away, and saps consumer expenditures, which undermines the stability of the community and reduces local political pressure for pollution control. The firm can then threaten to lay off still more workers if the community does not make land-use, tax or other concessions. Its profits rise further; it buys other plants in nearby towns. To benefit from economies of scale, it reorganises its plants to specialise, each producing one component part so that none of the plants makes anything that is useful without information held by the firm's central management. Production decisions which are vital to the health of all the communities where plants are located are made in a far-away headquarters office, and so on. The expansion of such processes on a global scale is possible and economically feasible only because of trade.

In nature, cycles often depend on 'negative feedbacks', not positive ones. There are many natural processes which contain the seeds of their own limitation. For example, the growth of individual plants and animals is limited, once they have reached adulthood, through species-specific hormonal and chemical processes which have apparently evolved to help the species survive within the constraints of its eco-system. These processes work like a thermostat designed to turn the heat on when the temperature drops below a certain level; if the temperature rises too far, the thermostat turns the heat off again. A 'negative feedback' corrects any departure of a system from normalcy (Peet, 1992: 75–6).

What sort of 'negative feedbacks' might we envision which would help to keep trade in check? Some recent writings on trade and environment stress the importance of protectionism, or controls on trade imposed at the level of national governments, to accomplish the goal of limiting its scale. Herman Daly and John Cobb, for example, write that a sort of targeted protectionism is needed to foster economic self-sufficiency within the United States (Daly and Cobb, 1989: 363). Stronger international environmental agreements in conjunction with revised trade agreements are also cited as a way of reorienting trade for sustainability (Lang and Hines, 1993: 138–40). Others advocate limits or taxes on international financial transfers, to reduce the facility with which global corporate transactions are made (Altwater, 1993: 259–60; Tobin, 1995). This regulatory approach to limiting trade, motivated in part by social and ecological concerns, is one way in which human society may be able, as Elmar Altwater says, to 'build into the functioning of the economic system a series of imperatives which prevent ecological damage' (Altwater, 1993: 213).

Outlined below is another approach which – while not at all contradictory to national and international regulation of the global market – instead places its primary emphasis at the local, community level.

10.3 Self-limiting trade: theory

What are some of the analytical foundations of a community-centred approach to ‘negative feedbacks’ for trade? For one thing, they require theoretical tools which are far more adept than those of traditional economics. Neo-classical economics, based on analysis of self-interested individuals’ behaviour, ignores other entire realms of human action and motivations – such as the fact that people often make choices with the welfare and interests of others in mind (Nelson and Ferber, 1993; Folbre, 2001; Van Staveren, 2001).

While the theoretical economic justifications for trade’s supposed contributions to economic efficiency are increasingly recognised as faulty (Krugman, 1990; Daly and Cobb, 1989; Ropke, 1993), traditional economic analysis is still used at all levels of policy decision-making to justify government action (and inaction), from international trade agreements to child care programmes (Waring, 1988). Its failure to measure many economic contributions made by women, its emphasis on individual over collective wants/needs, and the translation of this emphasis into policy, harms communities in both rich and poor countries (Elson, 1993; Palmer, 1992; Nozick, 1999).

New economic theories and models, based on collective processes and the centrality of people’s homes and communities to their ways of life, are beginning to appear. Hilikka Pietila, for instance, envisions economic transactions as taking place within a series of three concentric circles. The central one is the ‘free’ economy, consisting mainly of homes and family groups, in which labour and goods are exchanged for free; surrounding this is the ‘fettered’ economy, where governments regulate and control markets to which different people have varying degrees of access; finally, surrounding the others, there is the ‘closed’ economy, to which individuals have little access because international transactions are organised almost entirely by trans-national corporations and government treaties (Pietila, 1997).

Brian Milani calls for re-framing of the state ‘as a means to help the individual to fulfil a social purpose rather than as a policeman or as a substitute for real social bonds’. He speaks of ‘community oriented self-regulation’ as a process which could ‘design social forms to consciously cultivate and support that positive side of the human personality that seeks harmony, growth and meaning’ (Milani, 2000: 184).

Mark Roseland analyses the synergies between ‘natural capital’ and ‘social capital’ in generating sustainable community development. He says ‘the critical resource for enhancing social capital is not money – rather, the critical resources are trust, imagination, the relations between individuals and groups, and time . . . Focusing solely on money to provide security is using nineteenth century thinking to address twenty-first century challenges’ (Roseland, 1999: 198–204).

Much theoretical work that is central to feminism is also vitally important for community-based approaches to issues of international significance (including trade). Marcia Nozick summarises these contributions as

... a raising of consciousness to appreciate feminine, life-affirming values, long neglected by western culture. They are values similar to those held by aboriginal cultures and the ecology movement. They include:

- co-operation, empathy and nurture stemming from a relational, non-hierarchical view of the world;
- a focus on process rather than end results: ends and means are one;
- a belief that social change begins with personal transformation;
- the valuing of intuition, subjectivity, creativity and spontaneity. (Nozick, 1992: 38)

These feminine principles are forming the foundation for an alternative 'feminist ecological economics' vision of society. It relates to how we work, organise and make decisions – smaller, more personal structures and processes, co-operative work situations, consensus decision-making and reliance on community supports and the informal economy. They are values which support the building of sustainable communities.

The central theoretical insight linking community-based processes with 'negative feedbacks' on trade is that just as trade can work to destroy communities, strong communities have the potential to limit the growth and extension of trade. The terrain of the local is extremely important, not just because it is 'close to home', but also because community-based economic alternatives and resistance to centralised economic control represent a fundamental challenge to the juggernaut of globalisation (Korten, 1994).

Vandana Shiva puts the issue this way:

What at present exists as the global is not the democratic distillation of all local and national concerns worldwide, but the imposition of a narrow group of interests from a handful of nations on a world scale ... The roots of the ecological crisis at the institutional level lie in the alienation of the rights of local communities to actively participate in environmental decisions. The reversal of ecological decline involves strengthening local rights. *Every* local community equipped with rights and obligations, constitutes a new *global* order for environmental care. (Shiva, 1993: 154–5)

For Barbara Brandt, stronger community-based economies not only help people to survive the vicissitudes of world market fluctuations, they hold the seed of more fundamental economic transformation.

As individuals and households become more self-reliant and empowered, they lay the groundwork for new community responses to

larger social and economic problems. When plant closings, layoffs, loss of local stores, or other large-scale economic hardships afflict their communities, such empowered, creative individuals may be more able to develop new solutions to these problems. And the new community ties they have been forming through their shared activities serve as a base for building new economic structures and enterprises that more fully meet their community's needs. (Brandt, 1995: 153)

Strong communities act as 'negative feedback' mechanisms on trade in two main ways.

Firstly, through community solidarity, knowledge of the local ecosystems, and a sense of common purpose, they are able to stand up to intimidation by large corporations, resisting production practices which endanger workers, social solidarity, or the local environment (Lipschutz, 1999). This effectively limits corporate control over the geographical areas, natural resources, and labour power involved. The more distant the corporation's headquarters and the less community-sensitive its production practices, the more intensely these will be resisted by a strong community. This has happened, for example, in a number of cases in North America and elsewhere involving mines which were opposed by local people on environmental grounds. Opposition led by aboriginal groups blocked development of the Windy Craggy copper and gold mine in northern British Columbia in 1993, and the Voisey's Bay nickel mine in Labrador in the late 1990s. Mine developments near Yellowstone Park in Montana, and in northern Wisconsin, were also halted by local environmentalists and native people in the late 1990s (Gedicks, 2000). Coalitions of indigenous people and environmentalists were able to stop a Scott Paper Co. eucalyptus plantation in West Papua in 1989, a Conoco Oil expansion in Ecuador in 1991, and a Stone Container Co. lease and harvest of pine forests in Honduras in 1992 (Weissman, 1993), among many others. Asian auto companies' proclivity for locating new factories in non-union states of the deep South in the US, instead of mid-western communities where workers have experience in organised auto sector employment, is another example.

Secondly, as globalisation increasingly strips control over production and consumption from communities, consigning many of them to stagnation when cheaper sources of resources or labour power are found elsewhere, they lose wages and disposable income. If they are able, because of strong community ties, to begin producing locally for local needs, they may be able to effectively remove themselves from the global trading system, at least in part. If its participation is not needed by the global economy on the production side, a strong community can bid permanent farewell to the consumption side as well (and still meet its inhabitants' needs), thus shrinking the size of the globalised economy. This is related to the 'second crisis of capitalism' argument advanced by James O'Connor (O'Connor, 1994). Workers at the former National Steel plant in the small town of Weirton,

West Virginia, banded together to buy the factory when the company was going to shut it down; Weirton Steel is now the second-largest majority worker-owned manufacturer in the US. The firm invests seriously in re-tooling and worker training for participation and responsibility in the company's decision-making (Lappé and DuBois, 1994: 93). Similarly, workers at a paper mill in Kapuskasing, Ontario, bought the plant from a multinational firm to protect their jobs when the plant was threatened with closure. The mining town of Kirkland Lake in northern Ontario decided to redevelop and market itself as a retirement community, creating many jobs, when its main employer, a mine, closed down. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the Steel Valley Authority helps workers laid off due to extensive industrial relocation and factory closures to create new local jobs in such enterprises as bakeries (Lappé and DuBois, 1994: 95–7). Organic farmers in Ireland – as in many other places – have developed a growing local market for their produce in farmers' markets and restaurants, creating dozens of jobs (McMahon, 2001). A strong network of co-operatives in Evangeline and other areas of Prince Edward Island, Canada, has enabled many communities in that long-isolated province to create an economy based on local agriculture, industry, and service provision for local needs (Roseland, 1998: 164). When the town of Pattonsburg, Missouri, was nearly destroyed by a flood in 1993, its citizens took the opportunity to move the town to higher ground and design a new community incorporating principles of ecological sustainability, including passive solar building construction, attraction of environmentally-responsible industries, bio-treatment of municipal wastes in a wetland, and methane recovery from agricultural wastes for energy production (Sitarz, 1998: 256).

An emphasis on strengthening community, therefore, holds the possibility not just of limiting trade through centralised administrative and regulatory means (which, besides being hierarchical, are subject to the vagaries and influences of the political process), but of planting within the global trading system a size-limitation mechanism which becomes more effective the larger the trading system grows.

10.4 Self-limiting trade: practice

Communities that can meet their own needs are less dependent on the global economy. The rapid growth of the 'service sector' in relation to the overall economy implies that an increasing localisation of production, at least in money terms, is well advanced in many parts of the world (Krugman, 1997: 211–12). However, a local economy requires goods as well as services, so the crux of local economic sustainability is the extent to which basic inputs to the economy are generated locally – beginning with food, clothing, shelter, and the raw materials for other locally-consumed products.

In self-sufficient communities, it is possible to live a healthy, fulfilling, productive life without consuming goods and services which come from far away. But this requires knowing one's neighbours: their skills, needs, abilities, and trustworthiness. This makes possible the sorts of exchanges which are efficient and beneficial for everyone concerned – through skills exchanges, community-supported agriculture, Local Exchange Trading Schemes (see Chapter 8), credit unions or informal credit groups, urban gardens, child-care and other co-operatives, environmental housing improvement programs or any other enterprises where local resources are transformed into goods and services which local people need (Norberg-Hodge, 1994: 3–4; Shuman, 1998; Milani, 2000; Pierce and Dale, 1999; Mellor, 1993).

Working to create community has a lot to be said for it. It is environmentally and economically sensible to reduce the transport of things from where they naturally occur or are produced to where they are used and enjoyed. This requires less fuel, involves less spoilage and breakage along the way, implies less risk and dependence on global financial and transportation networks, and makes possible a closer match between what people want and what they get. The costs of international transfers of goods seem likely to rise, not just because of declining stocks of fossil fuels and pollution regulations related to climate change, but also because of the risks and complexity of international distribution systems. This may make locally-produced goods more and more competitive in the coming years. Moreover, community work is often fun and rewarding in an inter-personal sense, and it leads to the development of the social ties and friendships which make life more complex and rewarding and constitute the foundations of a social culture.

Building local economic self-sufficiency involves fostering the development, preservation, and appreciation of the skills needed to maintain high quality of life. The transition to a more sustainable future involving much less trade than at present, between much stronger and more self-sufficient local communities, offers many challenges. People all over the world are already working to address these challenges by building and strengthening local, community-based economies.

The Community Indicators movement, which includes initiatives in hundreds of towns and cities, involves local people in developing benchmarks for their community's improvements in quality of life, measuring such things as economic security, ecological integrity, and political empowerment. Sustainable Seattle, for example, beginning in 1980, has monitored more than 100 indicators in the Seattle metropolitan region. Citizens in Jacksonville, Florida, have used their local indicator system to rate politicians and public expenditures and to press for environmental clean-ups (Shuman, 1998: 185). A few communities, including Oakland, California, and Chester, Pennsylvania, have developed methodologies for measuring imports to and exports from their local economies, and thus keeping track

of leakages which damage community economic sustainability and moving toward import substitution. The Community Renewal Project at the Rocky Mountain Institute in Colorado uses this type of analysis in its local economic development work (Shuman, 1998: 186). GPI Atlantic, based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is developing similar community sustainability indicators for the Maritimes in Canada.

Models for local economies vary widely. From the co-operative based economies of Prince Edward Island and Mondragon in Spain to the ecological agriculture based economy in Gaivotas, Colombia; from the local lending-circles of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, and similar micro-finance enterprises throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America to the Local Currency movement in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand (Raddon, 2002), local economy initiatives are as diverse as the populations that invent and build them.

10.5 Toronto's local economy

Toronto, for example, is home to a vast and growing network of locally-based initiatives aimed at creating jobs by addressing environmental problems, and increasing local control of basic economic necessities such as food, shelter, transportation and money.

When Central American refugees form an agricultural co-operative, lease land outside Toronto, and provide weekly food baskets of organic vegetables to urban consumers in a 'community shared agriculture' project; or when the City of Toronto provides seed loans for energy-efficient retrofits of private housing which create construction jobs and save both energy and money; or when a largely abandoned industrial area along the Lake Ontario waterfront is converted to a 'green industry' centre, this contributes to the development of a more ecological, less wasteful, more locally-centred economy.

There are countless more examples in Toronto of small-scale organising and local economic initiatives involving people of all ethnicities and backgrounds, some of which are summarised in Box 10.1.

While some of these initiatives have received limited government assistance, others have had to fight restrictive government regulations and policies every step of the way. The lakeshore windmill project, for example, has faced a stringent Environmental Impact assessment on its siting, including allegations that migrating birds and Monarch butterflies will be harmed by the turbines; the many environmental benefits of producing electricity from wind power instead of fossil or nuclear fuels hardly fit into the standard land-use focused environmental impact procedures. At the same time, the project has benefited from policies of the provincial crown corporation Ontario Hydro which allow consumers' electric meters to run backwards if they are generating power for the grid, and from the municipal

Box 10.1 Local economy initiatives in Toronto

- The Toronto Renewable Energy Co-operative (TREC) is constructing large windmills on the shores of Lake Ontario to produce electricity for the city's power grid, lowering the utility bills of co-op members (TREC, 2001).
- Ethiopian immigrants, many of them taxi drivers, create loan pools like those they knew in Africa, giving members of the group access to far more credit than commercial banks would provide.
- Neighbourhood activists in the South Riverdale neighbourhood and other areas of the city work with government and industry representatives to carry out environmental clean-ups, meet the challenges posed by plant closings/'restructuring', and plan for healthy neighbourhood development.
- Foodshare, a local non-profit organisation, fosters community gardens, rooftop gardens, and organic food production and consumption through its 'Good Food Box' programs, which provide delivery of local produce direct to households (Foodshare, 2001).
- The Toronto Food Policy Council works to increase understanding and feasibility of locally-based food networks.
- The Toronto Island Community Land Trust, negotiated by local residents, shows how complex land ownership and stewardship issues can be resolved using unconventional institutional approaches.
- Pioneering eco-technology pilot projects include the Toronto Board of Education's Boyne River Ecology School and Toronto Islands Natural Science School, and the privately-built, award-winning Healthy House, all autonomous 'off-the-energy-grid' buildings featuring 'living machine' natural wastewater treatment.
- Green\$aver, established in 1993, performs home energy audits, repairs and retrofits, generating about \$1.3 million in the local economy over the past two years and forging wide-ranging partnerships to create jobs by upgrading the energy efficiency and environmental quality of buildings and of neighbourhood life (Green\$aver, 2001).
- The Environmental Centre for New Canadians organises recent immigrants to Canada around environmental issues, providing a focus for advocacy and job creation.

government's willingness to lease a site on publicly-owned land for the windmills. Plans for the Healthy House were sponsored by the federal Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), and the Toronto school board's commitment to environmental education led to the

ecological pilot projects at the Boyne River School. But government policies wreaked havoc with citizens' initiatives for land management on the Toronto Islands until the City of Toronto was able to broker a deal resulting in the Community Land Trust.

On balance, it is the commitment, involvement and energy of non-governmental organisations, activists and individuals that seems decisive in the originality and success of such sustainable community-building initiatives. For more information on green community development in Toronto, see Roberts and Brandum, 1995, and the Toronto Community Economic Development Learning Network, 2002.

As the largest city in Canada, Toronto benefits from ethnic and cultural diversity and a wide range of community traditions, many of which have been part of the city's heritage for decades/generations even if they have their original roots in other parts of the world. Toronto also has relatively well-developed environmental and community organisations, and well-defined downtown urban neighbourhoods, which facilitate local-level organising around particular communities' needs within the metropolitan area. At the same time, pressing urban environmental problems and high unemployment rates have put attention to local environmental and job creation issues at the top of the public agenda. This mix of diverse potentialities and needs characterises many urban areas worldwide. They speak to the need to understand self-sufficiency and local-ness in this context in an outward-looking, tolerant way which is welcoming of diversity – far from the xenophobic or 'survivalist' perspective on local sovereignty which suppresses divergence and dissent.

10.6 The potential of local economies

The fact that examples of burgeoning local economies similar to Toronto's can be found all over the world indicates that in many different contexts, the potential is growing for economies to become less dependent on the global economy even as they continue to participate in it. In many places, including Canada today, the growth of local economies is also related to the cuts in government expenditures and fiscal restraint which are part of 'structural adjustment' – whether mediated by the World Bank/International Monetary Fund, or part of a neo-conservative fiscal agenda. Communities worldwide are having their resilience tested as they struggle to find the means to meet people's basic needs.

This raises a number of interesting theoretical and empirical research questions, especially concerning the relationship between globalisation and the growth of local economies (Perkins, 1996, 2000). For example, is a focus on local economies misguided, short-sighted, or even elitist, because it takes attention away from many pressing and dangerous problems of globalisation, especially the need for international income redistribution? What is

the true potential of local economies to supply large quantities of basic necessities and consumer goods in an efficient and fair way, and thus to serve as a real alternative to the global market? Will local economies continue to be able to survive and grow ‘in the interstices’ of larger-scale economic activity – and is this enough? Should progressive governments adopt policies which support and help to incubate local economic institutions and processes, or focus elsewhere and leave them alone? Or is removal of existing policy barriers to innovation and creative local-economy experimentation the most important priority?

Recognising these crucial contextual questions, the focus here is on the potential for local economy creation in specific situations. While a local economy perspective is generally attractive from both a social and an environmental standpoint, building local economies seems easier in some circumstances than others. The following comments about the growth of local economies seem salient across a relatively wide range of circumstances.

During economic recessions, it is likely that more people will need the sorts of alternative sources of income that LETS systems and other local economy/community development initiatives can provide; they also will have more time for political organising and volunteer work than in boom times when unemployment rates are lower. Retrofits and alternative uses of urban buildings (e.g. for food production and social services instead of industry) are probably more likely during economic recessions than booms. In Toronto, vacant industrial buildings downtown became available for urban food production, bicycle repair operations, community kitchens and other local uses during the recession of the 1990s; once the economy improved, such buildings began to be renovated into high-priced housing condominiums.

If environmental pollution becomes worse during boom times, however, this may lead to more public commitment and available funds for environmental organising, job-creation in environmental re-mediation and other pollution-control work, and local political organising around environmental causes.

The ‘push’ factors for local economic development may thus fluctuate between an emphasis on local goods and service provision (during recessions) and environmental re-mediation/protecting the local environment (during booms).

Government and private foundation-funded pilot projects serve as extremely useful examples of what local people can do, and their worth in demonstrating and fine-tuning the techniques of alternative energy, food and other local economic endeavours is crucial. The CMHC’s sponsorship of the Healthy House, the City of Toronto’s policy work on sustainable transportation and the Food Policy Research Council as well as GreenSaver, the school board’s development of the Boyne River and Toronto Islands ecology school projects, are all examples of the important role of publicly-funded pilot projects.

Long-term demand and consumption shifts are inexorable; people's preferences are shifting toward greener products, more locally-produced food, re-use and recycling, etc. Local Agenda 21 initiatives play a role in this, as do consumer education, boycotts, and local entrepreneurial activities. Both the local-production and the environmental-protection sides of community-based economies are likely to be stimulated by these long-term trends.

Changing, open, diverse societies clearly make the growth of local economies easier. Acceptance of loan pools as an alternative to banking institutions, shifts in and widening of food tastes, international skills transmission and improvement in international income distribution as immigrants send money back home all demonstrate the benefits and value of social diversity.

Pressures for more growth, trade, sprawl and globalisation are intense, and the risks are growing of a cascading political/economic/environmental collapse. This means that the stakes are high and the need for local economic alternatives may suddenly become acute.

From a geologic time-scale perspective, economic change is quite rapid; possibly the theoretical studies and practical pilot projects of the kind discussed here will help to bring about an evolutionary shift toward more local economies 'in time', even if the progress is hard to discern initially.

Just as social and ecological conditions differ from place to place, the pillars of each local economy will differ as well, and so will the priorities and patterns of each local economy's development.

10.7 Conclusions

As local economies grow in response to economic globalisation and global ecological realities, their characteristics and implications will become clearer. Whether they represent an accommodation to the global economy or an alternative to it, local economies seem destined to play an important role in many people's lives.

There are at least two good reasons for economists, planners and policy makers to pay attention to the growth of local economies: they can provide a socially and ecologically attractive alternative to globalisation, and their growth seems to be at least partly driven by globalisation – in other words, local economies are an emergent phenomenon worthy of attention in their own right.

What facilitates the growth of a local economy? Are there preconditions or requirements for its development? How does public policy affect this?

It is easier for local economies to grow when all people have access to a guaranteed basic income, health care, child care and educational opportunities. This allows people, even if they lose or cannot get paid employment, to devote themselves to alternative forms of economic activity with a 'safety net' in case of illness or change in life circumstances.

Flexibility in the way basic social services are provided is helpful because it allows people to switch to locally-sourced food, health care and housing if they wish, and use the money they may save for other things. This implies welfare payments of a 'guaranteed annual income' kind, rather than food stamps, government housing, etc.

Large-scale economic change happening suddenly in a local area is more conducive to development of local economic activity than protracted, smaller shifts. This is because in the former situation, people are less likely to feel personally responsible for their being laid off. When big changes hit a community, a unified response seems easier and new institutions and lifestyles are more acceptable.

If pilot projects or small-scale local economic endeavours pre-exist a globalisation shock, this can help people to see them as a viable solution to new problems. There may be an openness to community approaches within a short time following economic upheaval which dissipates over time as people 'adjust' on their own, so a strong energy for creation of community-based economic institutions may be lost in the initial learning-by-doing phase. Pre-existing trials and 'fringe' projects can reduce this. Individual adjustment and alienation are dangerous because of the high costs in depression, family violence, alcoholism and other health effects. This of course has many gender implications.

A strong community is essential. People who know each other well, and maintain intergenerational connections, strong local institutions like churches, parents' groups, clubs, and sports leagues, can create the forums for people to expand and develop their interpersonal ties into new areas. There is no substitute for this sort of community interpersonal self-knowledge.

The longer people have lived in an area, the easier it is for a local economy to develop. People need to know each other as individuals, including each other's non-work related skills and strengths and needs. They need to know how the community works – its institutions and history. They also need to know the local geographical area well: What grows in gardens? Where can you get sand, or walnut planks, or locally-grown apples?

The transition to more locally-centred economies may not at all be an easy one. Very often the market does not give clear signals of an impending economic or ecological crash. The price of cod, for example, did not rise to reflect the growing crisis concerning the scarcity of the fish before the collapse of the Northern Atlantic fishery. Because of global competitive pressures, the growing scarcity of many raw materials is not being reflected in price levels. So, while it is true that economic pressures may force communities to make some progressive changes, in many cases crises can just increase desperation, panic and competition. Although it is the responsibility of governments to foresee and forestall such crises, the widespread public lack of confidence in governments' ability to do so seems understandable and justified. However, it is also true that public processes, and

public money, can at times provide very useful support for grass-roots economic initiatives.

Van der Ryn and Cowan (1996) mention a number of principles that can be applied to the policy formulation process in a sort of test of the degree to which it can be expected to produce ecologically-desirable outcomes. These principles have been paraphrased as follows:

- Does it cross traditional disciplinary and jurisdictional boundaries?
- Is it locally-specific, taking into account local social and ecological conditions?
- Does it include means to re-mediate past mistakes?
- Does it encourage public questioning, learning and participation?
- Is it concerned with conservation, regeneration and stewardship?
- Does it allow for scale-mixing – replication of the processes envisioned at both smaller and larger scales, as needed, to echo the fractal structure found in natural processes?
- Do the political boundaries involved reflect geographic boundaries (watersheds, airsheds, soil distributions, etc.)?

Clearly, these questions imply a standard for policy making which few, if any, governments anywhere in the world can now live up to. But they are, at the very least, forward-looking, and indicative of the kinds of changes that may be needed if the ‘state’ – local, regional, national and international – is to take a leadership role in making ecologically-sensitive policy decisions. This includes decisions which can help locally-centred economies to grow and flourish.

The sceptical viewpoint on the role of public policy in fostering or even permitting local alternatives to globalisation is strongly expressed by Gould *et al* (1996). They state:

Local citizen-worker environmental movements face considerable resistance from economic and political actors in their locality and their region . . . Each of our empirical studies forces us to challenge the efficacy of ‘think globally, act locally’. The central reason that acting locally is not sufficient to protect local eco-systems is that most environmental degradation is an outcome of the operations of the treadmill of production . . . (where) economic and political influence are linked. (Gould *et al*, 1996: 164–73)

They also question the potential of locally-centred economies to effectively counter globalisation, stating:

We believe that while local movements can support a return to more personal, labour-intensive organisations, they cannot create the conditions necessary to sustain such economic reforms . . . In many ways, they yearn to re-establish community-based economic, social, and political organisations that sustain both the social and environmental

bases of their personal and community lives. And yet we have noted that they generally lack the political power to confront the treadmill. (1996: 199)

They argue for extra-local coalitions of locally-based movements which can amass enough political power to challenge aspects of the global economic system.

Even fairly mainstream policy analysts call for increased democratisation at the local level as a way to bring about 'sustainability' – although they tend to be somewhat unclear on what kind of sustainability they are talking about. For example, according to Churchill and Worthington:

An informed and active citizenry at the local level is the cornerstone of a viable civic realm in a global society. The consequences of globalisation are comprehensible and concrete in the locality, and the potential for citizen-driven politics is greatest there. The central requirement for transition to sustainability is therefore widening the scope for meaningful and effective participation in policy and planning which links the locality to global forces. (Churchill and Worthington, 1995: 101)

Many authors emphasise the importance of change from the grass-roots, beginning at the local level, if production processes are to become more ecological and globalisation is to be confronted. Their emphases vary, but many give specific examples of how this process has already begun.

Helena Norberg-Hodge describes a number of mechanisms for creating economic value locally using local skills and resources, including, as mentioned above, skills exchanges, community-supported agriculture, Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS), credit unions and informal credit groups, urban gardens, child-care and other co-operatives, and environmental housing improvement programs (Norberg-Hodge, 1994: 3–4).

For Roy Morrison, the steps involved in building an ecological democracy include democratising finance (through credit unions and community-based banks), building community economies and especially local co-operatives for production and distribution, instituting new ways of accounting for and valuing environmental goods and services, creating a social wage which would provide some income for all, pursuing disarmament and demilitarisation, developing an industrial ecology, dematerialising production, and developing a solar economy (Morrison, 1995: 189–228).

For Enrique Leff, the technological, economic and cultural changes which must take place will begin at the local community level, fuelled by social struggle over access to resources and land. He sees this struggle as necessary if capitalism is to continue in a more ecologically sustainable form (Leff, 1995: 125–9).

Since by definition local economies are particular to specific local areas, they can best be studied in conjunction with activists and community groups

in the places where they are emerging. To expand our view of local economies, what is called for is more empirical economics – from the grass-roots.

This chapter has discussed the definition and characteristics of local economies, and suggested some criteria for public policy which might support or encourage the development of local economic initiatives. While examples do exist, both in Toronto and in other places, of publicly-funded pilot projects as well as longstanding and self-sufficient local-economy programmes, it is important not to overstate the potential of public policy in this area. There is no substitute for the creativity and hard work of people – usually volunteers – striving in their own communities to build better and more ecologically sustainable local economies.

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11

Inequality and community: the missing dimensions of sustainable development

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11.1 The discourse of sustainable development

It is no exaggeration to claim that sustainable development is now the dominant discourse of environmental decision-making. It has influenced policy at all levels, local, regional and global. As concerns about environmental change, and more especially anxiety about risks into the far future implied in modern technologies, threaten human health and even survival, so attention has focused on society's willingness or ability to avert ecological disaster. Yet, the precise meaning and implications of sustainable development remain elusive. While everywhere there is rhetorical genuflection to the idea of sustainable development, there remains little clarity or agreement as to what it means in principle, let alone in practice.

A major reason for this is that sustainable development has been appropriated by opposing interests, each able to underpin or undermine those sets of values and related policies which affect our relations with the environment. Broadly speaking, two distinctive sets of values can be discerned in relation to sustainable development. One set stresses the inherent compatibility between economic development and the conservation of the environment. The other emphasises the inevitable deterioration of the environment through the development of modern forms of technological development. In theoretical terms these contrasting positions are represented by, on the one hand, *ecological modernisation*, and, on the other, by the *Risk Society* thesis. These are examined below. However, both of these very different positions neglect the analytical and practical importance of two components in the relationship between society and the environment. They are *inequality* and *community*, each of which must be central to an

analysis and understanding of the possibilities and prospects for sustainable development.

This chapter will, firstly, demonstrate the limitations of contemporary discourses of ecological modernisation and Risk Society, notably their neglect of inequality and community. It then considers the relevance of these concepts to an understanding of social change in relation to the environment. The argument is illustrated by reference to changes that may be perceived in communities dependent on the nuclear industry. Finally, the implications for policy making and the role of planning, broadly conceived, will be considered as a means to encourage and facilitate change.

11.2 Political modernisation and the environment

Over the past two decades in many western countries there has been a transformation in governance in response to the increasing invasion of market processes into the various domains of social and political life. This process has been termed 'political modernisation' (Leroy and van Tatenhove, 1999). These changes have been encouraged by the ideological shift to the Right but they must also be seen as connected to developing economic globalisation. The rhetoric of the transformation embraces notions of consensus, co-operation and collaboration presenting a view of social development which is apolitical, emphasising cohesion and thereby reducing the focus on conflict. The reality has been a fundamental change in the relationships between the state, the market and society, a shift from a welfare state to an enabling state which has had profound impacts at all levels of policy making, including the environment.

Political modernisation has the following features:

- Most obvious has been the *emphasis on the market* as the fount of efficiency and effectiveness. The encouragement of competition and wealth creation has been accompanied by the dismantling of regulations and its concomitant, the recognition of self-regulation by industry as the normal way of dealing with environmental problems. Moreover, the private sector has taken on the responsibility for delivering a range of formerly public (including environmental) services.
- Political modernisation presents a form of *governance* that is distinctly different from the public policy led, state regulated forms that hitherto existed. It is a form that is, at once, both highly centralised and decentralised. On the one hand, there has been considerable centralisation as political power has been increasingly vested in the executive. On the other hand, as the primacy accorded to the market implies, government relies on the capacity of other agencies, notably the private sector, to deliver. As a result, large areas of public administration formerly controlled by representative forms of government (notably, local govern-

ment) have been devolved to quasi non-governmental organisations (quangos), peopled by appointees drawn from various groups with a high input from the business community.

- There is an emphasis on collaboration and co-operation to be achieved through *negotiative forms of decision-making* (described in various ways as ‘collaborative management’, ‘communicative governance’ or ‘co-operative management regimes’ (Glasbergen, 1998)). Its features are a shared definition of problems, a common desire to tackle them and knowledge of the contribution each partner can make to solutions. Indeed, partnership has become the *idée fixe* of political modernisation in the UK. The partnership that really matters is that between business and government although, in recent years, the emphasis on these key partners has been tempered by the incorporation of other so-called ‘stakeholders’. In the environmental field these include local government, voluntary organisations and community based groups encouraged to co-operate in a variety of programmes such as Local Agenda 21 and Single Regeneration partnerships.
- The decline of formal representative politics is counterbalanced by a *highly developed civil society*. The withdrawal or privatisation of many state functions has resulted in the so-called ‘hollowing out of the state’ (Rhodes, 1994). This has resulted in a void or political space which is increasingly occupied by interests and movements seeking to influence policy through consciousness raising, persuasion, lobbying, mobilisation of opinion or direct action. Civil society is the arena in which various social movements, including environmental movements, seek to make their presence felt. Many commentators perceive civil society as somehow neutral ground providing opportunity for progressive and democratic influences to flourish and counter the dominant forces in society. This view is flawed for three reasons. The first is that social movements frequently become incorporated into the decision-making structures operated by dominant interests. Secondly, civil society also offers fertile ground for reactionary forces to flourish on the basis of a politics of resentment. The third reason is that the social movements are not particularly democratic. They may claim to represent a wider public interest but, in their organisational structures and specific objectives, are often quite exclusive and unrepresentative (Potter, 1996).

Political modernisation is, in many ways, even less democratic than the system it has supplanted. While it reflects the importance of the market, urges the doctrine of consensus and purports to include a variety of interests, the reality is a system that is exclusive, elitist and unrepresentative. Political modernisation has resulted in a fundamental change in political institutions and encouraged the participation of key interests in policy making. But it has also been accompanied by two processes which are a barrier to broader, more socially inclusive forms of co-operation. One is the

persistence of inequality which is itself a barrier to co-operation; the other is the weakening of those institutions (such as community) which provide the integration necessary for co-operation to develop.

11.3 The environmental dimension of modernisation

11.3.1 Ecological modernisation

Put simply, ecological modernisation is the environmental variant of political modernisation. Indeed, Janicke claims that 'the ecology question has been a strong motor of political modernisation' (1996: 77). However, ecological modernisation is not an entirely new phenomenon, rather it is a hybrid combining elements of pre-existing forms of state regulation and market-based policy making. It is a mode of policy making which upholds the market as the principal means of ensuring efficiency and growth while, at the same time, recognising the need for regulation in order to prevent the environmental degradation which impedes market processes. It is both a description of the policy process that has developed as well as a prescription for managing environmental problems within a market economy. Indeed, its advocates argue that with ecological modernisation, 'economic growth and the resolution of ecological problems can, in principle, be reconciled' (Hajer, 1995: 248). 'Instead of seeing environmental protection as a burden upon the economy the ecological modernist sees it as a potential source for future growth' (Weale, 1992: 76). Herein lies its attractiveness, for ecological modernisation neither threatens business-as-usual nor requires a different form of political-economic system; as Dryzek puts it, 'the key to ecological modernisation is that there is money in it for business' (1997: 142).

Although ecological modernisation is subject to different interpretations, in its initial formulation four basic components can be discerned:

1. The necessity of incorporating environmental issues into the production and consumption processes – the so-called 'refinement of production' (Mol, 1995). Among the examples of this are recycling, waste minimisation, pollution abatement, use of renewable resources, conservation of energy and life cycle analysis. This is essentially business with a greener tint.
2. The market is regarded as flexible, efficient, innovative and responsive. Businesses deal with environmental problems through self-regulation. The most successful are able to consolidate their competitive position by defining tougher levels of environmental protection than can be achieved by weaker firms and, in some cases, are able to make money from selling pollution prevention expertise and equipment.
3. The state maintains its regulatory function in a more residual form, providing a framework of standards and incentives for environmental per-

formance. The engagement of the state and business as partners in environmental policy making is a central tenet of political modernisation.

4. Environmental movements are involved in collaborative relationships with business and government in the delineation of environmental policy. As Harvey observes, 'The thesis of ecological modernisation has now become deeply entrenched within many segments of the environmental movement' (1996: 378). For some, there is evidence of an equality of partnership, what Janicke (1996) terms an 'iron triangle', a kind of 'eco-corporatism' between business, government and environmental movements. However, it can also be argued that the role of environmental movements is one of supporting and legitimising the dominant partnership of state and business. Those which do not, tend to become marginalised.

Ecological modernisation is seductive and persuasive,

... a doctrine of reassurance, at least for residents of relatively prosperous developed societies. It assures us that no tough choices need to be made between economic growth and environmental protection, or between the present and the long-term future. (Dryzeck, 1997: 146)

There are some obvious limitations in a discourse that optimistically appears to satisfy the requirements of sustainable development by reconciling both environmental protection and economic development. In the first place it is Euro-centrist, limited in its application to those societies, mainly western European, which have the elements of a consensual, corporatist form of governance. It is limited, too, in its application to specific industries. While it is possible to introduce pollution controls, resource efficiency and conservation in a wide array of processes, certain industries cannot be modernised to the extent of removing threats to the environment. This is especially so with industries such as nuclear energy which pose high consequence, long-term risks that can never be eliminated.

In its application to specific processes in specific countries, ecological modernisation diverts attention from the problem of eco-system complexity and inter-relationships which may (as global warming or ozone depletion illustrate) spring surprises or create intractable problems that require global action. Furthermore, it ignores the impact of externalities on other places and in other parts of the world. It is specific communities, often in relatively remote locations, which bear the burden of long-term risk imposed by certain industries (nuclear reprocessing being a typical example). The costs of production in richer countries are often met by polluting the environment and depleting the resources of poorer parts of the world. In this sense, ecological modernisation is not compatible with global sustainable development. For, if ecological modernisation was to be pursued by the poorer countries, the world's eco-systems would surely soon

be over-burdened. Thus, ecological modernisation at a global level becomes unable to solve the paradox between continuing growth with ecological caution for the rich while denying such a prospect to the poor. Inequality is, once again, the neglected dimension.

The limitations of ecological modernisation have led some commentators to broaden the concept beyond its state/market focus. Christoff tries to take account of globalising processes, the advent of mega-risks, the problem of inequality and the emphasis on modernisation to propose a form of 'strong' ecological modernisation that emphasises local cultural and environmental conditions and the need for broad social and institutional change (1996). Dryzeck argues that melding capitalism with more enlightened environmental values 'offers a plausible strategy for transforming industrial society into a radically different and more environmentally defensible (but still capitalist) alternative' (1997: 143). Mol (2001) has tried to accommodate the criticisms of earlier formulations of ecological modernisation by demonstrating its relevance to environmental reform under conditions of global capitalism in a variety of contexts. Such arguments would seem to stretch the idea of ecological modernisation beyond credibility, to render it so inclusive as to be vague, tendentious and analytically useless. For, ultimately, ecological modernisation does not challenge capitalism, if anything it celebrates it. It idealises a society where pluralism, openness, civil society and consensus all flourish. It tends to deny the realities of elitism, conflict and inequality, which generate a social context in which it becomes impossible to realise sustainable forms of development.

11.4 Alternative approaches

11.4.1 Risk Society

The comfortable conclusions of ecological modernisation are confronted by the altogether more pessimistic outlook propounded by Ulrich Beck's Risk Society thesis (1992, 1995). For Beck, Risk Societies are those that 'are confronted by the challenges of the self-created possibility, hidden at first, then increasingly apparent, of the self-destruction of all life on this earth' (1995: 67). Risk Society emphasises the awesome destructive power inherent in the risks associated with some modern industries and the control exercised by scientific experts in the management of risk. Far from being involved in decision-making, environmental movements utter their warnings and seek to prevent the development of risky technologies in a series of confrontations. While ecological modernisation portrays a steady progress towards sustainable development, Risk Society reveals a world in which science and technology are directed towards the perpetuation of risk.

Unlike ecological modernisation, Beck's analysis is not confined to the relationship between the economy and the environment; it encompasses social change as well. One of the features of modern technology is that as

individual consumers we contribute to the production of risk but, since risks can only be controlled by collective action, as individuals we cannot prevent risks occurring and therefore continue to act irresponsibly. This creates a fatalistic acceptance of risks over which we have no control. This feeling of vulnerability to technological risk has been exacerbated by consciousness of personal insecurity, described by Beck as 'individualisation', created by the conditions of living in modern society with its threat of unemployment, reduction of welfare and the dislocation of personal life.

Beck sees two avenues of escape. One is through 'sub-politics' where an apparently apolitical disavowal of conventional party politics is replaced by commitment to various causes, campaigns and ideas such as those promoted through environmental movements (Beck, 1998). Through these movements environmental problems may be revealed and confronted. The other potential escape is through the experience of 'reflexivity' through which Beck believes individuals, confronted by the reality of their condition, are able to undergo reflection and self-criticism which leads on to self-transformation. In this lies the hope that society as a whole will be able to effect a transformation of industrial processes and political institutions. It must be said that this reflexivity has a wistful air about it and seems to be offered more in hope than expectation. But it does, at least, offer the prospect of change to be brought about by a collective determination to draw back from the abyss.

Although Risk Society presents a broad theoretical perspective, it is limited in its empirical scope. Like ecological modernisation it draws its inspiration from western societies so it is difficult to apply it more universally. It focuses on high risk technologies (incidentally the very ones that are not captured in the ecological modernisation analysis) as the creators of all pervading environmental risk. Yet, this condition of universal risk is nothing new. It has existed in earlier times (for example, risk from war and disease was the prevailing condition of the 'calamitous' fourteenth century in Europe (Tuchman, 1979)) and, in the contemporary world, risk of famine, disease and war is the common experience in many parts of the world. Although the risks to which we are exposed may ultimately engulf us all, the impacts of environmental degradation are present here and now and are experienced by some more than others.

Nor is the condition of individualisation universal – some individuals and groups are more vulnerable than others and it is often the most vulnerable who, struggling to survive, are least able to contemplate their condition in reflexive fashion. Beck's escape routes do not necessarily lead to benign outcomes. In the zone of sub-politics it is just as likely that reactionary forces may flourish and reflexivity may easily lead to self-interested rather than altruistic reflections. It is, therefore, conceivable that the social consequences of Risk Society may be an increase in inequality and a loss of collective purpose to defend against the consequences of ecological deterioration.

11.4.2 Counter modernist perspectives

Ecological modernisation provides the case for the continuation of an environmentally sensitive, reformist form of modernisation; Risk Society confronts the necessity for change. Moreover, in both accounts, the relevance of inequality in dealing with the processes of environmental change is neglected. In asserting the prevalence of modernisation the two perspectives also fail to identify the potential integrating role of community and locality, which give expression to the diversity of social responses to environmental change.

Inequality and community are central concerns of a range of alternative approaches and movements, which, in very different ways, provide a challenge to the dominant discourse of modernity. Among this collection of perspectives may be included the environmental justice movement, eco-socialism, and neo-Marxist analyses.

It is interesting to note that neo-Marxist perspectives were relatively common two decades ago, coinciding with the intellectual paradigms then current (e.g. Gorz, 1980; Stretton, 1976; Schnaiberg, 1980). Subsequently they tended to become eclipsed as attention was focused on the neo-liberal agenda that accelerated during the 1980s. They have once again emerged alongside counter cultural ideas, movements and ideologies such as deep ecology, bio-regionalism and eco-feminism, which have focused attention on the adoption of sustainable life styles in harmony with nature.

Although these approaches comprise a very diverse set of arguments coming from different ideological and theoretical positions (for example, Dobson, 1990; Jacobs, 1991; Eckersley, 1992; Pepper, 1993; Harvey, 1996; Gould *et al*, 1996; Benton, 1996) that cannot be covered here, they identify some key elements missing from the dominant discourse:

1. *Local/global*. It is in the locality that environmental problems are generated and it is the locality that experiences the effects. With the increase in trans-boundary problems there is no longer necessarily a coincidence between local cause and effect. As Gould *et al* put it, 'Local problems are more and more often generated by geographically distant producers and consumers. The socio-economic causes of environmental problems are therefore organised at a different level than are the social responses to these problems' (1996: 34). It is clear that certain places, communities and countries suffer disproportionately from the pollution, resource depletion and environmental degradation that result from the exploitative processes of the modern economy.
2. *Inter-generational effects*. According to current predictions, global warming will present serious impacts within one or two generations; the depletion of bio-diversity removes existing or potential assets from the future; and the problems of nuclear waste will persist indefinitely. The transmission of environmental effects down the generations means that the future is already compromised by the actions of the present.

3. *The value of nature.* Whereas ecological modernisation and Risk Society present anthropocentric positions, some radical approaches stress the intrinsic value of nature itself. There are various manifestations of this view, the most radical being bio-spherical egalitarianism, 'the equal right to live and blossom' as Naess puts it (1991: 243). The protection of nature in this sense has been transgressed by the instrumental values placed on natural resources by contemporary processes of modernisation.
4. *Environmental justice.* Radical theorists stress that the environment is a social as well as a physical problem. There is a clear relationship between economic, social and environmental disadvantage which is experienced by local communities. This is not only a moral issue but a practical one, too, since inequality is a stumbling block to the cooperative relationships adopted by ecological modernisation or the need for collective reflexivity espoused in the Risk Society analysis. It is a problem that has to be addressed by redistribution and empowerment.
5. *Environmental movements.* Some radical theorists take a more critical stance on the role of environmental movements. They point out that many, and often the most powerful, groups are composed of middle-class people intent on preventing damage to their own amenity; that such opposition often leads to the diversion of polluting projects to disadvantaged communities; and that such groups are unrepresentative and elitist in their organisation and decision-taking. Such groups are differentiated from those that compose the environmental justice movement. These are concerned to root out the inequalities – often related to race and class – that structure environmental disadvantage. As well as broader movements there are the myriad of citizen-based organisations which mobilise to resist dangerous activities (such as toxic waste dumps) or the destruction of communities through infrastructure projects.
6. *Empowerment.* Radical critics point to the imbalance of power reflected in the powerlessness of disadvantaged communities. Citing many examples, including such celebrated cases as Love Canal, Bhopal and Chernobyl, they illustrate the problems of ill-health, danger, dereliction and even displacement, experienced by poor communities. Decisions affecting their environment are often taken far away and their dependence on employment renders them passive in the face of environmental risk.

Ecological modernisation and the Risk Society thesis have relatively little to say about political change. They are apolitical theories. Ecological modernisation presumes a consensus in which, by definition, political conflict is largely absent. Risk Society exposes the inadequacies of the present system to deal with global risks and Beck argues strenuously for 'the opening up

to democratic scrutiny of the previous depoliticised realms of decision-making' (2000: 226). But, in terms of political solutions his analysis is, on the whole, pessimistic, offering 'a sigh to the end of the world' (Beck, 1996: 38). By contrast, radical theorists see the transformation of political institutions and structures to bring about redistribution and empowerment for the disadvantaged as the way to deal with the social challenge brought about by environmental change. By emphasising inequality and relating it to the problem of localised disadvantage these approaches reintroduce the missing dimensions in the contemporary debate about the social aspects of environmental change. The importance of these dimensions may be illustrated by the changing social relations within communities associated with the management of radioactive wastes, the accumulating legacy of the nuclear industry.

11.5 Inequality and community in nuclear communities

Although the risks presented by nuclear operations are widespread (and, in the case of a major accident or conflict, potentially global in reach) the problem of radioactive wastes is geographically concentrated. There are some sites where past and present military and civil reprocessing operations have created large volumes of wastes. Examples of such places are: Hanford in Washington state in north west USA where plutonium was produced for the atomic bomb; La Hague on the tip of the Cotentin peninsula in Normandy, France; and Sellafield, the UK's major centre for reprocessing in north west England. These and other examples in the USA, Germany, Japan, Russia and elsewhere possess the characteristics of what have been called 'peripheral communities' (Blowers and Leroy, 1994). They are places that are peripheral in several respects:

1. They are geographically remote and relatively inaccessible.
2. They are economically monocultural, dependent on a dominant activity.
3. They are relatively powerless, their fortunes controlled by outside forces.
4. They exhibit an inward-looking, defensive and acquiescent culture.
5. They are environmentally degraded by virtue of being host to radioactive wastes and their attendant hazards.

A persistent pattern of geographical inequality is reinforced by a process of 'peripheralisation'. On the one hand a coalition of economic interests (labour and capital) secures the presence of the nuclear industry providing wealth and jobs. On the other, a coalition of interests (environmental and economic) defends places elsewhere from the unwanted intrusion of such a hazardous industry. The history of conflicts over nuclear waste confirms this tendency for the nuclear industry to be confined to its established bases. The failure to find a greenfield site for nuclear waste disposal in eastern

England during the 1980s and similar difficulties encountered in France and the USA confirm the tendency for the geography of the industry to be set in stone in disadvantaged communities. They are the victims of a set of power relations which ensure the industry stays put.

The emphasis on modernisation that pervades both ecological modernisation and Risk Society theories fails to come to grips with social, cultural and political processes which shape these disadvantaged communities. Here, integrating institutions survive and give expression to community. These institutions are both traditional, like family, neighbourhood and religion, and modern such as trade unions, professional associations and political parties. And they co-exist alongside the so-called individualisation which Beck identifies as a consequence of modernisation. Thus, the social conditions in nuclear communities which include the traditional and modern are complex and have interesting implications for social and environmental change.

The power relations within these communities and between them and the outside world are changing. Typically, the economic leverage exerted by the industry has led governments to provide continuing support. For example, the need to support the West Cumbrian economy was a major reason for the decision, in 1994, to commission the new reprocessing facility (THORP) at Sellafield at a time when the justification on commercial grounds was being questioned. Economic as well as environmental reasons are responsible for the heavy investment into the clean-up of the Hanford site where the nuclear industry is the main employer for the remote but large Tri-Cities urban area of around 100 000 people. The decline of the industry, paradoxically, is accompanied by a shift in power which ensures its continuing survival. It is not simply a case of the community depending on the industry but of the industry becoming increasingly dependent on its existing bases. This interdependence is buttressed by the difficulty of finding sites elsewhere and by the recognition that communities bearing disproportionate risk are entitled to support from society at large. We do not need the opaque notion of reflexivity to tell us this basically self-evident feature of power relations. As circumstances change so opportunities open up and will be seized upon.

The example of nuclear communities draws attention to features of social change in relation to the environment which tend to be overlooked by the grand narratives of ecological modernisation and the Risk Society.

1. Nuclear communities illustrate the uneven geographical pattern of risk. The local concentration of risk is overlooked by ecological modernisation which is mainly concerned with environmental improvement rather than degradation, and by Risk Society which emphasises the pervasive nature of risk.
2. The theoretical focus on modernity understates the persistence of integrating institutions which ensure the survival of community. Ecological modernisation is largely silent on this question while Risk Society

focuses on individualisation as the prevailing condition and on reflexivity as its consequence.

3. The nuclear communities indicate the changing nature of power relations arising from changing circumstances within communities and in relation to external forces. Ecological modernisation tends to take a pluralistic view of power as shared between participants (market, state and environmental activists) in partnership while Risk Society emphasises the controlling power of experts.
4. The complexity and interconnectedness of social relations is underlined in the nuclear communities and suggests that specific circumstances in specific places must be understood to explain outcomes.

Again, these social aspects are integral to theories which seek to provide general explanations of societal change in response to environmental problems.

These features of inequality, community, local power relations and interconnectedness reveal some of the limitations in the broader theoretical ideas of ecological modernisation and Risk Society. Quite aside from their theoretical importance, inequality and community also have relevance to the solution of such intractable problems as the long-term management of hazards created by risky technologies. The final part of this chapter turns to some more practical considerations, in particular the approaches to policy making that will be necessary to enable society to adapt to environmental change in ways that are both acceptable and sustainable.

11.6 Environmental change – a new role for planning

Inequality needs to be tackled at various levels. At the political level the contemporary emphasis on ecological modernisation has tended to encourage the access of particular groups or 'stakeholders' while others, notably already disadvantaged communities or countries, tend to be politically excluded. These communities may lack the capacity, motivation or resources to defend against environmental deterioration; in any case the environment is likely to be lower on their list of priorities than the need for economic security. As a result such communities may manifest the condition of 'negative fatalism' described by Beck. On the other hand, passive acceptance may be transformed into a more active resistance against environmental risks for two reasons. One is that growing environmental awareness influences the disadvantaged as well as the population in general. The second is that high risk and polluting industries need the support of the communities in which they are located. Consequently, these disadvantaged communities can exert greater leverage in their demands for environmental improvements or compensation for bearing the blight and anxiety of environmental risk.

Contemporary policies, based as they are on the exigencies of the market and short-term political horizons, are inadequate to deal with the problems of long-term risk and the inequalities to which they give rise. What is required is a strategic approach capable of embracing a wider range of interests in order to achieve acceptability based on a social consensus. This approach we may call 'planning' in its broadest sense as a process of long-term policy making based on clearly articulated social purpose.

Planning as conventionally understood is wholly inadequate for such a task. Over the course of the last 50 years in the UK, planning has been moulded by the changing political economy. In its early days, planning, with its social vision, proved a vital instrument for implementing the land-use and environmental objectives of the welfare state. Subsequently, as a procedural and regulatory function, it was adapted to serve the purposes of the market economy. Indeed, for a time, planning was regarded as an impediment to economic growth imposing 'costs on the economy and constraints on enterprise' (HMSO, 1985). Latterly, planning has adopted the partnership ethos and the approach to sustainable development through ecological modernisation that now dominates state/market relations. Planning has also tended to become more centralised, less pluralistic and democratic as modernising tendencies in local government and planning have emphasised speed, efficiency and working better for business (DTLR, 2001).

Over the course of its history, planning has become a marginal activity of government. There are several reasons for this. Planning lacks effective powers; while it can influence the location and form of development, it cannot ensure that needs are met. It has a weak institutional base, the more so as local government has been undermined. It is limited in its reach, dealing with land-use while environmental issues such as waste management, air and water quality are largely outside its remit.

Yet, in principle, planning can provide a relevant vehicle for dealing with the social consequences of environmental change for several reasons:

1. It is concerned with the conservation of both the natural and the social environment. Prevention of pollution and the protection and enhancement of natural resources of landscape and eco-systems are values in themselves but are also necessary for the survival of both human and natural systems.
2. The use of land and the location of activities, the main concerns of planning, are fundamental to dealing with problems of pollution and resource conservation thereby placing planning at the heart of the ecological problem. Planning links the local to the global.
3. Planning takes a long-term perspective, producing development strategies for a decade or more ahead. Beyond that there is a concern for the needs of future generations. Thus the concerns of planning go well beyond the short-term and take account of the problems posed by environmental risks that persist into the far future.

4. Planning has traditionally had a primary role in the promotion of the public interest in development. It is therefore directly engaged in encouraging participation in order to reflect the diversity of interests in environmental matters. As part of the governmental system, planning is directly accountable and this provides legitimation for planning proposals. In principle, though not always in practice, planning is in a position to promote the needs, aspirations and thereby the empowerment of local communities and, particularly, the disadvantaged. By virtue of engaging with the wider public, planning potentially presents a mechanism for developing the social consensus necessary to secure public acceptability.

If planning is to fulfil its potential, a transformation in institutions and structures will be necessary. Sustainable development requires a strategic approach involving the integration of policies across all sectors and linking all levels of decision-making, local, national and international (RCEP, 2002; Blowers, 1993). It has to be a holistic process transcending the various economic sectors and involving social as well as environmental criteria. Despite the economic emphasis of this interpretation of sustainable development there is now a recognition, at least rhetorically, that social concerns are important:

Sustainable development is concerned with achieving economic growth, in the form of higher living standards, while protecting and where possible enhancing the environment – not just for its own sake but because a damaged environment will sooner or later hold back economic growth and lower the quality of life – and making sure that these economic and environmental benefits are available to everyone, not just to a privileged few. (DETR, 1998: 4)

In its early phase, planning was primarily concerned with the social outcomes of environmental change. It focused on issues of deprivation in the cities and on the health and well-being that is conveyed by environmental conservation and improvement. These problems remain but are now experienced in a broader context of global environmental change. There is now awareness that pollution and resource depletion are trans-boundary problems affecting both local populations and those distant in space and time. Their impacts are uneven, creating marked environmental inequalities usually associated with social and economic deprivation. However, the causes and effects still have to be tackled at the local level which is the arena in which planning also operates. Consequently, a much broader role for planning must be created, on the lines envisaged in the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report on *Environmental Planning*, that is, 'a much more effective mechanism for bringing together consideration of economic and social objectives and environmental constraints' (RCEP, 2002: 144).

Inequality is likely to become an increasing barrier to achieving the consent and co-operation necessary to deal with those problems affecting the far future. Communities are increasingly unlikely to tolerate environmental risk without adequate compensation and involvement in decisions affecting them. By regarding inequality and concern for community as high planning priorities, planning, as a reinvigorated and purposive activity, offers an approach to environmental policy making that counters the failings of ecological modernisation and which seeks to avert the perils of the Risk Society.

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