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COMMUNITY RESOURCE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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THE REALM OF THE POSSIBLE

In twenty years of effort on behalf of rural people and their nonmetropolitan problems I have worked in many different communities in many states. It has been my experience to find some communities frustrated, confused, and defeated. But many times I find optimistic, enthusiastic communities that are pleased with their accomplishments and eager to continue development programs. I believe these differences can be explained by the type of activity a community attempts. A continuum of these activities would appear as follows:

A SITUATION CONTINUUM

The proposed activity is impossible	The proposed activity is possible	The proposed activity is impossible
For external or national reasons		For local reasons

Strong national forces resulting from social and economic change render many attempted activities impossible from the standpoint of the local community. Local reasons, such as a small inadequate economic base or attitudinal barriers, make other activities either impossible or very difficult. But in almost every community some activity is in the area of the possible. The frustrated, confused, and defeated communities are usually attempting some activity in the area of the impossible. The enthusiastic community has successfully identified the area of the possible.

QUALITY OF LIFE

My examination of numerous programs in the general area of community resource and human development leads me to this conclusion: A common objective exists on a very broad, general level—a hope to improve the quality of living of people. Community resource and human development programs can be judged successful only if there has been a positive change in the living quality of people when comparing time period T_1 with time period T_2 . Development is the process by which the positive change is achieved.

I view quality of living as living satisfactions, the level of which

has been improved in the past and can be improved in the future. The aggregation of individual satisfactions then adds up to a satisfaction level for the community, which is synonymous with living quality. In equation form:

Quality of Life = W_1 Purchasing Power per Person, W_2 Income Distribution, W_3 Economic Base, W_4 Contributions of Institutions, W_5 Infrastructure, W_6 Capital Inventory, W_7 Cultural Level, W_8 Leadership Effectiveness, W_9 Performance of Services, . . .

If, in a period of time, a positive change in the Quality of Life term has occurred, then community resource and human development has taken place.

The reader should recognize that the equation developed here is designed for communication purposes and is not intended to be a mathematical model. This equation is used to communicate the content of community resource and human development, to indicate past problems and present difficulties, and (hopefully) to point up a few directions in order to struggle out of the present confusion. It could be viewed as a method of indicating the gross social product of a community.

The possibility of additional variables is indicated. Identifying the above variables does not suggest that the list is complete and will insure quality living. Other variables have been suggested and undoubtedly are important, but have not been included because no resource development programs have been focused on those variables. Perhaps new programs are needed in order to supply the missing components—or, as some will argue, perhaps the idea of community resource and human development is already too broad to be manageable.

There are two major problems associated with this equation. First, each development "agent" has selected the variable to receive his attention in accordance with his competency. Although this is understandable, the result is to ignore the weights attached to each variable. No consideration has been given to the question: Given the quantity of resources available for development purposes, on which variables should they be applied in order to receive the greatest return? Of course, institutional rigidities might render most of the resources immobile, but the question should still be asked in regard to new appropriations and allocations.

The second problem which emerges is the failure to recognize trade-offs between variables. Each development "agent" has selected

his variable and pursued it without regard to the effect on other variables. The existence of trade-offs cannot be denied. For example: (1) The increase in purchasing power per person in rural areas through the use of technology has caused out-migration which resulted in increased structural imbalance in our institutions. (2) Increasing the community economic base by using the functional economic area concept instead of the city limits has implications for leadership effectiveness. No formal leadership structure exists on a multicounty base. Sociologists question the existence of a multicounty social system or power structure. Therefore, leadership effectiveness is a pertinent question. (3) As capital inventory increases and the city becomes larger, leisure facilities can become more costly. Some leisure items that are free in the small town have a cost in the large city. (4) Purchasing power per person could be temporarily increased by using up capital inventory. (5) Capital inventory might be increased by investing funds in industrial parks or "shell" buildings at the expense of culture or recreation. Other examples could be cited. It is quite possible that vigorous pursuit of one variable could have a trade-off effect on another, lowering the quality of living.

Saying that we have a positive change in the quality of living only when one variable is increased without a reduction in another is not realistic. If this criterion were rigidly followed, very little could ever be done because of the extensive interrelationships which do exist.

The weight of a variable is the indicator of the importance of that variable to the community. If an additional unit of the variable would return the most, in terms of an increase in living quality, then that variable would have the highest weight. One variable could be limiting—in the sense that other variables cannot be increased until it is increased. In this case the limiting variable would have a high weight.

When viewed in this manner, weights will be different for each community and each weight is a function of the level of the variable. For example, a community that is inaccessible would place a high weight on a highway (infrastructure). However, if more and more highways are built through this community, the weight placed on highways would decrease. Presumably the weight could become negative at some point before the community was covered with concrete.

A very relevant question emerges: Who should place the weights on the variables? Jim Hildreth says:

If we accept the assumption that our society is a pluralistic one, we see that the voting and weighing of the votes is the community's privilege and the responsibility is not ours. The outsider's role is to

provide the community with information on which to make improved judgments and decisions. These judgments and decisions may differ from one community to the next and from one time period to the next with the same community. The "ask the community" approach will always be a source of discomfort for the well-meaning outsider. It would be much easier for the professional to impose his judgment on the community.

I agree that the community should place the weights on the variables. However, I would add one qualification. I believe the decisions should be made by a community that is viable and relevant in tomorrow's nonmetropolitan world. This statement would place the decision-making base in the multicounty area or functional economic area and not in each and every small town, where structural imbalances could be perpetuated indefinitely.

Although the resource development strategy is aimed at improving the decision-making ability of people within a specific community, I do not believe the issue or problem requiring a decision must be limited to specific community boundaries. Some problems can be decided by people living in a functional economic area, but many are influenced by state or national policies. The policy decision is larger than one community and often has more influence on development than any decision made strictly within a community. However, the use of state and national policies is frequently subject to some local decision making insofar as the policy affects the local people.

RESEARCH AND EXTENSION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Another way to approach community resource and human development, a "process with a purpose," is shown in Figure 1.

We begin with the identified concerns of people. These concerns relate to their community, their institutions, their community services, their costs, and their structures. Frequently rural people speak in terms of symptoms. They say young people are leaving the area. They say they do not have a doctor in the community. They say the merchants are closing shop and leaving empty stores in town. Rural people perceive these as problems, but they may be symptoms of the same broad problem. Therefore, the problem must be stated, it must be articulated, it must be specific. Once the basic problem, economic, social, or human, has been identified, it lends itself to analysis.

The analysis could consist of a logical separation of the problem into its various parts. It could mean collection of secondary or primary data. Whatever form the analysis might take, it must present the realistic alternatives, the realistic responses which a rural community

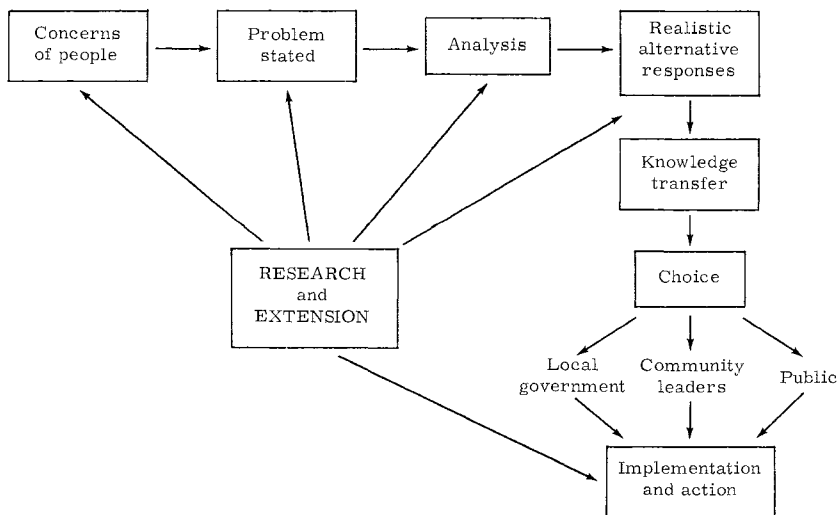


FIGURE 1. Role of research and extension in rural development.

might pursue. Each of the realistic responses must carry with it a description of the benefits, the consequences, the advantages, the disadvantages, the costs, and the gains. This presentation of alternatives is, of necessity, multidisciplinary. It will include economic analysis, social analysis of institutions and people, and the human response, involving political science and psychology.

Once the alternatives are presented (with the pros and cons) it is necessary to attempt knowledge transfer. I use the term "knowledge transfer" deliberately. This term implies more than distribution of bulletins, more than the presenting of a plan, more than the issuing of a report. "Knowledge transfer" implies doing whatever is necessary to secure an absolute improvement in the knowledge of the decision maker so that his decision will be influenced. This calls for an extension strategy to deliver the product of research. It calls for a planned and designated "delivery system" to accomplish the desired ends.

In a democratic society the choice of an alternative must be left to the people of the community. Once people understand the alternatives, the pros and cons, the people have the ability to make this choice. Sometimes the choice will be made by local government officials, by the community leaders, or by the entire public. The issue will determine the relevant decision-making group. Once the choice is made the problem of implementation begins.

This is the process of rural development, as I see it. The role of

extension and research in this process is important to almost every step.

Identifying the concerns of the people is a continuous need. Analysis of the problem is the major role of research. Identifying of realistic alternatives and the analysis of their advantages and disadvantages is a combined extension and research responsibility. The transfer of knowledge to the relevant audience is an extension function. Assisting with the implementation and the action (knowledge of how to do) is primarily the extension job. The evaluation of the results of action and the analysis of the appropriate ways to proceed could have a strong research component.

Research in rural development is extremely important throughout the process. The coordinated effort between research and extension is paramount. I believe a rural development program that does not carry a coordinated integrated plan with both research and extension components will stumble and falter.