REDISCOVERING ADVOCACY

The Role of Community Level Organizations in Promoting Nonservice Approaches
An Introduction

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PREFACE

Advocacy for institutional change to help the poor is a funda-
mental mission of the Community Services Administration. CSA
guidelines for Community Action Agencies require that CAA's undertake
institutional change strategies in their communities.

Since October 1979, SRI International has been conducting
research for CSA's Office of Policy Planning and Evaluation aimed
at identifying ways that CAA's and community based organizations
can promote nonservice approaches. Nonservice approaches involve
pursuing objectives through regulation, tax policy change, adminis-
trative reform, collaboration with the private sector, promotion of
self-help or public advocacy rather than through service delivery.
Under its CSA Award, SRI has been examining the use of nonservice
approaches by a wide variety of community level organizations to
address physical development, economic development and human develop-
ment problems as well as deal with fiscal issues such as property
tax reform and utility rate reform. A guide for CAA's and community
based organizations is now being prepared by SRI describing the use
of nonservice approaches and suggesting how organizations might
effectively engage in policy advocacy for nonservice approaches.

The following summary describes the background to the project
the research approach being used. Table 1 provides examples of
nonservice approaches used by community level organizations.

Citizen Participation in Nonservice Planning: An Assessment of the Role of Citizen Organizations and Community-Based Service Providers in Implementing Nonservice Approaches

Introduction

Thirty years ago, both the degree to which the poor and disenfranchised participated in local government policy-making and the kinds of things local government tried to do differed dramatically from the situation today. Local governments offered a few services and were not expected to solve deep-rooted societal problems. Decision-making was encased in the traditional cycles of the budgetary and electoral calendars, and few outside groups were regularly consulted except in more or less perfunctory public hearings. Neighborhood views were represented, if at all, by the president of the homeowners association, by a leading merchant, or perhaps by the parish priest, local minister, and rabbi.

Parallel developments in both the types of activities carried on by local government and the organizational activism within poor and disenfranchised neighborhoods have greatly changed these conditions in intervening years. Local public agencies, often spurred on by the Federal government, first took on the task of transforming the urban landscape through urban renewal and freeway construction, which provoked a great deal of controversy within the poorer, politically less powerful areas that bore the brunt of the change. The ensuing neighborhood activism, together with the turmoil of the 1960s, raised questions about the kinds of jobs government should take on, the ways government should be made accountable to those affected by public decisions, and the role citizens, especially those poor and disenfranchised, should play in implementing and monitoring new programs. During this time, people who had been outside the political process increasingly sought to take meaningful roles in the decision-making processes that affected them.

Overall, local government was charged during this period with grappling directly with basic societal problems like poverty and disenfranchisement, and as a result, new programs delivered by new agencies proliferated. However, even though services, programs, agencies, and budgets grew geometrically during this time, the severity of the underlying problems did not abate accordingly.

Partly as a consequence of frustration with past program approaches, the theme began to emerge in the late 1960s and early 1970s that government ought to attempt to effect outcomes through other means besides programmatic inputs. The increasing use by local governments of new forms of regulation, tax policy change and public, private collaboration all reflect

this theme from the government side. Similar demands for action reflect it from the community side. The central idea is that improved social outcomes should be arrived at by affecting the activities of private sector and public sector actors in a coherent way, rather than by delivering an array of public services directly. This philosophical orientation concedes that government cannot make all the important decisions and meet all needs. It focuses on the different tools government can use to change the environment in ways that produce desired outcomes. Looked at this way, direct public provision of services is only one tool, and perhaps not the most efficient tool, for pursuing the public interest. Instead of directly providing public housing or public employment to the poor, those who have articulated this second theme would ask how to influence the private marketplace to house or employ the previously neglected or how to influence large public or quasi-public agencies to modify existing programs to ensure similar results.

The use of powers of regulation, public-private coordination, taxation, and other governance powers to alter outcomes has many appealing features in comparison to direct service provision, not the least of which is that it operates without a large agency or bureaucratic structure. The main drawback in using tools of this kind derives from the unexpected, and frequently negative side-effects which markets produce as they adapt to, and sometimes resist, efforts to govern them. Downzoning for neighborhood preservation, for example, can raise housing values, and therefore costs, beyond the reach of the ordinary citizen. Community jurisdiction over zoning decisions may preserve the existing character of a neighborhood but decrease the overall rate of low and moderate housing development.

Alternatives to direct delivery of services raise two interconnected questions of concern to the poor and disenfranchised:

  - First, how can the tools which are most useful in a positive sense for enhancing the quality of life in poor areas be identified and assessed so that the poor and their advocates might make use of them?

  - Second, how can the negative consequences that sometimes follow from the application of these tools be identified and means of control be developed so that the interests of those who are often weakest in the marketplace are not ignored?

This research seeks to answer these questions systematically through an effort aimed at identifying, documenting, and, finally, disseminating information about the types of nonservice policy tools of most concern to those most disadvantaged in our society, so they can use them as effectively as other sectors of society do. The products which will result from the research will help empower such citizens by enabling them to make use of new forms of governance now being experimented with in cities and counties.

Background

Passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 represented a significant assault on the inadequacies of the then existing service delivery system. Lodged in the Executive Office of the President, OEO sought to coordinate and redirect the categorical program system at the Federal level and make the bureaucratic networks more responsive to the needs of the poor through "maximum feasible participation" at the local level. Local Community Action Agencies were also mandated to develop alternative (and thus competitive) service delivery systems where those existing were found to be unresponsive.

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At the heart of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was the idea of community action, the idea that broad coalitions of people and interest groups at the local level could most effectively forge the weapons of war on poverty. Title II, Section 201 (a), of the Act declared the basic purpose of community action to be:

> "to stimulate a better focusing of all available local, state, private, and Federal resources upon the goal of enabling low-income families, and low-income individuals of all ages, in rural and urban areas, to attain the skills, knowledge, and motivations, and secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient."

This ample conception of purpose embraced more than the goal of self-sufficiency for the poor. Community action was seen also as a means of altering the structure by which our society allocates its resources. In setting forth the mission of the Community Action Agency (CAA) OEO Instruction 6320-1 made this further goal explicit:

> The key phrase . . . is to stimulate a better focusing of all available . . . resources. The Act thus gives the CAA a primarily catalytic mission: to make the entire community more responsive to the needs and interests of the poor by mobilizing resources and bringing about greater institutional sensitivity. A CAA's effectiveness, therefore, is measured not only by the services which it directly provides, but more importantly by the improvements and changes it achieves in the community's attitudes and practices toward the poor, and in the allocation and focusing of public and private resources for antipoverty purposes.

Changes in attitude and practice were thus to be achieved by new catalytic organizations employing three basic strategies: giving poor people themselves a large share of the responsibility for planning and implementing programs in their own communities; stimulating a hitherto unrealized coordination of community effort; and effecting a massive new mobilization of available resources.

Passage of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act in 1966 was a less direct, but no less pointed, attack on the service delivery system. In this case, HUD was to coordinate and redirect the categorical system at the Federal level and CDAs (city demonstration agencies) were to produce responsiveness through "widespread" citizen participation at the local level. However, CDAs, unlike CAAs, were to leverage the existing systems with supplemental funds rather than create competitive systems. In addition, CDAs were to establish close ties between citizen groups and elected officials—particularly mayors.

Both the Model Cities and the Community Action programs underestimated the power of the existing service delivery system. Despite Presidential support neither HUD nor OEO was able to coordinate, much less redirect, Federal agencies and their state and local counterparts. Most CAAs and CDAs experienced a similar lack of success at the local level. Citizen groups organized by local CAAs had neither sufficient resources nor political clout to organize truly competitive service delivery systems or exercise significant influence over the use of existing categorical aids. Similarly, CDAs found that the support of mayors was not sufficient to meet needs for change in established systems expressed by citizen groups organized by Model Cities.

Competition between the two programs, with largely the same mission, was also a constraint, as was the fact that both programs were trying to do too much with too little money. However, this was only one aspect of the problem. Both CDAs and CAAs found that the service delivery network had already extended to the local level prior to their entry into the

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citizen participation market. Existing citizen groups were organized in various ways around education programs, social services programs, and housing programs, not to mention citizen groups organized around local issues and programs having no relation to the categorical grant system. These groups had only minimal representation from the poor, but they were established, accepted, and closely tied to the service delivery networks. Moreover, they were functionally oriented and controlled the major resources, Federal and local, which were the subject of citizen concern.

Given this situation, both OEO and Model Cities citizen groups naturally drifted in the direction of the resources they directly controlled, and began to focus their major efforts on program management. Over time, the intended attack on the service delivery system became collaboration in the operation of their own service delivery programs which were funded through OEO and HUD. As citizen groups and their staff became more embroiled in the day-to-day problems of operating HUD- or OEO-funded programs and securing continued funding through other Federal agencies, they found little time to consider the rules and regulations being adopted by local government or the effect these might have on their objectives. While some citizen activists, and occasionally staff, entered the mainstream of local politics and policymaking, most did not. Instead they accepted their new role as an extension of the service delivery system bureaucracy.

A considerable retrenchment of community-action effort began in 1968 as national emphasis programs were spun off without any replacement programs or money. By January of 1973, a full-scale Federal move was under way to demolish the OEO, as indicated by the new director who assumed control with the stated purpose of dismantling the agency. Even though the dismantling attempt was halted by court action, crippling damage had been done up and down the line at Federal, state, and CAA levels. (Community action has not yet fully recovered.) Nevertheless, since 1974 when the CSA was adopted by Congress, and with greater purpose since 1976 when a Presidential decision was made to retain an independent antipoverty agency, a slow process of rebuilding has been under way.*

Indeed a formidable antipoverty apparatus is still in place, an apparatus with a large potential for effecting social change. There are 865 multipurpose CAAs in existence and several hundred delegate agencies sponsored by CAAs; †of those, 770 CAAs are private corporations, and 95 are state- or local-government administered public agencies. CAA jurisdictions cover more than 70% of all counties in the United States, and CAAs directly employ approximately 100,000 full- and part-time personnel. Since 1968, many CAAs have greatly expanded their base of funding, relying to a great extent on public and private money sources aside from the CSA. In addition, CSA funds many special-purpose organizations at the local level in such areas as energy conservation and the elderly.

New Objectives for Citizen Participation in Nonservice Policy Planning

Citizen participation has taken a great many operational forms over the past decade in particular. A number of alternative conceptions of citizen participation cut across various strata and have competed in each government program for offical and popular support.

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*Grants Management Systems Project, *Initial Report and Recommendations of the 6710-1 Task Force*, 2-17-78. Mimeographed.

†These figures are from the Community Service Administration *Organization Manual*, July 1976.

To the social worker of the early 1960s, for example, participation of individuals was seen as therapeutic, serving to counter deep-rooted feelings of powerlessness and alienation and to bring such individuals closer to the dominant society. To today's local community leader, citizen participation may be synonymous with "community control" or "minority power," or it may simply stand for extended political confrontation with the established order. To various architects of the Great Society, the term came to symbolize a way to make government more responsive to the needs of individual citizens, an appeal to growing blocks of new urban voters, or a strategy for defusing militant dissent. Each of these views had its following among those involved in the categorical programs of the 1960s.

Despite debates regarding ultimate purpose and appropriate structure, however, the basic result of citizen participation requirements in Federal programs has been to give those most directly affected by a specific program some control over its operation. While policy has sometimes been mentioned, the reference is invariably to program policy. This focus occurred because advocates of citizen participation in the 1960s believed that the control they sought must first be focused on the bureaucratic network that managed the allocation of resources in the service delivery systems. Moreover, these were primarily new resources which were being made available through the Federal government to make up for deficiencies in local expenditures. Therefore, both citizens and professional advocates devoted their attention to ensuring the maintenance and/or continued growth of their program.

This approach to citizen participation was perhaps consistent with the realities of the 1960s and 1970s. In varying degrees, it gave clients a modicum of control over the resources being made available to address their particular problems, and in some cases, provided access to other elements in the political process. However, few citizen groups or their advocate staff devoted time and energy to achieving broader policy objectives by employing strategies that might lead to a change in the allocation of other Federal or local funds, or the development of interventionist policies that might lead to self-sufficiency.

It has been widely maintained by students and practitioners of community participation that citizens are best organized around specific issues. However, the experience of the 1960s indicates that the specific issues most often chosen were basically a reflection of the existing delivery systems and their fragmented single mission objectives. If the issue was jobs, the focus of citizen participation was on manpower programs funded by the Department of Labor and administered through State Employment services agencies. If the issue was housing, citizens organized around the programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development administered by local housing authorities and renewal agencies. Grant consolidation of the 1970s brought little change. Citizens still focused on the same set of programs funded by the same agencies and administered through the same or similar Federal/state/ local systems.

Citizen groups, therefore, have had little or no opportunity to consider, or affect major local policy decisions that relate to achieving economic self-sufficiency through forms of intervention affecting both jobs and housing, as well as a variety of other economic self-sufficiency objectives. For example, local policies regarding the mix of residential and commercial/industrial land uses projected for the community have a major and overriding effect on the number and type of jobs available as well as the mix and location of housing. These decisions are made in connection with the general planning process, including revisions to

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the zoning code. Citizen participation in this process is primarily achieved through public hearings and neighborhood forums conducted by the Planning Commission and/or the local legislative body. Typically, however, the poor and their representatives spend a great deal of time and effort attempting to manipulate the limited Federal resources for jobs and housing through the manpower and housing service delivery systems, but spend little time attempting to influence the policies of the general plan that set the basic parameters for attaining economic self-sufficiency.

Reliance on the traditional political process by the poor is not sufficient. As has been pointed out by a representative of the League of Women Voters:

> In discussing citizen participation as a policy management tool for state and local government, the first question always raised is, Isn't voting enough? Generally, the answer is no. Voters have very little idea of the specific actions which have been taken by their elected representatives and, in any case, have no mechanism to demonstrate approval or disapproval of the specific decisions made in the many functional areas for which the general purpose governments have responsibility.

If accountability for public policy is to be attained, especially with respect to the poor, new approaches to citizen participation must be developed. The political process must be expanded to include general purpose citizen groups who are not tied to a specific set of service delivery structures and hold as their primary concern the policies of government affecting their neighborhoods and lives. The issues around which the poor must organize in the future are the major policy issues on which local decisions are routinely made, rather than resource allocation decisions.

This will be no easy task. The issues of citizen control which surfaced but were never resolved in the 1960s and early 1970s will need to be reexamined. Equally difficult questions such as what constitutes a "neighborhood" or "representative citizen group" will also need further exploration, as will the question of legitimacy and relation to the existing political structure and process. Differences between the poor—whether in the same neighborhood or in different neighborhoods—need to be recognized. Yet, overall, there is a clear need to shift from service delivery to "policy" approaches if the objectives of citizen participation are to be realized.

Citizen organizations in many urban and rural settings have already formed to monitor and assist in the implementation of nonservice-type approaches. In San Francisco, a coalition of minority and disadvantaged groups throughout the city has formed to ensure the implementation of affirmative action hiring requirements. Citizen groups in many cities have been successful in getting local Community Development Block Grant programs to support equal opportunity and fair housing programs. Finally, a citizen organization in Northern California was successful in getting the power company to establish "life line" gas and electric rates especially sought by senior citizens and the poor. While these are only some examples of successful nonservice policy effort by citizen organizations, there have been others as well. They indicate a growing interest among citizen groups in bringing about institutional reform through nonservice policy approaches.

These citizen roles—enforcement, monitoring, change, neighborhood protection—suggest the range of roles that groups representing the poor can play in implementing the new nonservice approaches, not only by encouraging helpful policy initiatives but by vigorously resisting nonservice strategies inimical to their interest. Table 1 illustrates both positive roles citizen groups can play in nonservice approaches and possible negative impacts they should seek to avoid.

The planned research on citizen roles in nonservice planning should help illuminate these issues, constraints that hinder their resolution, and possible alternative approaches. The materials produced by the research should contribute in a meaningful way to helping both citizen organizations and community action agencies develop new and more effective forms of social action.

Research Approach

The primary purpose of the research to be carried out for CSA is to examine nonservice policy strategies in which citizen groups and community-based service providers can participate so as to better meet the needs of the economically disadvantaged.

The research will result in a better understanding of these nonservice tools, the circumstances in which they have been employed, and the extent to which citizen action groups have participated. This information in turn will provide the basis for prototypes of community action that can be followed by local citizen groups to improve the community. The exemplary models to be identified will provide transferable concepts that will enable citizens or citizen groups to influence local institutions, such as banks, real estate developers, school districts, government service delivery organizations, and others, whether to halt damaging policies or encourage helpful ones.

SRI will use a research approach that is developmental. The four study phases will involve:

- Development of a conceptual schema for understanding the role of citizen groups and community-based organizations in implementing nonservice policy approaches.

- Identification of the range of nonservice policy applications being used in urban and rural areas that include citizen and community based organization participation.

- Selection and completion of a series of case studies where citizen groups and community-based organizations have played an active role in the development and implementation of nonservice policies or have protected themselves against them.

- Documentation and packaging of findings of the preliminary analysis and the case studies designed for use by three audiences: CSA, local community-based organization staff, and citizens; development and implementation of a dissemination strategy for ensuring relevance and utilization of project products.

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Table 1
EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY GROUP ROLES
IN NONSERVICE POLICY APPROACHES*

Policy Approach	Primary Performer	Community Group or CBO Role	Intended Consequences
A. Regulatory Change			
Downzoning of Neighborhoods	City/county zoning, board/administrator, commission/appeals board	Advocacy of change in neighborhood specific, or city-wide downzoning	Prevent encroachment of central business district or high density development into single family neighborhoods
Flexible enforcement of select housing/health and safety codes	Bureau of buildings, planning department/office of community development	Advocacy of changes in traditional housing and building code policies in target areas	Reduce displacement of, or abandonment by low income families, and, promote rehabilitation
Utility rate reform for public and private utilities	City council and public utilities commission	Advocacy of changes in rate structure and for specialized rates	Prevent unsubstantiated rate increases, and, provide either reductions, discounts, rebates or life-line rates to needy
B. Tax Policy Change			
Property tax deferral for low income, elderly, or blighted areas	City/county tax assessor (May require state policy), planning department	Advocacy for strategic tax deferral policy	Reduces fiscal burden that may serve as incentive for abandonment or outmigration in unstable neighborhoods
Tax abatement for home or small business improvements	City/county tax assessor	Advocacy of abatement to reduce disincentives for property upgrading	Reduces disincentive for improvement of property by individuals and business by not increasing taxes as improvements are made
C. Administrative Reform			
Use of nontraditional locations for delivery of social services	City council working with various urban agencies and social service agency	Advocacy of innovative service delivery format, and participation in its development/operation	Enables reaching clientele more effectively, and reduces certain capital requirements
Targeting procurements of local government on small urban businesses	City council and purchasers office, possibly working with SBA or OMBE groups	Advocate for targeting of extensive purchasing dollars spent by local governments on businesses within city	Strengthen small business by increasing retail and wholesale activity with procurements
Permit streamlining	Planning department, bureau of buildings	Advocates can support the need to reduce bureaucratic steps for homeowners and help communicate permit processing steps and requirements to community members	Reduces cost and time lost by individuals engaging in home upgrading
D. Collaboration with the Private Sector			
Private sector provision of occupation training in public school system, or under their auspices at work site	Firm, school system, city council	Advocacy of school policy change	Increase relevant training for those students with academic difficulties/increase employment opportunities
Targeting location or expansion of firm to community in need	Firm	Advocates are able to work with city and firm to find reasons and opportunity for plant expansion or location in need area	This can bring in new employment and revenues to aging, high unemployment areas

*Taken from "Rediscovering Advocacy: The Role of Community-Level Organizations in Implementing Non-Service Approaches," SRI International (1980).

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Table 1 (Concluded)

Policy Approach	Primary Performer	Community Group or CBO Role	Intended Consequences
E. Promotion of Self-Help			
Development of compliance monitoring roles for citizen organizations on important issues	Service delivery agency	CBOs may define or advocate for specific monitoring roles	Citizens can benefit by monitoring programs that affect them, such as affirmative action in public and private firms, resource allocation, code enforcement, etc.
Local government support of self-help organizations/peer support group operation	Social welfare and community development agencies	Advocacy of provision of technical assistance, or meeting resource needs (such as rooms to meet in, work shops) is important	By assisting the operation of self-help groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Widow to Widow, and others, local government can reduce eventual need for direct provision of support or therapeutic services
F. Public Advocacy			
Local government can sue Federal agencies if it finds it is not receiving its fair share of program allocations	Local city/county attorney working with planning or other public works/transit department	Provide supportive evidence on discriminatory policy	Sue the federal government to provide more equitable allocations of transit funds, for example (when more money goes to suburban transit than to urban transit)
Local government can sue a private firm if it has evidence that its practices are against consumer interests	Local attorney can bring a class-action suit	Provide evidence of consumer abuse, and serve as representative of consumer population	When abusive customer treatment is reported, in either advertising or actual products, the local government can sue for abatement of the nuisance

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