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The Communities First Programme: A Case Study of Social Innovation

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Abstract: The research project aims to evaluate the extent to which the Communities First Programme has increased levels of innovation activity. The Communities First Programme is a Welsh Assembly Government initiative. The programme is designed to improve 'opportunities and the quality of life for people living and working in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002). The main themes of the Communities First Programme may be stated as: involvement, action, sustainability, innovation, entrepreneurship, problem solving and teamwork. Innovation may be considered to be a learning process, relying partially upon technological competence and partially upon 'entrepreneurial and learning competence' (Morgan and Nauwelaers, 1999). Fundamentally, the innovation potential of a region is heavily reliant upon socio cultural factors, which if appropriately developed may enhance the 'collective learning and diffusion mechanisms' of a region (Morgan and Nauwelaers, 1999). Indeed, it may be stated that there is a social dimension to successful innovation; Bachmann (2003) identifies the importance of trust in such social interaction between players/stakeholders in the innovation process. It should be noted that the impact of socio-cultural issues upon innovative activity is notoriously difficult to measure. Given that similar socio-cultural traits may affect several regions in differing intensities (Pilon and DeBresson, 2003). Further, Cooke, Roper and Wylie (2002) exploring the social dimension to innovation view innovation as the 'result of interaction between economic actors in an open social system'. Pilon and DeBresson (2003) refer to the prerequisition of a form of socio-cultural openness as a genesis for innovation. The problematic issue here is likely to be how to capture instances of 'socially interactive learning' - to facilitate evaluation. It is highly unlikely that evaluation methods founded on positivist principles may offer a justifiable means to capture such interaction. As champions of the pluralistic paradigm, Diez and Esteban (2002) strongly support the use of 'participatory evaluation'. This enmeshes with the philosophy of policy evaluation contributing to policy making. Such an approach involves regional innovation policy stakeholders at all levels and at all stages in the policy making process. The research project explores the Communities First Programme in terms of business innovation and social innovation outcomes. Business focused innovation activities such as new: product, service, process or working practices are analysed and evaluated. For social innovation the new activities and services motivated by the goal of social need (Mulgan, 2006) are analysed and evaluated. Ultimately, the research project will consider the extent to which innovation policy stakeholders may/should be involved in the policy making process. As Diez and Esteban (2002) observe, a possible logical progression from stakeholder involvement in policy evaluation to stakeholder involvement in policy formulation.

Key words: Evaluation, innovation, communities, case study, Wales

Social Innovation

The Young Foundation/NESTA (2007) defines social innovation as 'new ideas, institutions or ways of working that aim to fulfil unmet social needs or tackle social problems'. A similar definition is that of Mulgan (2006) he describes social innovation as 'new ideas that work in meeting social goals'. Arguably, social innovation may have dual interpretation. Literature reveals social innovation to have both a formal and informal cynosure. For instance some arguably consider social innovation to be predominantly a public sector phenomenon (Young Foundation/NESTA, 2007). Whereas, others see social innovation as occurring more organically from societal need supported by third sector organisations (Mulgan et al, 2007). It may be a comparatively complex task to isolate what is meant by social innovation. Given that

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technological and business innovation may also directly or indirectly meet social goals. However, the Young Foundation/NESTA (2007) attempt to bridge any potential divide between formal and informal social innovation, highlighting the role public sector institutions may play in supporting informal innovation. Such a view is supported by Heiskala (2007). Heiskala describes a situation where the complexity of the real world contributes to social innovation resulting from business and technological innovation.

Whilst, Heiskala (2007) considers social innovation to be a configuration which may include regulative, normative and cultural innovation. Heiskala describes regulatory innovation as changing regulations and/or the regulatory system, normative innovation as challenging societal values/legitimate social norms, and cultural innovation challenge the ways in which society interprets reality. Heiskala seems to offer an opportunity to explore social innovation in a manner which is meaningful.

Innovation is considered to be something that is novel and has a use (Mayle, 2006). Westland (2008) alludes to the variety of interpretations of innovation, typically dependent upon profession. Heiskala (2007) considers innovation to be 'an idea or pattern that is defined as new, and has the impact of changing social practices with the consequence of improved social and/or economic performance'. As Heiskala identifies, his definition of innovation strongly suggests that all innovations are social innovations. His rationale for this statement is that prerequisite to innovation is an impact on social practices. Heiskala's definition may be arguably said to be a refinement and contemporarisation of previous definitions of innovation. Namely, that Heiskala may be amongst the first to consider true innovation to occur when there are only positive outcomes from an idea or pattern. For instance, Heiskala quotes the example of pollution as a by-product of so-called innovation. According to Heiskala this would not be defined as an innovation because of the damage caused to social life and/or economic performance. Chesebrough and Teece (1997) categorise innovation into two types autonomous and systemic – integrated with complementary innovations. In this respect it may be possible to categorise business and social innovation resultant of the Communities First project to be partially autonomous and partially systemic. This may the case if the Communities First project is considered as a complementary innovation to the innovation business and social innovation outcomes of the Communities First project. Brown (1997) stresses the importance of capturing local knowledge as a key abutment to the innovation process. Is the Communities First project actively or possibly passively acting as a conduit for the capturing of local knowledge? Further is the Communities First project facilitating both business and social innovation?

Arguably, one of the most significant differences between the process of business innovation and social innovation is the existence of support mechanisms. For instance, government agencies and private sector organisations offer a range of advice and financial support for business innovation. Such organisations often adopt the role of intermediary between demand and supply of business innovation. However, social innovation is less likely to be supported by the mechanisms typically available to business innovators. To nurture social innovation Mulgan et al (2007) identify a need to increase level and sophistication of support mechanisms available to potential and actual social innovators. For instance, the provision of suitable finance increases the likelihood of risk taking. Secondly, involvement with a more durable knowledge and experience base. Thirdly facilitate exposure of public and third sector personnel to more contemporary models of innovation. Chesbrough (2007) supports the view that innovation is more likely to occur where useful/relevant knowledge flows in and out of an organisation. It may be possible to consider the Communities First project as having the potential to facilitate knowledge in and outflows to local community based organisations. This view may be further supported by Sinard and West (2007) who describe the importance of networks to innovation. The Communities First project may be an opportunity to foster locally based innovation. Finally, it may be stated that more sophisticated institutions and networks are required to support social innovation (Mulgan et al, 2007).

In terms of organisational capability to innovate it may be stated that size matters. Namely, that inputs prerequisite for innovation may differ between large and small organisations. This has relevance for both social and business innovation outcomes of the Communities First project. All Communities First projects explored in this paper are considered to be of a size equivalent to a small

business (10 – 49 employees). As a consequence of the Communities First project's size it is likely to require bespoke inputs to be innovative. For instance, insufficient resource capability for innovation means external support is expected to be required. Further, small organisations are more likely to engage in meaningful relationships with external support agencies (Smallbone et al, 2003). Arguably, the Communities First project with its support mechanisms and opportunities for the building of informal/personal relationships may be fertile ground for both social and business innovation.

Although, social innovation is frequently organically initiated it is often introduced top-down from a strategic level within the public sector (Young Foundation/NESTA, 2007). The Young Foundation/NESTA (2007) considers the initiation stage of social innovation to typically have a local focus. The stimulus for local innovation appears to be a need to resolve local problems (Young Foundation/NESTA, 2007).

Mulgan et al (2007) consider there are a number of prerequisite conditions for the success of social innovations. The four conditions are listed in Table 1.0. Mulgan et al (2007) state that successful social innovation is more likely if all four elements are in 'sync'. Indeed, Mulgan et al (2007) consider the opposite to be true. Namely, if one or more elements are missing the social innovation is far less likely to be successful.

Table 1.0 Conditions Prerequisite for Practical, Sustainable, Large Scale Social Innovation

Element One Pull	Effective Demand	• Acknowledged societal need • Recognition of need by organisations • Organisations have sufficient financial capacity to exploit need
Element Two Push	Effective Supply	• Generation of innovative ideas (often inspired by anger, suffering or compassion) • Development of ideas into workable forms • Idea communication and dissemination
Element Three Connection of Pull and Push	Effective Strategies	• Choice of appropriate organisational form to put innovation into practice
	Learning and Adaptation	• Ensure innovation achieves social impact. • Ensure evaluation of innovation to maintain social impact

Source: Adapted Mulgan et al (2007)

The Young Foundation/NESTA (2007) identifies six factors affecting levels of local social innovation: 'underperformance; external and internal pressure for change; strong political and managerial leadership; networks linking frontline staff and central decision makers; organisational culture (embracing change and risk taking); and access to human and financial resources'. The six factors considered an abutment to social innovation by the Young Foundation/NESTA (2007) may be coupled to the work of Mulgan et al (2007). Mulgan et al, as 'push' elements, may consider the first two factors. The third and four factors may be considered as pull elements. Whilst the fifth and sixth factors may be coupled with the third element, the connection of pull and push. However, the fourth element – learning and adaptation is omitted for the six factors. Such omission may limit the sustainability of the social innovation.

Purdue (2001) in his study of community leaders in regeneration projects discovered several limiting factors. For instance, Purdue identified that due to resource limitations community leaders struggled to build communal social capital. This issue may be traced back to problems of connecting with and gaining the trust of community stakeholders. Further, community leaders seemed unable to accumulate external collaborative social capital (Purdue, 2001). It should be noted that social capital may also be referred to as a resource accumulation outcome of a firm's inter firm relationships (Molina-

Morales and Martinez- Fernandez, 2007). The problems may occur because of a lack of trust between public sector bodies and a community (Purdue, 2001). This issue may be exacerbated by the expectation that those involved in the community should trust the public sector sponsors. Purdue (2001) continues indicating that community efforts to maintain levels of trust may act as a distraction from the project raison d'etre. However, Molina-Morales and Martinez- Fernandez (2007) argue that trust is likely to be an influence promoting innovation. A question may be posed as to whether or not the Communities First project may be able to overcome the potential, leadership and trust deficiencies identified by Purdue (2001).

Evaluation

Given the potentially elusive nature of innovation it is often considered difficult to capture instances of innovation. This may be particularly true of social innovation. Such innovation may take place on an ad hoc basis. This may be especially true during the early stages of social innovation. Further, much social innovation happens at the interface between the service provider and client (Young Foundation/NESTA, 2007). Such interface occurrences are highly likely to be difficult to capture for evaluation purposes. Indeed, Burton (2008) fuels this debate supporting the view that evaluation of the Communities First project should focus upon both tangible and intangible innovation outcomes.

Commentators such as Georghiou (1998) describe the evolution of innovation policy from a financial/techno centric offering to the development of an environment conducive for innovation. It is questionable as to the priority of public funded support for innovation. Should public funds actively support this evolutionary path? Is there a danger of neglecting the role technology may play in increasing levels if innovative activity. It may be possible to identify a relationship between the ease of innovation policy evaluation and the evolution of innovation policy. Arguably, policy evaluation may be less demanding when the policy outcomes are more tangible, as may be found with technology policy. Whilst, innovation policy evaluation may be more complex when the outcomes from environment based programmes designed to foster innovation activity are likely to be less tangible. In addition, evaluation of social innovation may be problematic due to the comparative poor communication of innovation outcomes by the public sector (Young Foundation/NESTA, 2007). Innovation policy evaluation may also want to consider behavioural additionality (Georghiou, 1998). Behavioural additionality may be described as an organisational behaviour change resulting from an innovation policy intervention. In other words existing business-based innovation projects may be undertaken differently as a consequence of innovation policy support (Georghiou, 1998). Georghiou offers a further critique of innovation policy evaluation. He considers evaluation of innovation policy may understate the true extent of policy outcomes. For instance, innovation programmes may support business innovation projects that have already been initiated, but not support the development of the end product or service. Therefore, it may be comparatively more difficult to evaluate this intermediate stage in product or service development Georghiou (1998). Further, there is likely to be a time lag between termination of the innovation policy initiative and policy outcomes. Georghiou (1998) is a supporter of an innovation policy evaluation being undertaken via a variety of means.

Worthy of note is the role played by institutions in the creation of social innovation. Institutions are defined by Scott (2001) cited by Heiskala as being made up of three institutional pillars – namely, regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive (see Table 2.0). It may be possible to use Scott's institutional pillars to explore the actual and potential impact of institutions upon an area's capacity and capability for social innovation.

Table 2.0: Three Institutional Pillars

	Pillar		
	Regulative	**Normative**	**Cultural-cognitive**
Basis of compliance	Expedience	Social obligation	Taken-for-grantedness, shared understanding
Basis of order	Regulative rules	Binding expectations	Constitutive schema
Mechanisms	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
Logic	Instrumentality	Appropriateness	Orthodoxy
Indicators	Rules, laws, sanctions	Certification, accreditation	Common beliefs, shared logics of action
Basis of legitimacy	Legally sanctioned	Morally governed	Comprehensible, recognizable, culturally supported

Source: Scott (2001) cited by Hamalainen and Heiskala (2007)

To attempt to classify forms of social innovation produced as outcomes of the Communities First project the model constructed by Utterback and Abernathy (1975) will be employed. Utterback and Abernathy classified innovative firms into three stages as illustrated in Table 3.0.

Table 3.0: Classification of Innovative Firms

	Factor Initiating Innovation
Stage One	Primary factor to kick start innovation was market related
Stage Two	Perception of a technical opportunity to create or improve a product or production process
Stage Three	Innovation was initiated by the product and/or administrative function.

Source: Utterback and Abernathy (1975)

The Communities First project is arguably at Utterback and Abernathy (1975) Stage one - the factor to kick start innovation was community (market) related. The factor initiating social innovation has typically been the local community. This may be further explored by Mulgan (2007) in his identification of two main catalytic factors for innovation; discontent and a gap between where we are and where we ought to be. Evidence of the two factors may be said to be present in Community First areas as a catalyst for social innovation.

Palfrey et al (1992) state that in their opinion the public policy design process is typically undertaken rationally. Further, Palfrey et al consider policy evaluation as a means of improving the rationality of policy making. It is worth noting that policy evaluators are merely one of the contributors to policy making (Rossi and Freeman, 1989). Palfrey et al (1992) contend that policy evaluation should not merely compare inputs and outcomes. Instead, Palfrey et al propose that policy evaluation approaches should be 'referential rather than exclusively instrumental'. Namely, the evaluation process is inclusive of reference to the principle in which policy is embedded. Indeed, it may be stated that Palfrey et al are advocates of 'pluralistic evaluation'. Pluralistic evaluation they state is not an evaluation panacea. However, given the nature of its inclusive methodological and method approach, pluralistic evaluation will yield results which arguably may be described as a holistic representation of policy/programme outcomes. Such an approach may be considered appropriate as a means of evaluating the Communities First project. This may be so given the inclusive nature of pluralistic evaluation is likely to mirror the multitude of outcomes, values and stakeholders enmeshed with the Communities First project. However, evaluation theorists such as Rossi and Freeman (1989) seem to

favour a more focused approach to evaluation. Debatably, Rossi and Freeman consider the broad goals of projects such as Communities First to lack the prerequisite characteristics for evaluation. Instead, Rossi and Freeman favour an evaluation process with an objective-based cynosure.

To evaluate policy initiatives Palfrey et al (1992) suggest the use of 'value-laden' criteria. The application of such criteria is more likely to enable a more representative evaluation of the Communities First project. If values are to be a legitimate element of policy/programme evaluation it is worth noting that different policy stakeholders may have different policy stakeholders may have different value systems. Namely, policy makers, policy recipients and policy evaluators may not hold the same value system (Palfrey et al, 1992)

In summary, it can be stated that 'evaluation needs to follow the same adaptive learning approach as innovation policy itself' (Georghiou, 1998). Further, to continue the theme of learning in policy design, the work of Palfrey et al (1992) may be considered. The following statement may be said to encapsulate the notion of a holistic, learning approach to the evaluation of public policy. 'Only fully-fledged evaluation which incorporates a variety of criteria, perspectives and methodological approaches and techniques can hope to produce data that will adequately serve the purpose of policy making in the public sector' (Palfrey et al, 1992). Finally, it should be noted that there is no one most efficient and effective means of evaluating public policy (Palfrey et al, 1992)

Research Methods

To evaluate innovation policy/programmes it is necessary to identify, explore and implement a suitable research philosophy. It may be stated, ontologically there are two poles of thought – one positivist and one phenomenological. Positivism may be described as assuming 'an objective world, which scientific methods can more or less readily represent and measure' Gephart (1999). Further, it may be stated at the heart of positivism is the notion that 'science makes knowledge, practice uses it' Darlington and Scott (2002). However, positivism has its critics. For example, Gephart (1999) talks of positivism '*stripping meaning*' from analysis and evaluation of phenomena. A positivist may retort to such criticism by questioning the capability of qualitative researchers to 'verify their truth statements' (Denzin and Lincoln (2005). Denzin and Lincoln also view positivists as perceiving qualitative researchers as writing *'fiction not science'*.

Phenomenological or qualitative researchers 'stress the socially constructed nature of reality' (Flick, 2002). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) fragment qualitative research into some of its components. They consider qualitative research to include 'verisimilitude, emotionality, personal responsibility, an ethic of caring, political praxis multivoiced texts, and dialogues with subjects'. This observation may be considered to be recognition of the subjective understanding of phenomena by researchers.

Arguably, innovative activity has both 'hard', tangible positivistic elements and 'softer', more elusive phenomenological components. The view of innovation being multi-faceted is likely to indicate a need for a research paradigm which encapsulates this variety of activity. Interviews have been used to collect data relating to instances of social innovation occurring in the Communities First Project. To date fifteen interviews have been held, interviews with five Communities First Project Managers and ten interviews with Communities First project workers.

Findings

Mulgan (2006) has identified there is a lack of suitably developed and resourced social innovation strategy and programmes. It appears there is far less emphasis placed upon the development of social innovation programmes as opposed to technology based business innovation programmes where far more resources are targeted.

Arguably, the Dowlais Communities First 'Engine House' project with its tiered innovation outcomes illustrates the work of Brown (1997). The 'Engine House' project is located in a two storey building. The ground floor is host to a social innovation project. The first floor hosts a social enterprise which has both business and social innovation outcomes. Whilst, on the second floor a commercially viable business is operated which has mainly business outcomes. The viability of the 'Engine House' project is partially reliant upon the cross subsidisation of financial support cascaded from the commercial and social enterprises to the social innovation project. The 'Engine House' model undoubtedly relies upon the use of local knowledge to support innovation activity. The work of Moulaert and Sekia (2003) may support this statement. Namely, Moulaert and Sekia consider

successfully raising levels of innovation activity may be at least partially reliant upon the appropriateness of 'community life'. Roberts (2008) also considers a balance of social and business input to be prerequisite to the achievement of social innovation outcomes. This may be considered to be supportive of the Mulgan et al (2007) model illustrated in Table 1.0. In particular Mulgan's Element Three – 'pull and push' an appropriate combination of social and business input is likely to be a positive influence at this stage. Further, Molina-Morales and Martinez-Fernandez (2007) support the view that local institutions are likely to have a positive impact upon a firm's ability to innovate.

Sinard and West (2007) stress the importance of location proximity as a factor which affects the likelihood of innovation taking place. They state that if a potential innovator is not geographically close to a 'key' innovation network then the potential innovator needs to build a network. Brenner and Greif (2006) support this view that innovation is more likely to take place with other firms rather than a lone firm attempting to be innovative. The degree of importance of other firms upon innovation may vary according to industrial sector and urban construction (Brenner and Greif, 2006). The Communities First project may be both a catalyst and a solution – either creating opportunities to establish a network and/or providing an established network to assist a potential innovator.

Positive outcomes from the Communities First project are more likely if levels of social capital are increased. This may be the case, if as Purdue (2001) states social capital consists of 'trust relationships between a community and its leaders'. It may be possible to identify ways in which the Communities First project contributes to the building of trust between a community and its leaders However, there is evidence that a major contributory factor to any Communities First project failure is a lack of communication/connection with local people and issues (Roberts, 2008). Further, failing projects are more likely to have a high turnover of staff, contributing to a lack of continuity and momentum. This is likely to inhibit the building of trust relationships. It may be the case that given the opportunities for involvement by a community generated by the Communities First project it may be more likely that community leaders will engender a genuine followship amongst their community. Indeed, Communities First projects are more likely to be successful when community involvement pervades all activities (Burton, 2008). As a consequence a 'real' leader-followship relationship is more likely to be a powerful force for change. Indeed, it may be the case that social entrepreneurs such as both the Cwmni and Ystradgynlais Communities First project Co-ordinators can be described as transformational leaders. Purdue (2001) defines a transformational leader as a person combining 'entrepreneurial skills with a vision for the neighbourhood'. Clearly, the co-ordination at both the Cwmni and Ystradgynlais Communities First projects have a strong case for inclusion in this category. Indeed, both co-ordinators at Cwmni and Ystradgynlais may also be considered to be communitiy leaders as opposed to 'managerial leaders' Roberts (2008). Further, Purdue describes transformational leaders as 'community representatives who interact with their followers'. It may be stated that Communities First project objectives are more likely to be fulfilled via community engagement with a transformational leader. Indeed, programmes such as Communities First project may create opportunities/resources to aid the development of social capital. This in turn may contribute to the nurturing of competence blocs as described by Eliasson (2007). Purdue (2001) perceives the role of leaders in community regeneration to be a major contributor to regeneration project success or failure. Purdue claims the social entrepreneur is a key force contributing to successful change. However, to measure the influence of social entrepreneurship upon programmes such as the Communities First project it is helpful to explore definitions of a social entrepreneur. For instance, Purdue links the social entrepreneur to traditional views of the entrepreneur – such as risk taking and creativity with 'social mission and accountability'.

The capability of transactional leaders to be innovative is partially dependent upon credits of 'competence, conformity to group norms, length of participation or a prior good reputation (Purdue, 2001). The credits may be viewed as a form of buffer fending off negative influences/forces. Thus, allowing the incubation and launch of an innovation.

An evaluation of the Communities First project may be legitimately be undertaken not only with project outcomes but also with process. Palfrey et al (1992) support this view by eluding to the irrationality of only evaluating programmes on completion. If only final outcomes are the subject of evaluation then

any intermediate outcomes would not be exposed to evaluation. It may be argued that the Communities First project has a plethora of reference points for evaluation. Some, outcomes on termination of the Communities First project and many others are occurring, throughout the project process. Further, adoption of a referential evaluation approach proposed by Palfrey et al would create opportunities to evaluate the value basis of the Communities First project. In other words the Communities First project would be evaluated using the project objectives and the values of the policy design rationale.

Conclusion

Of potential interest to Communities First project leaders is the work of Eliasson (2007). Eliasson refers to the need to build competence blocs as a means of ensuring at least a satisfactory level of regional or national competitiveness. Specifically relating to the Communities First project, Eliasson eludes to the transformational stage of a move from an old to new economy. The Communities First project is typically located in economic areas where the transformation stage has traditionally been comparatively slow. It may be possible for the Communities First project to speed up the transformation stage and support the development of competence blocs. Heiskala (2007) calls for social innovation to be a driving force behind the creation of competence blocs that will in turn support a region or nation's capability to compete against other regions and nations. Heiskala continues, emphasising the need for social innovation to 'create reflexive social structures which have the capacity for collective learning'. Indeed, Heiskala is eulogistical about the role social innovation may play in the sustainability of renewable reflexive social structures. Heiskala also supports the view that social innovation has the capacity to change the 'hegemonic pattern'. Thus social innovation may be a catalyst for harnessing societal power to benefit all. It may be too soon to consider the national impact of the Communities First project. However, there are cases such as Cwmni and Ystradgynlais where there is evidence of the harnessing societal power to benefit all.

The Community First project's funding mechanism is likely to help overcome the financial barriers to innovation. However, according to Riding (2003) a problematic funding issue for innovation projects is their uniqueness. Potential investors may be deterred because of a lack of previous experience or expertise in the proposed innovation. The Communities First project aims may contribute to overcoming this barrier. Steil et al (2002) highlight the importance of capital markets in the promotion of innovative activity in a region or country. Although potentially rather tenuous, it may be possible to consider Communities First project funding as an opportunity for potential innovators (both social and business) to access capital. Are the Communities First projects acting as a source and/or a conduit for capital (both financial and physical)? Amongst the barriers to successful business innovation is the state of readiness of consumers. The state of readiness refers to the consumer's ability and desire to consume the product /service. Arguably given the organic nature of the Communities First project – such a barrier is more likely to be overcome. This may be so because the potential consumers are likely to contribute to the innovation process. Thus, making it more likely that the output of the innovative activity will fulfil customer needs.

Mulgan et al (2007) state that organisational growth is one of the most effective methods of disseminating social innovation. However, Mulgan et al consider that successful organisational growth typically has to over come several challenges. For instance, organisation founders may lack the management qualities prerequisite for a growing organisation. Also governance structures may be inappropriate. Further, organisational cultures may not evolve to support the organisation as it grows and interacts with an ever-changing environment. Mulgan et al (2007) make especial reference to changes in funding mechanisms and relationships. Early in the organisations life cycle, funding relationships may be more informal and personal. As the organisation grows funding relationships may become more contractual.

Arguably the best way to achieve an effective sustainable social innovation is via the fostering of emulators (Mulgan et al (2007). Mulgan et al consider some of the most successful social innovators to be those influencing both demand and supply. Namely, as campaigners influencing demand and as organisers influencing supply. Roberts (2008) also highlights the need for emulators. However, he considers 'true' emulation to occur where there is cognisance of Communities First project back office/support mechanisms. Roberts is a critic of emulation that is arguably too superficial, only focusing

upon outcomes and not processes.

The future for projects such as Communities First may arguably be less peripheral (in terms of innovation policy), becoming increasingly main stream. In Ireland, community based activists are typically heavily involved in social partnerships. Working alongside government, employers and trade unions to improve economic performance (O'Connor, 2007)

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