

CHAPTER FIVE

Process, Context and the Human Factor

The first part of this chapter presents a schema for studying all kinds of church and community work. The second part discusses some of the things involved in using this schema, such as coping with feelings and limited thinking time and workers being their own analytical instruments. The third part is about coping with contextual intimidation.

I. THE CORE PROCESS: FROM EXPERIENCE THROUGH CRITICAL AND IMAGINATIVE THOUGHT TO CREATIVE ACTION

Underlying the examples I worked through in Part One is a very important dynamic and thrust from experience through critical and imaginative thought to creative action.* I would represent it diagrammatically as follows in Figure 5:1 in order to suggest how thought, informed by experience, is earthed in action.

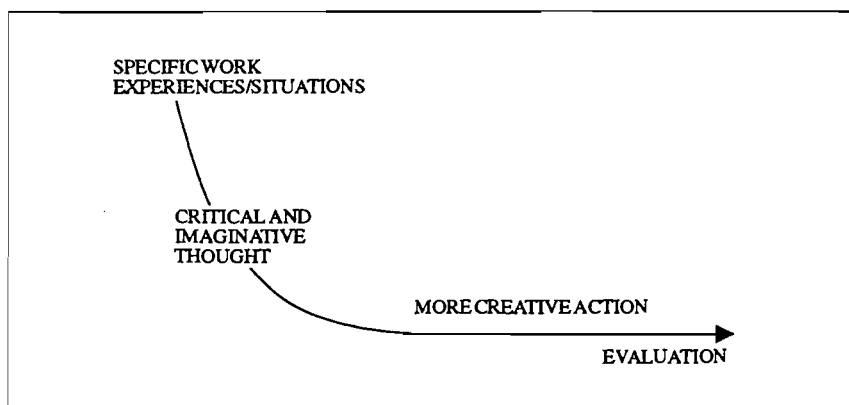


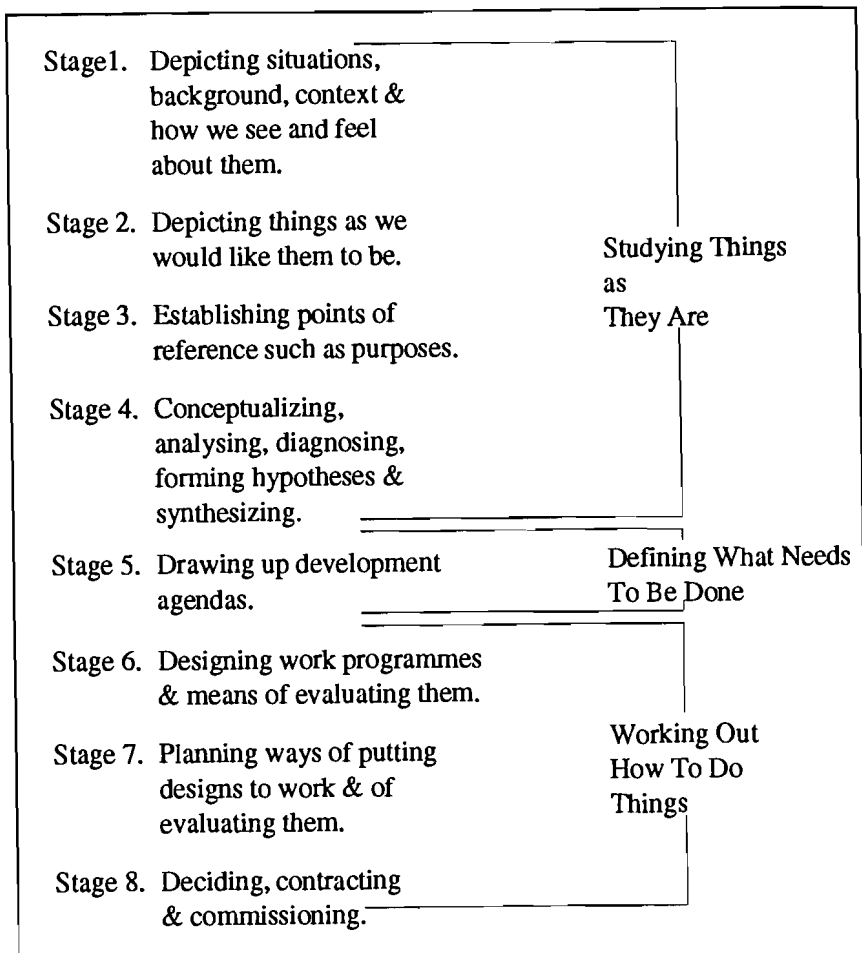
FIGURE 5:1. THE CREATIVE ACTION THRUST OF CRITICAL AND IMAGINATIVE THOUGHT

*To communicate about the experiential approach to Christian Education during the 1960s the late Douglas S. Hubery coined the phrase "from experience to experience through experience". Cf. *Teaching the Christian Faith Today* (A Chester House Publication 1965). This was the inspiration for "from experience through critical and imaginative thought to creative action".

This thrust is built into the structures used to work on problems, cases, situations and projects in Part One. It directs and eases people towards thoughtful action even while holding them back from precipitate action to enable them to think things through. Getting as many people as possible engaged together in this process is of the essence of church and community development.

1. Stages in Critical and Imaginative Thought

As Part One illustrates, our ability to think things through to a good conclusion improves when our efforts are guided but not dominated by a logical sequence of thinking steps. Reviewing all the examples and my experience I identify the eight stages in thinking critically and imaginatively about church and community work which are set out in Display 5:1.



DISPLAY 5:1. EIGHT THINKING STAGES

Our aspirations and feelings are significant parts of "things as they are"; that is why Stages 2 and 3 are grouped with Stages 1 and 4. Whether people are satisfied or dissatisfied is, for example, an important part of any situation. Each stage has its own ethos. Looking forward and designing, planning and dreaming have an ethos quite different from that associated with analysing and deciding. The systematic movement in thought from what is to what is to be has a momentum and drive of its own which uplifts the spirit and stirs people to want to get on with things.

These thinking stages are especially helpful when we are overwhelmed by complex situations and issues, when we are daunted by the task, when our feelings tend to inhibit rational thought, when we just do not think it is possible for us to think our way to a good conclusion and when we are so eager to get on with things that we do not want to stop and think.

There is a logic in the order but the sequence is not invariable. Stages 2 and 3 could well precede Stage 1. Sometimes an examination of a situation or problem starts with what people are planning to do next, i.e. with Stages 6, 7 and 8 or in the evaluation of a programme of work. Wherever you start, some of the steps can be done adequately only when the others have been worked on: 2, for instance, can be informed by 4; 6 and 7 depend upon what people are prepared to do, and that comes out clearly in 8. In practice, each stage facilitates and refines the others, and Stage 3, points of reference such as beliefs and purposes, is a guide to them all. So it is good practice to summarize what is emerging in order to revise earlier thoughts in the light of later insights.

There are many ways in which this process can be sabotaged deliberately or by default. For instance some people make heavy emotional bids to "get on with the job because we all know what needs to be done, don't we?" They want to by-pass Stages 1 to 7 if not 1 to 8. Others are very happy to think and think again without acting on their conclusions. Maintaining the thrust towards action generates the distinctive ethos of a workshop in which people are engaged in purposeful, productive thought rather than in a "talking shop".

Pursuing this process in living situations in which you have invested a lot of yourself taxes your feelings as well as your ability to think critically and imaginatively. You can experience all kinds of emotions. We need to deal with these so that they help rather than hinder the thinking processes. Those helping people to use this process need to be sensitive and to offer the moral and pastoral support and care which enables people to think through things about which they feel deeply and to think about their feelings as well as their ideas.

Our ability to think things through also improves when the uses of these stages is accompanied by meditation, reflection and prayer and when what is being learnt through the process is articulated. Adding all these dimensions to figure 5:1 gives us a conceptual framework for analysing and designing all kinds of church and community work, a schema. This is presented in Figure 5:2 and described and discussed in detail in the remainder of this chapter.

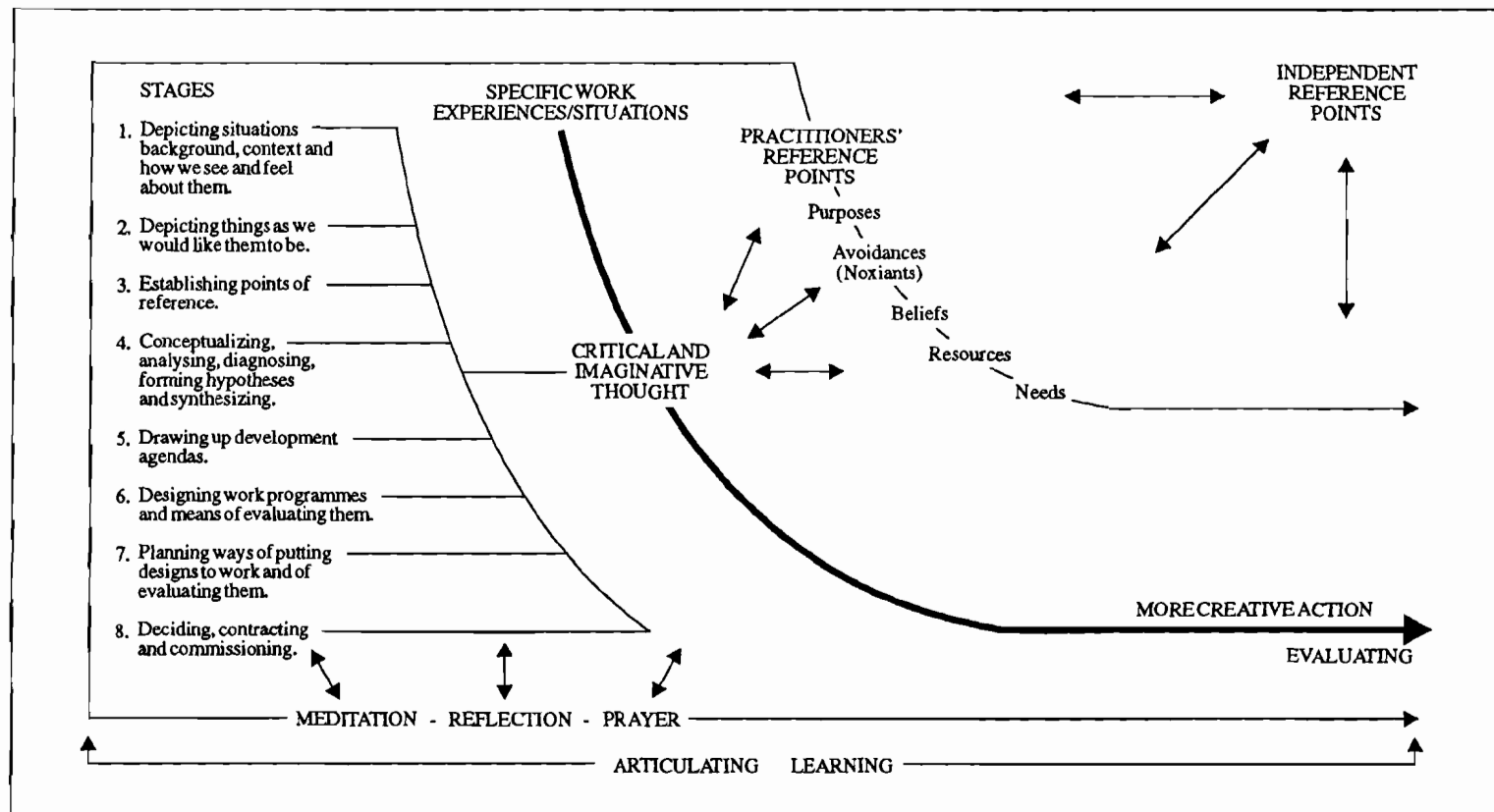


FIGURE 5.2. A SCHEMA FOR ANALYSING AND DESIGNING CHURCH AND COMMUNITY WORK

Stage 1: Depicting Work Situations, Backgrounds and Contexts and how we see them and feel about them

Part One showed the importance of getting as accurate a picture as possible of the work situation, the nature of the workers' involvement and how they feel about it: the problem and the project were defined; the case set down succinctly; the situation described. Subjective realities (feelings, ideas, thoughts, hopes and fears) were differentiated and stated alongside objective ones about place, programmes, numbers of people, finance etc: they are equally material "facts". The examples I have given in Part One showed the importance of working to the perspectives of those involved because how they see and experience the realities conditions what they do. Clarity about this facilitates creative interaction between their perspective and those of others. The art in all this is to depict these various realities about workers and their situations in ways that enable all concerned to grasp the essentials and to work at them. I say "depict", rather than describe, because, for me, it conveys portraying things through graphics and possibly paintings as well as through the spoken and written word.

All but painting were used in the worked examples. The aim is to portray as succinctly as possible the essentials of situations, the experience and dimensions of problems, the story-line of cases. Descriptive economy is necessary in what is essentially an exercise in profiling: too many words and fussy diagrams obfuscate.

Stage 2: Depicting Things as we would like them to be

There are many reasons why it is good practice for people engaged in development work to describe and share their visions, their ideas about how they would prefer things to be. Actualities and visions are creative foils to each other when they are depicted together and compared and contrasted. (A.N. Whitehead said, "... progress in the right direction is the result of a slow, gradual process of continual comparison of ideas with facts".¹) Individuals working privately and groups of people need to have both in view. What can happen is that people in working groups who have shared their understandings of their situations try to continue without sharing their vision. (It can happen the other way round as well.) Working to public statements of the actualities and private visions is a recipe for frustration and confusion: people are assuming or guessing what others think would be ideal. Visions help us to formulate some important points of reference such as purposes.

Stage 3: Establishing Points of Reference

Five reference points that help people to regulate this process are described in section 2. They are purposes, noxians or things to be avoided, beliefs, resources and needs.

Stage 4. Conceptualizing, analysing, diagnosing, forming Hypotheses and synthesizing

Essentially this activity is about workers systematically conceptualizing, examining, diagnosing and analysing their work themselves and establishing their hypotheses in order to be better able to achieve their purposes, improve their performance and develop their abilities and themselves and to help those with whom they work to do the same. Others, such as consultants, may help them to do these things and may suggest analyses but workers need to "own" the analyses. Consultants must aim to help workers to analyse their own work and to become increasingly better at doing so: they should not do it for them. I would hope that workers would help those with whom they work to acquire these skills.²

Analysis is about taking things apart or "the resolution of anything complex into its simple elements" and "the tracing of things to their sources; the discovery of general principles underlying concrete phenomena" (S.O.E.D.). Part One shows that the kind of analyses we are considering are about what is happening to people and workers in complex collectives (groups, committees, churches, organizations and communities) as they go about the business of living, working and worshipping together. They are, for example, about patterns of interaction which facilitate and inhibit human and spiritual growth being achieved; they are about people and groups working well together; they are about clashes between people, workers and groups and faction; they are about elitist, autocratic, authoritarian and non-directive action. The analyses, like the patterns of interaction, touch the nerve centres of workers' and people's motivation, purposes, beliefs and sense of vocation. Clearly, such essential analytical work is as sensitive as it is intellectually demanding: those who help others to do it need to be pastors as well as analysts, who tread carefully on vocational ground because it is holy.

In this context, dealing as we are with living situations, it is particularly dangerous to take apart what subsequently cannot be put together. I have experienced it. To be health-giving, diagnosis must be followed by effective treatment. Similarly work analysis must be construed in a positive synthesis and used in the design of realistic plans as a prelude to creative action. Analysis and design must always be coupled: analysis is a means to an end, not an end. We return to this later. This underlines the importance of working at all the stages of the sequence so that analysis leads to synthesis, and to a purposeful movement from what was done to what is to be done.

Holland and Henriot, dedicated advocates of "pastoral social analysis" in the service of faith and justice, underline all this:

First, social analysis is only a negative instrument. By that we mean it has the destructive power to tear away the mystification of our social world and to unveil the deep structures that control it. Our response to that disclosure is often a feeling of powerlessness. We are overwhelmed and immobilized. (We experience the "paralysis of analysis".)

To move beyond this feeling of powerlessness, we need the creative resources of vision and energy.

Second, social analysis is a scientific effort; that is, it uses analytical tools to divide reality into separate and abstract parts.... However, if the analysis breaks a living body into its component parts, it risks destroying its creative life. If a social analyst takes away life, what will return it—at least in social terms?

That task falls to the artist—not only the artist of high culture (the great painters, composers, and authors of classical literature), but an artist whose roots are found in popular culture. We believe that the artistic impulse is the creative force in modern civilization. It is the spiritual source from which vision and energy flow. While we need to analyse society with scientific rigor, we must be wary of destroying that impulse.³

Stage 5: Drawing up Development Agendas

By "drawing up a development agenda" I mean determining just what needs to be done to pursue the implications of the analysis. This was done in working on the bishop's situation. Three tasks were identified, and others were added after further reflection. In the case study we speculated about the action that could now be taken.

Drawing up such agendas is a reflective phase which follows analytical probing and precedes designing and planning. It is a brooding mood stage and a standing back to take stock before going forward. For this stage to be creative the workers directly concerned have to experience a subjective synthesis which brings together several elements: intellectual and intuitive convictions that the analysis is sufficiently profound and the tasks essential; feelings, convictions and assurances that they can and must do the tasks and that their commitment, calling and integrity as workers require them to do so.

Sometimes workers simply cannot commit themselves to tasks that seem obvious and logical both to them and others. Enthusiasm can waver after the excitement of analyses which lead to disclosures. At other times what they feel in their bones is needed just does not seem to fit the logic of the analysis. Sometimes I have become impatient with myself and others over such dissonance. At my best I have stayed with it and had the great privilege of waiting expectantly whilst others search inwardly for the connections they need to make.⁴ It has always been worth while. It has led to new insights and to key tasks being discerned which were previously obscured by other more obvious tasks.

Waiting and working for connections to be made by workers themselves between their inner and outer worlds is essential because these connections are a primary source of creative energy. It leads to what Eric Fromm calls non-alienated activity and that, he says, gives "birth to their own faculties and brings life to other persons and to things".⁵ Genuine development agendas emerge from this process which is soul-searching rather than brainstorming. Mechanical listing can be a servant of, but not a substitute for, this process. At times it prevents reflection.

Stage 6: Designing Work Programmes, Projects and Programmes and Means of evaluating them

Designing the basics of human work programmes is one of those things it is easier to illustrate than to describe. The Jesuits' project described in Chapter 4 illustrates it admirably. Figures 4:1 and 2 are designs. It shows how it was intended that the Project would work. It sets out the structures and the working relationships that would hold the human parts together and facilitate the flow of creative effort in many different directions. It shows the kind of structures and relationships necessary; it does not show how to construct and establish them. Doing that, in the terminology I am using, is planning, contracting and commissioning. More often than not, people in church and community work act without overt reference to the designs upon which their action is based. This is a stage that is generally omitted. This neglected activity is considered in Chapter 6.

At this stage it is also desirable to design a system of evaluation, i.e. to decide just what is to be evaluated and in what way can it be shown that objectives have been achieved.

Stage 7: Planning Ways and Means of putting Designs to Work and evaluating them

This stage is about the steps to be taken to convert designs into reality. Thinking through these steps is a real test of the feasibility of designs and a prelude to the next stage. People often think quite wrongly that they are "designing" when they are doing this. It involves things like: deciding who to see, in what order and to what ends; convening meetings; deciding what to do and how to do it; setting up groups and organizations.

Stage 8: Deciding, contracting and commissioning

Generally speaking people give themselves more freely to the tasks associated with the first seven stages when there is a firm and genuine understanding at the outset that decisions will be made only when the implications are sufficiently clear for all concerned to make them freely and realistically. With this understanding, provisional decisions are made en route to facilitate the processes of analysis and design. At appropriate points these are revised or confirmed. When the information is available decisions and contracts are made and people commission themselves and others to do the work. Such arrangements help those who get so carried away by the subject matter and group processes that they over-commit themselves. At the same time they help those who hold back for fear of committing themselves prematurely. And they defend people from those who habitually think of things for others to do and leave them to do them!

Thus, in the early stages of this process, tentativeness engenders free, imaginative and creative thought that leads to well-informed decision making and action. The later stages lead to disciplined decision making. The process

opens out thought to lead on to action. This is an action-focused, not an open-ended, process.

2. Workers' Reference Points

To be most effective the use of this process has to result in activities which those concerned can sustain and which:

- (a) give expression to their beliefs;
- (b) are along the line of their purposes;
- (c) make constructive contributions to the overall context in which they occur.

I would now like to show that these fundamental requirements can be used to produce overall reference points which can be used to guide, check and regulate the process and, if necessary, to adjust whatever emerges from it.

Formulating reference points and using them is an integral part of the process. There are several reasons for setting them alongside the process as well as within it.

First, they are rarely used consistently to check what is emerging from the various stages even when people are convinced of their importance and have taken the trouble to formulate them precisely. They tend to be polished, put on a pedestal and forgotten as people grapple with more tangible things. Setting them out separately alongside the process helps to remind people of the importance of using them over and again.

Second, in working on the stages it is all too easy to produce lop-sided plans through becoming preoccupied with one part of the analysis rather than the whole of it. This was a very real danger in designing the project described in Chapter Four. The design was developed piecemeal. Critical pieces would have been missed had we not compared the pieces of the design we had put in place with the Jesuits' beliefs, purposes, personal needs and critical features of the context in which they were to work. I have in mind the subtle and significant nuances of the relationships in the design between the Jesuits and people in other organizations working with the poor and in the way of relating to unsympathetic Protestants through sympathetic ones rather than directly. Without these refinements of earlier designs the project would have been seriously flawed. Clearly, the effects of errors multiply as one works through the stages.

Third, putting this process to work involves introducing a systematic and closely structured way of going about things into specific human activities with their own flow of thought and action and in which people have their own way of going about things. Sometimes it all comes together in a positive dynamic. More often than not, cross-currents of thought, beliefs, purposes, approaches

and methods play on orderly processes and interrupt, deflect, resist and even swamp them. (This is my experience, but it is also my experience that the process invariably generates more productive thought and action than there would be without it.) Whilst all this is going on, clearly marked reference points are needed to keep our bearings and to help others to do so. Reference points, not visions, are needed. Pictures of places help us to recognize them. Reference points help us to discern whether our thinking and deciding is going in the right direction. They need to be sharp and readily available to help us, individuals or groups, when we are deeply involved in the kind of processes we are considering here.

Fourth, reference points relate to all stages so they need to be readily available all the time.

There are many different kinds of reference points. Those that I use are beliefs, purposes, things to avoid ("noxious"6), needs and resources. (Hypotheses are another kind that keep alive speculative thinking. They are discussed in Chapter 7.) Reference points, like tools, are useful for different functions and some are in more constant use than others. Beliefs connect us with the ground of our being and doing. Purposes point to what we want or need to achieve and noxious to what we want or need to avoid. Needs and resources earth us in our situation and context. Together they form a framework of reference. Mission statements, which are very much in vogue in secular as well as religious institutes, weave together these kinds of reference points in a paragraph or two.

There is a limited number of different kinds of reference points. The content of each kind and the way in which it is expressed is unlimited. Individuals, groups, organizations, churches determine them in their own way. This brings us to the need to formulate the content so that it really represents our thinking and is useful in the work place.

a. Purposes and Avoidances (Noxious)

For many years I worked consciously and systematically to what I wanted to achieve (purpose and objectives) and subconsciously to what I wanted to avoid (noxious). Occasionally I did work to noxious but I was not aware of the methodological implications of what I was doing. Now I work consciously to both. I put down quite unashamedly what I want or need to avoid. For instance I might put down that I want to avoid compromising my integrity or that I want to avoid making a mess of a meeting and having to endure the inner pain that would follow. The sea-change was brought about by reading about a contrast that Professor Gareth Morgan makes between "goal oriented strategies" in organizations and "a strategy based on the avoidance of noxious". The latter, he says:

involves a choice of limits and constraints rather than a choice of ends, creating degrees of freedom that allow meaningful direction to emerge....

Whether we examine the Ten Commandments or contemporary legal systems, we find the principles of avoiding noxious defining a space of acceptable behaviours within which individuals can self-organize.⁷

Morgan argues that "the process of pursuing a specific goal and the process of identifying and avoiding noxious" are not simply two sides of the same coin, they "are qualitatively different modes of action that impact on organization and environment in very different ways".⁸ That may be so but my experience is that both modes of activity have a place in the kind of work in which I am engaged. They go together, just as Jesus' great commandments to love God and neighbour and self go alongside the commandments not to murder, commit adultery, etc.⁹ I find working to both purposes and noxious releasing and creative. It helps me to steer away from the noxious and to keep nearer to the fairly narrow purpose path.

Purposes and noxious help to check in a positive and negative manner whatever is emerging from the process. A purpose, for example, might be to promote love and care in a neighbourhood; a noxious to avoid mistrust. Using these to check ideas for action involves asking, "Will our plans help people to love and care for each other? Can they possibly lead to mistrust?" Each question has its own potential not possessed by the other for checking things out and faulting plans. Together they have a pincer checking effect.

Noxious are sometimes better evaluative reference points than purposes. Attempts, for instance, to promote dialogue must aim to avoid defensive thought and behaviour which rings the death knell on all forms of dialogue and critical thought. There is a checking cutting edge in the noxious that is absent from the objective, "to promote dialogue". Noxious they might be, but avoiding things can be very positive. Much in the case study in Chapter 3 and the project design in Chapter 4 is about avoiding bad relationships: the minister with his wife, Sunday School teachers and church members; the Jesuits with the local priests and with people in secular, Protestant and Catholic agencies who are working with the poor. The noxious were very much in the Jesuits' mind when they were designing the project. Things might have been quite different if the minister in the case had had in mind the things he needed to avoid, for instance one section of the Church playing him off against another. For these reasons I find it more effective to use purposes and noxious rather than to transform noxious into negative purposes and objectives as is sometimes done.

Formulating one's own real purpose is often a difficult thing to do; but when achieved it becomes a signpost, directing and redirecting attention and effort to vital points. Doing so involves clarifying to oneself what is at the core of what one aims to achieve in and through every aspect of one's work. An objective¹⁰ is also something one aims to achieve but, in the terminology I use, it is a sub-purpose, something necessary to the purpose but not equal to it. For example, to increase church membership is an objective; to get people to live

in Christian love with people in the Church and in the community is a purpose. The former is not a purpose because it is not the core of what the church wants to achieve. To achieve the church membership objective may or may not promote the overall purpose. It will only do so if, as the result of joining a church, people live in Christian love.

Similarly, to build a community centre is an objective; to help people differing widely in belief and culture to use the Centre and to love and care for each other is a purpose because it is about developing Christian attributes. The building of a community centre provides opportunities for people to meet; the way in which it is run and the effects, good or bad, that staff and members have upon one another are crucial to promoting the purpose. So, again, good working relationships are an objective, not a purpose.

A purpose stated in terms of helping people in a specific church and neighbourhood to love themselves, each other and God and to care for one another is more useful as a reference point than one stated in terms, say, of bringing in the Kingdom: it is useful because it is possible for most people to assess whether or not specific action in a given situation is likely to promote loving and caring relationships; the same people may make gross errors in assessing whether the action will bring in the Kingdom.

Purposes are formed within us by complex intellectual, moral, spiritual and intuitive processes.¹¹ Elliott Jaques says: "It is done by touch and feel, by intuition, by hunch, by guess, by flashes of insight".¹² It is a conviction about what is needed to improve things substantially. These purposes influence what we do. They are primary reference points. They are inseparable from us. They are buried deep within us. They are generally available for us as reference points only if we dig them out and define them. (Note that the task is to describe and define purposes that already exist: it is not to construct them, although once defined we may want to modify them.) People are generally helped to get at their purposes:

- by expressing their intuitions and gut feelings about what is needed;
- by differentiating between objectives and purposes through asking "why?" or "what for?" of each successive objective until the most useful formulation of purpose is reached;¹³
- by stating beliefs and purposes separately;
- by formulating statements which make clear that objectives are subordinate to purposes (this can be done by adding to a statement of objectives an "in order to" or "for" clause. It can also be done by adding to a statement of purpose a list of objectives, each one prefaced with "by" or "through". The latter I find particularly useful in sorting out objectives from purpose and in classifying them);

- by stating purpose in terms of:
 - people and their relationships rather than things and their relationships,
 - the human rather than the material,
 - personal rather than the impersonal attributes,
 - specific situations and people;
- by expressing purposes succinctly and plainly.

Our motivation is always mixed. Clarifying and working to our substantive purpose and noxiants helps us achieve our highest motives and to steer away from our lowest. These reference points, therefore, perform moral and spiritual functions as well as pragmatic ones.

b. Beliefs

Our belief systems are intricate and complex. They are rational and non-rational. Some of our beliefs are fine, noble and well thought out; others anything but. Consequently each of us operates out of a qualitative mix of beliefs as well as out of mixed motivation. Sometimes our beliefs are fixed, at other times they are in flux. At other times we cannot make up our minds whether to adopt beliefs about the essential goodness of people or their sinfulness and end up confusing ourselves by alternating between them. To complicate things further, our awareness of our beliefs and our ability to get in touch with them and to articulate them varies enormously. Some beliefs are located in our head, others in our heart or gut. Head beliefs are more public and easier to get at than those of the heart and the gut; head beliefs are better organized and more rational (or rationalized) than our heart and gut beliefs, which are personal and precious and which have more profound, pervasive and hidden effects upon our character and behaviour. This is discussed in Chapter 10.

Exploring all this is a privileged and fascinating occupation. Nevertheless, there are many problems in establishing reliable belief reference points. We need to resist the temptation to abandon the task: the rewards are great. *What is required is as honest a statement as possible of any beliefs upon which we believe we are operating in relation to a specific aspect of our work at a given time.* This focus makes the task more manageable. A statement of this kind is as good a reference point as it is possible to get, provided that the beliefs are stated, as a friend of mine, The Revd Dr Michael Bayley, is wont to say, "without reference to merit". They should not be edited simply to match standards of acceptability. To be true to ourselves and others and to be effective in our work and ministry, what we do together and separately must be authentic expressions of our individual and corporate beliefs. If they are not, we need to work at beliefs, thought and action until they are authentic expressions of what we are and want to be.

The case study in Chapter 2 showed just how important it was for the Church

members, officers and teachers to state just what they believed about communion and to examine the problem in relation to those beliefs as well as in relation to their objective of making the children feel part of the family—much of the difficulty stemmed from treating this objective as a purpose. An ecumenical group of people with whom I worked on a good neighbour scheme were unable to clarify their *purposes* until they had defined the *beliefs* that motivated them.¹⁴

c. Resources

Basically, the resources required to do church and community work are people and their mental, nervous and spiritual energy, their time, equipment, plant and money. Making accurate estimates of the material resources needed is not too difficult. Estimating the resources of time available is also not too difficult whereas estimating that which will be needed is very difficult. Quantifying how much mental, nervous and spiritual energy is available and will be required is impossible. Nevertheless, it is necessary to make the best possible estimates of what is available and what might be required. For one thing it helps to make realistic plans and contracts. Another reason is that it reduces the dangers of people experiencing “burn-out”¹⁵ through being over-taxed. Purposes to which people are highly committed induce what I understand some psychologists call “traction”, i.e. the power to draw the various threads of individual and collective effort, energy and objectives together and to pull people along.¹⁶ (Acute human and spiritual need also induces traction.) Traction can cause people who are highly committed to advancing their purpose to give time and energy they did not know they could find and which can take them beyond their reserves and strength. This can occur when things are going really well and people are carried along with the momentum and excitement. It can also occur when enormous effort is required to make very little progress or to hold the line. People who possess purposes (“my/our purpose”) can be possessed and obsessed by them.

Beliefs drive people on. Purposes and needs and a sense of vocation induce traction. Christians are urged to give themselves unreservedly to the service of God, Church and world. No matter how long or hard people work, church and community work is never completed; there is always more to be done. (A discussion I had about the implications of this obvious fact with a very intelligent person helped him to find immediate release from grossly overworking. He realized that subconsciously he had been working on the assumption that if only he worked hard enough he could complete the work. What released him was the realization that he could complete *his* work, his contribution, but not all the work associated with his purposes; that was not his responsibility.) It is essential, therefore, to regulate the input of energy. Work aimed at promoting the well-being and development of others must also promote the well-being and development of the workers. Working to resources as well as to beliefs, purposes, need and vocation is one way of ensuring that this happens.

There are dangers, however, in regulating our input. The work requires the willing, costly and sacrificial giving and sharing of self. Doing that responsibly, we have to tread a narrow path bounded by reckless abandon on the one side and cool, calculated and careful giving on the other. It is hard to remain on that path. Pseudo-professionalism and over-concern for our own well-being take us to one side and obsessive and insatiable commitment to the other. Everything must be done to keep workers on the central path for their own good and that of the work in which they are engaged. Resources are a down-to-earth reminder that the work is infinite; workers are finite and so is the work they can do. Resources are a very important reference point.

d. Needs

Programmes of church and community work exist because they provide opportunities for multifarious human and spiritual needs to be met. On the one hand they exist to meet the needs of people for places to meet for diverse secular and religious activities and the needs for help, counselling and mutual support and many other things. On the other hand they exist to meet the needs organizations and their workers have for opportunities to pursue their purposes and to put their beliefs into practice. Some of these needs are healthy ones, others are not. Healthy and unhealthy needs of people, organizations and workers are key reference points: the former point to objectives; the latter to noxians. Keeping them in mind and submitting them to critical analysis helps workers to get at substantive needs rather than superficial wants.

Generally speaking, careful attention is given to meeting the needs of the people whilst workers are left to see to their own needs. One reason for this is that workers tend to give themselves spontaneously, willingly and genuinely to the needs of others; another reason is that Christians have been encouraged to forget themselves and their needs and to deny and sacrifice themselves.

As we saw in the discussion about resources, workers' needs are important. Critical and compassionate attention must be given to them. The purposes of the Church require it: the Church exists for its non-members *and* for its workers and members. Self-interest requires it. Meeting workers' vocational needs is health-giving to them and to those they befriend and serve. Some workers may well be using, albeit unconsciously, programmes to “satisfy” unhealthy wants and needs such as a lust for power or desires to be the centre of attention. They require help. The purposes of the Church require that they be given the help that they need to develop for their own sake and also for the sake of the work in which they are engaged. Giving such help is a tricky work-cum-pastoral task generally best tackled in private through counselling and consultancy.

One of the effects of taking such needs seriously is that workers and people attend to human and religious needs at a progressively deeper level—they address “real needs”, which they are constantly seeking to do. Clearly not all the needs of the workers are of an acute kind. More of them than ever before are now being met through assessment, appraisal, counselling, consulting and

in-service training schemes. Most of the needs can go on the development agenda. Discussions I had with one group of lay workers deeply involved in the organization of both church services and church social work identified three needs.

The first, and most important, was to experience for themselves the successful application of Christian teaching to social situations. They had heard so much from the pulpit about how it does work and seen so little evidence of its doing so in their neighbourhood. Second, they wanted opportunities to go to church without having any jobs to do so that they could give themselves to worship and prayer. Third, they wanted to enjoy each others' company socially.

Setting out all the needs—those of people and those of the organizations and their workers that aim to see that these are met—helps to tackle the tricky business of meeting all the needs concurrently through church and community work programmes. Focusing predominantly, if not exclusively, on the needs of the people out there engenders a patronizing approach. Unavoidably it gives the impression that the workers are people without needs engaged in helping those who have them. Trying to equalize things by saying that the work helps to meet the needs of the workers can cause people to feel they are being “used” for purposes to which they do not subscribe. The only way in which I know how to pursue both ways concurrently is through egalitarian programmes of inter-related development of all the people and secular and religious organizations concerned.¹⁷

3. Independent Reference Points

People who follow the procedures I have described are taking a positive grip on their own situation and their environment. They are doing everything they can to direct, control and shape their affairs from within themselves in accord with their ideas rather than being formed and directed from without by other agents according to their purposes and beliefs, although they will, of course, be influenced by them. Inasmuch as they succeed they are able to be autonomous and act accordingly. (They are in fact “autogenic” rather than “allogenic”.¹⁸) By defining their own reference points, they are constructing the context within which they are going to think and work and which they have organized in such a way that will impinge upon them, their thinking and their action.¹⁹ Clearly there are dangers in all this. For instance, individuals, groups, organizations and churches can end up in a little world of their own. They can fall victim to what has been described as “group think”.²⁰ They can be locked in their own closed thinking circuits.²¹ Being alert to this very real danger is one way of obviating it. Others are discussed below.

Such undesirable things are less likely to happen when as many people as possible who differ significantly are using procedures such as the ones I have described to work through things together at local level (within and between churches of different denominations, in community groups and other

organizations) and at regional and national levels. They are even less likely to happen when people from local, regional and national “domains” are working through things together. Overall development which is contextually located depends upon this kind of critical thought/action in all these domains and between them. Progress is being made in promoting critical and open thought within and between these domains: the latter is much more difficult than the former.²² Open participation in collective thinking allows different patterns of thought and reference points to interact and new patterns to be formed. (This can also happen when individuals and groups work with consultants and facilitators.) It enhances the contextual awareness of *all* concerned and helps them, separately and together, to have the most profound effect upon their context.

Church and community development equips people to engage in, and to promote, this kind of open participation: its philosophy and theology argues for it and its approaches and methods facilitate it. I have illustrated this in Part One, especially in Chapters 3 and 4.

Anything, in fact, that gets people comparing and contrasting their own thinking openly with that of others is to be welcomed, provided that it does not paralyse them. There are infinite possibilities of doing this through books, the media, worship, Bible study, house groups, etc.

Two things I wish to mention here. One is worship. Over and again during the past twenty years, as I have struggled to explore this new field of work, worship, and particularly the eucharist, has helped me to put it in a wider context. In that environment I have faced and explored issues I could not have done in other settings. I much appreciate Robin Green's suggestion that:

Liturgy, which is the vehicle through which worship is expressed, creates an environment in which human beings confront those sides of themselves which under normal circumstances they dare not face.²³

The second thing I wish to mention is the important function that churches can perform by offering an overall reference framework which can act as a catalyst to our own. An example of this which helped me greatly was a statement in the 1986 Methodist Conference Agenda.²⁴ It was entitled “A Context for Policy Decisions”. It had been devised to help the President's Council to review connexional policy with particular regard to the uses to which we put our limited resources at a time when new opportunities and needs are stimulating a desire to respond in new ways. The Revd Brian Beck, the author of the statement, set out the reference points as “nine obligations which we must seek to fulfil. They are the dimensions within which we have to live. They are not set out in any particular order (as in the three-dimensional world in which we all live, all three dimensions are equally important, whatever the order in which we speak of them) and they are not numbered for that reason.” I paraphrase the obligations because they are such a good example of the way in which we can help people to reconsider their own reference frameworks. The obligations are:

- A deeper rooting of the life of the Church. (Several concerns come together here: the quality of worship, including the use of the arts, the need for better theological knowledge and understanding, and a wider concern for and fostering of spirituality.)
- To develop and pursue the mission of the Church, in its many forms, evangelistic and socio-political.
- To take seriously the intellectual encounter with our society. (The engagement is in several theatres: scientific/technological, political/economic, religious/theological, in the encounter with other faiths and moralities.)
- The discernment, development and deployment of the gifts of the whole people of God.
- To ensure that we do not allow two experiences of disappointment in ecumenical negotiations ... to deflect us from our commitment to the ecumenical movement, co-operation with other churches, and ultimately (in whatever form) the reintegration of a divided Church.
- To ensure that we do not allow the natural insularity of the British Islanders to blinker us to our membership in the world church, with the obligations and potential which that brings.
- Priority is to be given to the poor.
- Priority is to be given to those activities which have a long-term rather than a short-term application.
- We must ensure that our procedures acquire enough flexibility to enable changes to be agreed and take place rapidly, and local adaptations to be encouraged.

These obligations have helped me. It is not difficult to see how they can be used to check and evaluate our plans for action and our reference frameworks.

The possibility of closed-circuit thinking cannot be entirely avoided. We select our circles of influence and we have a propensity to welcome that which confirms our thinking and resist that which challenges and contradicts it. But we can reduce the dangers of our thinking becoming parochial and seriously dysfunctional by comparing our reference points with those formed in environments other than those in which ours were formed. This induces "double loop learning" which enables us "to take a double look" at things and to question the relevance of our operating norms.²⁵ It also helps us to relate our work to the wider context of thought and need.

4. Articulating Learning

"What are we learning?" This question can be asked at any stage of the process.

It never fails to evoke significant responses—frequently unexpected, always productive. There is an example of its effectiveness in the study of the problem on failure in Chapter 2. Spontaneously, the whole group knew what they had to do to tackle this problem when I asked them what they were learning: "We must get this kind of discussion going amongst the people with whom we work!"

I use the question frequently, especially when I and those with whom I am working are stuck or struggling with a bad experience. Addressing it causes us to look at whatever we have been doing from a different angle. It distances us from direct engagement with the subject-matter and gives us a new perspective on it and our activity in relation to it. The analogy that comes to mind is of craftsmen or artists standing back from whatever they are doing, walking around it and looking at it first from this position and then from that. Viewing their work in this way helps them to assess it and to decide what, if anything, now needs to be done. Thus informed, they can return to close engagement with their material. Asking this question, therefore, frees people to change their mental and emotional perspective—a coffee break can, of course, have the same effect. It stimulates lateral thinking, it gets people to articulate feelings and part-formed thoughts generated by the activity. Establishing what we have learnt from a particular experience—and there is always something to be learnt—adds value to it. In fact, it can salvage bad experiences. It is a way of building up our own practice theory. It helps us to rise above circumstances.

Also, by directing attention to what we are learning about doing God's will in the church and in society, it reinforces the vocational education model upon which the approach advocated in this book is based. Were it based upon a therapeutic model, the question would be, "Are you feeling better?" Of course, this could well be a subordinate question, but the primary issue in this context is about what we are learning about ourselves as workers and the work in which we are engaged.

5. Meditation, Reflection and Prayer

As I said earlier, this process is most effective when it is used in close association with meditation, reflection and prayer. They are different but complementary activities. Analysis and design are in the active mood and mode of being; they involve the disciplined application of mind, inspiration and heart to the job of working things out systematically; they are carried out by logical dialogues informed by intuitions. Reflection is in a different mood and mode. It involves concentrating and waiting upon things meditatively, "listening" to what they might say. Prayer is a dialogue with God about things. Meditation, reflection and prayer allow the free association of mind and heart with all that is happening in the widest possible context. These different activities draw and feed upon one another. Working at things systematically

and praying about them in a context of pastoral care integrates the activities, creates a spirituality of its own, generates and releases energy and enables people to work creatively for human and spiritual development.

6. Evaluation

The processes I am describing enable people to evaluate past experience through analysing it in relation to a cluster of reference points and through reflecting and meditating upon it and praying about it. Similarly, they enable workers to evaluate their ideas for future action. At the same time they encourage people to articulate what they are learning and thus to evaluate the processes in which they are engaged. The result is that continuous assessment is written deep into the analysis and design of church and community work. Thus evaluation is an integral part of the process of thinking things through, not simply a stage in it. Consequently wherever, whenever and however people use this schema they have to be able to handle continuous feedback. I consider that later.

Other ways of evaluating can complement that which is embedded in the analysis and design of work programmes. That is why in Figure 5:2 I have shown evaluation following through the action. Various systems are used to evaluate different kinds of change.²⁶ The one I use involves assessing change in relation to objectives and purposes - I call it a "directional analysis of change". And I use "behavioural indicators" to assess changes in things such as commitment which cannot be directly observed or measured. To pursue this further would be to go beyond the scope of this book.

II. USING THE SCHEMA

So far in this chapter we have presented a conceptual framework, a schema, for analysing and designing church and community development work and have explored some of the things involved in using various aspects of it. Now we turn to using the schema to promote human and spiritual development.

This schema can be used by individuals on their own to help them to think through their work. No area of work is too small or too large for these analytical methods. Colleagues, teams and groups can also use it. Workers and consultants, too, can use it to help individuals, groups, churches and organizations to think about and to plan their work. Clearly there are significant differences in using the schema in these different ways and settings. Those will be considered later. Here we will concentrate on things to be taken into account in using the schema in any way whatsoever.

1. An Art and a Craft

Presenting the schema in an orderly way as we have done could mislead people into thinking that they have to use it, privately or with others, in a rather mechanical and inflexible manner in order to put their thinking and that of others into precisely the same tidy shape. That is not the aim. The intention is that the schema will help people to organize their thoughts and ideas about themselves as workers and about their work in ways which will enable *them* to make *their* best contributions in *their* situations. Doing that involves promoting, within workers in relation to their work, creative interplay between the schema and

- the ways in which the people concerned naturally and normally think about things;
- the thoughts and feelings that the people have about themselves as workers and their work;
- the subject-matter under consideration.

The potential for variation in each of these three factors is enormous and the permutations of them are infinite. People, for instance, think in different ways and at different speeds. Many things alter the tempo and rhythm of thought. Some people want to think from the abstract to the concrete whilst others are only comfortable when discussion is earthed in actual situations. Some people want to work through things systematically, whilst others like to move at will or whim from one topic to another. Turning to the second factor, people may be preoccupied with a particular difficulty or an idea or something they want to do. And the emotional investment that people have in the subjects under discussion will vary enormously. Some will be very clear, others confused. Similarly, the subject-matter could vary enormously in content and complexity.

Clearly, whether we are using the schema on our own or with others, promoting creative interplay between so many human factors, subtly different and bewilderingly complex, is an art or a craft. It calls for self-knowledge, skills in working on our own and with ourselves and others, sensitivity to thoughts, feelings and situations, and the ability to choose appropriate ways of using the schema. Sometimes, for example, it is right to go through the eight stages systematically, or versions of it, as we did in the case study and the situational analysis (Chapters 1 and 3). But even then it is essential to have the freedom to explore, to revisit previous stages and to visit stages not yet reached. At other times it is necessary to start with the things with which we are preoccupied or which we fear: beliefs or action plans for example. Then, from that point, to work backwards and forwards through the stages until all the necessary analytical and design work has been completed. Or, again, when working with others, it may be necessary to get people to work at stages they are neglecting or avoiding.

Then there are other choices, whether one is working systematically through the stages or in a much more discursive way. These concern methods. When working on a development agenda, for example, it might be appropriate to do some hard disciplined thinking about the alternatives and their respective advantages and disadvantages as a prelude to making decisions. On the other hand, it might be much more creative to meditate or reflect or pray or state what is being learnt about making development agendas.

Then there is the choice of perspective from which to do the analytical work. Sometimes it is right to focus on situations, problems and cases in relation to one's own reference points. At other times it is right to consider one's own reference points in relation to a situation and/or independent reference points and set the work in a wider context. Choosing the most helpful perspective from which to analyse and design, selecting aspects of the schema and using them in the most creative way, is a matter of judgement, skill and style calling for the artistry of the craftsman in sculpting church and community work, the analytical rigour of the scientist and the systematic approach of the technician.

2. Working to the Whole and the Parts

The craft, therefore, requires the ability to work at each stage separately and to the whole process. Each stage can result in a completed piece of potentially useful work: a building block. A sound design, for example, is a considerable achievement even if it is not deployed for some considerable time. The value, veracity and viability of the product of one stage depends upon the reliability of the stages that have preceded it: decisions depend upon planning, planning upon designs and design upon analysis. Error at one stage flaws the next. Fortunately the insights gained from a later stage often reveal errors in an earlier one. But this does not always happen.

One of the ways of avoiding the cumulative effect of error is to review periodically the stages covered in relation to each other by summarizing what has emerged from them and looking carefully at the connections between them. Contrasting and comparing stages can show whether or not the stages are building upon each other in the most constructive way. Using the schema, therefore, involves changing perspectives between attending to the stages of the process and to the process as a whole and focusing variously on the people, their situations, the schema and the interaction between them.

3. The Dynamic

Working for development with people in church and community is as complicated, messy and difficult a business as it is exciting and absorbing. So is thinking about it. The processes we are discussing help people to think about their work and to go about it in a more orderly and analytical way. They are tidy tools to work on untidy material. Concentrating on the tidy tools could give

false impressions: that using the tools is as tidy as the tools themselves; that the subject-matter is more tidy than it is; that the thinking will be functional only if it is as tidy as the layout of the process. The aim is to get and maintain the clarity of thought which gives life to the dynamic of creative activity within the people concerned. A bit of tidying up, to continue the metaphor, can sometimes do this better than a thorough spring-clean. It is a matter of doing the amount of thinking and clarifying with which people can cope; no more and no less.

It is easy enough to indicate the untidiness and complexity of the thinking process but I find it impossible to model it in still pictures and diagrams. For instance, thinking about an old experience is a new experience which can include new experiences of the original experience. As we think, act and evaluate, we continuously look back to former experiences to bring forward anything of use in the present which we can use in the future. "Layering" is one way of describing the process of adding to previous experiences new layers of analytical and evaluative thought about them which contribute to an evolving understanding and interpretation of them. This happens in the use of the processes we are considering. The linearity of the diagram denies it. The "pastoral spiral" which some people prefer gets a little nearer to it but misses dimensions of my diagram.

Another metaphor, the incoming tide, helps me to represent rhythms in the process. Withdrawing from the action to think, plan and evaluate is like the ebb of the tide. It enables workers to gather themselves for the next wave of forward movement. Action, like the tide, sometimes moves gently forward whilst at other times it surges. Some ground gives way quickly to the incoming tide, some resists it. What is important is that the action tide is incoming. It is not always easy to discern whether tides are coming in or going out when they are on the turn. In human and spiritual affairs the eddies, currents and endless to and fro movements of human beings in thought and action often make it difficult to determine the flow of things.

Several pictures of the processes of moving from experience to creative action are emerging. One picture portrays it in eight carefully differentiated and inter-related steps. Another shows the movement of human thought from the present to the past, backwards and forwards to the future which forms new layers to old experiences and is ever generating new experiences. Yet another shows it to be tidal. Certainly it has a pulse. These pictures are complementary. Together they prevent the process being seen as either formless or as an inflexible, closed, mechanical system. It is living and vital, at its most effective when it resonates with the rhythms of thought and action of people and enhances their creative dynamic.²⁷

4. Using it with Other People

Basically there are two ways of using this process when working with other people. The first is to lead them through it stage by stage in a way which seems

appropriate to the leader or worker. The schema as a whole is not disclosed at the outset: the leader uses it as a personal mental map. The second is to get the commitment of those involved to the process from the outset by describing it to them and adapting or adopting it. The first is to be preferred when, for example, people are likely to be put off or overwhelmed by the presentation of all the stages. The second is to be preferred whenever possible because all those involved have opportunities to contribute to managing the process and this, in turn, maximizes effectiveness and learning. Shared understanding of the process engenders discipline amongst the participants and gives them freedom; the discipline to follow the process and to see that all necessary stages are covered; and the freedom to modify it as required.

5. The Human Factor

Workers and people are the make-and-break factor in these processes of thoughtful action. The processes will only work if they have the personal resources and the skills and the will to use them. The human factor is critical. Three aspects of this are considered in this section.

a. Workers as their own Analytical Instruments²⁸

The processes work in and through the people who engage in them: the workers. They provide the data from their observations. Everything, including the perspectives of others, is processed through their minds, hearts and souls. The principal axis of the process is their perspective. Much vital data is provided from their experiences of the situation upon which they are working and what other people think and feel. Other data comes from research, surveys, published papers, etc. They interpret their own data and that of others. The information they work on is variously about places, buildings, details of events, money; experiences of people and God; ideas and concepts, etc. They use their beliefs and noxians as reference points and they assess resources and needs. The human factor dominates. Human error is omnipresent. Workers are their own analytical, design, decision-making and acting instruments.

Most of their information comes through the workers' own observations as participants in their working situations. Participant observation²⁹ is the principal research tool used in community studies, anthropology and action-research. (The processes described in this section are action-reflection-action procedures and sequences which have much in common with action-research.) Members of these disciplines have put an enormous amount of effort into studying the theory and practice of participant observation and experimenting with its use in order to make it as reliable an instrument as possible. "Participant observation" has, in fact, become a technical term for all that is involved in this way of collecting and correcting data which helps towards a better understanding of human situations.

All of us participate and observe. We cannot help doing so. What I have

learnt about "participant observation" from the three disciplines mentioned above has enriched my ministry. It has helped me to be much more effective as a minister in my work with people in church and community. It has helped me to take better account of the effects that my part in the scheme of things and the nature of my participation have upon my observations. (The kind of participation varies greatly from active leadership to a passive presence.) It has helped me to take into account ways in which I distort data and deceive myself. It has helped me to be aware of the ways in which data is distorted by misinformation, evasions, lies and "fronts" and the need to correct it. It has helped me to see the value of recording what I have seen and thought. The enormous value of participant observation is that it enables workers to study human situations from within, the changes and developments as they occur, the sequence of events which lead to changes for the better and worse, and the causes of change.

When working with people for human and spiritual development, some people hesitate about using anything that smacks of a scientific method. They feel that "studying people" with whom they are working in loving, caring relationships can affect their relationships with them adversely. I agree, but the processes described in this book are designed for workers and people, separately and together, *to study the work in which they are engaged*. People, of course, are involved in the work and processes but the emphasis is on thinking through critical aspects of our vocational work or apostolate in order that we may do it more effectively and with growing satisfaction.

This is not the place to explore this subject further. I have described elsewhere ways in which this method helped a group of ordinary people to solve problems connected with violent behaviour which had vandalized and closed our youth club.³⁰ Also some books are listed in the notes for those who would like to pursue this matter further.³¹

b. Feelings and Emotions

Part One illustrates how feelings and emotions of varying kinds are inextricably intertwined with ideas, thoughts, beliefs and concepts in the lives and working relationships of church and community workers. They can range from depression to excited anticipation. Generally speaking, problems and cases are associated with a sense of failure and all the pain that goes with it. Examining what has happened probes sensitive wounds. Workers can experience frustration because they sense opportunities have been missed and that they have lost the initiative. Not surprisingly, they tend to be defensive and apprehensive because they know healing will hurt and that there could be hurt without healing.

Quite different emotions are commonly associated with new projects. Workers are excited about the possibilities and promise of new beginnings, the challenge of exploring the unknown and of creating something. Getting people to take a hard look at difficulties they had not previously seen in a project that they are

on fire about can all too easily dampen their enthusiasm and weaken their will to continue with the project. Working to feelings and within the emotional competence of people, therefore, is as necessary as working to thoughts and their intellectual competence. People simply cannot think straight when they are out of their emotional depth. Defensiveness prevents creative thought. Panic is the end of rational thought.

A vital question for workers, co-workers and consultants is implicit in all this: what helps people to work at feelings and to develop emotional competence? I venture the following suggestions, based on the things which I have found help the negative feelings of people to give way to positive ones and which enhance their emotional involvement in their work.

- Offer and honour confidentiality.
- Establish an understanding with the people about what they require of you should their feelings take over.
- Acknowledge and accept feelings of any kind as a legitimate part of the reality of the work situation but avoid inflaming them.
- Work to feelings and thoughts. (One way of doing this is to ask people "How do you feel?" as well as "What do you think?" Another way is to ask if any feelings are inhibiting their participation.)
- Work with people on their feelings with empathy but non-emotively. (At times I have found myself adding my feelings about, say, the injustice experienced by someone, to theirs and using emotive language. Generally speaking, this does not help, whereas controlled emotional involvement does.)
- Work at feelings specifically and with objectivity. (Working at feelings in relation to specific situations, people and events using expressive but non-emotive language helps to do this.)
- Help people to express feelings that they need to make explicit and help them guard against the danger of saying things publicly that they will subsequently regret having said. (Sharing thoughts and feelings is always a risky business. One of the things I do when I think people are about to take too big a risk is to hold them back for a moment and ask them to consider whether they need to share whatever is about to come.)
- Check out and take seriously how people feel about doing things. (Sometimes people cannot enter into a discussion about something because they cannot see how it can be done or they cannot see themselves doing it. It happens to a colleague of mine. They need some idea of how the thing might be done before they can discuss whether it should be done.)
- Plan for affective involvement.

Working with people affectively in these ways gives them emotional confidence, develops work programmes with which they are most likely to be able to cope and gradually extends their emotional competence.

c. Handling Feedback

In addition to the technical and conceptual skills required, the ability of people to participate creatively in the processes described in this chapter depends upon their capacity to handle positive and negative feedback constructively. They are likely to experience both kinds of feedback. My experience has been that, overall, the effect of working through the process is invariably positive: facing up to and working through negative feedback is releasing and renewing; moving from designing and planning can turn any disappointment experienced in the analysis to the hope and expectation that comes from new plans and knowing just what to do. Part One illustrates this. The objective of this section is quite specific: it is to bring this important but often neglected aspect of the process into full view in order to encourage and help people to prepare themselves for it in advance. As people think their way through these processes, feedback can come to them in four different ways: they will certainly experience the first and probably the others as well.

Self-feedback. This feedback is the inner response we experience when we are involved in some activity or other in private or in public or when we are reflecting on it. We feel whether things are going well or badly. It is immediate, unbidden and can be difficult to control. It is the response of our whole being to whatever is happening. Every part of us is affected by our feelings, our mood, our composure and our energy level. It can variously freeze or free us; it can affirm, confirm, confound, confuse and embarrass us. It changes our state of mind and being and our ability to think and act. Some of the worst experiences of negative self-feedback come when least expected and consequently are more devastating. It must be said that self-feedback is not an infallible or even reliable guide to our performance as experienced by others even though it is often a good indicator of what is happening and of our effectiveness. Our poise, well-being and performance depend upon being able to handle, in public and private, a range of feedback from that which flatters to that which devastates.

Unsolicited feedback from others. The supportive and evaluative value of unsolicited and other forms of feedback is dependent upon the perceived motives, insights and sincerity of those who give it. It can be the expression of joy at some success or support at a time of failure or loss. It can be a caring challenge. On the other hand, it can be an attempt to hurt or to curry favour. We need to be able to discern feedback that must be taken seriously.

Casually solicited feedback. More often than not it is when we are feeling

battered or uncertain that we solicit feedback casually. Loaded rather than unloaded questions come more easily to our lips under such circumstances. We are more likely to say, "I did all right in that discussion, didn't I?" than "Please give me your honest opinion of my performance in that discussion". It is more difficult to give an honest answer to the first because the request is for affirmative support rather than an assessment.

Serious attempts to get reliable feedback. Various methods of evaluation and survey can be used to get reliable feedback. As we have noted, the process described here is evaluative.

Possible aids to handling feedback. What will help us to handle feedback especially that which hurts, deflates and erodes confidence? Answering that question helps us to prepare to tackle the process and the feedback openly and more confidently. Church and community workers with whom I have discussed this have found one or other of the following things have helped them.

(i) The Importance of Processing Feedback. It is important to work on the basis that the quality of the human processing of feedback, not the nature or quality of the feedback, determines the substantive long-term effects that it has upon those who receive it and those with whom they work. Even though research shows that the most common result is that success leads to greater efforts and failure to less,³² the reverse does happen: "success can lead to taking things easy and failure to increased effort".³³ Success can also lead to conceit. Research also shows that "those high in achievement motivation appear to be stimulated to greater efforts by both success and failure".³⁴ This underlines the enormous importance of the personal preparation to receive feedback and guidelines for processing it.

(ii) Personal Preparation for Feedback. Some questions help to prepare to receive and work on feedback that comes in all four ways:

- What kind of good and bad inner responses and reactions do you customarily make when you receive feedback that is positive/negative?
- What responses do those with whom you work often make and what effects does that have upon you?
- What would you have to do in order to improve the way in which you process and use feedback?
- What kind(s) of feedback do you need from whom or what?
- Why do you need it?
- Are there any dangers in trying to get it?
- How can you get and receive it?

(iii) Guidelines to Processing Feedback. Remain critically open to negative and positive feedback; don't dismiss or quench it by denigrating the sources. In relation to feedback, however, the source may be wrong and you may be right. Several things can help:

- Make it usable and manageable by:
 - collating and condensing it to avoid the problems of feedback overload;
 - trying to de-personalize and objectify it possibly by writing it down, or talking to someone else about it. Look at it from different perspectives. Feelings are facts but try to avoid being preoccupied with them. Delay reaction when possible.
- Determine quite specifically to what the feedback properly relates: to you? your work? your beliefs/purposes? your organization? Or is it a projection of a problem that others have?
- Decide whether or not anything can be done about it and whether it is worthy of serious attention.
- Try to keep things in proportion by counter-balancing positive with negative feedback and vice versa.
- Avoid confusing qualitative with quantitative feedback: one person may be right and the rest wrong and vice versa; the person who makes most noise may or may not be right!
- Evaluate feedback and determine its implications in relation to beliefs, purposes, needs, resources and your personal performance (not only in relation to yourself) *and* in relation to what you know of its source.
- Whenever possible seek help and support, not just one or the other.
- Think, feel and pray things through.

6. Using Appropriate Modes

Successful use of these systematic thinking procedures depends to a considerable extent upon selecting a mode of the process most appropriate to the people concerned and the task in which they are engaged. This variously involves *translating* the description of the stages and procedures into a language understood by and acceptable to those involved; *choosing* an appropriate mode; *designing* new modes when the available ones are not suitable; and *structuring* procedures to fit people and their circumstances. This is true whether we are working on our own or with others.

Translating. The language used here to describe the process is appropriate to those who are comfortable with formal and slightly technical language. I use

it with some, but by no means all groups. Some people, for instance, I encourage to work through the process by using two groups of questions. The first is about reference points: What do you want to do? (purpose); What don't you want to happen? (noxious); Why? (beliefs); What are your resources? The second group is: What is the situation like? What changes would you like to see? What works and doesn't work? Why? What needs to be done? How can these things be done? How will we know when we have done them satisfactorily? What has to be done and who is going to do what? People and their situation would determine the order in which these questions would be put. Translating the terms into appropriate language is vitally important.

Choosing. So far we have described the generic process and four modes of it related to working on problems, cases, situations and projects. The stages and sequences of the generic process are directly useful to help people think through things. I have used it in this way on a wide range of my own work and that of others. One example is work that I did over a period of two years with a large ecumenical team. We agreed the process. They wrote papers depicting the situation as they saw it and as they would prefer it. I collected their replies and drew out critical features. We gave a day to discussing it and analysing the situation and to establishing the development agenda. Some of the work on this agenda the team carried out, some of it we did together. I have worked through the same process with many individuals and groups in two hours or so.

Sometimes the mode is appropriately self-selecting through the focus of people's attention on a problem, a case, a situation, a project or a whole programme of work. Generally speaking the problem and case-study methods are apposite when they can be properly considered without surveying the situation as a whole. Situational and longitudinal studies of projects and programmes are necessary when overviews of the inter-related parts are required. Studying problems and cases can lead to, or clear the way for, situational and longitudinal studies. Studies of situations, projects and programmes can identify key problems and cases that would not have been identified by working on the cases and problems initially presented by people. Modes are not always self-selecting so it is prudent to check out which is appropriate.

One of the issues is whether to start with problems and cases or situations. A way to check this is to ask at an early stage whether people experience this kind of problem or case frequently. If not, the problem or case mode is probably appropriate. If they do, then it may be that there is in the people themselves, or in the way in which they work, or in the situation, a more basic cause of the difficulties. The nature of those difficulties/issues will indicate the appropriate mode.

Designing. Tailor-made modes have to be designed if neither the generic process nor the four modes is suitable. (There is, of course, considerable scope

for adaptation in all the given modes.) Designing appropriate modes is a fascinating and fulfilling occupation. A project upon which I worked illustrates this process.³⁵ It was entitled "Relationships in Mission". The aim was to promote deeper levels of interdependence and mutuality in the relationships between the Overseas Division of the Methodist Church (MCOD) and Methodist Churches in West Africa.

Three consultations were held between MCOB and the Methodist Churches in Sierra Leone (1984), Ghana (1985) and Nigeria (1986). The facilitating structure for these consultations was an application of the basic principles and processes we are considering. During the course of a week we worked through a seven-stage process: agreement about objectives for the consultation (reference points); establishing profiles of the churches (situations as they were); agreeing a programme of work to be done on issues of mutual concern during the consultation (development agenda); working on the agreed tasks in separate groups (designing programmes); sharing findings and analysing and reflecting on what was being learnt about being together in the Kingdom of God (theological reflection); ensuring that the consultations flowed into the life and work of the churches (putting ideas to work); and preparing and agreeing a report during the consultation (recording). There were three core strands to the process: theology, relationships and practicalities, including finance (key reference points). Versions of the chart in Figure 5:3 were used to explain and promote the consultative processes, which were set in a prayerful context.

Structuring. People not only differ considerably in their ability and willingness to think systematically but they are more capable of doing so in some circumstances rather than in others. Helping people, therefore, to work through things as thoroughly as they are able—and that is the aim, not working slavishly through a process in a doctrinaire way—involves finding structures which fit them, their mood and circumstances. Both over- and under-structuring can inhibit thought. Frequently I have had the experience of people saying in a group that they feel inhibited from contributing something they feel to be relevant because it does not fit into the pattern that is emerging. Taking such incidents seriously invariably leads to a revision of the process, to a correction of the structures and to new patterns of creative thought. Another frequent experience is of people saying things like, "I am lost," "I do not know where we are going," "I just cannot see where that fits." This can be an indication of lack of structure or the failure to build up the unfolding pattern of thought so that everyone can see how things fit and do not fit together. One of my reflex actions to such situations is to *summarize*—I do it whenever I get lost or stuck in working things out on my own or with other people. Summarizing is one of my most useful tools. It gathers up the thinking, and gives us a chance to take hold of it together and decide just what we must do next. We are most likely to get the structuring right if we:

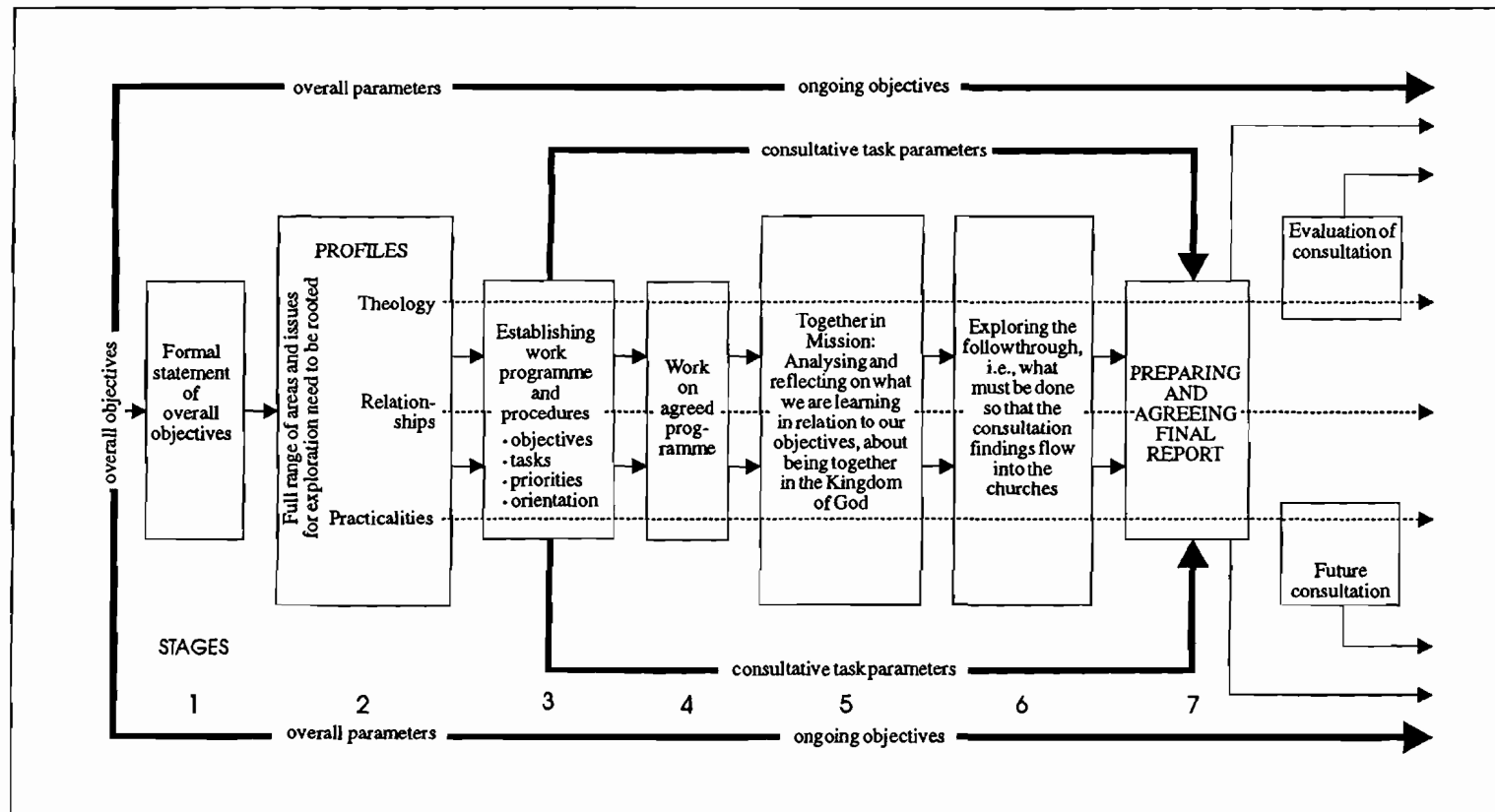


FIGURE 5.3. PROCESSES EMPLOYED DURING THE "RELATIONSHIPS IN MISSION" CONSULTATION

- have assimilated the essentials of the processes so that they are a natural part of the way in which we ourselves work at things;
- tailor structures to people rather than people to structures;
- work to the people, their thinking rhythms and their situation; (This is no easy thing when working with people who differ significantly, as I invariably do. I try not to leave anyone behind: working to those who can verbalize their thoughts most readily marginalizes the others and their contributions—and the best thoughts do not always come from the quickest thinkers! I find that this generates trust and mutual respect and understanding of each other's thought-processes. As trust and respect grow, people think together more deeply and more quickly. This does not, of course, preclude comparatively fast-flowing conversations between two or three people which others pick up in subsequent discussions and from which they learn.)
- stretch but do not overstretch people;
- keep a weather eye open for indicators that processes and structures are impeding thought; (Some indicators have been mentioned. Others are: the mechanical or/and desultory application of the processes; lack of creativity; the loss of energy; people not applying themselves; boredom.)
- check out from time to time whether or not people are happy with the way of working; (This can be done with a light touch. It does not have to be a ponderous evaluation!)
- strike a working balance between competing objectives. (There are several competing objectives in this kind of work related to: making critical decisions when time for thought is seriously limited; involving as many people as possible in the decisions and getting as many insights as possible; helping people to learn how to work things out more thoroughly.)

Such approaches to structuring formal and informal discussions help people to learn together as they work together. They give people clues about ways of promoting more creative thought through the informal conversations and gossip which are important parts of the fabric of human life. The grapevine and networks carry much of the traffic that promotes or undermines human well-being and development.³⁶

All this is highly pertinent to an important issue in community development highlighted by Professor Roland Warren. He suggests that community development can be “seen as a process of converting the community or parts of it into a formal organization for problem-solving and action purposes”.³⁷ One effect of this is that it converts the much-valued *gemeinschaft** (natural

**gemeinschaft* has three central aspects: “blood, place (land) and mind, with their sociological consequents of kinship, neighbourhood and friendship”.³⁸ It is based on community sentiment, customs, commonly accepted norms and shared institutions and values.

community) to *gesellschaft** (organized society).

It has been commonly thought that the latter destroys the former. In part this is the case but more recent research demonstrates that they co-exist. The growth of *gesellschaft* does, in fact, lead to the growth of *gemeinschaft* as people seek ways of compensating for living in urban society by generating "community". However this might be, there is the possibility of community development that seeks to promote *gemeinschaft* actually converting parts of the community into *gesellschaft*-like structures and methods. This tricky issue from community development resonates with the problem of over-structuring analytical and design processes which we have just discussed.

7. Subject-Matter

These processes are used on various kinds of subject-matter: the actualities of working situations presented by the workers; what the workers think and feel about the situations; the beliefs, purposes, hopes, fears and aspirations of the workers; the understanding and knowledge derived from many sources that the workers have about themselves, other human beings and church and society. The processes are designed to help workers to gather this information; to shape and order it so that it is most readily available and useful; to supplement it; and then to work on it so that it is used in relation to the purposes of the workers.

In this way much complex information can be brought into consciousness. At times workers can manage to use it creatively with the help of the processes without too much difficulty. At other times the difficulties of handling it are further complicated by the cloud of unknowing that surrounds us when we are working with people: always there are so many things it would help us to know about what people really think and feel and how they will respond to this or that.

And there is another difficulty. On all sides the subject-matter opens out on to the disciplines of the social and behavioural sciences and theology and their endless literature. Seeking help from these disciplines in relation to specific work situations takes us into the complexities and contradictions of these disciplines. Not surprisingly, people stick to well-worn traditions and their habitual ways of working at things and are wary of new ideas! So much information can be overwhelming and intimidating. Several things can help, although the inherent difficulties do not go away.

First, my experience is that for the main part people, especially pairs and small groups, can be very creative when they work at the information and the knowledge that they already have in the ways I have described. The introduction of the process greatly enhances the use to which they put whatever knowledge and information they have. This is good because more often than not they simply have to get on with things and have not time to do any research.

**gesellschaft* "refers to the large-scale, impersonal and contractual ties that were seen by nineteenth-century sociologists to be on the increase at the expense of *gemeinschaft*".³⁹

Second, when further information is needed the processes help to determine what is required.⁴⁰

Third, to be most effective I need to work within my own discipline and to concentrate on my own work situation, paying particular attention to the interfaces between my situation and the contextual issues and between my discipline and that of others. Attention to those interfaces enables me to read off the implications of issues and other disciplines for my work and situations—and this, in turn, informs others working on the issues and in other disciplines. I have illustrated this later in this chapter from some work I did in Ireland.

This does not preclude my making excursions into other disciplines or working on critical contextual issues. On the contrary; it gives me a secure situational and professional base from which to make such excursions and many advantages accrue from doing so. For instance, I brought to the worked examples in Part One my experience and research into church and community development. But there are many difficulties and dangers in making these excursions apart from finding the time and the energy and selecting promising areas. There is the sheer number of disciplines that have so much to offer to church and community work through their study of things such as human and spiritual development, churches, organizations, communities and the ways of working with them. And one thing leads to another: I find community development useful and that takes me into adult education, community studies, anthropology, ethnography, social psychology, urban sociology.... All yielding useful information—and this is only one cluster of relevant subjects. Quite irrationally, I find myself feeling I must master these subjects. I get demoralized because I cannot do so. It is precisely at this point that the orientation described at the beginning of this paragraph helps me. My objective is not to master but to forage: to search for things which, once integrated into my own discipline (that of a Methodist minister engaged in church and community development work), will enhance my ability to do my work in my situation. So, in my foraging two important reference points—professional discipline and work situation—help me to find my way around the complexities of these disciplines and similarly around the complexities of the contextual issues.

A fourth thing that helps me is the realization that the substantive contributions of all the relevant disciplines can be made only through people from those disciplines working together. The processes described in this book and the non-directive approach make unique contributions towards making such multi-disciplinary partnerships happen and work.

Fifth, when people are approached non-directively they are more likely to share information about their thoughts and feelings which is highly relevant to promoting human and spiritual development—information, that is, which can be gained only through people themselves giving it. The use of these processes which are thoroughly non-directive, therefore, provides a sound body of knowledge and understanding upon which to build. Those who habitually take directive action are less likely to get into such privileged positions because they

are inclined to overlay the thoughts of others with their own thinking and plans. However, in working with people there is always so much we need to know that we do not know but desperately want to know. Questions and hypotheses are, therefore, important tools when working with people (cf. Chapter 7).

The sixth point is the fact that we continually act to good effect in human affairs on the basis of a minute part of the sum total of human knowledge even when we are working at full capacity or overload.

So, having made the best possible use of the knowledge we have and that which we can bring into play through inter-disciplinary partnerships we can only commit the outcome and ourselves to God and his providence.

8. But there is limited thinking time!

Advocating this approach can all too easily give the impression that church and community workers should think about every aspect of their work in this thorough-going way all the time. Palpably, that is neither desirable nor possible. In one way or another we are thinking about things all the time. But at any one time most of us can think in depth about only a few things of importance to us. We are most free to do that when other aspects of our lives and work are running smoothly as a result of previous hard thinking, studying and training. Not being able to think in this thorough-going way about everything does not mean, as some suggest, that there is little point in trying to think about anything in this way. It points us to the vital importance of selecting carefully just what we should be thinking about in this way at any particular time. Discerning this with perspicacity can make heavy demands upon our thinking and decision-making resources. The processes described in this chapter help people to engage in this kind of thinking. Our effectiveness in promoting human and spiritual development depends upon doing this whether or not our thinking time is at a premium. Disciplining ourselves to do this helps us to encourage and enable others to do the same.

The task is a challenging one. There is not much difficulty in getting people talking and thinking quite hard about things of mutual interest. We all experience difficulties in thinking about things that we need to think about, but do not want to. Exploring why we are resisting may be a way forward.

My conviction about the need for this kind of thinking was reinforced recently when I reviewed in some detail the work we did over a period of six years in a church, youth and community centre. I was impressed by the breadth, depth and intensity of the thinking about fundamentals that went on. Ordinary people of all ages, Christians and non-Christians, engaged in it with me, using elementary formulations of the process described in this book. We had an enormous appetite for rigorous thinking about core issues that resulted in action. People's minds, as well as their hearts, were directing their action.

III. COPING WITH CONTEXTUAL INTIMIDATION

All aspects of church and community work from local to national and the disciplines we have just been considering open out on to pressing contextual issues such as poverty, deprivation, injustice, sexism and racism, conflict, faction and violence. When I focus on work of the kind described in Part One I have no doubts at all about the value of what I am doing and I am confident about the processes I am using. My feelings are less predictable when I focus on aspects of the context, i.e., the wider circumstances in which the work is set. Sometimes I am affirmed in what I am doing, and excited by the possibilities I see. This is especially the case when some of the acute contextual issues are being experienced and tackled in the situation upon which I am working. That is, when I am working on concrete effects of poverty, injustice, or racism: I have restricted myself to working at issues situationally rather than campaigning about them, important as that is.

At other times I am variously challenged, intimidated, overwhelmed, deflated and depressed by the puny contributions I feel I am making in relation to the awful vastness of human need; by new theories, approaches and methods which appear to invalidate the ones on which I am working; by the feeling I am dealing with symptoms rather than causes; by my inability to get to the heart of the matter which seems to be "out there" somewhere, and put things right at source; by the ever-changing climates of opinion in the economic and socio-religious spheres and the many disciplines which form important parts of my context. It is all quite disturbing. I cannot, and I know I should not, shut out the context, but there is a temptation to do so, especially when it is overwhelming.

What I believe I need is a creative tension between me, my work and my context with which I can live—if the tension is too high or too low it is disabling. I am still struggling with all this and I know that that is my permanent lot! The modest aim of this section is to share some of the things that have helped me and those with whom I have worked to make the tension a little more creative and bearable.

1. Contextualizing our Approach

One thing I find helps me is to reflect on the contributions that the processes we are considering and church and community development are making and could make to tackling critical contextual issues. This reverses the process from thinking of the implications of the contextual issues for our work to thinking of the application of our approaches to the contextual issues. I have attempted the latter in Chapter Twelve.

2. Understanding the Dynamic

How I experience the overall context is one part only of the dynamic interaction

that takes place. How others experience it could be significantly different. For instance, unemployment and its consequences will be experienced quite differently by the following: someone who is unemployed; employers with jobs to offer; ministers of religion with guaranteed employment ministering to congregations composed of a rising minority of people without jobs and a majority in secure well-paid jobs. The positive and negative effects of one or more contextual factors upon the interaction between these people is very complex. The following simplified version of the dynamics, Figure 5:4, helps to keep some of this complexity in mind and to work at it to better effect. It illustrates the ways in which contextual factors affect workers, people and the work in which they are engaged and the relationships between them.

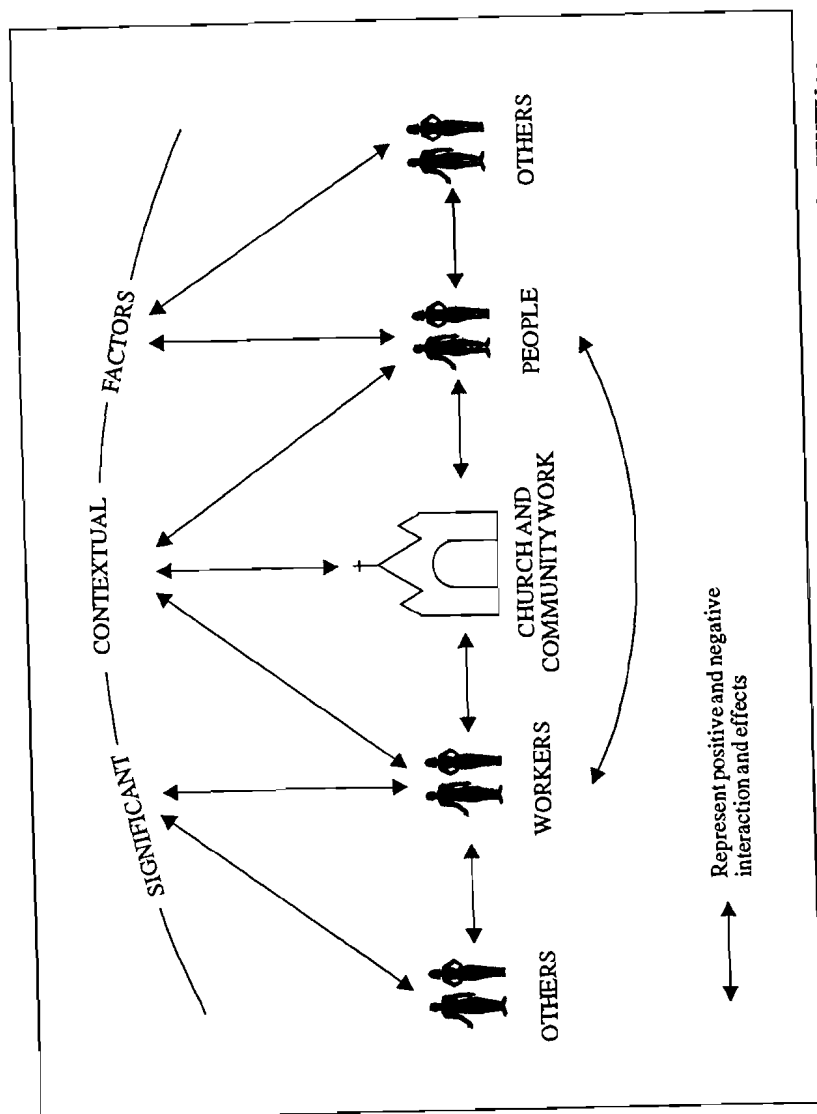


FIGURE 5:4. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE INTERACTION BETWEEN CONTEXTUAL FACTORS, WORKERS, PEOPLE AND THEIR WORK AND RELATIONSHIPS

3. Relating to the Wider Context

One way of working at these things constructively is to consider what are healthy and what are unhealthy relationships between ourselves and our context. Those with whom I have discussed this say that healthy responses are those in which they accept and face up to the contextual issues in relation to their vision; listen to that which they do not want to hear; look for positives in what appear to be negative contextual factors and vice versa; keep calm and think of what they can do; collaborate with others and seek any necessary technical help to become properly informed; accept the pain, take risks and pray.

Unhealthy relationships, they say, are those by which they evade the reality by sticking to the status quo, burying themselves in *their* work, isolating themselves and rubbish new ideas and those who propose them. Panic, they say, is a bad response because it paralyses them or drives them into inappropriate action. Examining these kind of responses helps people to determine the approach they wish to adopt towards contextual issues.

This can be followed by another thing I have found useful: tracing out the actualities of the patterns of interaction in given situations through flow charts or diagrams. This can promote mutual understanding and support between workers. Those who wish to pursue this more rigorously might find some work by Gareth Morgan helpful.⁴¹

4. Determining the Implications of the Context for my Work

During the 1970s and 80s I was involved in work-study courses in Northern Ireland. On the first course with an ecumenical group of twelve people, the work papers contained no references to the "troubles". (At that stage we did not ask them to write about the context as we did later: cf. the Appendix.) The situations described could have been anywhere in the UK; yet one person was working on the "peace line" and another in the Shankill Road and still another on the Falls Road! Understandable and responsible caution could explain the omission. They were taking considerable risks by joining an ecumenical group; to put things on paper about the "troubles" could have been dangerous. We raised this omission with them and after everyone had painstakingly committed themselves to absolute confidentiality they discussed it with us.

One of the things that emerged was that they desperately wanted to make contributions to peace but they felt that they could only contribute through becoming political activists. They did not want to do that.* They said that they

*Very interestingly some years later I read this comment by Professor Hywel Griffiths, written some two years after the incident I am describing.

"... community work itself has come to be associated with left wing political activism. I do not like [this] for two reasons.

"In the first place I do not like it because I believe it is based upon a delusion. The delusion consists of believing that community work is concerned with political action and that

were priests, ministers, religious, church and community workers at work in local churches and communities. That is what they wished to remain. They wanted to make their contributions through their vocational work.

So we focused on promoting change through the work that they did with people as ministers, priests, religious and church and community workers. Everyone was amazed at what emerged. They saw their ministries in a new light. The following extracts illustrate the points made.

One of the changes that they wished to see was "a deeper and wider mutual understanding between people divided by religious and political faction, resulting in less fear, more trust and more loving relationships". They said they could contribute towards achieving these changes by getting local groups of Christians to meet people of different denominations in different areas. First they would begin in their own communities with those whose differences are considerable but less than those between separated communities. This, they felt, would enable them to learn about the processes of crossing divides before tackling the bigger divisions between people and communities. They would build personal relationships through cultural activities before tackling the hard questions of sectarian divisions. They said that they needed to get as many people as possible engaged in the kind of exercise in which they were involved (those engaged in discussing the problem of failure in Chapter One said the same). They felt that it was important to get the following people to think in the way that they had done because they influenced large numbers of other

therefore through community work one can have an influence on politics. There is no evidence to support this belief: indeed there is much contradictory evidence. In Ulster where I worked for many years during the seventies I found myself working occasionally with community groups and organizations that were prepared to set aside conventional ideas of legality and morality in pursuit of their aim. Even then with all the considerable force that they could muster and all the recklessness they displayed they could not effectively play a political role. All that they could do at the political level was to interdict on occasion; all their best socially-useful work was undertaken at a sub-political level. Direct action may provide new services on a self help basis or affect the outcome of a particular decision which has to be made; but generally it can have no effect on decision-making systems and therefore has no political significance.

"Secondly I do not like this association because it would identify a strategy for effecting social change with a political ideology in a way which would not only prevent other political groups from embracing it but even encourage partisan opposition to it. The values of community development are plain to see and it may very well be that they might have appeal to more people of one political persuasion than another.

"But that is not a sufficient argument for making them the property of one political grouping rather than another. Moreover the attempt to do so, as we are witnessing today in the espousal of certain forms of voluntary action by the party in government, carries with it the grave danger of splitting voluntary action and those associated with its promotion into two rival camps. If that were to happen we would all find ourselves serving someone else's political purposes and rather than having an influence on politics we would instead lose our own credibility. As professionals seeking to promote community development that credibility rests upon our expertise and our integrity and not upon the political principles and affiliation which we may personally hold."⁴²

people: clergy and lay leaders, extremists (and between them they had pastoral relationships with such people from all sides), teachers, youth and community workers, the media.

One of the things that they said would help them to do this was an analysis by Dr Henry Grant⁴³ of the social and religious interaction between the various faction groups which followed violent events. Another thing that would help was to follow the way in which their discussions had been structured: open and free exchanges about whether or not to discuss the implications of the "troubles for them" and the arrangements for doing so; establishing the objective of the discussion; considering an analysis of the socio-religious dynamics of the troubles (in this case the one by Dr Grant); identifying the changes that they felt could have far-reaching effects for good in Northern Ireland and the various things needed to make those changes; determining just what they could do towards making those changes through their work in the church and the community.

Others focused on what they could do to achieve the same changes through their pastoral work with people of all denominations who were bereaved, threatened, hurt and frightened by violent action, whatever their religious affiliations. Extended and deep pastoral counselling of individuals and groups provided opportunities to work through many of the deep questions relating to fear, bitterness, disillusionment, depression, hopelessness, desires for revenge, forgiveness, and Christian and other responses to tit-for-tat killings which would break the chain reactions of evil. In fact, they saw that by staying in role they could try to strengthen the moral and spiritual infrastructures, with all that this could mean for healing and peace.

These kinds of discussions influenced the work of the Jesuit Project described in Chapter Four which was done on one of the later courses in the series. It also greatly influenced the thinking of the Revd Fred Graham, a Church of Ireland priest who later wrote a dissertation about his attempts to promote better ecumenical relationships in a staunchly Protestant rural parish in Belfast.⁴⁴

I have told this story because it illustrates quite vividly that there is much that can be done in relation to major contextual issues through working with people locally in church and community in all kinds of situations. Other things have to be done by politicians and people of other professions. That is understood. What we are concentrating on is the unique contribution that can be made through church and community work in urban, rural and suburban settings; and that is determined by attending to the interface between the situation and the critical contextual issues.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Whitehead, A.N., *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (London: Benn, 1932, 6th impression 1966), p. 156 f.
2. I discuss this in Chapter 12. I plan to develop it further in a companion volume to this book, *An Invaluable Resource: Work Consultancy in Church and Community Work*.
3. Holland, Joe & Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books in collaboration with The Center of Concern, revised and enlarged edition 1983), p. 90; cf. p. 15 and 7.
4. I have learnt much about the theology and practice of waiting from Vanstone, W.H., *The Structure of Waiting* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1982).
5. Fromm, Erich, *To Have or To Be* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978) pp. 90ff. Cf. Lovell, George, *Human and Religious Factors in Church and Community Work* (London: Grail Publications, 1982) pp. 27f.
6. I owe this term to Morgan, Gareth, *Images of Organizations* (Sage Publications, 1986), p. 105 ff; cf. pp. 84 ff.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 106
9. Cf. Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 10:19.
10. I discuss what I understand to be the distinctions between purposes and objectives in *Human and Religious Factors in Church and Community Work*, pp. 46 ff. Others use different terminologies to make the same distinctions, e.g. long- and short-term objectives; aim and objective.
11. Cf. Dewey, John, *Experience and Education* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1968), Chapter 6, "The Meaning of Purpose", in which he shows the importance of the "participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his activities in the learning process" (p. 67). He also wrote:

A genuine purpose always starts with an impulse. Obstruction of the immediate execution of an impulse converts it into a desire. Nevertheless neither impulse nor desire is itself a purpose. A purpose is an end-view. That is, it involves foresight of the consequences which will result from acting upon impulse. Foresight of consequences involves the operation of intelligence. (*Ibid.*, p. 67 f).
12. Cf. Jaques, Elliott, *A General Theory of Bureaucracy* (London: Heinemann, 1976), p. 102.
13. See note 10 above.
14. The case study is described in Lovell, George & Catherine Widdicombe, *Churches and Communities: An Approach to Development in the Local Church* (Tunbridge Wells: Search Press, 1978 reprinted 1986), pp. 125-132.
15. Sanford, John A., *Ministry Burnout* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) describes burnout as a person "devoured from within by fiery energy until, like a gutted house, nothing is left".

He says the problems of burnout and the exhausted ego are first cousins.

16. I have been aware of this attribute for some time but I am indebted to Prof. Charles Handy for his telling way of describing it. Unfortunately I cannot locate the reference.
17. Cf. Lovell, *Human and Religious Factors in Church and Community Work*, pp. 12 ff, and Lovell, *The Church and Community Development: An Introduction* (Grail Publications and Chester House Publications, 1972), Chapter 7.
18. Cf. McKelvey, Bill, *Organizational Systemics: Taxonomy, Evolution, Classification* (University of California Press, 1982), pp. 75-92, where he discusses autogenic and allogenic modes of organization, their environmental "coupling" and their "order".
19. Karl E. Weick has described the process through which we shape and structure our realities as a process of *enactment*: cf. Morgan, *Images of Organization*, p. 130. Morgan discusses this in a useful section entitled "Creating Organizational Reality" (pp. 128 ff). Weick examines the concept in a chapter in a book by Shaw, Barry M. & Gerald R. Salancik (eds) *New Directions in Organizational Behaviour* (Chicago: St Clair Press, 1977) entitled "Enactment Processes in Organizations". He describes ways in which people have a major role in creating the world towards which they subsequently respond and suggests that "the process of sensemaking in each case (that he gives) is better understood by examining what is in people's heads and imposed by them on a stream of events than by trying to describe what is 'out there'". Cf. also *Journal of Management Studies* 25: 4 (July 1988), "Enacted Sensemaking In Crisis Situations", for an exposition of the "enactment perspective".
20. "Group think" is a well-researched "collective pattern of defensive avoidance". The symptoms of this condition are: an illusion of invulnerability, rationalizing to discount warnings of error, unquestioned belief in a group's inherent morality, stereotyped views of rivals and enemies as evil, pressure against dissenters, self-censorship of deviants, a shared illusion of unanimity, self-appointed "mind guards". Cf. Jarvis, Irving L. & Leon Mann, *Decision Making: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice and Commitment* (Free Press, 1977) pp. 129 ff, and an article in the *Guardian* by Dr Frank Heller, Director of the Centre for Decision Making Studies, Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, entitled "The Danger of Group Think", *Guardian* 31 Jan. 1983. I agree with Gareth Morgan, *ibid.*, that "this kind of group think has been reproduced in thousands of decision-making situations in organizations of all kinds" (p. 202).
21. Morgan, Gareth, *ibid.*, (see note 6 above), shows how this can happen through "single-loop learning" and the importance of "double-loop learning" (pp. 87 ff).
22. There is a considerable amount of emphasis in community development about working with the "vertical" and "horizontal" patterns of community and the "local" and "non-local": cf. *Involvement in Community: A Christian Contribution. A Report by the Community Development Group, William Temple Foundation in collaboration with the Community Work Advisory Group, British Council of Churches* (William Temple Foundation, 1980), Chapter 3 *et al.*, and Warren, Roland L. & Larry Lyon, *New Perspectives on the American Community* (The Dorsey Press, 1983), especially Section Three.
23. Green, Robin, *Only Connect: Worship and Liturgy From the Perspective of Pastoral Care* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987), p. 8.
24. Methodist Conference Agenda, 1986: "A Context for Policy Decisions", pp. 531-533.
25. See note 21 above and Lovell, George, *Reflective Practitioners in Church and Community Work* (1992), pp. 20 ff.
26. An excellent publication, *Evaluation of Community Work* (The London Council of Social Service, 1978), describes, illustrates and assesses the following seven "evaluation models": **Goal Model**, evaluating the outcome of work done in relation to pre-determined objectives; **System Model**, evaluating the effect of work upon human systems; **Impressionistic Enquiry**, recording impressions of what is happening; **Opinion Surveys**, researching

people's views on changes and developments; **Blue-Ribbon Committees/Testimonials**, named after blue ribbon committees in the U.S.A. which praise work programmes; **Text-book Precepts**, assessing work done in relation to theoretical standards set down in text books; and **Historical Approach**, evaluating through critically examining the twists and turns of the history of the work. This combines aspects of (a) and (b). I describe a system of evaluation based on directional analysis which I evolved and used in my Ph.D. Thesis: *An Action Research Project to Test the Applicability of the Non-Directive Concepts in a Church, Youth and Community Centre Setting* (Institute of Education, Faculty of Arts, University of London, 1973).

27. Young, Michael, *The Metronomic Society—Natural Rhythms and Human Timetables* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988), helped me to a better understanding of the importance of working to human rhythms and what is involved in doing so.

28. This title is based on a description of a community sociologist as one who is his/her own "research instrument" by Bell, Colin & Howard Newby, *Community Studies: An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971, fourth impression 1982), p. 62.

29. See Bell & Newby (*ibid.*) for a description of the use of participant observation methods in community studies.

30. Lovell, *Human and Religious Factors in Church and Community Work*, pp. 29 ff.

31. There are many books and articles and chapters in books on social research on participant observation. Ones I have found helpful are:

Spradley, James P., *Participant Observation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980)

Kane, Eileen, *Doing Your Own Research* (London: Marion Boyars, 1983)

An Avec Occasional Paper makes a comparative analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of survey and active and passive participant observation methods.

32. Argyle, Michael, *The Social Psychology of Work* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 96.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

35. The whole process was comprehensively documented. Reports were published in the *Methodist Recorder*. An article in *Epworth Review* described the process in some detail: "Relationships in Mission", by Leslie J. Griffiths (Volume 15, No. 2, May 1988, pp. 85-94).

36. Cf. Rogers, Maria & Ralph B. Spence, *Leadership and Authority in the Local Community: A report to the fourth International Congress on Mental Health by the Preparatory Commission on Autonomous Groups and Mental Health Autonomous Groups Bulletin* Vol. VII, No 4—Vol. VIII, No. 1 Summer—Autumn, 1952. This is the only publication known to me which takes seriously the controlling part played by networks and grapevines in the development of community. See p. 25 *et al.*

37. Warren, *op. cit.* p. 419.

38. Bell & Newby *Community Studies*, p. 25.

39. Bell & Newby, *op. cit.* p. 24 f.

40. A good example of collecting and assessing information received critically using these processes is given in Lovell & Widdicombe, *Churches and Communities: An approach to development in the local church*, pp. 96 ff.

41. Morgan—see note 19 above—gives a very useful way of examining the positive and negative feedback between inter-related contextual factors by drawing connecting "loops":

cf. pp. 247 ff.

42. Griffiths, Hywel, An Address given to Southern Region Conference 21st March, 1981 entitled, *Community Work In The 80s: Paid and Voluntary Action* (1981), p. 9 f.

43. Cf. Grant, Henry, S.J., an article in *Studies* (Summer 1983), pp. 145-155 entitled "Understanding The Northern Irish Troubles: A Preliminary to Action". This was based upon the lecture he gave to the Avec Course at Larne in May 1982.

44. Graham, Fred L., *Ecumenical Initiatives in a Rural Parish* (a dissertation for the Avec/RIHE Diploma in Church and Community Development, 1988).