

Community-led development in Aotearoa New Zealand:

- *what's changed,*
- *what it takes,*
- *what next to strengthen and support CLD?*



...a think piece from Inspiring Communities – July 2012

Thinking out loud

Two years have quickly passed since Inspiring Communities penned [What we are learning about community-led development in Aotearoa, New Zealand](#). As a lead in to our next edition (due for release early in 2013) we thought it timely to review changes in the broader environment. We also wanted to comment on key aspects that are helping and hindering communities' and key stakeholders' work in community-led development (CLD) ways.

To help us, we interviewed a cross section of 22 thought leaders from a variety of sectors and places within Aotearoa New Zealand. Their thoughts, and those of Inspiring Communities, have been brought together to prompt and spark further dialogue and discussion about CLD and what's required to support and strengthen its future. We welcome your thoughts on the ideas presented here and encourage ongoing 'thinking out loud' to help create the conditions for all Kiwi communities to flourish.

Key messages in this think piece:

- ▶ CLD is a useful framework for addressing complex issues.
- ▶ There have been many positive steps forward for CLD over the past two years including:
 - Increased awareness, interest and uptake of CLD by many stakeholders
 - Growing recognition that leadership and active participation by local communities is key to strengthening positive local futures
 - Iwi-led development and CLD viewed as complementary rather than competing approaches.
- ▶ Challenging events and crises (such as global recession, Christchurch earthquakes) have highlighted the importance of strong local connections and citizen-led responses. They have also prompted calls for creative **new** ways of thinking and working to achieve shared goals and aspirations at every level.
- ▶ Key ingredients for successful CLD include:
 - Having the 'right people with the right skills'
 - Quality, high-trust relationships
 - Starting in and with communities
 - Having a critical mass of highly skilled leaders working from the same page
 - Being prepared for a long-term journey and being able to 'let go' previous ways of doing things
- ▶ CLD is here to stay. Key areas to help enhance and support this way of working include:
 - Systems changes
 - Strengthening collaborative cultures
 - More active citizens and more active citizenship
 - Staunch peak bodies who can advocate, connect communities and gather robust evidence
 - Skills development and training for practitioners
 - Ensuring local government is actively involved in CLD
 - Developing the business community interface
 - Living with messy language and framing
 - Being aware of broader political contexts and ensuring CLD remains community driven.

"If we want our communities and country to be as good as we can be there is no alternative to community-led development. Strong, resilient families and neighbourhoods are basic building blocks for a strong, resilient community."

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

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1. Community-Led Development (CLD) is about working together in place to create and achieve locally determined visions and goals. CLD is not a service delivery model or programme. Rather, it's a strengths-based planning and development approach that's underpinned by some [key principles](#) such as cross-sector collaboration, empowering local voice and leadership, and working on broader systems change rather than one-off projects. Key to this approach is also having local residents at decision-making and action-taking tables alongside others, including for example, central and local government, business, local residents, funders, community organisations, iwi and academia.

The challenges local communities face today have become increasingly complex. New ways of working are needed. Inspiring Communities believes CLD is a very useful framework for harnessing opportunities and addressing complex issues. Key implications of a CLD approach are noted in the following table.

Complex Issues:	This means.....
Have multiple root causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Multiple stakeholders will need to work together on solutions. ∞ Taking time to understand drivers behind local issues. ∞ Work will be hard, messy and challenging.
Require a developmental approach (strategies and solutions emerge as people work together)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Being intentional and clear on your vision but flexible in how you might get there – be prepared to experiment and take risks. ∞ Being prepared to work differently. ∞ Being responsive and adaptive in both planning and action phases. ∞ Focusing not just on projects but also on building local skills and local collaboration infrastructure.
Are hard to eliminate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Change will take time and require long-term investment, commitment and perseverance from all involved. ∞ Action plans should be linked to and build on existing community strengths, assets and resources. ∞ Ongoing small intentional steps contribute to transformational changes.
Are sensitive to each community and context ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ While principles, key ingredients and lessons can be usefully transferred between communities, no 'one size fits all' model can be nationally rolled out. ∞ Solutions need to be tailor-made from the inside and reflect local aspirations, needs and conditions.
Require local people to be part of generating, implementing and owning solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Proactively engaging, supporting and valuing local people as experts in their place. ∞ Ensuring strong local relationships and connections – both at street/neighbourhood level and within the broader community (for example NGOs, local businesses, schools, churches, marae etc.)

¹ For example: demographic make-up; community history; strength of local relationships and networks; collaboration culture; current environmental, economic, and political stresses such as earthquakes, global recession, policy changes etc.



Complex Issues:	This means.....
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ In many communities additional capacity and capability building² will also be required to connect local people, enable them to self organise, and to grow local voice and leadership. ∞ Making progress visible so local people see change is both possible and happening!

When a CLD approach is succeeding, we can expect to see:

- Shared local visions, goals and action plans being worked on by multiple stakeholders.
- Local residents engaged, empowered and actively participating in planning, action and evaluation of change efforts in their community i.e. the ‘bottom up’ element is strong and visible!
- Many parts of the community, for example residents, sports groups, churches, politicians and local businesses are connected, communicating and collaborating.
- External stakeholders involved and supporting local efforts such as through funding, information provision, promoting and brokering.
- Positive local energy and pride, local assets and resources being used in different ways, increased social connectedness and caring for people and place.

2. So, what’s changed since 2010 and why? While the world is ever changing, most think-piece contributors commented that two years was too short a timeframe to see any *major* changes in the ‘big national picture’ for CLD. However, all acknowledged that positive progress continues to be made.

While a ‘place-based focus’ continues to be on the radar, the uptake of CLD is still higher in communities with capacity³ - where locals are better able to understand and harness the language, frameworks, networks and resources required to support a CLD approach.

In terms of the ‘big picture changes’, contributors noted the following positive steps for CLD including:

- ▶ An increasing use of the term CLD and greater prominence of the broader ‘communities’ agenda.
- ▶ A growing understanding that community services and CLD are very different and that the consumer model (more and more services focused on fixing deficits) has not made significant inroads to solving ‘wicked’⁴ issues.
- ▶ Greater awareness and inclusion of [complexity](#)⁵, [panarchy/innovation cycle](#) and [strengths and asset-based thinking](#).
- ▶ Many deeper and different CLD conversations happening in more places.
- ▶ More interest in CLD ways of working from key stakeholders, including:
 - *Local government*: especially neighbourhood strengthening and connecting.
 - *Business*: while environmental sustainability is still the dominant focus, awareness of social and community aspects of business sustainability are growing.

² Building interest, confidence and ‘know how’ to enable individuals, organisations and communities to be part of what’s happening.

³ Existing knowledge, skills, connections and experience that allow communities to self organise and effectively lead/participate in their own development. For example see: <http://www.greyllyn2030.co.nz/>.

⁴ For example: poverty, family violence, housing affordability.

⁵ For a home grown development model that usefully incorporates complexity thinking and indigenous/environmental perspectives see <http://www.tipuake.org.nz/index.php>.



- *Philanthropic funders*: some have become much more proactive, going beyond usual 'cheque book' roles and processes to support CLD.
 - *Social service agencies*: leading to more conversations about how CLD principles could work hand in hand with service delivery approaches.
 - *Iwi*: with growing understanding of how CLD and iwi-led development approaches are complementary.
 - *Academia*: new discussions prompted on teaching/learning approaches to grow more skilled CLD practitioners.
 - *Central government*: including [five new CLD pilots](#) being funded. Some emerging new interest in CLD ways of working, enabled by broad policy direction of less government and more self reliance within local communities.
 - *Communities*: more local people wanting a stronger say/more control about what happens in their place. For instance the Lyttleton community [purchasing their local grocery store](#) to guarantee it would remain open to service their local community. More activity, interest and engagement at [street and neighbourhood](#) level, and a growing interest from [schools/early childhood centres](#) in CLD approaches. Many [disability organisations](#) are also thinking about the intersection of CLD thinking and their social/community inclusion efforts. The eight communities that have been part of the Inspiring Communities [Core Learning Cluster](#) can also link over 100 new initiatives with their work.
- ▶ Increasing recognition of the interconnections between local, regional, national and global domains, with growing understanding of how macro and micro initiatives need to work together to enable broader change.
 - ▶ Strengthened international linkages, for example with [Tamarack](#) and [ABCD](#) thinking.
 - ▶ More cross-sectoral place-based thinking happening in some regions, such as the Bay of Plenty.
 - ▶ Stronger social enterprise thinking and understanding in community organisations and in communities more broadly, supported by the [NZ CED Network](#).

Other contributors were slightly more reserved about the changes they saw, noting CLD language being 'bandied' around a lot more – but often without any real understanding about what this meant. Others were cautious that recent interest in CLD by government may be a mask for further devolution of government responsibility to communities, without accompanying resources.

Interestingly, negative events were often considered to be drivers behind positive changes in broader CLD awareness and understanding. The Christchurch earthquakes, global recession, rising poverty levels and social inequality, tragic high-profile cases of child abuse and family violence, climate change and the national debt burden etc, all provided catalysts for new and different ways of framing and responding to emerging challenges and opportunities. For example some contributors noted how the recession has made communities more aware of accessible natural local resources and opportunities around them such as fishing, hunting, gardening and recycling/reusing waste.

Importantly, these crises have renewed debate about the values and paradigms upon which decisions are being made.⁶ The need for more active engagement with, and participation by, local communities in ongoing planning efforts has also been strongly highlighted.

⁶ As seen with the rapid spread of the 'Occupy' movement in 2011 which mobilized internationally to challenge corporate greed, rising social inequalities and environmental degradation.



“The GFC has impacted hugely; it’s shown the way the business world is set up isn’t sustainable. The voices articulating change have also been getting stronger – for example in New Zealand business leaders have gone from conversations to action in forming [Pure Advantage](#).”

“The earthquakes have shaken our core assumptions about how we do things. It’s brought a new emphasis on resilience and the importance of neighbourhoods that wasn’t there before. It’s given a new imperative for collaboration too.”

CLD Think Piece Contributors 2012

The next or younger generation of New Zealanders (often referred to as Generation ⁷Y) are credited with leading the way in thinking and acting differently to enhance community wellbeing outcomes. As a group they’re technology savvy, well connected, creative and environmentally conscious⁸. There are now many young entrepreneurs proactively and practically redefining ways of working in business and society more broadly⁹. For some contributors, the next phase of significant community-led change will happen as the power of voice (younger generation) and the power of action (older generation) realise each others’ strengths, and pull together to share power and maximise the impact of intergenerationally-led change.

“In terms of social enterprise, both leadership and new creative models are coming from the younger generation. They have a new outlook and are committed to combining social value and making a living – it may well be the new business as usual.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

Treaty settlements were another key positive driver of change identified by contributors. Significant changes are now being seen in communities with a strong iwi presence, especially where claims have been settled. Settlement monies are enabling new local economic and social development strategies and action plans, with iwi increasingly being recognised as a key shaper and partner in New Zealand’s future¹⁰. Rather than being in competition, community-led development and iwi development are increasingly being understood as ‘flip sides of the same coin’ – with the ongoing challenge being how best to integrate the best of both approaches effectively ‘in place’ and take wider New Zealand along at the same time.

“You can’t talk about neighbourhood development in many rural and coastal areas without talking about the role of whanau, hapu and iwi. The importance of these is now recognised in places like Opotiki, where they’re key mechanisms for helping strengthen local communities.”

“So much of New Zealand doesn’t have a clue about iwi development or things Maori. They don’t interact with Maori on a daily or even monthly basis, and both CLD and iwi development may be hindered as a result.”

CLD Think Piece Contributors 2012

⁷ Referring to the ‘echo’ baby boomers or those born from the early 1980’s to the early 2000s.

⁸ In New Zealand, the long standing [Enviroschools](#) programme is credited with having supported and nurtured many thousands of fabulous new young thinkers and leaders - many of who now link nationally through networks like [ReGeneration](#) which intentionally connects and promotes youth voice, leadership and participation in change efforts at multiple levels.

⁹ For example the ‘[Student Volunteer Army](#)’ in Christchurch earth quake cleanup efforts and establishment of many new businesses that combine both profit and public good within their business models – see [the Kitchen](#) as an example of a new co-working space of small ‘like minded’ businesses in Auckland.

¹⁰ In 2011, the Māori Economic Taskforce estimated the “Māori Economy” to be approximately \$36.9 billion.



3. What DOES community-led development take? We asked Think Piece contributors to highlight their biggest learnings and observations about CLD and what they think this tells us about the key ingredients for success.

3.1 *Having the right people*

Highly skilled co-ordinators, convenors and brokers are essential in CLD. Contributors noted that the 'right people and right skills' combination is often **the** key determinant for progress and success. Given there's no fixed model for CLD, brokers in this space require a high degree of judgement, and be able to:

- Communicate well.
- Read signs and sense patterns to design processes/advise on what's 'right for now'.
- Understand that process is at least as important as results.
- Hold the space and not do everything themselves.
- Enable and support others to grow and shine.
- Work with paradoxes.

"There are so many paradoxes involved in CLD – like having structure and no structure, being goal/milestone driven and open/emergent, leading and allowing others to lead etc. As a CLD practitioner, you have to hold both paradoxes yet depending on what's required, be at one end of the continuum or the other. This requires real judgement and intuition."

CLD Think Piece Contributor 201

The reality is that CLD brokers with all of these skills are actually quite rare. How best to identify, support and grow more of them is a key area for future attention. In the interim, linking those working and wanting to work in this way is key to assist skill and knowledge transfer.

3.2 *It's all about relationships*

CLD relies heavily on relational rather than systems-based approaches to achieving shared visions. Quality, high-trust relationships are essential for successful CLD and take time to build. Really understanding others' drivers, histories, motivations, expectations and aspirations is critical, with these aspects generally developed while working and doing together. Building solid relationships between CLD stakeholders means having honesty, respect, integrity and transparency at the heart of conversations and collaboration efforts.

"There are key relationship holders within a community that make the big difference to engaging and growing momentum locally."

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

Some contributors also reflected on the dangers of assumptions and expectations in relationships, noting that you can't always assume that other partners can do all of what they say they can, or that everyone is necessarily always on the same page. This is a reminder:

- Not to make assumptions.
- To confirm the capacity/capability of those you're working with.
- To be prepared to step in or out (as the need arises!) in order to support others to build, and work to their strengths.



3.3 Starting in and with communities

For many contributors, having CLD being driven from the ‘bottom up’ is essential. Without local communities committed and enabled to lead locally over the long term, the real likelihood is that any short-term gains will not be sustained.

“Central or local government choosing communities where it wants community-led development to happen and then investing big money is coming at it all the wrong way.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

This raises questions about the best starting points for CLD and how, or even if, outside agencies can be effective catalysts and drivers of CLD. This is particularly important when, along with resources they often also bring pre-determined parameters and expectations of what and how CLD should happen. The key issue here is power – not just who has it, but how it’s used, including:

- Who determines what will be focused on and how things will happen.
- Principles, values and processes underpinning collaboration intent.
- How success will be judged and measured.

3.4 The ‘right’ leadership: critical mass and critical skill-sets

Capable individuals can only take things so far in communities. Progress in CLD is clearly enabled when there are **a number** of leaders driving forward together, including those from grass-roots levels. The type of leadership also matters.

“Leaders really need to understand CLD, be courageous and stay loyal to local dreams and goals. They often have to be tunnel visioned to help embed new ways of working.”

“Leaders have to both catalyse and empower others. CLD needs more than just ‘leaderful’; it needs leaders who can lead.”

CLD Think Piece Contributors 2012

Equally critical is leadership from the top. Without long-term support of key managers and leaders at multiple levels to support risk and innovation, it’s hard for CLD approaches to get real traction or sustainability. Championing CLD sometimes requires thinking in unconventional ways and having the mana/authority to break and/or create new rules as to how things can be done. Many contributors also highlighted the need for leaders to ‘take organisations with them’, acknowledging the need to not just transform those directly involved, but also parts of the system that can ‘support from afar’. Critical to these processes are ‘intrapreneurs’ – those who champion, navigate, educate and advocate within their own organisation to enable broader awareness and internal systems change.

“CLD requires intrapreneurs and champions who can take politicians on a journey. Bridge builders who can both harness communities and work the politics necessary to bring Cabinet Ministers on board - showing them too how systems could be made to work to support CLD.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

3.5 Convening organisations that can ‘hold’ the community innovation space

Selected organisations, networks and structures within communities are now increasingly recognised as critical for creating and holding spaces for communities and other stakeholders to talk and work collaboratively. There are many terms in use to describe these kinds of bodies – for example ‘back bone’ and ‘anchor’ organisations. They currently take on a wide range of roles including:

- Supporting key individuals within communities to work in high-risk spaces, while providing assistance, guidance and structure, often in a very low-key way.



- Owning assets and holding funds on behalf of communities to support and grow local development, services and activities
- Being a ‘hub’ – a connecting place for local people, organisations and stakeholders.
- Providing convening/central administration services for [constellation governance](#) models.

“Anchor organisations can provide constancy and stability amidst the flux and fragility of community change processes.”

“You can’t just leave communities on their own, they need supporting mechanisms in place to help things happen and to support, convene and lightly hold ongoing dialogue, planning and doing.”

CLD Think Piece Contributors 2012

What’s clear is that new ways of community organising and convening challenge many of the traditional assumptions about the role and behaviours of a community organisation¹¹. However, their role in CLD is pivotal, often nuanced¹², and needs to be much better documented and understood.

3.6 *Being prepared for the journey*

There was broad agreement that working in a CLD way is much harder than sticking with business as usual. Therefore, it’s important for those working or investing in CLD to be realistic about the time things will take, how challenging it will be and the importance of communicating and celebrating successes along the way. It’s also a reminder that all those involved have to be prepared to let go of previous ways of working, and to really listen and learn to enable new co-created ways to emerge.

“CLD has become simpler in philosophy but harder in implementation. What it is and what might be is easy to talk about in comparison to actually creating it, doing it and maintaining it. It’s really hard work – but much more meaningful.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

4. The Future: supporting and strengthening CLD

As noted earlier, there are many examples of community-led successes¹³. However, because CLD demands different ways of working, many of the entrenched systems and practices that underpin current paradigms¹⁴ in New Zealand do not always support or enable CLD. What follows are some key platforms for enhancing CLD practice, outcomes and results:

4.1 *Systems changes to enable CLD*

By far the biggest frustration expressed by contributors to this paper was around the very slow speed of systems change to support CLD – particularly in terms of flexible, long-term funding to support locally determined outcomes, joined-up policy and practice, power sharing, supporting experimentation, and accepting risk and failure.

This points to the need to identify key policy levers that will enable CLD to be integrated into policy work underway at both central and local government levels. It also means stating and presenting

¹¹ For more on this see <http://www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz/community-led-development/leadership/151-interview-hanna-a-edridge>

¹² For example being patient, humble and waiting to be invited in to support others versus assuming leadership/organising roles.

¹³ For example government investment and multiparty collaboration have enabled the creation of [Be.Accessible](#) – an exciting new community-driven social change initiative with a mission of creating a truly accessible country for us all.

¹⁴ There are multiple paradigms always at play: socio-economic, political, business, policy, funding, cultural, spiritual, media, environmental etc.



more clearly the value proposition and evidence for CLD processes, results and outcomes in language that 'systems gatekeepers' (usually middle management) understand and can own themselves.

"Systems are the hardest to move. People within them need to build comfort with the practice of CLD before they're prepared to 'let go' the way things have always been done."

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

Specific actions to enable a more supportive macro framework for CLD could include:

- Extending the Better Public Services Programme's results-based approach further and making joined-up policy and thinking in central government an imperative.
- Developing a place-based policy framework so that interconnections can be better recognised, planned for and funded – especially at regional levels where relationships and agreements can be tailored with localities and local partners according to context, aspiration and needs.

"Allowing communities to determine pathways should be part of government's purchase and investment decisions."

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

4.2 Strengthen collaborative cultures

While in some communities and organisations collaboration is part of the local DNA, it's certainly not the case everywhere. As a country, we need to get better at working together. The reality is that collaboration has to be proactively and thoughtfully nurtured and grown over time.

"Getting more political in our approach is not just creating bigger umbrella organisations and lobbying politicians. It's also about building relationships across difference and relationships with the people who we imagine we're in competition with."

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

Contributors noted that collaboration is strengthened by:

- Building and joining relationships one by one.
- Incentives and resourcing both to encourage synergies and sustain collaboration infrastructure.
- Intentionally crossing boundaries in local projects to ensure different groups and sectors **are** working together.
- Having skilled bridge builders who can navigate the spaces in between people, organisations and agendas.

"I'd love to see Collective Impact work picked up by more sectors and institutions and really understood. It's about doing things the HARD way by bringing multiple organisations together to agree on shared intent, outcomes and how progress can best be measured. Then everyone goes off to do their bits with the knowledge that it all adds up to so much more."

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

Importantly, it was noted that CLD really takes off when key people outside communities, such as funders, spot opportunities, make connections and provide support (moral and/or financial) in ways that don't take over the local driving role. Building strategic connections and collaboration partners then needs to be seen as an iterative process, and one that keeps growing over a long period.



4.3 More active citizens, more active citizenship

“Insurgency at the coal face is a good thing! Local people need the freedom, licence and encouragement to do what feels right for them and their place.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

There are clearly inspiring glimpses of very active citizens¹⁵ and communities in Aotearoa. The huge interest and participation in [Neighbours Day Aotearoa](#) has also shown that people do care and want to connect - sometimes they just need a catalyst and bit of help to do so. Active citizenship and community leadership are definitely linked. Contributors noted the need to consciously and proactively invest in growing both if we want all our communities to flourish.

The kind of citizenship underpinning CLD is about more than democracy, having rights and turning out for elections every three years. It’s also about doing things with and for others, getting involved locally and doing your bit to support those around you and the place you call home. This expanding notion of [‘active citizenship’](#) and having engaged residents who are empowered and supported to both lead and participate in community affairs is critical to the ongoing growth of CLD both in New Zealand and internationally.

“Our sense of citizenship needs to awaken from a much deeper place. It needs to awaken at the place where we each get to answer the question: “What is my contribution to the common good?” It is only when we get to answer to that question that we can step up to becoming the changemakers our communities are looking for.”

Excerpt from Vivian Hutchinson article, [“It’s going to take Community”](#) 2011

4.4 Staunch advocacy and evidence to support, influence and champion CLD

Given the long-term nature of CLD and the work required to change systems and connect communities, practice and learning about CLD, there is a recognised need for peak bodies such as Inspiring Communities to remain active and vocal at a national level.

While waving the CLD flag is seen as important, so too is collecting diverse examples and more robust evidence/cost benefit analyses that demonstrate CLD impact, change and success. Contributors felt more needs to be done to strategically feed insights and key messages to CLD champions, activists and supporters located in a range of sectors and places. This will enable them to comment, interpret and promote latest thinking in relevant media, organisational and public policy settings.

“We need ongoing promotion of CLD so that people hear it and see it in many different forms and places – it’s going to take a decade of osmosis for things to really stick.”

“ We need more rigorous evaluation within communities where things are happening so we can build a critical mass of evidence to redefine CLD principles – there’s still too much service oriented evaluation happening.”

CLD Think Piece Contributors 2012

Contributors also identified the need to consciously build new strategic alliances across the many diverse, yet aligned, community movements in New Zealand – for example Transition Towns, NZ Community Economic Development Trust, ReGeneration, Social Innovation Group and Inspiring Communities. This was seen as key for enabling learning and experiences to be shared, and

¹⁵ For example: Pacific peoples recently marched in downtown Auckland <http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/pacific-community-march-poor-4932165> and in Christchurch local residents and community groups have collaborated to create [CanCERN](#) to support residents most affected by the quakes and to strengthen resident voices in ongoing recovery and rebuilding planning.



relationships, activities and evidence strategically leveraged to help stake a greater claim to power for community-led agendas.

4.5 Strengthen and nurture capability in people

As noted earlier, CLD demands a high level of skill and training. Think Piece contributors reflected the need to provide more opportunities for CLD learning and training and for learning resources to be available in a variety of forms. For example webinars, workshops, stories, on-line video clips, conference presentations, publications, developmental evaluation guides and other practical ‘how to’ tools – such as helping communities tell their own stories.

“Up-skilling and retraining is needed for CLD practitioners and supporters at many levels. We also need new training models that enable insights to be drawn, rather than content taught – some of this work you have to feel and understand from the inside.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

More regional CLD networks were also seen as a key way to promote peer learning and resource sharing, with the suggestion made to link CLD networks more proactively to tertiary and learning institutions in place, so key learnings can influence courses and curricula as well.

Another recommended hands-on way to build capacity and skills within place is for a greater use of CLD experts and consultants – experienced practitioners who can walk alongside locals in supportive, enabling ways to share their knowledge, give advice, and demonstrate key CLD principles. These are wise people who can help co-create plans and next steps **with** local people! It was noted that the burgeoning social enterprise movement in the UK has been strongly supported by consultants who are engaged to work as critical friends or mentors to help local initiatives both in beginning phases and if/as times get tough. There is no such scheme here in New Zealand – either for social enterprise or CLD.

“We need to learn from those who have made it work and cross fertilise this with those just beginning.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

4.6 Recognise the key role of local government in CLD

As the layer of formal democracy closest to communities, local government is a key player and partner¹⁶ in CLD. For example, the community leadership role of the mayor¹⁷ is often especially critical in bringing people together and enabling local leadership and future planning conversations. Current proposed changes to redefine and minimise the purpose of local government to “good quality local infrastructure, local public services and performance of regulatory functions” are alarming and ignore the key role the sector plays in supporting, investing and participating in CLD.

“Community responsiveness is also a key principle of local government. Sadly, the enabling and facilitating roles of local government within communities are generally not seen or understood by central government. You can’t be efficient and effective if you’re not responding or acting in a way that your local community is asking you to.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

¹⁶ Key local government CLD roles include: facilitator, funder, service provider, political advocacy and support, regulator, enabler, asset owner, broker etc.

¹⁷ For examples of the Mayoral community leadership role in action see <http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/rise/issue-thirteen/otorohangas-zero-youth-waste.html> and <http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/newsevents/culture/OurAuckland/mediareleases/Pages/mayortakesactiononcentralcityalcoholissues.aspx>



4.7 Keep developing the business-community interface

Local businesses are a key aspect of communities and economic wellbeing. It was noted that more strategic conversations about the relationship between business and community are happening, and while largely exploratory, progress is being made. Within local communities to date, business-community relationships have largely focused on sponsorship and writing cheques. For CLD to succeed, more sophisticated mutually beneficial relationships need to be developed.

“Have we changed the conversation yet and impacted on outcomes? I don’t think so, that’s still work in progress. You have to ask yourself how is business representing itself in terms of dialogue around housing, poverty and resilient communities? The answer is there’s not been that much noise yet.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

Though not widespread, some businesses are definitely asking questions (beyond corporate social responsibility) about their role both in society and in community change processes. However, to make a difference, this needs to translate into bigger, broader cross-sectoral dialogue about measures of community wellbeing and respective roles in supporting change. In other words there needs to be more talking **with** each other rather than **about** each other.

“In small businesses, leadership for change will be driven by a business owner and/or their peers who challenge them to see things differently. In medium-sized enterprises, staff does tend to have a little more on an influence on direction. In terms of large corporations, it’s shareholders and investors who are now demanding a broader range of returns.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

4.8 Accept messy CLD language and framing

“CLD is common sense yet elusive. It’s hard to describe and capture because it never looks the same in two places. But it’s not what’s on the surface that counts – it’s what’s underneath that’s the most important.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

In the establishment phase of Inspiring Communities we debated (and angsted!) for months about the core elements underpinning CLD and how to best describe it. In the end, we put some stakes in the ground by defining key [CLD principles](#) we felt captured the essence of CLD. Then we waited to see what came back.

While the term community-led development is now used more frequently, it continues to mean different things to different people in different communities at different times – which can, and does, cause confusion.

For example, sometimes CLD involves a whole community¹⁸ coming together to define its vision and goals and then develop a collaborative action plan. Sometimes CLD is about bringing multiple community stakeholders together to explore root causes of a problem and develop solutions for positive changes in their community. Sometimes CLD is about local residents connecting in a street or neighbourhood, building relationships and undertaking tasks or projects they decide will improve their place.

¹⁸ Stakeholders will vary depending on each community and starting point but over time will likely include a combination of residents, businesses, iwi, marae, schools, community groups and clubs, community board or Council, government agencies, philanthropic funders, academics etc.



In the examples above, while the scale, drivers and start points for CLD are all different, all incorporate CLD principles and approaches. Further complicating things are similarities and overlaps with other related terms and fields, such as community and neighbourhood development.¹⁹

So does this signal an insurmountable problem for CLD? We don't think so.

While some contributors to this Think Piece requested greater clarity and sharpness in CLD language and framing, they also understood the need for flexibility, adaption and iteration by local communities – both in terms of language and labels applied. We also know that as a movement, CLD is not alone. Many other related movements (such as social enterprise/social entrepreneurship/social innovation etc) also suffer from issues of overlap and multiple definitions. However, over time we expect these will evolve and be resolved – which means for now we think CLD should stay broad and inclusive.

“If you get too technical about CLD, you stand a good chance of excluding some of the communities that CLD is really trying to serve.”

“CLD principles need to be a ‘how-to tool’ rather than a set-in-stone yardstick to judge and beat each other up by.”

CLD Think Piece Contributors 2012

4.9 Be aware of political contexts and potential capture

The ongoing challenge of recovering from the global recession and national debt crises means that constraints on new spending will likely be in place for some time. The ‘do more with less’ ethos is not going to go away, making it difficult for CLD initiatives to receive significant new public sector investment. While successful CLD is not all about money, it is important that resourcing requirements and CLD achievements are recognised.

“The theory is that government needs to be more hands off and leave communities alone to do stuff but reality is that communities need to be ‘tooled up’ and enabled. Government gets CLD outcomes, but I’m not sure they understand the inputs and investments required to make it all happen.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

The current government’s drive for less government has also brought ongoing restructuring within the public service – and with it, ongoing job uncertainty for public servants. This affects the ability of bureaucrats to buy-in and champion edgy new approaches such as CLD at this time.

“People are worried about losing their jobs and they’re not prepared to step out of line. It’s a really risk-averse environment at the moment. Most bureaucrats are looking after their own backs rather than creatively looking at outcomes – there’s not a lot of trust out there at present.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

There are however, many valid roles for central government to play in CLD – for example, investing²⁰, enabling, brokering, information provision, capacity building, service provision and being a partner/participant. While government needs to be a key player, some are wary of too much

¹⁹ Other terms and fields that also closely overlap with CLD include: community enterprise, iwi-led development, social innovation, whanau ora, community planning, and community building.

²⁰ Three examples of government funding that support and enable community-led action include the [Community Development Scheme](#), [Community Environment Fund](#) and the [SKIP Community Action Fund](#).



government involvement in CLD – citing the need for government to both specify outcomes and control processes in order to minimise risk. Some fear this may result in the ‘institutionalisation’ of CLD – and its potential downfall.

Because of these concerns, government and communities need to be mindful and tread carefully and respectfully, in order to fully appreciate the meaning and implications of CLD – and ensure it remains community-owned and driven.

5. **Our conclusion - it's here to stay!**

All contributors to this Think Piece agreed that CLD was here to stay – in some way, shape or form. CLD’s positive aspects include its flexibility, dynamism, and its resonance and relevance to communities of place.

“Local communities are the only security we have in a volatile environment.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

Excitement about a stronger CLD future was tempered by a sense of fragility brought about by the inherent bumpy road ahead. The fact that the community development agenda has been in and out of government favour numerous times over the past 30+ years was noted, with one commentator positively reflecting that “if things disappear now, they will return again in a few years time with new people and new ways of thinking and doing”.

“Community-led development is here to stay. It’s like a wilding pine – it can be starved, poisoned, ruled illegal, have dictators own it...but it can keep on going. You can’t stop communities from wanting a say in their future and having dreams and aspirations for how to get there.”

CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012

Inspiring Communities thinks there’s a lot to be optimistic about right now.

Though incredibly challenging, current global financial, social and environmental challenges all provide new platforms for alternative approaches such as CLD to thrive. We also see a growing desire for people to reconnect at a very human level in the places where we live. We have experienced the energy, pride and hope that builds in local communities as this grows. As a result, neighbourhood development and building community resilience (ahead of crises and natural disasters) are much more prominent in both policy and practice agendas right now, and deservedly so.

While CLD is both aspirational and inspirational, it’s important to remember that it’s not a quick-fix or cut-price option. It takes long-term effort, patience, faith, hope, investment and persistence. It’s a marathon of small steps rather than giant leaps. It demands ongoing, collective dialogue, analysis of practice and results, and it requires an innovative forward looking focus. We can’t keep doing what we’ve always done and expect to suddenly see different results. Courage and openness to change are essential.

Many New Zealand communities are actively demonstrating what’s possible. Last year’s sold-out [Victory Village Forum](#) in Nelson showcased some amazing examples and reminded us that to enhance social change ²¹we need to:

²¹ Mark Cabaj: Inspiring Communities Learning Forum, Taranaki 2011.



1. Look for positive deviance (what appears to be working) and scale it up by sharing ideas, processes and key ingredients.
2. Experiment like crazy to find out what works and why.
3. Focus on early adopters and innovators – follow their leads, insights and intuition.

We figure the best strategy for New Zealand right now is to continue doing all three above and intentionally focus on where this takes us to next. We sense it will be somewhere exciting!

Inspiring Communities Development Team, July 2012
Megan Courtney, Barbara MacLennan, Denise Bijoux, Patrick McCombs

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We'd love to have your feedback on this paper and to hear more about what you're seeing and noticing about community-led development too!

You can email the Inspiring Communities team at exchange@inspiringcommunities.org.nz

About Inspiring Communities

Our Vision is an Aotearoa New Zealand where local communities flourish.

Our Mission is to grow the recognition, understanding and practice of community-led development in Aotearoa New Zealand, and notice the difference it makes.

We focus on:

- **Learning:** more about CLD, what creates change and how – and then sharing this with others.
- **Promoting:** the understanding and practice of CLD and the difference it makes.
- **Connecting:** people, projects and places to share CLD ideas, knowledge and experience.



For more about Inspiring Communities see www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz

To receive regular newsletters with CLD news, tips and resource links please contact us on: exchange@inspiringcommunities.org.nz