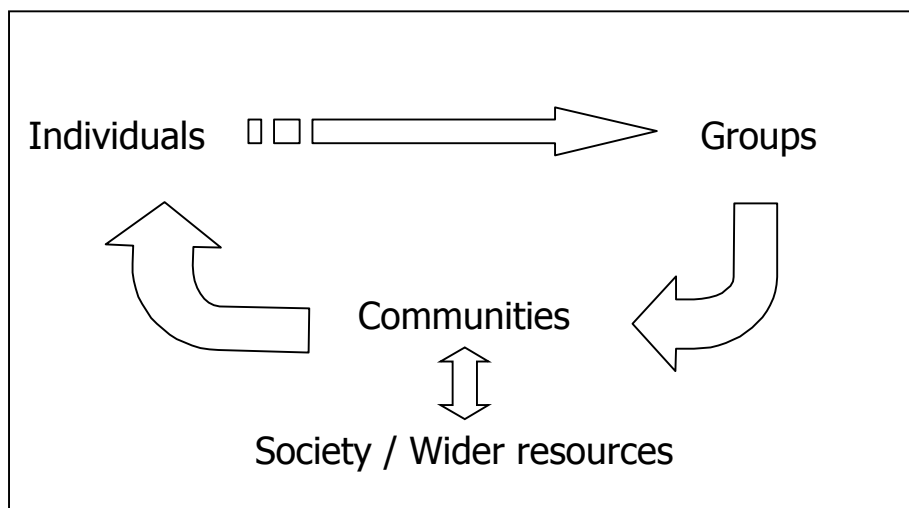


Empowering people and communities

'Community empowerment' is a buzz-phrase we now hear all the time from policy-makers. Despite a huge rise in the average British person's standard of living over the past 30 years, there are some sections of the population that remain stubbornly disadvantaged and excluded from all this economic well-being. The answer, we are often told, is 'community empowerment' – enabling communities to take better advantage of the wider social resources, to choose for themselves what they need to thrive.

But what of *individual* empowerment? How can 'communities' be empowered if the people living and working in them are not? Or should we be empowering communities and hope that it rubs off on people?

A more holistic way of looking at empowerment is to see the relationships between people as individuals, as groups, as communities, and as society as a whole:



If individuals are un-confident, depressed, negative, we find it difficult to create effective groups, which in turn are ineffective at supporting or campaigning for the wider community, which continues to be marginalised from society and which does not provide a nurturing environment for its members.

If, on the other hand, individuals develop a sense of confidence, hope, and self-belief, we are better able to sustain co-operative, effective groups, which are creative and generous towards the wider community, helping it to draw in the resources needed from the wider society, to create an environment in which individuals can continue to develop.