‘Plugging the Leaks’ Workshop activities - Facilitators’ notes

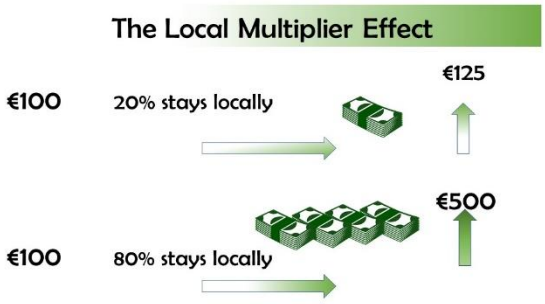
Whether you are new to community-led local development, or have years of experience, this methodology, originally developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF), will support you to explore your local economy in an informative and enjoyable way. Rural communities and interest groups in the UK and Europe have adapted the tool to meet their particular needs, and these notes are based on our experiences of delivering participative workshops over 20 years supporting rural development.

These activities can be used individually in sequence, or together as part of one or two workshops. It is possible to undertake web-based activities but our experience to date suggests that the best interactions occur in a physical workshop with small groups working together and forming connections. The room will ‘buzz’ with ideas and possibilities. The challenge will be to harness the enthusiasm and make things happen.

It is a participative process, and general community engagement principles apply e.g. all ideas are valid; listen when others speak; keep to time etc. You will need around 4-5 hours to complete the activities. The exact timings will depend on the number of participants you have, but to get the most out of each activity it is recommended to allocate at least 30 minutes per activity; and remember to factor in breaks for networking as well as ‘recharging’.

Workshop activity: *Money-go-round*

This activity looks at the multiplier effect of spending money locally.



One person in your group (local area economy) receives €10 income and makes spending decisions as follows:

- decide how much money would be spent on non-local purchases - place this amount in the middle of the table
- use the remainder of the money to make local purchases - pass this amount to the next person in the group
- complete your spending details on the table shown below

Repeat this process until the last person in the group receives income or until the money runs out - whichever happens first! Whatever money is left over at the end of the process should be placed in the middle of the table.

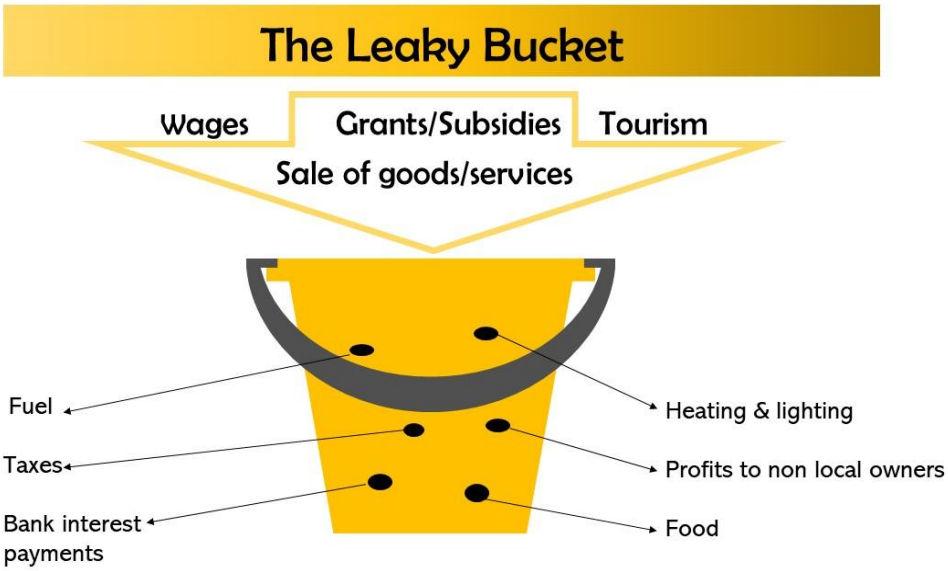
SPENDING RECORD	
Name	**Amount spent locally**
Adam	**€10.00**
Total amount spent locally	

Now work out the multiplier effect on your €10 income based on your local spending pattern.
Multiplier = [*total amount spent locally*] ÷ [*original income*]

Multiplier: _____

Workshop activity: The Leaky Bucket

Think of your local area economy as a leaky bucket. Money flows in - and money flows out. The problem in weak economies is that the money flows out faster than it comes in.



Materials needed: Flipcharts with a drawing of a leaky bucket, one flipchart per group, felt pens, sticky notes.

Where does the money come from?

Using sticky notes, each participant identifies ways money flows into their business or household and writes each main source of income on a sticky note. One item per note.

Each participant places the sticky notes **above** the bucket drawn on the flip chart. Working in the group discuss and agree the main sources of income. Similar ideas can be clustered together.

Where does the money go?

Using sticky notes, each participant identifies items they spend money on that are sourced outside their local area. The number of leaks should be limited to five each (participant will need to prioritise if they have more than five) and write each leak on a separate sticky note.

Each participant places the sticky notes **below** the bucket drawn on the flip chart. Working in the group discuss and agree the main leaks from the local economy. Similar ideas can be clustered together.

Reporting back to plenary

Each group nominates a representative to feedback their flows and leaks to the rest of the workshop participants.

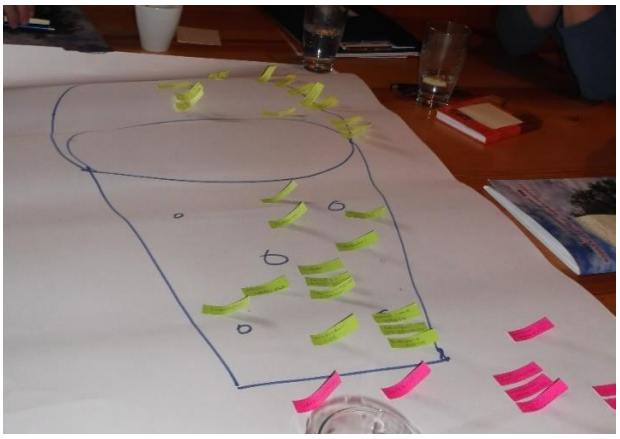
Workshop Activity: '*Plugging the leaks' and Designing the plug tree*

Materials: Flip charts produced in *Leaky Bucket* activity showing flows and leaks, sticky notes (different colour to the sticky notes used in the Leaky bucket activity); 10 X sticky dots for each group member, large sheet of plain white paper

Activity 1 - leak plugging ideas

Workshop participants should work in the same groups as they were in for the *Leaky Bucket* activity. Working individually, each member of the group should write on the sticky notes their ideas for plugging each of the major leaks identified - one idea per note

Each participant then places their sticky notes in the middle of the bucket - where the holes are. Working as a group, then discuss the plug ideas in more detail and cluster them together.

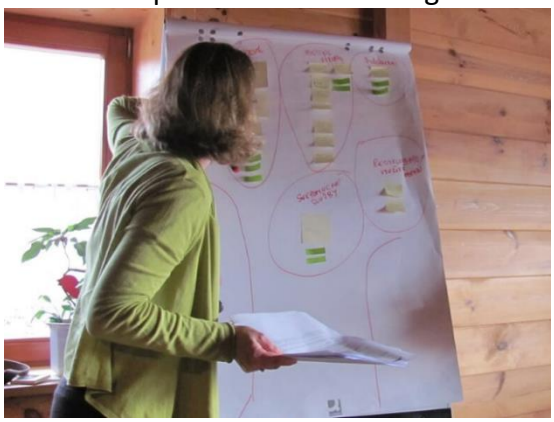


Reporting back to plenary

Each group nominates a person to present the leak-plugging ideas to the rest of the workshop participants.

Activity 2 – designing a plug tree

Working collectively group members should remove their leak-plugging ideas from the leaky bucket and place them on the large sheet of paper. Ideas are grouped under common themes.



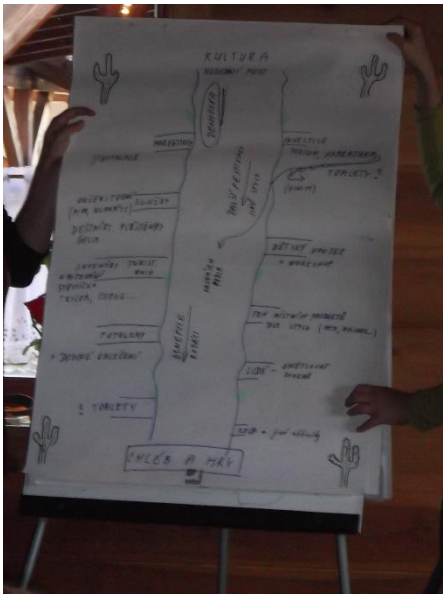
Once the themes have been agreed, by using the sticky dots, participants indicate their interest in a theme by placing a dot against a single theme if they wish. They can use all dots on the one theme or place dots around other themes. Themes with most dots are the priority themes.

Workshop Activity: *From ideas to action*

Materials: Large sheet of plain white paper with Plug tree; flip chart paper, pens

Activity 1 – Irrigation channels

To help visualise how money that is already in the community can be re-spent locally, NEF's 'Irrigation'[1] analogy can be used. Imagine that each major flow of income into the local area economy is like a main irrigation channel. The banks of the channel become green as the water flows in, but the rest of the area stays unfertile. Smaller channels from the main flow need to be dug out to ensure that the rest of the area becomes green and fertile.



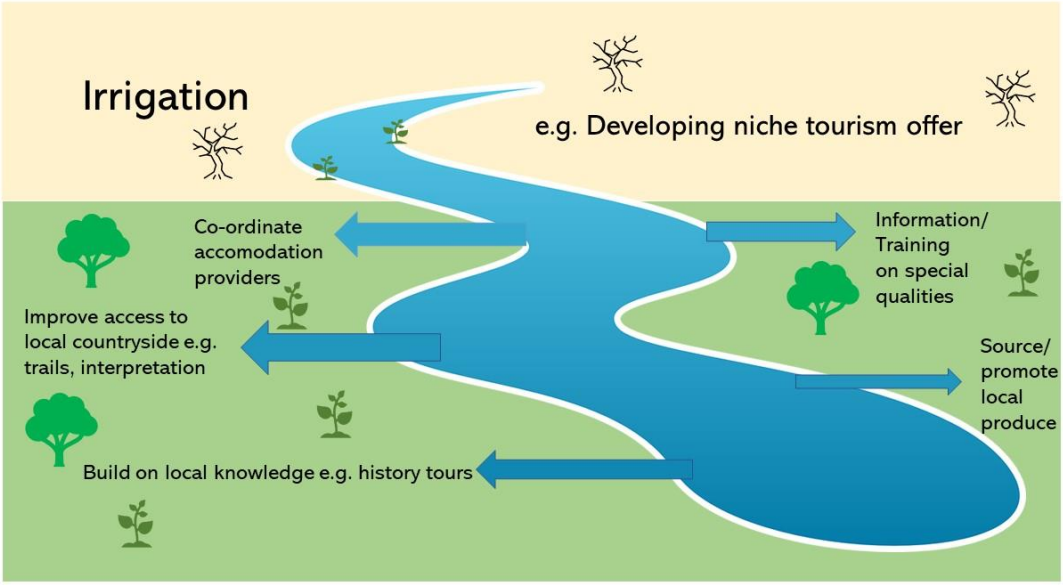
The central irrigation channel

Working as a whole group, identify the major flows into the local area economy based on the leaky bucket activity or using the major themes from the plug tree, and allocate one flow to each working group. On a separate flip chart, each group should label its central irrigation channel with the inflow.

Digging mini-irrigation channels

Each working group to discuss and agree on mini-irrigation channels. One idea per channel and draw these onto a flip chart, from the main channel. Each group to think about what would be needed to bring about the local re-spend - for example training, marketing, local purchasing, skills and so on. Think of these as being the shovels that would be needed to dig the irrigation channels. Write these ideas along the mini-irrigation channels onto the flip chart.

[1] https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/plugging-the-leaks.pdf



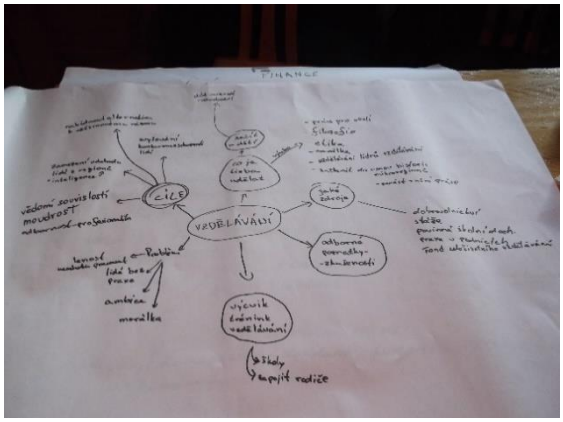
Depending on time constraints of the workshop session, this workshop activity can be omitted, and the groups can progress from the plug tree activity straight into the project planning stage.

Activity 2 – Taking things forward – project planning

Working as a whole group, choose a priority theme or idea (i.e. a major flow into the local area economy) from the plug tree. One theme / idea per working group.

Using a separate flipchart sheet for each theme / idea, each group addresses the following questions:

- What strengths and opportunities exist to develop this idea?
- What challenges might have to be overcome and how?
- What can be done locally towards this idea?
- What resources are needed for this idea to succeed? (including skills, or training)
- Who else can help?
- What actions need to be taken and when?



Reporting back to plenary

Each group nominates a person to present project development idea to the rest of the workshop participants.

At the end of the session agree the next steps, for example:

- Establish a working group
- Capture project ideas in a development plan
- Agree timescales
- How to keep the wider community informed

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