

Book review**Community Development in Theory and Practice an International Reader**

Gary Craig, Keith Popple, Mae Shaw (eds)
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Being asked to review a book that begins in the year of your birth is a daunting task. The 29 contributions cover the period 1966-2005. From New Zealand to El Salvador, from Scotland to South Africa, the authors are drawn from across the globe: complemented by an introduction. For students and workers this is essential reading. The forward asserts the editor's hope to strengthen a 'now-global project': community development. Below I attempt to assess how far this has been done.

It would be wrong to list the merits of each of the chapters in turn. I took the approach of reading through the chapters in chronological order but the format affords flexibility. This book is not a completion of the best of the back catalogue of the Community Development Journal (CDJ). Thanks to the editor's painstaking selection it is more than that. It is both a perspective on our history and a tool for future thought and action.

Marjorie Mayo's introduction asks us to consider the 'continuities and discontinuities' over time; but reminds us to take care with context. Not simply transferring one historical moment for another or too lightly dismissing the cultural or political specifics. The 'competing theoretical perspectives' on community development also require

consideration. Mayo offers the reader a conceptual framework:

- The post-colonial legacy
- Community work and the state
- Social movement and globalisation

This is a helpful starting point.

The early chapters are located in the colonial; they talk about community development becoming 'something in its own right', distinct from social work but still contributing to betterment: helping people to become 'more productive and more deserving'. Batten in chapter 5 calls for agencies to co-ordinate effort so that people 'really do value' the services and amenities provided to them. Writing in 1974 his sentiments find an echo in the managerialism of today. Wrestling with the limitations of practice however Batten goes on to ask whether community development should not be simply considered an approach. This emphasis on technique distances practice from theory; ideology and significant social change, things that the book goes on to consider further.

The following chapters provide able illustration of why technique alone cannot withstand the impact of policy, politics or the cultural manifestations of inequality. Drawing Antonio Gramsci, in chapter 12 Jennifer Sayer asserts ideology 'is created and recreated through the social practices that hold society together'. Here individuals are seen as subjects of history operating in civil society, in and against the welfare state. Structural analysis is retained: people and communities have agency but within the context of existing inequality. This jars with a later chapter where self-described radical workers are trapped by their own determinism and by a

lack of 'strategy' (chapter 18). Developing that strategy can be about challenging the official discourse. Mae Shaw and Ian Martin (chapter 25) illustrate this in relation to citizenship. To 'democratise democracy' we need to 'politicize politics' this cannot be done without 'commitment, leadership and organisation' (chapter 20). It also means workers seeing community development as contributing to a counter hegemonic project. A project that challenges negative social relations (Izugbara, chapter 27), this means asking questions about our social purpose and the explicit and implicit content of our programmes. This reading of the book tests, to a degree, Mayo's framework. Returning to it we are reminded to be careful not to let hindsight distort historical reality. Gary Craig's chapter (15) chronicles community development progress in Britain, from its early history, mentioned above, through the post-war social democratic consensus and the advent of the Community Development Project (CDP). The CDP marked the high point of an unnuanced structural analysis that saw welfare as a sop to deflect from 'industrial and economic' exploitation.

However, as outlined above social movements were already alive to a reality that was more complex. In response to Thatcherism, practice needed to be both 'in and against the state' and understand that in 'a world that has no patience with a class analysis' there is a need to address other (previously ignored) contradictions (Sondhi, Chapter 21). But it did not end there. Community development, like many other parts of the welfare state infrastructure, had to not only undergo self examination and internal ideological

contestation but also withstand the onslaught of global neo-liberal orthodoxy. In some cases this has seen a threat to 'autonomy' and a battle for continued existence. As politicians embrace the market they have suggested that 'local authorities must cease doing so many things themselves' (Chapter 26). This may push community development to the margins and/or provide the impetus for reinvention.

At the time of writing there are huge global financial and environmental imperatives. In Britain there is a crisis of formal governmental processes. There is a need to rethink citizenship 'in a free society as distinct from a 'free' market' (Chapter 25). That gives community workers space to be more than uncritical conduits of government policy. Educational and developmental activity requires to respond to the agendas of the communities we work with but those agendas require to include challenging inequality and to be transformative. Reading and discussing the chapters in this book will provide practical inspiration for that activity: strengthening community development global and local potential.

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