Review

Margaret Ledwith (2020) *Community Development: A Critical and Radical Approach,* **3rd Edition, Policy Press, 302pp.**

This third edition of Margaret Ledwith's bestselling text extends earlier editions from 1997's *Participation in Transformation* to 2005's *Community Development: A Critical Approach*, with the name changing to become not just a "critical" but also a "radical" approach. Ledwith's central argument is that community development has a key role to play in creating spaces in which to develop a counter-narrative that challenges the powerful neoliberal story that presents individualism, competition and self-interest as natural and unavoidable, and social inequality as the outcome of individual success or failure.

She describes radical community development as having four key components: political, educational and theoretical activity and, finally, collective action for social change. Her books draw heavily on the seminal concepts advanced by Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci which this book retains and clearly explains. In this edition, however, she also usefully introduces concepts from more contemporary writers such as Kate Raworth's doughnut economics, Neil Thompson's (2016) personal or psychological, cultural and social (PCS) model and Reni Eddo-Lodge's (2018) challenge to acknowledge and address white privilege. Promoting an intersectional critical pedagogy, she offers a loci of oppressions matrix which, in its Rubik's cube design, is resonant of John Gaventa[i]'s power cube (although he is not cited here). In addition to the aforementioned, authors she describes as intellectual activists are cited throughout the text: Danny Dorling, Bel Hooks, Andrew Sayer, George Monbiot, Naomi Klein, Wilkinson and Pickett, Kerry-Anne Mendoza and Imogen Tyler. This is useful as an encouragement to new readers to further explore their work.

Ledwith locates her arguments in her own practice and life experience, including a commentary on contemporary UK events. This both situates and enhances the book but also dates it, most significantly as its completion in late 2019 and publication in 2020 predates the pandemic. The practice examples do not exemplify a critique of contemporary UK community development practice as such or, indeed, offer examples

which illustrate potential strategies to address some of the challenges confronting practitioners whose work is heavily shaped by the demand that they achieve predetermined instrumental outcomes. There are, however, useful illustrations of local action taking place in different parts of the world which gives voice, for example, to environmental or feminist concerns. Overall, the book is more of a call to arms in recognition that community development has been undermined by neoliberal social policy. She describes this as reclaiming the radical agenda for community development via seven steps: 1. Voicing values, 2. Making critical connections, 3. Critiquing and dissenting, 4. Imagining alternatives, 5. Creating counter-narratives, 6. Connecting and acting, and 7. Cooperating for a common good. Although there is acknowledgement that community development alone cannot achieve social change and that we have failed to come up with a counter-narrative of change, this book, while offering worthwhile suggestions (first steps perhaps), does not present a comprehensive analysis of how that might be done.

Ledwith is, however, a very accessible writer who offers a useful introduction to key ideas and, in my teaching experience, she is highly valued and heavily quoted by students. A recent group of online international postgraduate students (introduced to her via an article she based on the arguments in the 2005 edition of this book), commented in the chat box: "We all wanted to have a cup of coffee with Margaret Ledwith …. she rocks basically!"

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[i] Gaventa, John (2006) Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis, *IDS Bulletin* Volume 37 Number 6 November 2006