Concepts of "Community" in Community Economic Development:

The Social Dynamics of Community-Based Development in Winnipeg's Inner City

By

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

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Abstract

Community Economic Development (CED) is an alternative form of development that assesses the social and economic needs of a community and engages community members in the creation of locally relevant development initiatives. Many communities in Winnipeg's North End are pursuing CED initiatives to address the problems of poverty, unemployment and violence.

Although the concept of "community" evokes images of unity and cooperation, communities are composed of diverse individuals, groups and agendas. CED organizations must understand the unique forms of community belonging in their target communities. This understanding will increase awareness of the factors that influence exclusion and inclusion in communities and their impacts on community development.

In this thesis I explore the meanings of "community" to North End community members and CED organization staff, and the ways in which CED organizations and community members negotiate these diverse concepts of "community" to imagine and implement constructive, communal and sustainable development initiatives.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Healthy communities – in which education, health, recreation and employment are prioritized – promote the health of individuals within those communities and benefit society as a whole. However, the rights of many individuals to live in such communities are threatened by government policies influenced by a capitalist economic system that privileges economic profit and gain over social security and growth. Communities in struggle often employ Community Economic Development (CED) strategies as a way of combating these policies using locally relevant and beneficial development projects.

CED is a challenging form of development, in part due to its high degree of engagement with "communities." Although CED generally focuses on particular geographic neighborhoods, there are many different concepts of "community" within those neighborhoods. These concepts of community are influenced not only by locale, but also by social relationships and imaginings. Communities are therefore dynamic, complex and adaptable, and demand shifting and flexible relationships with CED organizations. In order to offer progressive social development initiatives, CED organizations must understand the multiple and diverse concepts of "community" at work in their target areas. As well, CED organizations must develop an appreciation of the factors that lead to the creation and development of these diverse communities.

The focus of this thesis is Winnipeg's North End, currently the site of serious social problems and opportunities for social change. My goal is to explore the meanings that North End community members and CED organizations ascribe to "community", as well as how organizations and community members negotiate these meanings to imagine and implement constructive and communal community development initiatives.

The Global Context

The "culture of capitalism" (Robbins 2004:47) encourages individualism and competition for money, goods and resources. As many theorists across a multitude of disciplines have explored, capitalist systems, based on ever-increasing growth, require the predation of the environment and natural resources and the exploitation of human labour (Robbins 1999, Sachs 1997, Wallerstein 1999). Without conscience and without cease, capitalist growth drives "Western" countries to exploit and consume territory and resources that are outside their influence and reasonable access rights (Harris 2004). Often the poorest or "developing" countries are exploited for natural resources and are the dumping grounds of "developed" countries' waste materials, while their citizens are exploited to provide cheap labour (Chodkiewicz 2004, Robbins 2004). The negative effects of capitalist enterprises are disproportionately visited on indigenous peoples (Niezen 2004) and women (Ghorayshi 2004).

While capitalist systems wreak such havoc in the pursuit of increased production at lower costs, they also attempt to convince developed societies to increase their consumption. A barrage of advertising messages attempts to convince mainstream Western societies not to consume responsibly or sustainably, but instead to consume recklessly and constantly, and to accumulate those goods that cannot be immediately consumed. The motivation and reasoning for this consumption is that consumer products promote emotional and mental health and are necessary for a happy and fulfilled life (Miller 1997). The success and meaning of human life within capitalist systems are being gauged according to economic rather than social measurements. This risks the commoditization of social relationships and other non-economic relations (Wiest 2004).

Some theorists assert that capitalist systems and the processes of globalization and economic development contribute to the breakdown of communities and the severing of social relationships (Nozick 1994). Many believe that the increased focus on global identity and relations will create a homogenous world, where cultural diversity and identities will vanish (Nozick 1994) or be replaced by a corporate monoculture (for discussion see Chodkiewicz 2004, Wiest 2004). In a world where relations are perceived as being increasingly global, identity is less connected to place (Cohen 1985), and individuals may feel rootless, transitory, dispossessed or alienated (Nozick 1994). This affects the ways in which they define their selves and their places in the world.

While human relationships *do* appear to be changing as a result of capitalist systems and policies, individuals have the capacity to define and interpret their experiences and relationships with a capitalist system (Rapport in Amit 2002, Ashcroft 2001, Escobar 1992, Wiest 2004, Mankekar 1993, Chodkiewicz 2004). Symptoms of discontent are evident, even among those people who may not recognize capitalist systems and cultures as the source of their dissatisfaction. Individuals and groups have emerged to challenge the makeup of mainstream capitalist societies and bring to light the futility of a system based on increasing growth on a planet with finite resources (Douglas 1994, Sachs 1997). They also expose the social and economic inequalities inherent in capitalism, which are based on parasitic and unsustainable practices and relationships. While small-scale communities are facing challenges and breaking down their old forms, this does not imply that communities no longer exist, but rather that they are adapting and changing in response to the global environment (Cohen in Amit 2002).

Canada is a "developed" country, and one that works to create and maintain discourses of equality, freedom, democracy, modernity, multiculturalism, inclusivity and opportunity. These discourses make it easy for many Canadians to overlook or ignore the people who are being excluded or abused by the capitalist system and mainstream Canadian society. The inequalities and abuses experienced by some people living in a so-called "developed" country must be investigated, as must the cultural, social, racial, gender, economic and political dynamics behind these experiences. My increasing awareness of the marginalization of individuals and communities in Canada leads me to focus on the effects of capitalism and economic development in Winnipeg, as well as some of the alternatives to capitalist development being explored by Winnipeg communities.

Alternatives to capitalist definitions of development are currently being investigated and implemented in "developed" and "developing" nations. These alternative strategies often attempt to counter the focus on global forces and processes by concentrating on small-scale, local or community contexts, connected to specific places and groups (Escobar 1992, Wiest 2004). Along with a more localized economic focus, many alternative development programs also attempt to reintroduce social relations and priorities into the economic field, by fostering individual and communal health and well-being, rather than encouraging individual profit and competition. Community Economic Development (CED) is one such form of alternative development, and one with a strong tradition and history in Winnipeg (Loxley 1986, Rothney 1992, Fernandez 2005).

Organizations working with a CED perspective in Winnipeg focus on areas of the city in which people are dealing with the challenges of poverty, unemployment or

underemployment, violence, gangs and addictions. Many people in these areas also struggle to deal with the history of inequality and colonialism in Canada, ongoing systemic racism, negative media representation, and the social prejudices and ignorance of mainstream society. CED organizations are often community-driven and adopt strategies that require high levels of community input and participation in working toward communal and person-centred development goals.

Many organizations are pursuing CED initiatives in the North End to encourage community development and vitality. In the following chapters I will explore the meanings of community to North End community members, their development priorities and goals, and the obstacles that prevent them from putting their visions of community into practice. This discussion challenges the meanings of both "community" and "development" in ways that are essential to creating and promoting progressive and socially beneficial CED initiatives.

Research Questions

With these issues in mind, my objective is to explore two main questions. First, how do local CED organizations and community members work together to assess and address community issues and needs? Secondly, how do community members and organizations define "community" and how do these definitions affect their participation and inclusion in CED? I address these questions using information obtained from interviews with twenty-two individuals who are involved with CED organizations in Winnipeg's North End. The participants are organization staff members and community members, many of whom play extensive and multi-faceted roles in the lives of their communities.

Chapter Two: Background and Theoretical Context

What is Community Economic Development (CED)?

Community Economic Development (CED) is an alternative form of small-scale development enacted in areas or among groups that are struggling to meet their various basic needs. CED is difficult to define as it is meant to be flexible enough to respond to the needs and characteristics of diverse communities (Brodhead and Lamontagne 1994). While a concrete definition of CED is undesirable and impossible, there is a common ideology that informs and motivates CED practitioners and organizations to bring about social change.

CED is often described as a holistic approach to development (Bryant 1994, Douglas 1994) due to its focus on social as well as economic goals (Pell 1994). The unique social, cultural and political dimensions of each community are considered when creating and implementing CED programs and projects (Douglas 1994). This commitment to the overall well-being of communities requires CED programs to respond to short-term and emergency needs and issues, which are often influenced by economic factors, while creating long-term development programs that will meet social needs (Douglas 1994). CED generally recognizes that increasing economic growth does not always stimulate social development and therefore maintains a focus on advancing social goals (Brodhead 1994).

CED is also often described as inclusive (Brodhead 1994), as it attempts to enlist the participation of disadvantaged or marginalized groups and values the input of all community members. Since CED is premised on the importance of community, it is distinguishable from other forms of economic development in that it is directed "*by* the

community, *for* the community" (Douglas 1994:22). In contrast to many capitalist, profit-driven development projects, CED encourages individuals and communities to become more cooperative rather than competitive (Nozick 1994). Inclusivity and cooperation help to minimize hierarchical relationships of power, to create partnerships, to focus on goals and objectives that are communal, and to create projects that will benefit the people who are most in need (Bryant 1994). CED aims to benefit as many community members as possible, and creates partnerships between marginalized groups and the rest of the community (Brodhead 1994). Inclusivity in CED projects may also include environmental and ecological needs and concerns. This kind of CED builds an understanding of the role of human beings in the greater eco-system, and can help individuals and communities to develop an "ecological consciousness" (Nozick 1994:86).

Working with communities at the grassroots or ground level requires CED to adapt and respond to fluctuations in social and economic conditions (Pell 1994). This requires CED practitioners and participants to become familiar with the specificities of the community and its members, in order to design programs that will be truly appropriate and beneficial (MacNeil 1994). CED is therefore often described as being community-based or community-driven, and is premised on the belief that community members are the most knowledgeable about local conditions (Brodhead 1994). Therefore, CED should be small-scale, tailored to community needs and issues, and have a high degree of community participation in the creation and implementation of programs. One of the ultimate goals of CED is to increase the self-reliance of the community as a whole (Brodhead 1994, Loxley and Lamb 2005).

The ways in which CED is defined and practiced are not without conflict and disagreement. There are two CED ideologies – the conventional and the progressive. The "liberal local development" (Brodhead 1994:2) is more conventional and focuses on increasing employment and building businesses in a community. In contrast, the "progressive" (Brodhead 1994:2) approach focuses on changing the structure of the community altogether in ways that enable the community to actively control more resources, institutions and decisions. The conventional approach generally corresponds with the economic orthodoxy, which concentrates on market forces and is driven by profit, individual self-interest and competition. The progressive approach challenges economic orthodoxy to create alternative systems and programs. This progressive form of CED challenges capitalism and attempts to build a new system based on communal and cooperative economic strategies (Loxley and Lamb 2005, Fernandez 2005).

Types of Involvement

It is important to examine the ways in which CED theory and goals are translated into practice. While I have separated types of involvement into the categories of community, business, and government for ease of explanation, there is a great deal of interaction between the three groups.

a. Community involvement

In order to be truly knowledgeable about community conditions and character, CED must always have a great degree of close community involvement. Community members who participate in CED are generally those who can be considered "underprivileged" in some facet of their lives. This can include low-income earners; people who are unemployed or have low educational levels; or people who belong to a marginalized group, such as

women, Aboriginal peoples or street youth. Community members often become involved in CED by volunteering with non-governmental or other organizations, and are generally motivated by the desire to address a specific community or social issue (Bryant 1994). Volunteer work provides a crucial resource in CED and yet is often undervalued (Loxley and Lamb 2005). Volunteer work may include aid in delivering services with an organization, participation on boards, organizing meetings to provide feedback to a community group, or participation in fundraising events.

Community members may also join together to form community organizations, which serve a particular population and address economic and social issues (Bryant 1994). One such example is the neighborhood or residents association, whereby concerned community members gather voluntarily to discuss potential solutions to community issues and to fundraise for community projects. This is a type of community development corporation, which receives and distributes funds to communities for development projects (Nozick 1994). Community members may also become involved in CED by creating cooperatives. These are small businesses that attempt to create democratic employment relations by blurring the lines between owners, managers and consumers (Nozick 1994, Loxley and Lamb 2005).

b. Business involvement

CED is not synonymous with business or economic development, and the social and cultural aspects of development must be considered alongside economic factors (Brodhead 1994). The corporate sector can, and should, help communities to develop their own resources and should support local businesses in the community (Bryant 1994). CED organizations often operate on a not-for-profit basis as part of the "informal"

economy (Douglas 1994:31). As such, they often require economic support, which businesses can provide in the form of funding (Douglas 1994:31). Local financial institutions (LFIs), such as credit unions, often support community enterprises. Local training institutions (LTIs) play a role by partnering with businesses to provide training to community members for specific business positions (Brodhead 1994). The creation and maintenance of small businesses is also an important factor in CED (Douglas 1994). In contrast to large-scale corporate enterprises, small-scale production is more appropriate to support a local economy and is less taxing on the environment. It also provides a personal work environment and is appropriate to "local skill and employment levels" (Loxley 1986).

c. Government involvement

As a not-for-profit or non-market response to economic and social needs, CED requires government support, and governments are the primary form of funding for CED work (Pell 1994, Fernandez 2005). The government has largely controlled economic decisions throughout history, and this has led communities to feel helpless with regard to their place in economic decision-making. The ideal role of governments in the CED process is therefore to overcome this "learned helplessness" (MacNeil 1994) and to play a supportive rather than a decision-making role in the economic life of communities. This requires governments to change the way they design and implement general or remote development programs to account for local specificity and meaning (MacNeil 1994).

Governments must also recognize that economically unviable projects can be socially viable, and can become more economically viable over the long term (Loxley and Lamb 2005). This entails that governments reject a market-based approach to

development, in which economic growth is the primary focus and is believed to "trickle down" to people in poverty (Silver 2000:129). Increased economic growth has *not* led to a decrease in poverty in Canada and does not answer to the social needs of communities (Silver 2000:129). Instead, CED argues that governments need to increase economic investment in socially beneficial projects and programs and to recognize the ways in which social development can translate into long-term economic gain. For instance, the cost of providing employment training may be offset in later years by higher rates of employment and therefore lower expenditures on Social Assistance programs (Loxley and Lamb 2005). As well, by supporting and encouraging local rather than foreign businesses, and training local employees instead of importing workers, governments can support CED and the local economy (Pell 1994).

My Working Definition of CED

Faced with diverse and occasionally contradictory definitions of CED, I use a progressive definition of CED:

> *CED is a community-based and community-directed process that explicitly combines social and economic development and is directed towards fostering the economic, social, ecological and cultural well-being of communities* (BC Working Group on CED, in Fernandez 2005).

A progressive definition of CED challenges mainstream development discourses and goals, and fits best with the organizations and communities involved in this project. This definition permits me to explore the social dynamics and relations of communities engaged in CED initiatives.

Theoretical Approaches to "Development"

In order to define and situate CED as a form of "alternative" development, it is necessary to understand what is meant by mainstream development. The concept of development has historic roots in the Enlightenment thinking of eighteenth century Europe. This realm of thought, also known as positivism, used science and rational thought to explain and explore reality and to reveal universal truths about the world (Harvey 1989:12, Parpart 1995:222). Development has primarily been viewed in a positive light, as "progress" toward modernity and civilization through scientific knowledge, economics and technology. As the society that produced these markers of modernity, the West was the model of developed, modern, civilized society (Harvey 1989). The West became associated with development technology and the "experts" who used their knowledge of this technology to disseminate their model of modernity (Parpart 1995; Banks and Mangan 1995). All non-Western countries were, by contrast, perceived as "underdeveloped" or "developing," using Western definitions, values and standards for these terms. The people in these "developing" countries were then defined as needy, illiterate, poor and ignorant, and were classified as being "traditional" as opposed to "modern" (Escobar 1995). These definitions turned "developing" countries into a homogenous group with identical concerns and needs, giving Western, capitalist projects the power to introduce homogenous, generic solutions in the name of development (Parpart 1995, Wallerstein 1999, Mohanty 1991).

The disastrous and devastating cost of mainstream development on people and the environment is increasingly recognized, and the sustainability, practicality and necessity of large-scale Western development come into question. Many critics of development

view development projects as a form of neo-colonialism, replacing the colonial pursuit of territory with the neo-colonial pursuit of economic growth (Spivak 1999, Taussig 1987). The greatest threat of this neo-colonial pursuit is that, like colonial projects before it, development uses discourse – powerful language and concepts – to characterize "developing" countries (Escobar 1992). The language and statistics often used by Western organizations to characterize levels of "development" and "underdevelopment" are misleading and misinformed (Ramanathaiyer 2000; Dreze and Sen 2002, Douglas 1994), and become a part of the hegemonic discourse used to justify Western interference and development projects.

Despite this oppressive hegemony, it is increasingly evident that the world is not becoming a homogenous global village (McLuhan and Powers 1989). Development has not had the effects that were expected and promised, and resistance to development hegemony has led to re-imaginings of development. Post-development theory exposes the discourse that motivates and accompanies mainstream development. It seeks to deconstruct the ideology and myths of development in order to bring to light the ways this ideological dominance has silenced "subaltern" (Spivak 1988) or alternative voices, explanations, ideas and approaches (Escobar 1992).

Some theorists focus on the ways development discourse permeates and colonizes the minds of people in "underdeveloped" countries by creating and using polarities, such as "primitive" and "modern" (Nandy 1997:170). This discourse also refers to non-Western countries as having "subsistence" economies, implying that people are surviving rather than living, and that development can offer a life beyond mere subsistence (N'Dione et al. 1997). This language and attitude depreciate the ability of

"underdeveloped" countries and individuals to be self-sufficient and to sustain themselves on local resources (N'Dione et al. 1997). Often this powerful discourse enacts "epistemic violence" (Spivak 1988) on non-Western cultures, resulting in the devaluation and rejection of indigenous ways of knowing and living in the world, in favour of "modernity" and "development" (Rahnema 1997).

At the same time, the development discourse blinds individuals in "developed" countries by allowing them to believe they are acting morally while participating in a lifestyle that is predicated on the immoral treatment of other human beings (Havel 1997). Capitalism and development, and their proponents and supporters, have no loyalty to people, and no nation but the "country of money" (Subcomandante Marcos, in Esteva 1997). Individuals in developed countries are often oblivious to the global injustices that make a middle-class lifestyle possible. Sachs sees the result of development being the establishment of a global middle-class lifestyle made up of "the majority in the North and small elites in the South" (1997:291). The lines between North and South are therefore increasingly socioeconomic, rather than geographical (Sachs 1997).

The exposure of this development "crisis" (Escobar 1992) through post-development theory also creates space for a discourse of alternatives. However, it is vital that these alternatives break with mainstream development altogether and redefine democracy, economy and society (1992). Therefore, these new forms should be characterized as "alternatives *to* development" (Escobar 1992:27). Awareness of the specific nature of development and its interpretations has led to a greater focus on the local when imagining alternatives to development. Many development practitioners and participants now advocate locally-based thought and action, as individuals' needs and

realities are not uniform and cannot be expected to follow a predetermined path of development (Escobar 1992, Esteva and Prakash 1997, Prashad 2001). Local, case-specific development projects are often better equipped to deal with the social issues that accompany economic needs, and can create connections to other local efforts and broad social movements (Shragge 1997a, Escobar 1992).

Within this context, CED can be viewed as one of many alternative development solutions that have emerged in response to and reaction against mainstream development and the theory and ideology that informs it. CED can be an alternative to development only if it is progressive, as defined above. Where CED comes to focus solely on economic or business development (Fernandez 2005), it falls prey to the problems of mainstream development undertakings in that it attempts to address social issues without challenging the systemic causes of poverty, unemployment, job loss, environmental degradation and loss of community control caused by capitalist systems (Loxley and Lamb 2005). Instead, CED should create space for alternative voices of dissent and challenge to the dominant voice. This is a difficult task, especially where the dominant system designates disproportionate access to power and influence and represses even minor forms of dissent. Progressive CED work is therefore a process of endless struggle.

It is important to question the meanings of development, how it is practiced in CED projects and how it affects the kinds of programs and approaches that communities decide to pursue. Much CED literature focuses on the empowerment of individuals and communities through development projects that enhance or encourage the capabilities of the community so it can direct its own development path (Douglas 1994). CED should be constantly made accountable to the community and its members, an attitude that is

often not reflected in traditional development, which is accountable only to shareholders and profit (Douglas 1994). As well, CED theorists often advocate a convergence approach, wherein a community attempts to produce what it consumes and to consume what it produces. This keeps resources and money within the community and the local economy (Loxley and Lamb 2005).

The hegemonic discourse on development has led to the creation and implementation of many unsuccessful projects that have increased inequalities and reinforced the power of Western systems and countries. The existence of alternatives is encouraging, as long as they are truly alternative. There is often a gap between theory and lived experiences, therefore, it is necessary to question whether CED organizations are actually based in and led by community, and to explore the struggles they face against orthodox economics and development. CED's ostensible roots in "community" also necessitate an exploration of the meanings ascribed to this term.

Theoretical Approaches to "Community"

There has been a great deal of debate in anthropology surrounding the concept of community. Much of this debate stems from changes in the location of the anthropological "field" in recent years. While anthropologists once worked with relatively small-scale social groups that were more easily categorized and interpreted in the form of communities, these groups are now increasingly "incorporated into ever expanding systems of political, economic and cultural connections" (Amit and Rapport 2002:4), and fields are becoming more and more difficult to locate as concrete groups. The concept of "imagined communities" (Amit and Rapport 2002:17) took over from communities formed by social relations, a move that fit well with the increasing