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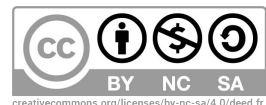
## **THE 2002 NATIONAL CED SYMPOSIUM: SETTING ECONOMIC POLICY TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL GOALS**

### **OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Dear David Miller,

I would like to take this opportunity to reply — admittedly, with a slight degree of tardiness — to your e-mail message dated July 10, 2002. You see, by comparing international and national CED discourse, you raised some important points that I thought might serve me well to better explain the objectives and rationale behind this first (and hopefully not last) National Community Economic Development Symposium. With the Symposium only three months away at the time, I originally thought that responding through my presentation would not be inappropriate. However, the seven-month postponement of the Symposium brought about an additional delay and so today, the day after Mother's Day, the only thing that I can somewhat belatedly fall back on to excuse myself is my mother's adage of "better late than never"...

## **OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE**

David, you highlight the following in your note to me:

In the international arena, most of the community-based organisations, self-help organisations, self-help support organisations, umbrella organisations and all other development-focused non-governmental organisations doing development work have been lumped under the erstwhile title of NGOs.

The "development work" that you refer to generally builds upon local strengths and resources, forges local networks and partnerships, meshes social and economic goals, and fosters a sense of community and of citizenship. In North America and Great Britain, this type of development is commonly referred to as community economic development (CED) and it is on this strategic level that I believe international and national local development work converges.

However, in your note to me, you indicate that international CED and national CED differ in a number of aspects, especially those of practice and purpose. On one hand, in North America:

[CED] is recognised as having a set of practices that permit community-focused organisations to maximise the use of recognised financial strategies [...] to increase the wealth of a community which, inter alia, will address social

ends” and the discussion “is more or less focused around how CED financial strategies affect the public good.

On the other hand:

[in] the international arena, the economic issues are broader. We are still talking about civil and human rights. We are talking about aid and trade on a massive scale. We are talking about massive social isolation and displacement. We are talking about institutional violence and changes in power relationships. [...] The economic issues internationally are more focused on the issues of moving participation up the ladder [...]

I agree that issues of scale and context defy comparisons, but do you truly believe that the fundamental objectives are all that different? Hasn't there been a “new” model of development emerging in both realms, one that differs from previous models by the kind of goals it sets, the types of people that it involves, the means that it uses for achieving them and the criteria that it retains for evaluation purposes? The elements of this model would seem to include new people who heretofore were not included in development decisions: women, youth, the poor and the marginalised. New elements also include the ways in which people now work together: the establishment of new networks, the development of social trust, the shaping of new norms of organisational and corporate behaviour, the building of more collaborative local and national institutions, and yes, as you note, a new emphasis on authentic participation. Indeed, this new model of development generally gives equal weight to building social assets in communities, broadening the focus from the traditional model which is informed principally, if not solely, by economic indicators. In this new model, people and organisations measuring social capital must thus learn to talk with people measuring financial capital and vice versa.

This Symposium is premised on the idea that, in this relatively new and little-charted form of simultaneous economic and social intervention that specifically focuses on locally-controlled economic dynamics to ensure a community's social well-being, a better understanding is required of the social processes and components of individual and community development and their relationship to traditional (economic) development. Indeed, such knowledge is a prerequisite to the formulation of a more comprehensive evaluation framework that can better guide practitioners' interventions, situate the roles of various CED stakeholders and inform both private sector and public policy decision-makers.

As you mention, this last question of policy is crucial since all CED practices, whether international or national require some kind of policy support, especially for

the early stages of CED processes as well as to level the playing field for specific population groups and geographical areas. You mention that NGOs can shape policy in several ways: “pilot projects; lobbying and proposing legislation; revolving door shifting of personnel; contracting with government agencies to address particular problems; conducting surveys and research (preferably participatory research); public mobilisation”. It seems to me that the situation isn’t very different in the industrialised countries of the world. However, private and public sector officials, even those who understand the benefits of CED approaches and who are desirous of supporting them, most often have constraints that practitioners and stakeholders are not aware of or objectives that do not immediately seem to dovetail with those of CED initiatives. This Symposium thus also seeks to provide a forum for advancing the dialogue between divergent practice and policy perspectives in order to contribute to the establishment of a common language and common understanding that can form the basis of future if not further co-operation.

This having been said, the focus of the Symposium is not on how NGOs or CED organisations are able to affect economic policies that serve their organisational goals. It is rather on how CED organisations and practitioners, who lead these initiatives and who may someday become policy-makers, can better understand the various components of CED practice in order to: a) increase CED’s ability to achieve both social and economic goals; and b) inform economic development policy-making. What makes the Symposium unique is using theory to achieve such greater understanding and, since the Symposium has been developed under the aegis of Southern New Hampshire University’s School of Community Economic Development, we want to see how both social and economic theories can be used to achieve such purposes. The Symposium has thus been designed accordingly.

## **SYMPOSIUM<sup>1</sup> DESIGN**

### **1. CASE STUDIES**

The 2003 National CED Symposium is actually a component of a broader project that began with a preparatory research phase wherein CED practitioners and students developed case studies. The main purpose of the case studies was to present concrete examples of practices that have consciously combined social and economic goals and that their proponents believe have succeeded on both levels. Case studies were limited to practices in the United States in order to facilitate comparisons and analyses.

The Symposium's first component is a presentation of the case study template followed by presentations of the critical elements contained in each of the case studies (which all participants will have received beforehand) and by a synthesis of the case studies.

### **2. THE NORTH AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

Developing economic policy to attain social goals is not really a new phenomenon in your country, David. The programs to support the setting up of community development corporations in poor African-American neighbourhoods in the 1960's<sup>2</sup> are a good example of what can be done. Since then, however, programs to combat poverty have generally targeted social issues such as housing, job training and personal savings. During this same time, economic development policies have dropped their social component, evolving from a focus on industrial recruitment and private-sector investments to stimulate economic development in depressed areas and declining city neighbourhoods (1970's) to one on entrepreneurship and

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Encarta® World English Dictionary [North American Edition], «symposium» is defined as: 1) a formal meeting held for the discussion of a particular subject and during which individuals may make presentations; 2) a published collection of opinions or writings on a subject, often in a periodical; 3) a drinking party in ancient Greece, usually with music and philosophical conversation. Web site at <http://dictionary.msn.com> consulted on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Perry, Stewart E., *Communities on the Way: Rebuilding Local Economies in the United States and Canada*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1987, 254 pages.  
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assistance to small and medium-sized firms (1980's)<sup>3</sup>. In other words, economic policies and social policies seem to have drifted apart in the last 25 years or so.

To a great extent, this split is a result of what some refer to as the “old market paradigm” — the idea that competition freed from constraints will, on its own, solve social problems and that the market is the foundation for society<sup>4</sup>. This paradigm sees social development as subordinate to economic development. Proponents of this way of thinking believe that there is therefore no need to integrate the two types of development since economic progress will ultimately result in less social problems and enhanced quality of life. In practice, unfortunately, this has not been the case. Indeed, economic growth in recent decades has not lessened inequalities between rich and poor individuals and communities but has instead simultaneously created both wealth and poverty<sup>5</sup>. This is also the case in most other industrialised countries where certain social problems are on the rise and the gap between “haves” and “have-nots” has not been bridged<sup>6</sup> even as unemployment levels and welfare rolls decline<sup>7</sup>. Simply put, the segregation of economic development and social development policies and programs does not seem to be working well. This situation has led, since the mid-1960's, to the advent of community-based development strategies throughout the world to combat both urban and rural poverty, the “new” model of development previously referred to.

The Symposium's second component is a look back at the American experience of developing economic policies for social goals and an exploration of the particular

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<sup>3</sup> Bingham, Richard D., and Mier, Robert, “Preface”, in Bingham, Richard D., and Mier, Robert, *Theories of Local Economic Development: Perspectives from Across the Disciplines*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993, pp. vii-xvi.

<sup>4</sup> Mingione, Enzo, “Market and Society: The Social Embeddedment of the Economy”, in Shragge, Eric, and Fontan, Jean-Marc (Editors), *Social Economy: International Debates and Perspectives*, Montréal: Black Rose Books, 2000, pp. 16-35.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2001*, New York: UNDP, 278 pages.

<sup>6</sup> Hardina, Donna, “Workfare in the U.S.: Empirically-Tested Programs or Ideological Quagmire?”, in Shragge, Eric (Editor) *Workfare: Ideology for an New Underclass*, Toronto: Garamond Press, 1997, 200 pages; Mead, Lawrence M., “Welfare Employment”, in Mead, Lawrence M. (Editor), *The New Paternalism*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1997, pp.1-88; Sherman, Arloc, Amey, Cheryl, Duffield, Barbara, Ebb, Nancy, and Weinstein, Deborah, *Welfare to What? Early Findings on Family Hardship and Well-Being*, Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund and National Coalition for the Homeless, 1998, 67 pages.

<sup>7</sup> Friedlander, Daniel, and Burtless, Gary. *Five Years Later: The Long-Term Effects of Welfare-to-Work Programs*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995, 230 pages; O'Neill, Dave M., and O'Neill, June Ellenoff, *Lessons for Welfare Reform: An Analysis of the AFDC Caseload and Past*

challenges of doing this in the context in the current social, political and economic climate.

### **3. THEORETICAL TOOLS**

One major problem faced by both CED and NGO practitioners is demonstrating and building a case for the advantages of including both social and economic goals in development work. To be able to do this, they require comparative research and clear indicators of the effectiveness of their approaches. This information must then be taken to public sector and private sector officials in order to influence planning and decision-making processes.

The Symposium thus has a practical goal of providing CED practitioners with information upon which to found their arguments using terms and concepts that public and private sector officials will understand and will acknowledge as being important in relation to their programs. In order to achieve this, the Symposium's third component is made up of panel presentations wherein speakers will explain how theories related to their respective themes can be used to better understand and evaluate practice, and how they can guide policy formulation. You are already aware of this since you are moderating one of the panels.

In a more recent e-mail message from you, David, this one dated February 6<sup>th</sup> of this year, you mention "a need to talk about how theory is developed in our discipline, [...] how knowledge is built from practice and how it is used to develop theory". Unfortunately, epistemological considerations were not woven into the fabric of the Symposium although some may emerge from the various discussions. The question put to the speakers was more practice-oriented: how can social theories and economic theories be used to analyse CED initiatives in order to improve practice and to guide policymaking from a CED perspective (simultaneously attaining both social and economic goals)?

### **4. POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

The Symposium has been designed to have the theoretical presentations precede a panel examining the ways in which theory can be useful or not, in your country, in developing economic policy that is more effective in attaining social goals. This will be followed by a presentation of a European perspective on economic development

and social goals, touching upon the social economy and local development, as well as the use of theories in such local economic development policy formulation in Europe.

## **5. FUTURE TRENDS AND CHALLENGES**

The Symposium's next to last component is a keynote presentation that attempts to answer the following questions:

What lies ahead for those of us who want to build an economy based on partnerships and solidarity? What will be the "new" issues to contend with even though we haven't finished dealing with those that already know about and haven't (yet?) resolved? What strengths should CED initiatives be building on and what weaknesses will hamper their ability to achieve their simultaneous social and economic goals in the years to come?

## **6. SYNTHESIS**

The Symposium's last component includes personal reflections by practitioners (who are also presently or formerly students of CED) on the content they have heard to date followed by an overall synthesis of the event.

## **CONCLUSION**

David, in one of your messages, you also suggest "that it is the actual practitioners in the field who, through horizontal exchange, assessment tools, and engagement with the actual stakeholders, build theory [and that it] is not done by detached academics or in a laboratory setting or by pure research". I agree with you but the Symposium was not organised to delve into this. Here's how I framed this issue in the Graduate Diploma Program in CED that I helped develop at Concordia University in Montréal:

CED, as a *field of study*, is practice-based and practice-driven. Although it borrows from a number of academic disciplines that lean towards conceptual model building such as sociology, economics, and political science, CED's knowledge and professional roles and values are intrinsically expressed in action. CED, therefore, has much in common with other specialised, professional domains such as social work (especially group-work and community practice), business administration, and urban and rural planning and development.



The Symposium is nevertheless an educational event above all and its mission is inherently pedagogical. Combining this with its practical perspective, you could say that the Symposium has an applied research focus. The term "applied research" refers to scientific and systematic inquiry to acquire facts that can be used to solve or prevent practical problems. Applied research is usually contrasted to "basic", "fundamental", or "pure" research that has the purpose of acquiring knowledge for knowledge's sake. But applied research does not differ from fundamental research on epistemological or methodological levels but rather on the end use of the research itself. Even though fundamental research is the type often a theory-building exercise and although applied research may not aim to advance general scientific theory, applied research may often do so just the same. French-language literature stresses that there is no contradiction between pure and applied research and that existing theories are there to help guide the research process and analyse the data acquired, and that theories must be informed by empirical findings<sup>8</sup>.

Exploring how educational programs can be designed to wed both theoretical and intervention-oriented approaches could be the theme of another Symposium. Imagine discussing how technical skills taught in such programs can be presented in both theoretical and contextual frameworks in order to develop students' critical consciousness and to spark research interests to be pursued, especially action research, as you indicate. Wouldn't it be great?

Moreover, it could also provide us with an opportunity to continue corresponding!

Your friend and former student,

Bill Ninacs

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<sup>8</sup> Grawitz, Madeleine (1993). *Méthodes des sciences sociales*. Paris, Éditions Dalloz, pp. 417-424.  
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