Can community development practice survive neoliberalism in Aotearoa New Zealand?

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Abstract This article discusses the development and contested nature of community development practice and the effects of neoliberalism on community development in Aotearoa New Zealand. We describe how community development has been constructed and influenced by the neoliberal environment since the early 1980s. In this country neoliberal policies transformed the community and voluntary sector with community development all but disappearing from successive government's priorities for a number of years. This work is informed by an empirical study that collected 13 in-depth narratives from a range of community development practitioner. We found that community development practice can survive indifference from government policy when practitioners and communities have strong enough convictions about their practice to carry them through lean funding periods. We outline different community development models that have informed and sustained practice and outline the current funding environment.

Introduction

In this article we describe how community development in Aotearoa New Zealand has changed over the period from the 1980s to the present day. We draw on empirical research from a series of interviews with 13 community work practitioners. The research was funded by the University of Otago, with staff participation from the Otago Polytechnic and ethical approval was gained from the University of Otago. Using a narrative methodology, we

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undertook in-depth interviews of one to two hours, using a series of open-ended themes. There was an extensive feedback process with the respondents to create a series of narratives. At all stages, the respondents were able to direct the interpretation of the research questions and their own responses. As there is limited published material detailing the history of community development in this country, we give context to our discussion, using interviews alongside other documents and the literature, to fill gaps in those already recorded histories.

One of the most significant influences on community development has been the growth of neoliberalism. Much has already been written of the effects of neoliberalism from the late 1990s−early 2000s in Aotearoa New Zealand (Jenkins, 2005; Larner and Craig, 2005; Craig and Porter, 2006; Shannon and Walker, 2006; Craig and Larner, 2002). The adoption of neoliberalism by the government resulted in a hostile policy environment that left community development isolated and financially unsupported. During this period, community development lost funding and political traction; this is in contrast to countries such as the UK where community development continued to receive ongoing support, albeit as a key driver for neoliberal-orientated ends (MacLeod and Emejulu, 2014). The social service groups that flourished under neoliberalism were those that aligned themselves to the government policies promoting social development as part of the contracting out of some social service provision. Despite being suppressed, community development survives thanks to the conviction of individual practitioners who were committed to the practice and had access to models that were appropriate for their particular communities. After a decade of focusing on supporting social development, government support for community development was recently re-considered. In response to lobbying from the Inspiring Communities Trust, the current government provided a new opportunity in the form of a funding pilot for community-led development projects in 2011 (Department of Internal Affairs, 2013). We conclude our discussion by reflecting on the current position of community development in Aotearoa New Zealand now and in the future.

The origins of community development in Aotearoa

Before we can engage in a discussion of how community development has developed as a practice under neoliberalism, we need to outline the unique historical context of this practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. While community development was not recognized as a practice until the 1960s, its origins were much earlier. Aotearoa New Zealand has two distinct cultural origins that have led to two broad forms of practice developing in parallel; Māori development (by Māori for Māori), and community development. The origins

of Māori development (including Māori community development) begin prior to colonization, when Māori people had a model of society that was communal, holistic and with a sacred relationship with the natural world. Second, as a result of colonization during the 1800s, the new immigrants, mainly from the UK, bought with them charitable models of care and support for the poor and vulnerable within communities that they were familiar with at home. As a result, new groups were established for these purposes, typically under the auspice of the church (Else, 1973; Chile, 2006). Where these practices connect is in the recognition of the principles of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi (seen as the foundation document of this country) signed by the Crown and representatives from the majority of hapu (subtribes) in 1840.

From these two distinct cultural origins, community development practice has been continually influenced by political and social contexts through time. Building up to the 1960s, political changes such as the emergence of the welfare state and the introduction of a social democratic polity (Sinclair, 1990) and social issues such as rapid urbanization, particularly for Māori and immigrants from Pacific Island nations, had produced complex social needs related to housing, health and cultural alienation (Chile, 2006). Alongside this the growing youth population in the 1950s resulted in a proliferation of youth and leisure clubs throughout the country (Church, 1990). Community development came into being in the 1960s and 1970s much the work at this time was rights-based responding to social grass-roots movements such as feminism, the Māori renaissance, the pacific peoples' diaspora and developing youth cultures. Neighbourhood work also appeared during the 1970s and 1980s as territorial local authorities (TLA) were encouraged to recognize the diversity of their communities and develop community development units under the Local Government Act 1974 (Aimers and Walker, 2013).

Bolstered by a strong rights based practice originating in the 1960s, the late 1970s–1980s saw a rise in citizen-led activities sought co-operative solutions to growing social problems. Practitioners who worked throughout the 1980s suggest that this period peaked in its interest in community development as a practice (Aimers and Walker, 2013). Rising inflation, high unemployment and subsequent cuts to state welfare provided fire to these activities. This period was also strongly influenced by a structural analysis approach, based on the work of Paolo Freire (1970) that focused on identifying power structures and strategizing to reposition power (Aimers and Walker, 2013). In parallel, the emerging issues of the 'Māori renaissance' and calls by Māori for te tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and for the Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ Treaty of Waitangi to be honoured as the nation's founding document surfaced. This led to the rise of bi-culturalism as the '... relationship between

the state's founding cultures . . .' (Durie, 2005, p. 7). For those working in the wider community this had implications for how they engaged with Māori communities with particular emphasis on understanding the effects of colonization and how to conduct appropriate consultation on issues that concern Māori. Māori development grew in parallel to non-Māori community development models by creating new perspectives based within Māori communities (Eketone, 2006, 2013) as well as influencing the process of non-Māori engaging with Māori communities. Māori development has its own theoretical background, which reflects a uniquely Māori perspective on notions of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi, iwi development, self-determination, economic self-reliance, social equity and cultural advancement (Eketone, 2013). These concepts of identity and community are expressed in multiple forms that include; we outline these in more detail using Eketone (2013).

- *Māori community development:* This is seen as part of the mainstream version of community development in Aotearoa New Zealand. The overall desire is an empowerment of socially marginalized groups through a collective social justice vision. This is achieved by defining issues, and developing strategies for change, to identify and address structural causes. Eketone (2013) notes that this form is linked to critical theory.
- *Iwi development:* This form is best described as hierarchical utilizing existing Iwi (tribal) structures to manage collective treasures and resources '. . . for the maximum benefit of this and future generations'. [Te Runanga o Ngāi Tahu (2001) quoted in Eketone (2013, p. 188)]. The priorities are situated around the economic advancement, growth and development of the iwi at the marae (local governance) level.
- *Marae development:* In this form the marae (the local governance place of Māori) comes to the fore. Marae work to ensure that their traditional food reserves and resources are protected and maintained. In this way, the mana (power, honour) of the marae is upheld. Decision-making tends to be collective as marae rely on voluntary association and goodwill '. . . so need to be responsive to their community' (Eketone, 2013, p. 190). The focus is on local decision-making responding to locally identified needs.
- *Positive Māori development:* This form develops and promotes economic and political strength 'to enhance environmental, social and cultural wellbeing' (Eketone, 2013, p. 191) for Māori as Māori. The leadership and decision processes are dependent upon

organizational and whānau (extended family) contexts that can be collective and/or hierarchical depending on local context.

Eketone highlights that the complexity and pluralistic nature of tribal-based Māori communities with their own unique histories, values and perspectives makes it difficult to ascribe a unitary explanation. Perhaps one of the key knowledges is the Māori focus on process as an outcome in itself; 'If you have maintained a project where people have pulled together, had a satisfying involvement and finished with their mana [honour] intact, then that is good – the community has been strengthened' (Eketone, 2013, p. 197).

As these forms of Māori development were evolving, there was also an interest in Putnam's (1995) ideas around social capital and social inclusion. This was, in part, the basis for the partnering ethos introduced with the adoption of 'third way' style policies by the Labour-led government in 1999. This was followed by a strengths-based approach that focused on localized projects that at times took precedence over structural issues in order to be achievable within defined time frames (Aimers, 2005). Since the mid-2000s, a new interest in sustainability and sustainable practice grew, sometimes linked with asset-based community development – particularly popular with rural areas and small towns. Both strength-based and asset-based community development continued to focus on identifying and developing community strengths rather than focusing on social deficits (Aimers and Walker, 2013).

Table 1 summarizes the main models of community development that are linked to the development of community development in Aotearoa New Zealand. These were derived from our research including respondent interviews, further details of which can be found in Aimers and Walker (2013).

Community development as a pluralistic practice

Within any discussion about community development, we must begin with the acknowledgement that the meaning of both community and development are themselves contested. Sihlongonyane (2009) argues that community development has become so caught in multiple meanings that it is now little more than a 'rhetorical gesture' that can mean anything any interested group wants it to mean. Such a range of meanings represent different shades of community development that are unlikely to be compatible but instead 'reflect particular political and social practices in the contexts in which they occur' (Shilongonyane, 2009, p. 137). Our research has found that this is indeed the case as different methods of practice have been popular at

Table 1 Historical timeline for Community Development Practice in Aotearoa New Zealand

Time frame	Discourse	Informed by	Type of practice
1960s–1970s	Rights based	Treaty of Waitangi/ Indigenous rights Feminism Immigration from the Pacific Class and Power	Māori renaissance protest marches; Women's groups; unemployed and beneficiaries rights and youth work
1980s–1990s	Structural analysis	Freire (1970)	Used by communities of interest, seen as a technique to address macro-environmental issues
1990s–2000s	Social inclusion	Putnam (1995)	Adopted by TLAs to promote volunteer work; community education and recreation programmes to build social capital
Early 2000s– present day	Strengths/asset based	Peter Kenyon's ABCD Agnes Gannon's holistic global management approach	Geographic-based rural and small town re-development including the Community Employment Group's 'Bootstraps' programme
1970s–present day	Alternative communities	Sub-cultures and environmentalism	Communities of interest including co-operatives; music and cultural centres to the transition town movement
2000s–present day	Community-led development	Linked to asset based community development (ABCD)	Geographic-based projects promoting whole of community approaches. Promoted by Inspiring Communities (2010)
2000s–present day	Social enterprise	Promoted by the Government via the Ākina Foundation (2015) and the Philanthropic Tindall Foundation.	Not widely adopted but beginning to see some small initiatives, e.g. Thankyou Payroll (2015)
Developing throughout 1960s–present day	Māori development (encompassing community, Iwi, Marae and positive Māori development)	Informed by culturally specific critical theory (Eketone, 2013)	Social justice work, protection of traditional resources, development of mana, promoting economic and political strength, development of social and cultural well-being

distinct periods but then go out of favour when political or social conditions change. Along a similar vein, Shaw (2008) notes that since the nineteenth century, there are two origins for the notion of community, one that relates to a geographic area and the other that relates to a critique of the existing

social order. This is particularly prevalent in the tensions between whole of community approaches such as asset-based or community-led approaches that do not sit comfortably with those methods that are critical of the social order such as structural analysis or even some forms of Māori development. Shaw (2008) argues that this has resulted in two competing visions that conflict in policy and practice. Shaw goes on to quote Williams (1976, p. 66) to illustrate this dilemma, 'Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships'. These are important concepts to keep in mind when attempting to define such activity, knowing that community development can express itself in a variety of ways within different agendas and is reflected in the experiences of the community development workers we interviewed (Aimers and Walker, 2013).

Despite agreeing to be part of a research project on community development work, some did not want to be labelled 'community development workers', but instead chose other titles such as facilitators, project workers, field officers or community members. One of our respondents commented, '. . . I have a problem with the term 'community development', development is a loaded word; it gives the idea that you're moving from a point of under development to another ideal point in the future and I don't see it like that . . . it's not setting a framework that people adhere to in a development model . . . it's more a conversation that assist us to go forward, to transition'. In addition, only a few had consciously chosen to do 'community development work', although all came to their work from a belief in the power of a communitarian standpoint. These standpoints were influenced by a range of academic approaches or inspired by social movements including neo-peasantry, feminism, the peace movement, indigenous rights, marxism, anti-apartheid or bi-culturalism (Treaty of Waitangi). While our research found that the philosophical standpoints of our respondents was diverse, they provided inspiration and informed their work. While these models of practice are embedded in the dominant discourse of each historical period they are still relevant in particular contexts today by contributing to the unique approach that is contemporary community development in this country.

Despite the pluralistic nature of community development practice in Aotearoa New Zealand, the processes our respondents developed (often in isolation) for achieving change at the community level were very similar, irrespective of the time period they worked in or the community context. The typical community development process articulated by our respondents was as follows:

- Engaging your community by cultivating a shared vision and building trust.

- Keeping things going with effective communication and facilitation.
- Ways of getting stuff done using activities and practical projects.
- Empower and ensure succession by cultivating new leaders (Aimers and Walker, 2013, p. 173).

These processes are similar to what can be gleaned from a multitude of other community development texts and as such reinforce what is considered to be appropriate community development practice globally. The Scottish Community Development Foundation (2014, p. 2), for example, defines the role of community development as a process '... to support people and community groups to identify and articulate their needs, and to take practical, collective action to address them'. They describe the community development process as being about purpose, focus and methods.

The impact of neoliberalism on the community development

With the election of the Labour Government in 1984, Aotearoa New Zealand entered into the neoliberal phase with the adoption of market-driven policies and the rolling back of the welfare state (Kelsey, 1995). This was to have an unprecedented effect on the community and voluntary sector (Larner and Craig, 2005) however, the negative effects were not immediately apparent. As one of our respondents' states the 1984 election initially '... bought a whole lot of change and put energy into giving people voice'. By the early 1990s things began to change, as another respondent explains, '... we had seen what happened to community initiatives and organizations which had come to rely on government funding and then had had that funding pulled'.

Larner and Craig (2005) describe the neoliberal period in Aotearoa New Zealand as having three phases; the withdrawal of the state from economic production, the extension of marketization and the introduction of neo-conservative social policy and the introduction of a state-driven partnering ethos. The first two phases saw a gradual shift away from grant funding to contracting for services (and later outcomes) – this shift to embrace contracting had the greatest impact on the community and voluntary sector as it established a competition for funding to provide ostensibly decentralized social services. The effect on community development is summed up by one respondent this way, 'Government departments weren't interested in building communities as we needed them. We had to be really clear with ourselves because it did mean turning down money'. Existing organizations professionalized their approach and adopted a neo-managerist ethos to attract service contracts and new organizations developed specifically to capitalize on this new market. This shift resulted in resistance and

dissatisfaction from the community and voluntary sector to the increasing compliance costs coupled with competitive funding models (Cribb, 2005; Larner and Craig, 2005; Shannon and Walker, 2006).

Ironically, it was with some relief that parts of the community and voluntary sector embraced the third phase of neoliberalism, partnering, which appeared to align more with their communitarian outlook. While the government third-sector partnering strategy has been described as 'neo-communitarianism', this strategy ignored the obvious power imbalance between the two partners. Larner and Butler (2005) observed that community-based yet state legitimized 'strategic brokers' were responsible for the facilitation of the state-community collaboration thereby blurring the boundaries and distinctions between the community and voluntary sector and the state. Craig and Porter (2006, p. 219) describe the government policy of this time as '... a strange new hybrid ... partnership and competitive contracts, inclusion and sharp discipline, free markets and community ... (creating) impossible transaction costs and slippery multilevel accountabilities'. The third phase was also influenced by Robert Putnam's (1995) work on social capital linking voluntary association with economic sustainability. For community development practice, this segued into a desire by Government agencies to build 'community capacity' through the development of community networks and voluntary associations in order to prevent social exclusion (Eketone and Shannon, 2006). While this rhetoric was attractive to many, Putnam's version failed to recognize the overt power/political focus of Bourdieu (1986) who viewed capital in all its senses (economic, social and cultural) as a power resource for class conflict. The adoption of Putnam's form of social capital by TLA and government agencies conveniently suppressed attention to inequality, conflict and the role of power (Eketone and Shannon, 2006).

While TLAs were interested in developing social capital, it is worth noting that the employment of community development staff was not universal, they were located primarily in the larger TLAs. TLAs took their lead from central government's focus on partnering with community groups (Aimers, 2005) that involved supporting community networks, championing the need for central government resources to their locality, providing small grants to community and sports groups and supporting central government initiatives. One of the most influential of these government initiatives aimed at the TLA level was the Department of Labour's Community Employment Group who introduced ABCD to small towns and rural communities to accompany their Bootstraps programme that aimed to re-vitalize depressed or isolated communities (Aimers and Walker, 2013). Despite this interest in partnership and community capacity building, government support for community development declined during this phase (Aimers and Walker, 2008).

Even the terms 'community development' or 'community work' were subverted to cover a wide range of activities from non-custodial correctional sentences to beneficiary work schemes. The Community Advisory section of the Department of Internal Affairs (the government department charged with supporting community development) re-focused their Community Development Resource Kit (2003) which subsequently became the Community Resource Kit (2006). Not only was the word development dropped from the title, but the community development section of the kit was also deleted. Funding schemes that once supported community development projects were reviewed, resulting in restructuring and a refocusing of priorities. One of the most notable casualties of this process was the disestablishment of the Community Employment Group (CEG), which not only meant a loss of funding but also the loss of a dedicated group of advisory staff who worked with communities. Other casualties were more subtle, the Department of Internal Affairs community managed funding scheme, the Community Organizations Grants Scheme – that previously had the freedom to fund local priorities with a unique process for community accountability – was streamlined and standardized to meet government rather than local priorities (Aimers and Walker, 2008).

The government's partnering and contracting policies led to a widening gap between larger community and voluntary sector organizations providing government contracted social services and those smaller independent community organizations that were not part of this partnering process (Shannon and Walker 2006; Tennant, O'Brien and Sanders, 2008). Larner and Craig (2005) argued that the only way to resist this new environment was for these small organizations to act locally. While not a defined strategy this desire to act locally was reflected in the small local projects that subsisted over the late 1990s and early 2000s with little or no government recognition or funding (Ibid). One respondent describes their current work in the sustainable development field as a 'specific action' around 'sovereignty' and building local resources that are independent of state control. Another practitioner states, '. . . actually money doesn't solve your problems . . . if you are able to mobilize your community then you can do stuff on the smell of an oily rag'. Such community development workers have had to work without adequate funding and as a result have tuned in to the universal principles of grass roots local control.

Concurrent with the adoption of neoliberalism were growing demands from Māori for self-determination in managing and providing their own health and social services (Boulton *et al.*, 2013). In addition, biculturalism, the political philosophy of requiring institutions, government and community organizations to contemplate how they might give effect to the principles (partnership, participation and protection) of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the

Treaty of Waitangi in their practice (Durie, 2001), was being widely promulgated. The emergence of a philosophy that supported Māori controlled services, in combination with the government's social development agenda of purchasing and contracting out services, created the environment for 'kaupapa Māori' organizations to develop. These organizations deliver services 'by Māori, for Māori' and are informed by Māori cultural values, processes and understandings (Durie, 2001). Kaupapa Māori social service providers in the health, education and community sectors grew from almost zero to 1000 between 1984 and 2004 (Tennant, O'Brien and Sanders, 2008).

The latest funding structure for the community and volunteer sector is 'funding for outcomes' which is aimed at contracting the sector to achieve performance-linked social outcomes that align with government priorities. This has resulted in an identification of two distinct provider groups bidding for contracts: 'corporate NGOs' who behave more like businesses and 'small NGOs' who '. . . rely more on individual passion and commitment, and being well connected to the local community.' (Treasury, 2013, p. 8). In order to successfully bid for contracts it has been identified (Treasury, 2013) that the smaller NGOs need to collaborate to attain the capacity that the corporate NGOs possess.

Current position of community development in Aotearoa New Zealand

After a decade of focusing on adopting a social development regime, central government support for community development was partially readopted. In response to lobbying from the Inspiring Communities Trust, the National party-led government made a tentative return to funding community development by establishing a three-year funding pilot for community-led development projects in 2011 (Turia, 2011a). This initiative came from the Māori party (in coalition with the right-wing National party-led government), championed by their co-leader Tariana Turia. The Inspiring Communities Trust is an independent non-profit community and voluntary sector organization, established in 2008 that promotes a single specific method of community development – community-led development, which seeks a whole of community approach to development. While this method was first cited in the 2005 report from the Department of Internal Affairs, *Investing in Community Capacity Building,* it was not until the establishment of the Inspiring Communities Trust that community-led development began to gain traction.

In its early development, the Inspiring Communities Trust promoted one project in particular; the Victory Village project in Nelson (a small city in the South Island). This project sought to identify community aspirations that form the basis for collaboration amongst community members and various

health and welfare professionals. The project addressed local problems by changing the underlying system in which a problem lies, they called this process 'social innovation' (Stuart, 2010). The project captured significant government interest, so much so that a national Victory Village forum was held in 2011 supported by the Inspiring Communities Trust and the government's Families Commission. In order to support the community-led development pilot, government-employed community advisors were required to advise community groups to introduce community-led development principles into their work and assist them to report on outcome-based milestones. In the Department of Internal Affairs' second year evaluation of this new programme, it was found that the funded groups felt constrained by the milestones imposed on them and some groups struggled to achieve the 'whole of community' consensus that was required by the community-led approach (Department of Internal Affairs, 2013).

Despite the support of the Inspiring Communities Trust, this struggle to build capability within the community-led pilot suggests either there was some loss of community development knowledge and experience within the proceeding 10 years or that the funding pilot was too restrictive to allow for the communities to be truly self-determining. In their third year of operation, a government commissioned review of the community trials has been positive, it did find that the whole of community approach of community-led development puts significant burdens on leadership groups to keep their communities engaged, '[a]t times this has shown to have a negative effect on the enthusiasm and pace in which CLD projects are carried out' (Department of Internal Affairs, 2015, p. 6). In addition, the structured nature of the trial has an element of top-down focus where groups must meet goals and milestones reporting back to the Department of Internal Affairs. Only three of the original pilot projects have been successful in meeting their milestone targets, significantly these projects are located within the three smallest communities – two rural towns and a city suburb (ibid). One of our respondents, a community development worker responsible for one of the trial projects, found a way to bring together the whole of community by connecting with other agencies working in their area and promoting their interest groups across the whole community. She notes, 'The biggest thing is around relationships, making sure the relationships were strong'. Our respondent identifies the need to maintain their community mandate and ensure that the community holds the power within the project. The community-led approach has generated criticism by some, including that they tend to have inattention to power imbalances within communities (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). While community-led development is not the only form of community development operating in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is currently the only government supported and funded form.

The funding model used to support the pilot differed significantly from the contracting model in that the funding was intended to be holistic. The funding was allocated to five community-based 'fund holders' to run community-led development process within their communities. They were tasked to allocate this funding in response to a broad-based community visioning and planning process (Turia, 2011b). In her report to the Cabinet Social Policy Committee, the architect of this initiative, Hon Tariana Turia, stated 'I want to see a shift of focus in my portfolio away from small grants for individual projects and/or service organizations towards a community-led development (CLD) approach which invests more directly and more strategically in communities as a whole to achieve better outcomes for those communities' (Turia, 2011b). The pilot was initially from July 2011 to June 2015, it has since been extended with four of the original providers (1 dropped out) and funded with an additional $0.4 million until June 2016 (Department of Internal Affairs, 2015). While there have been significant issues with this pilot and funding for community development is at a very low level there is some hope for a significant change in government policy as a result of recommendations in a newly released report by the Productivity Commission for the government on the operation of social services. This report (Productivity Commission, 2015) has recommended that community development work be separated from the delivery of social services in terms of funding. The report notes that community development organizations that represent communities (geographic or interest) should not compete for performance-based contracting but should have access to grants funding that support their goals rather than meet government service outcomes. Should this recommendation be adopted it could be the most significant move to support community development in Aotearoa New Zealand since the 1980s.

While we believe good community development workers come from a place of passion, the idea of having options for support and further training can be provided by relevant qualifications or an inclusive professional body. Few of our respondents had sought qualifications in community development, one interviewee from our study commented that part-time study was a great way for her to put '. . . a name to stuff and so it made it much easier to do'. For those that do seek further education, there are few alternatives to choose from. It is indicative of the current position of community development in Aotearoa New Zealand that, other than a community development major in the Bachelor of Social Practice offered at Unitec institute of Technology in Auckland, there are no standalone educational qualifications available for those wishing to study community development. Some community development workers we interviewed sought further education in allied fields such as social work, community recreation, health promotion and geography (Aimers and Walker, 2013).

Conclusion

Community development practice in Aotearoa New Zealand has been influenced by the social issues of the time, the political environment, the personal philosophical standpoints of community development workers and imported and home-grown models of practice. From the 1970s, community development work has been introduced to and inspired by a range of styles or practices including rights based, structural analysis, social inclusion, strengths-based and asset-based community development, Māori development, alternative communities and most recently community-led development and social entrepreneurship. Since the mid-1980s, the political and environmental context was strongly influenced by neoliberal policies that had transformational impacts on the community and voluntary sector (Larner and Craig, 2005). This led to a repositioning of community development practice through a change of government funding priorities away from community development towards social development.

Under the social development regime, combined with a partnering ethos and the impact of neomanageralism, many community and voluntary organizations professionalized their approach in order to focus on the provision of social services in order to attract contracts and new organizations emerged to capitalize on this new market. In parallel, a new discourse of Maori development emerged that supported a huge growth in 'kaupapa Maori' organizations that seemed to align with government priorities. The government's policies led to a widening gap between the larger organizations providing government contracted social services and the smaller independent community organizations that were not part of this partnering process (Shannon and Walker, 2006; Tennant, , O'Brien and Sanders, 2008). The impact of these combined government strategies saw community development disappear from successive government's priorities for support and funding for a number of years (Aimers and Walker, 2013). Community development practice went underground; having no place in this newly professionalized community and voluntary sector, and becoming marginalized by the government as a result. Recently, however, we have seen government backing for a community-led development funding pilot and investigation into social enterprise projects that promote community-based solutions, rather than government-led solutions articulated within the broader policy of funding for outcomes.

Neoliberalism has impacted on the conceptualization of organizations within the community and volunteer sector by supporting the development of corporate NGOs that, to some extent, mimic private sector organizations at the expense of smaller community-based NGOs. While the community-led funding pilot utilized community-embedded processes it required an

element of joining up within those communities to achieve a 'whole of community' response. Our research found that community development exists by virture of strong philosophical standpoints of individuals, organizations and communities. Community development should exist as a pluralistic practice. We argue that this limits community development to being only focused on community as a location and ignores or minimizes the ability for communities in all their manifestations (interest, ethnicity, gender, class, etc.) to self-define.

Shaw (2008, p. 26) wrote that '... conflicting notions of community is arguably at the root of one of the long-standing preoccupations of community development – whether it can (or should) be called a profession at all ...' We argue that rather than attempt to professionalize community development an alternative practitioner-led platform can nurture community development in its myriad forms and community locations by valuing such work as a distinct way of achieving social change. For those that seek community development training, there needs to be appropriate educational opportunities that support community-centred knowledge and an experiential base that models and promotes a range of practices and perspectives. Our research found that irrespective of whether community development practice is deemed activist, strengths-based, community-led, social entrepreneurial, sustainable or Māori development; or derived from any one of a range of philosophical, political or practice standpoints; the process of community development was similar across time, models and practice. It is because of such standpoints that community development has survived under neoliberalism. Irrespective of the standpoint we found that practice retained four common principles: engaging the community by cultivating a shared vision and building trust, using communication and facilitation to keep momentum, ensuring that there are practical achievements and bringing new leaders forward to empower and ensure succession for your project.

To be successful community development work needs to move with, and be responsive to, the community in which it is located. This makes for an organic and unpredictable process that may always be at odds with a neoliberal funding and policy framework that seeks predictable and unitary government-led outcomes. While it is encouraging to see new government initiatives such as the community-led development pilot, these are not enough to sustain a broadly based community development practice. Practitioners need to ensure that the recent recommendations from the Productivity Commission (2015) are enacted in order to ensure that community development is given dedicated support and funding. If this does not happen community development may be confined to a fringe activity or optional extra attached to social services provision and therefore linked to the achievement of government outcomes rather than community felt needs.

The challenge for the future of community development is to organize, educate and support community-centred knowledge and provide an experiential base that models a range of practices and perspectives. In addition, to fund community development activities, the government need to adopt the recommendations from the Productivity Commission to create a grant funding model. We would add that this model needs to be inclusive of divergent communities and include community-based accountabilities to ensure that such work is embedded within and responsive to the communities where it is located.

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