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The process of community development 'involves stimulating communication between people with a view to social action for the ultimate purpose of transforming individuals and society for the better' (O'Sullivan, 1993: 59). The feedback from the seminars on the Northside of Cork was quite succinct in relation to community perceptions of the role of community development:

Community development involves a way of thinking as well as a way of acting. It can involve analysis of how society works, how this affects communities, and what communities can do to bring about change in society. It is important to keep this aspect of community development in mind, as it can often be neglected when people talk about the skills communities need to undertake activities at local level.

Communities have a wealth of skills which can be put to use in the community development process. Communities may, however, need help with certain tasks. For example, if a community is successful in accessing funding for a project or task, it may require assistance in managing and spending this money. Training and information from outside sources may also be needed. It is vital, however, that skills are transferred from outside agencies to communities, so that communities may become more independent and self-sufficient. There is also a need for advice on strategies or actions which have proved successful in other places, so that communities may be aware of what is being done outside of their own area and may learn from those experiences. (Cork Northside Education Initiative, 1995)

What is clear from the above analysis is that empowerment is both a goal and a process for overcoming exclusion and cultural disrespect.

This consideration differentiates community development from other social work methods. Empowering practice within the community involves a dialogical relationship geared towards consciousness-raising. Mullaly (1997: 71) observes: 'much of consciousness-raising occurs in the form of political education whereby structural social workers, in the course of their daily service efforts, attempt to educate service users about their oppression and how to combat it'. This dialogical relationship is a democratic one rather than the traditional hierarchical professional relationship. It eschews 'the big professional-small service-user model'. Rather it is based upon a shared humanity. It leads to the 'normalisation' of the helping relationship in which the service user is no longer seen as the problem – and becomes a citizen rather than a client. The core problematic of social work is consequently redefined.

Hardcastle et al. (1997: 5) have asserted that: 'without community knowledge and skill, the social worker is limited in the capacity to understand and assist clients in shaping and managing the major forces that affect their lives, and in the ability to help clients empower themselves to develop and manage personal and social resources'. They view community development skills as providing 'the "social" in social work' that distinguishes it from cognate professions, such as counselling. Empowerment radically reframes social workers' relationships with service users.

Community provides the context because it replaces individualisation with collectivisation. The emphasis on the collective group, as opposed to the individualised self, underlines the 'social' as a value in the helping process. Mullaly (1997: 175)

explains: 'This value is a recognition that people are social beings who depend on one another for the satisfaction of most of their primary and social needs'. The communitarian approach to social work has close links to the radical social work movement of the 1960s and 1970s and to earlier initiatives (notably the settlement movement). It aims to define social work in 'social' terms. The links with political radicalism are clearly evident. However, within Europe there are 'social economy' initiatives grounded in the ecological concept of sustainability, that share this approach to community-based social work. It is compatible with both the European Union's emphasis on social cohesion and Anglo-Saxon concerns with promoting social capital. Empowerment promotes trust and social integration. This is the essence of its communitarian ethos.

Social economy, sustainability and inclusive practice

European advocates of the social economy approach to community-based social work acknowledge their inspiration in the settlement movement in the United States. They also note the inspirational role of earlier European settlers in the American Midwest, who managed to adapt and redesign community bonds and systems of social solidarity in the face of the raw forces of 'robber-baron' capitalism. Hull House in Chicago and Jane Addams were emblematic in this regard (Elsen and Wallimann, 1998: 151). Communitarianism has deep roots in social work practice.

In the wake of globalisation, a renewed free market capitalism is evident in Europe, tearing communities asunder and leaving people's lives shattered and their worlds fragmented. European countries grounded in the more inclusive tradition of the social market economy have been seeking to adapt, by emphasising the importance of the social economy in sustaining communities in their attempts to deal with these economic changes. Elsen and Wallimann (1998: 157) assert: 'social economy provides people with an alternative which is work intensive, equitable, and integrative', adding, 'it is based on the principles of grass roots democracy and can be facilitated through community-based social work'. They argue that community-based social work needs to adjust to changing the economic reality of globalisation by widening its focus to incorporate sustainable economic life in communities beset by unemployment, marginalisation and poverty. The social economy approach to community development, based upon the idea of sustainability, stands in marked contrast to contemporary social policy trends defined by the calculus of risk. It stresses the need to act locally while thinking globally (Shanahan and Ward, 1995: 80).

Elsen and Wallimann (1998) identify several examples of community-based business enterprises and federations of social co-operatives in Switzerland, Germany and Italy. All of these social economy initiatives share a number of core principles or 'steps'; as Elsen and Wallimann (1998: 155–156) put it:

The first step involves thought and action in core areas of development as a means of focusing individual efforts on the internal and external possibilities for development and on the possibilities of working in combination with others and as a network in a local

community... The second step involves systematic anchoring in the community as conscious integration and reintegration of economic efforts in the social and cultural structures of the community... The third step involves the development of an 'autonomous' grass roots sector in a regional network.

Social economy initiatives do not share the same goals and principles as market economy. They are guided by humanism, co-operative endeavour and a commitment to sustainable development in a community context. As the Basle Social Economy Project, in Switzerland, put it: 'The way to save the physical and socio-cultural basis for human existence is to be found in the construction of a social economy' (cited in Elsen and Wallimann, 1998: 157).

The European Union has played a key role in promoting the concept of social economy as a basic community development strategy in a series of poverty programmes. One example of EU anti-poverty strategy is Forum: the North West Connemara Rural Development Project, based in Ireland's disadvantaged west coast at the extreme periphery of Europe. This project was established under the European Union Third Poverty Programme 1989-94. Its aims were to:

- develop locally based activities which will improve the lives of people in north-west Connemara, particularly the disadvantaged;
- work out new partnership arrangements between statutory, voluntary, community and private bodies;
- empower local people and the development of sustainable action programmes;
- integrate the experience gained into mainstream public policy and practice. (Combat Poverty, 1995)

Many of the successful features of this programme, which includes the development of local co-operatives and allied social economy activities, have been adopted in the Irish government's National Anti-Poverty Strategy, which was initiated in 1997 with a commitment 'to building an inclusive society'. In 1998 there were ninety community development projects in Ireland.

In Britain the Commission on Social Justice (Borrie Report) in 1994 endorsed the concept of social economy. It emphasised 'the need to build linkages between the economic, human and social capital investments required to achieve sustainable regeneration' (Borrie Report, 1994: 325). The Borrie Report pointed to several successful community development projects in the United Kingdom based upon the principles of social economy, notably Bootstraps in the London Borough of Hackney, the Miles Platting and Ancoats Development Trust in Manchester and the activities of the Belfast Action Teams. The Commission on Social Justice asserted:

It is difficult to exaggerate the change in thinking and working required of central government and civil servants, away from the top-down approach towards one rooted in the needs and skills of local communities. The Fabian notion that governments know better than citizens cannot stand. The future lies in a new partnership, where national and local governments share power with their citizens, enabling local people to use the skills, which are now being wasted. (Borrie Report, 1994: 326)

It advocated that 'the focus of a new, bottom-up regeneration strategy should be

bring together residents, voluntary organisations, religious and other groups, and local authority councillors and officers' (Borrie Report, 1994: 328).

The successful Northern Ireland community development activist, Paddy Doherty, of the Inner City Trust, explained to the Commission on Social Justice:

Standing in the vacuum between private enterprise, unwilling to become involved because of the lack of profit on the one hand, and government on the other, and harnessing help from both sides, we can fill that vacuum... The best vehicle to fill the gap is the development trust movement. (Borrie Report, 1994: 328)

President Clinton's community empowerment agenda in the United States reflected similar principles, including new programmes to provide access to capital; credit and banking services for poor communities; the extension of small business support to inner city and ethnic minority businesses; public/private partnerships for economic development; a concentration on the educational capital in an area; and a new infrastructure programme to reconnect disadvantaged communities. His community development programme has been described as 'the most significant neighbourhood revitalisation initiative since the Model Cities programme of the 1960s' (Wievel and Gills, 1995: 127).

Paradoxically, Wievel and Gills (1995: 134) note during that neo-conservative presidencies of Reagan and Bush, which withdrew funding from urban areas, community development not only survived but flourished. This was because of the 'new federalism' characterised by decentralised government, greater emphasis on local decision-making and volunteerism. Wievel and Gills (1995: 136) conclude:

Thus the community-based development movement is in a reasonably good position to have a positive effect on domestic policy. With the relative decline of labour as a political force and in the absence of a progressive national movement among the underrepresented minority groups, the community based development movement has filled a vacuum as a significant player in public policy formation over the past decade.

In South Africa today community development has become an important aspect of social reconstruction. However, the community development movement has had to struggle against the legacy of apartheid, which sought to destroy civil society. In a transitional society, where endemic injustice and poverty have for so long militated against trust and capacity-building, the challenge to community development is a considerable one in the new democratic political order. As Taylor (1995: 171) puts it: 'when people have been denied access to education, health care, housing and work over many years, it is not difficult to understand why the slightest provocation from groups who are competing for power and material resources can lead to intense battles'. Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence that the ANC-led government is tackling the task with energy. The South African Development Education Programme (SADEP) is addressing the challenge of providing community development workers with the skills necessary to promote bottom-up decision-making processes in social reconstruction.

Inevitably, there are sceptics such as the Dutch sociologist, Benno Galjart (1995) who characterises the social economy approach as an exercise in

counter-development, largely dependent on non-governmental organisations. He is open to criticism for underestimating the role of the state and particularly the European Union. Nonetheless, Galjart (1995: 21) makes the limitations of the social economy approach to community development clear in an incisive critique:

Not only is it illusory to think that Schumpeterian entrepreneurs will suddenly arise among the poor. To expect a group of poor people to refrain to a large extent from relying on markets, and hierarchy, as organising principles, relying only on trust, is to burden them with additional difficulties.

Galjart's point is that the social economy approach to community development is essentially a utopian enterprise. However, there is a considerable body of evidence to the contrary. The long established success of the co-operative movement, credit unions and mutual organisations attests to this fact. O'Gorman (1995: 209–210) commenting in a Brazilian context, where community development and the social economy approach have been closely interlinked, notes:

Community group processes began to sustain and guide the varied range of self-help and popular movement activists, as a constructive form of social contestation, a 'utopia of society', a solidarity in group cohesion and social ferment not dependent on a specific social formation. 'Base' community experiences, although limited to local outreach work, stood as providing an alternative to society's dominant values of individualism, personal ambition and inordinate market competition.

A British community worker, Paul Henderson from the Leeds Community Development Foundation, makes a similar point to the Commission on Social Justice:

Community development does not offer a panacea to the deep-rooted social and economic problems of British society. But it can help to bring forward the language and political agenda of communities which are exhausted and suspicious of external agencies. It can be a means of keeping hope alive and kicking. (Borrie Report, 1994: 325)

However, Galjart is right to point out the vulnerability of excluded groups and individuals in the age of global capitalism. There is a need for the state to assist the socially excluded by making its policies and practices socially inclusive. Poverty proofing is an important strategic consideration in this regard.

Poverty proofing, social work and welfare rights

What is poverty proofing? It can be defined as a process by which statutory bodies (e.g. social work agencies) assess policies, programmes and practices at design, implementation and review stages in relation to their anticipated impact on poverty and the social and cultural inequalities that cause poverty, with a view to poverty reduction. Some policy initiatives may result in positive outcomes for some 'at risk' social groups and negative outcomes for others. There is a need to tease out such policy anomalies at design and review stages. The participation of social workers and involvement of user groups in this process is essential rather than top-down management directives, if an inclusive approach to practice is envisaged.

Poverty proofing, arguably, needs to be an integral part of agency policy formulation. It should be included in the preparation of statements of strategy and organisational plans; in the preparation of agency annual budget proposals and project estimates; in manuals, handbooks and procedural guidelines; in quality control and annual audits.

Social workers have a key role to play in poverty proofing their agencies' policies and practices in the promotion of inclusive practice. This strategy creates an important bridge between the professional, the agency and the service user. Particular user groups need to be identified in the poverty proofing exercise: the homeless and rough sleepers; children in families at risk; lone parents and marginalised women; unemployed (especially long-term unemployed people); ethnic minorities, asylum seekers, refugees, HIV/AIDS victims; the elderly, especially in households headed by retired persons; people with disabilities.

The Irish National Anti-Poverty Strategy has made poverty proofing a core element of its approach to promoting inclusive practice (National Anti-Poverty Strategy, 1999). It clearly has potential as an approach to developing inclusive practice in social work. But there are constraints. The term 'poverty proofing' tends to define the responsibility in the context of agencies' social liability, rather than promoting the potential of service users as actors in their own emancipation. Radicals will no doubt have concerns for the potential for 'assistentialism', i.e. the pacification of the poor. However, a poverty proofing strategy based upon user involvement should allay these concerns. User involvement in poverty proofing that is genuinely empowering needs to be based upon democratic community development principles. It envisages the user as being involved in the key steps in the process:

- identification of need;
- identification of options and strategies;
- decision or choice of action;
- mobilisation of resources;
- the action itself. (Onyx and Benton, 1995: 51)

Ultimately, national and local policies need to be 'joined up' in the pursuit of poverty proofing.

The former Director of the Child Poverty Action Group, Professor Ruth Lister (1998: 16) comments that 'despite the involvement of a growing number of British local authorities in anti-poverty strategies over the past decade and the significant increase in the number of "poor clients", poverty appears to have slipped off the social work and social service users' agenda'. She notes that, despite encouragement from the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW), there is resistance in British schools of social work to welfare rights training, resulting in the voice of social workers and social services departments on behalf of the poor being at best 'muted'.

Reisser (1996: 243) also detects a growing apathy towards the poor amongst American social workers: 'Political efforts seem to be too unbalanced in favour of professional protection as opposed to advocating for change on behalf of and with the poor and oppressed'. She is concerned about the impact of social work

education on the perception of professionalism amongst the student body. Reisser advocates a more pluralistic approach to training that encompasses both private and public issues. She concludes: 'There must be a better fit between the purpose of social work, which deals with the intersection of private and public issues, and what most social workers do, which is deal with individual problems (private issues). Both poverty proofing and welfare rights are important ingredients in any anti-poverty strategy'.

Conclusion

Social work in postmodern society has had to confront the challenge of social exclusion. This challenge is manifest in the paradigms of trust and risk that define the social and moral context of social work. Risk has created an environment in which there is a perception of dangerousness. Marginalised groups receive increasingly harsh treatment in a society characterised by coerced marginalisation that is revisiting Poor Law forms of regulation and control. Social work has found itself at the sharp end of this new environment. Its challenge is to redefine its mission in a manner that promotes trust and humanistic responses to risk. Inclusive practice has been suggested as an appropriate social work response to social exclusion. The concept of inclusive practice is closely connected to the idea of empowerment and user involvement. Community development is an essential ingredient in inclusive practice because of its associations with consciousness-raising, democratic dialogue and empowerment. The concept of social economy is also important in inclusive practice, empowering communities to think global while acting local. But service users need to operate in the context of agency policies that are supportive of inclusive approaches to practice. Poverty proofing based upon the principles of bottom-up planning and service delivery is an approach that sets out to address social exclusion. Ultimately, there is a need for joined-up solutions involving national, local and regional government, social agencies, professionals and service users in the pursuit of inclusive practices.

Civil Society, Citizenship and User Participation

The decline of the welfare state is matched by the degeneration of the nation-state paradigm. Increasingly, we are witnessing the placelessness of power and the powerlessness of place. Paradoxically, there is a growing interest in global forms of governance and local capacity-building. The intellectual foundations of a new paradigm of governance are already evident in the work of sociologists such as Jürgen Habermas and Manuel Castells. Political developments, notably the European Union, suggest a federalist paradigm of international governance in the making. As the nation state is hollowed out politically and ideologically, cosmic optimists look to these new forms of governance as the paradigm of the future. Essential to this unfolding transformation in governance is a growing interest in civil society, active citizenship and participation. This chapter sets out to explore the implications of changing paradigms of governance for social work with reference to civil society, citizenship and user participation. The implications of a politically more variegated society are important for social work in its broadest sense, which includes service users, volunteers, community activists and professionals.

Civil society, globalisation and the state

Barber (1998: 14) writes that 'without civil society, citizens are suspended between big bureaucratic governments they no longer trust and private markets they cannot depend on for moral and civic values'. This statement invests a lot of credibility in the social and moral potential of civil society. It envisages the civic domain as essentially democratic, providing 'free spaces' where citizens can take control of democracy, learning the competencies of social responsibility and participation. Keane (1998: 6) has defined civil society as 'an ideal-typical category that both describes and envisages a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected non-governmental institutions that tend to be non violent, self-organising, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension with each other and with state institutions that "frame", constrict and enable their activities'. This definition places a very positive construction on the concept of civil society and its potential for good. Essentially, Keane (1998: 69) notes, civil society has become 'a positive