

ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY CROATIA: GLOBALISATION, NEO-LIBERALISATION AND NGO-ISATION

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Introduction

'Community development' or 'community empowerment' is often presented as having two faces, as a progressive strategy for deepening democracy from below, on the one hand, and a conservative strategy for placing greater responsibility on communities in the context of a reduction of welfare state services, on the other (cf. Mayo and Craig, 1995; 1). This chapter focuses on the role of NGOs and social movements in community development in Croatia, emerging in the last decade from state socialism, war, and ethnicised nationalism. In the context of globalization and neo-liberalism, the chapter will show how this dichotomy is not always helpful in understanding complex processes in specific countries.

The case study suggests that, alongside concepts of globalization and neo-liberalization, a third process, that of NGOization, needs to be addressed. Utilised, particularly, by feminist researchers in Western Europe (Lang, 1997), in Latin America (Alvarez, 1998), and in the Arab countries (Jad, 2003), the concept of NGOization refers to the transformation of social movements into organizations and the increasing dominance of 'modern' NGOs which emphasise "issue-specific interventions and pragmatic strategies with a strong employment focus, rather than the establishment of a new democratic counter-culture" (Bagić, 2004; 222). Whereas many writers have emphasised the relationship between these new NGOs and the state, Bagić and others, writing in the context of the post-Yugoslav countries, have emphasised the way in which "pressure from donors has changed the working style of many organizations" (ibid; 222).

Whilst much has been written on globalization and neo-liberalization, it is important to stress that, in this text, we consider the two as separate and separable, and as processes (the suffix -ization denotes precisely this) rather than causal structures. Whilst an early definition sees globalization as a "process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware they are receding" (Waters, 1995; 3), it is important not to understate the economic dimensions of this (cf. Hoogvelt, 2001; ch.6), nor the role of politicised resistance. Above all, studying 'grounded globalizations' emphasizes the diverse, often unexpected, local manifestations of 'global forces, connections and imaginings' (Burawoy, 2000).

We also share Tickell and Peck's concern with neoliberalization as a process, the outcomes of which are "contingent and geographically specific – since they are working themselves out in a non-necessary fashion across an uneven institutional landscape" (Tickell and Peck, 2003). Indeed, taking this further, John Clarke has recently focused on 'uneven neo-liberalisms', varying in space and time, and able to enter 'national-popular formations' only in and through alliances, 'assemblages of political discourses' which inevitably change shape, and produce 'hybrids, paradoxes, tensions and incompatibilities' rather than "coherent implementation of a unified discourse and plan" (Clarke, 2004; 93-94).

Building on Tickell and Peck's work, it is possible to see Croatia in the context of a revised and hybridised 'roll out' neo-liberalism, very different from the 'roll back' neo-liberalism of the early phase of Thatcher and Reagan's prescriptions for the United Kingdom and the United States, in which some aspects of the advice and programming priorities of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and USAID, in particular, find common ground with emerging liberal 'think-

tanks' and with some politicians and policy makers, particularly those close to the Ministry of Finance. Those who argue that, rather than 'blaming 'neo-liberalism' for 'mistakes in the last decade', one needs to recognise that "liberal economic policy was never given a trial in a consistent manner." and therefore that "the liberal programme did not fail during the first decade of the transition – it has yet to be tried" (Šonje and Vujčić, 2003; 245-6), should simply alert us to the increasing 'radical' nature of the neo-liberal critique.

The complexities of the construction of a new common-sense of the importance of competitiveness and of reducing 'non-productive social expenditures' are, perhaps, less important than the way in which all external assistance programmes tend to be framed in terms of the strictures of the 'new public management' which has been, accurately, described as the "little brother of the neo-liberal economic ideology, originating from the same intellectual and ideological roots" (Voipio, 2003; 360). In addition, the 'silence' regarding the anti-social nature of various forms of neo-liberalism by diverse kinds of NGOs in Croatia, including those focused on anti-war, feminist and human rights' activities, is particularly relevant, framed as it is within global, regional post-communist, and specifically Croatian experiences.

This chapter will, first, sketch the most important social, political and economic dimensions of contemporary Croatian society, and ask how far these promote or impede progressive approaches to community development. Secondly, in historical perspective, the chapter will outline some of the origins of community development in Croatia. Thirdly, the chapter will outline trends in donor activities and will attempt to analyse the problems and possibilities of recent emphases on community development. Fourthly, the nature of activities in Croatian civil society will be addressed, including the role of diverse NGOs and social movements in relation to community development as a whole and specific themes and policy and practice issues. Finally, the chapter will draw some conclusions and outline a series of possible steps to enhance the progressive quality of NGOs' contribution to community development in contemporary Croatia.

The chapter is written by a UK-born sociologist, who has lived and worked in Croatia for almost twelve years, combining activism, research and consultancy. As such, it does not pretend to be an 'objective' account based on an external evaluation of the Croatian community development scene but, rather, is based on active involvement in many of the processes under study, and strong advocacy, within public policy, for community development approaches. In particular, the chapter borrows from action research undertaken by MAP Savjetovanja, and funded by the C S Mott Foundation, into aspects of community development and mobilisation in contemporary Croatia (cf. <http://www.map.hr>).

The conceptual overview of this project borrows heavily from the 'radical' positions taken by authors such as Saul Alinsky (Alinsky 1972) and, in particular Paulo Freire, whose seminal work 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (Freire, 1993) has now been translated into the Croatian language, as well as from James Ife's holistic conception of community development (Ife, 2002). Hence, community development and mobilisation is defined as processes, strategies and practices which promote sustainable, people-centred development, equal opportunities and social justice and which establish or re-establish structures of human community within which new ways of organising social life become possible. Community development, in its progressive sense, then, promotes equalities of access, voice, agency and opportunity within localities, as well as in and between communities defined in terms of identities and interests. Inevitably, this definition needs to be explored in diverse contexts and in terms of the growth of various kinds of 'fused discourses' (cf. Kenny, 2001). Nevertheless, it acts as the basis for exploring structural constraints, state forms, historical legacies, donor priorities, and NGO activities.

Croatia: an overview of structural and institutional constraints to community development

Key Socio-economic Trends

Space precludes an adequate overview of the wider structural context of Croatian society, although the combination of war, physical destruction, mass population displacement, authoritarian nationalism, 'repatriarchalisation', and economic and social crises and transition, have all played a role in defining the shape of community development interventions. Subsequently, with increased stability, a more democratic political scene, and aspirations towards membership of the European Union, a new conjuncture has emerged, although the movement towards 'deep democracy' is still in process rather than fully achieved.

Croatia applied for membership of the European Union on 21 February 2003. Following a positive *avis* in April 2004, Croatia obtained official candidate status in June 2004. However, at the European Council meeting on 16 March 2005, the start of formal negotiations, due the next day, were postponed, pending full co-operation by Croatia with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague. In addition to concern regarding the failure to catch and deliver to The Hague one ex-Croatian General, there are also concerns about general blockages and problems in the judicial process in Croatia.

The war in Croatia between 1991 and 1995, seen most dramatically internationally in the shelling of Dubrovnik and siege of Vukovar in late 1991, which overall affected 56 per cent of the territory with, at one time, 26 per cent of the land under occupation, led to the deaths of 13,583 people. Croatian Government figures estimate war damages to be in excess of 20 billion USD (Bošnjak et al, 2002; 7). At its height, the crisis of forced migration meant that some 10% of the Croatian population were refugees or displaced persons. Following military actions in May and August 1995, which re-took all occupied territory, some 300,000 ethnic Serbs fled Croatia, only 98,000 of whom had returned by February 2003 (Škrabalo, 2003). Some 150,000 ethnic Croats, mainly from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, have obtained Croatian citizenship since 1991.

The changed demographic structure of Croatia is shown most clearly by comparing the 1991 and 2001 censuses. In this time, Croatia's population declined by 7.25 per cent from 4,784,265 to 4,437,460 with the ethnic composition also changing considerably, ethnic Serbs in particular declining from 12.16 per cent in 1991 to 4.54 per cent in 2001 (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

Given increasing regional inequalities and differential growth prospects, with the gap between the 'war-affected areas', most of which were in decline before the war, and the big cities, particularly Zagreb, aggregates of income and wealth can be misleading. Nevertheless, Croatia with a per capita GDP in 2001 of 4,625 USD, and a Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) GDP per capita of 9,170 USD, is ranked 47th in the UNDP Human Development Index, exhibiting many of the features of a classic middle-income country (UNDP, 2003). GDP has, however, still not recovered to its 1990 peak of 9,313 USD per capita PPP.

Unemployment has remained consistently high despite sustained macro-economic stability, with registered unemployment of almost 320,000 persons, an unemployment rate of 18.9 per cent (Croatian Employment Bureau, 2004). Youth unemployment (for persons aged 15-24) is double this, and the highest in all the transition countries (Starc et al, 2003; 47). Women, particularly those with higher education, are also over-represented amongst the unemployed. International financial agencies have continued to urge restraint in public spending, since Croatia has high current account deficit (around 7.3 per cent in 2003), foreign debt (81.9 per cent of GDP in 2003) and budget deficit (around 4.5 per cent in 2004) (cf. Ott, 2005; 7).

Data on poverty and inequality reveal a mixed picture, with low rates of absolute poverty - 4.8 per cent according to the international standard of 4.3 USD per person per day, and 10 per cent according to the national poverty line, although subjective poverty, at 80 per cent, is exceptionally high (Starc et al, 2003; 11). Based on the European Union standard measurement of 60 per cent of median income, Croatia's relative poverty stood at 21 per cent higher than 24 of the EU member states and equal to that of Ireland (Šućur, 2004; 443). Overall inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient stood at 0.31 in 2001, above the average of the EU 25 of 0.28, but well below rates in Portugal, Spain, Estonia and Greece (ibid; 448).

As already noted, there is considerable, and widening, regional gaps between the affluent, largely urban, areas including Zagreb and Rijeka, and many of the war-affected areas, now designated as 'areas of special state concern' marked by high unemployment, low human capital, an ageing population, and tensions between settler, returnee, and domicile groups. The war affected areas have experienced a 40 per cent decline in population between 1991 and 2001; have unemployment rates over twice the national average, with unemployment growing faster than employment; whilst accounting for only 8 per cent of the Croatian population, they account for 21.7 per cent of all social welfare recipients; and, excluding welfare benefits, have only 51.8 per cent of the average personal per capita income of Croatia (Škrabalo, 2003). Recent work on regional GDP per capita, on educational inequalities and on regional unemployment suggest that the gap between Zagreb and some of the poorer counties is considerable with the city of Zagreb having per capita GDP of 156 per cent of the national figure and an unemployment rate of 13.43 per cent. The poorest county, is that of Zagreb, surrounding the capital, with only 67 per cent of national GDP. The highest rate of unemployment, at 41.35 per cent is found in the war-affected Vukovar-Srijem County in the east of Croatia bordering Serbia, (cf. Lovrinčević, Mikulić and Budak 2004; Kordej De-Villa et al, 2004).

Roma, officially numbering 9,463 according to the 2001 census, but with real numbers estimated at around 40,000, face discrimination in terms of citizenship, policing, housing and, above all, education (cf. Mehmedi and Papa, 2001). The National Programme for Roma adopted in 2003 also notes Roma, less than 1 per cent of the population, represented 13.56 per cent of all social assistance benefit claimants.

The impact of rapid urbanization, followed by de-industrialisation and the shifting fortunes of tourism have created wider developmental problems, particularly on the Croatian coast and islands, with many of the smaller islands, in particular, experiencing massive population reduction, although the Islands Law has been seen as one of the few pieces of development legislation which has had a positive impact (cf. Starc et al, 2000; ch 5). Whilst difficult to capture empirically, Croatian society has experienced a decline in both generalised trust and trust by the population in particular institutions, linked with an observed strong value dissensus (Starc et al, 2003; ch. 2).

Whilst not approaching the scale of some CEE countries such as Bulgaria and Romania, Croatia has rather high numbers of persons in institutional care of one kind or another, many isolated from centres of population (Stubbs and Warwick, 2003) as well as a prison population which, whilst low by international standards, rose from 20 per 100,000 population in 1991 to 55 per 100,000 in 1996 (Walmeseley, 1998). Whilst funding for these institutions is not yet at crisis point, and physical conditions tend to be satisfactory, it is not uncommon for children to spend all their childhood in residential care, and for adults with disabilities to spend all their lives in an institution, often remote from centres of population, with resources or facilities devoted to leaving care, after care or rehabilitation into the community very scarce for all groups.

Strategies Abound

Institutional forces and configurations are crucial in shaping and constraining the potential for community development and empowerment in contemporary Croatia. The strategic direction of development policy in Croatia is, to say the least, confusing. As an excellent text in the 2001 Human Development Report puts it: "In the second half of the 1990s ... an inclination (some would call it a fascination) with strategies became prominent (such that) Croatia was teeming with decisions and intentions about drafting strategies" (Starc et al, 2002; 49). Alongside this went a proliferation of Agencies, Institutes, Commissions, Committees, and such like, all charged with developing and overseeing such strategies and programmes with overlapping, competing and multiple mandates, akin to an 'institutional jungle' (Hauser, 2002). Any attempt to trace a rational or logical sense of ownership or steering of any particular issue is almost bound to end in failure amidst this proliferation of bodies and actors, often themselves complexly relating to more permanent bodies and more ephemeral networks and groups.

Marina's Škrabalo's recent discussion of the policy context for peace-building in Croatia can also be applied to community development and mobilisation: 'There is an immediate need to take advantage of existing opportunities for enriching and entwining different, currently disconnected, legislative, institutional and programmatic frameworks... with a special focus on the accumulation of social capital ... and citizens' participation in the local and national policy making processes' (Škrabalo, 2003; 2-3). The disconnect between 'top-down' policy making and development strategies and 'bottom up' community development and mobilisation initiatives is crucial here.

Above all, perhaps the most important constraint on 'progressive' community development and empowerment in contemporary Croatia is not so much 'the new social stratification of Croatian society, accompanied by a significant redistribution of social wealth, social power and social esteem' (Malenica, 2003; 342), as the deeper meta-level crisis in values and trust which can be seen as both a cause and effect of this redistribution. One of the most influential of contemporary Croatian sociologists, Josip Županov, who died in 2004, has described this as a process of semi-modernism, driven by a new political elite, and containing elements of 'modernising' and 'traditionalising' discourses and practices (Županov, 2001). He suggests that this semi-modernism is a mixture of three elements: re-traditionalization, de-industrialization, and de-scientization.

It is possible to trace the contours of state forms in Croatia, with ten years of nationalist rule, divided between the time of war (1991-1995); the time of reinforced authoritarianism searching for the enemy within (1996-1998) and the beginnings of democratic transformation (1998-2000), culminating in the election, in January 2000, of a left of centre coalition. The reformed nationalist party (HDZ) which came back into power in the elections of November 2003, continued to espouse a more European orientation. Crucially, throughout the last fifteen years, there has been an immense implicit and, at times, explicit, centralisation of political power and authority in the capital Zagreb. In part, this has been an adjunct to authoritarian nationalism and the fear of regional separatist movements developing (particularly in Istria with a large Italian population).

The proliferation of local government units, and the failure to distinguish between a small municipality, unable to raise revenues locally to be sustainable, and a large city, has meant that decentralisation is increasingly spoken of rhetorically but rarely pursued in practice. Conversely, and somewhat paradoxically, there is still a sense that, in some of the war-affected areas, processes of democratisation are not as advanced as centrally, with a degree of clientelism, informal power and influence brokerage, in which a coalition of charismatic politicians and local war-veteran activist groups continue to hold sway. When one adds to this the massive

demographic changes in the last decade, it is clear that it is difficult to generalise about 'Croatian society' much less to suggest, in one-dimensional terms, an openness or resistance to community development.

An Historical Excavation of Community Development in Croatia

Eight years ago, Nino Žganec, the leading Croatian scholar of community development and, since 2000, an Assistant Minister (later State Secretary) for Social Welfare, stated that the 'domestic literature' on 'community organising methods' taught to social work students in Zagreb was "really poor – only one book and a few articles" so that "most of the knowledge that students learn are from the other countries of Europe and the USA" (Žganec, 1997). A work of recovery is needed, therefore, to excavate traces of a theory and practice of community development in Croatia, without over-stating the case so that the label of 'community development' is found everywhere and forced onto too wide a range of historical phenomena. Such a project is beyond the scope of this chapter. It is also the case that, since 1997 when Žganec wrote the above, there has been much more attention to this theme within Croatia and, whilst not an 'explosion' of texts, there are now a number of theoretical, case study, and practical handbook texts in the field.

Two different historical starting points could be taken for this 'excavation'. The first would be the first half of the twentieth century during the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and the kingdom of Yugoslavia. Pioneering ethnographic studies of rural communities, such as *Kako živi narod/How the people live* (Bićanić, 1936) can be linked with notions of agrarianism and, in particular, the role of co-operatives (*zadruga*), as profoundly social and cultural institutions as well as economic ones. This configuration should be seen not as a set of anti-modernising forces and ideas but as representing an alternative path to modernisation. Few authors have examined the *zadruga* movement as a particular kind of community organising which, insofar as it continues to exist today, represents a profound, if almost completely hidden, continuity in terms of community development and mobilisation.

The second starting point would be Croatia in socialist Yugoslavia, particularly after Tito's break with Stalin in 1948. The explicitly 'modernising', industrialising and urbanising elements of the first wave of the Yugoslav experiment was something of a totalising, 'top down' project, although initial moves towards worker's self-management are, perhaps, relevant to community development, and forms of work action and work brigades (*radna akcija*) were also important social and cultural practices.

The later phase of decentralisation and full-scale implementation of self-management socialism, following the 1974 Constitution, is of much greater interest. Without ever questioning the leading role of the communist party or the importance of central or Republic-based state functions, the creation of self-management communities of interest (*SIZ*), work-based, professional, service-based, and at local community level, alongside local wards (*MZ*), is of immense interest as an experiment in 'participatory socialism', albeit of a somewhat paternalistic, formalistic, if not even compulsory, kind. The impact of this in terms of the creation of a new public sphere, as well as, at least tokenistic, notions of client feedback and choice in health and social services (cf. Parmalee, 1982; Saric and Rodwin, n.d.) is crucial here. In addition, longer-standing women's and youth organisations began, in this period, to take on a more autonomous role, often active at the local community level, as were both the Red Cross and Caritas, as well as the children's organisation *Naša Djeca* (Our Children), utilising networks of volunteers. There were linked academic developments as the humanistic and social sciences sought to explore and explain the practices and attitudes of diverse communities, cultures and subcultures.

The 1980s

In the 1980s, a series of initiatives and movements emerged which represented the creation of a genuinely autonomous public sphere. In neighbouring Slovenia, many of these explicitly articulated a concern with the development of 'civil society' and 'new social movements', even influencing the discourse of the League of Communists of Slovenia (Mastnak, 1994; 100). Activists in and around the University of Ljubljana engaged in, and learnt from, a range of community actions, often explicitly influenced by Friere, including: community art and music; alternative mental health movements; work with young people labeled as 'at risk'; work with drug users; and so on. In the latter part of the 1980s, a fusion of anti-militaristic and peace groups, women's groups, and environmental activists, represented a coherent critique of the communist system.

In Croatia, and particularly in Zagreb, a similar range of initiatives developed. The component elements of these movements and initiatives, when listed, appear similar to those in Slovenia, and certainly there were mutual influences, but their content and meaning was somewhat different. There were a number of highly innovative and progressive media initiatives, notably the weekly *Start*, the student newspaper *Studentski List*, the periodical *Polet*, and, in the latter part of the 1980s, Zagreb's *Radio 101*, later to become national President Tuđman's *bete noir*. In addition, ecological movements were established, notably *Svarun*, an ecological and peace group formed in 1986, an antecedent to the current *Zelena Akcija* (Green Action) formed in 1987 in Split and in 1989 in Zagreb (Green Action 2000: 86).

Perhaps the most important, and certainly the longest established, strand was the development of a range of women's organisations and neo-feminist activism beginning, perhaps, with the 'Women and Society' section of the Croatian Sociological Society founded in 1978 (Feldman 1999: 8), continuing with a strong presence in both academic and popular publishing, notably through the work of Lydia Sklevicky, Slavenka Drakulić and Vesna Kesić, and, in the late 1980s, leading to the establishment of an SOS telephone hotline for women, victims of violence, in Zagreb (cf. Stubbs, 2003; 153-4).

The 1990s

In the context of the development of political pluralism, emerging authoritarian nationalism, and war destruction and mass forced migration in the early 1990s, the entire landscape for community development changed in Croatia. An emergency-based international response to the effects of war tended to develop in two, interlinked, directions. The first involved work with, and promotion of, an emerging group of Croatian non-governmental organisations in a dominant 'psycho-social' approach, emphasising individual, family and group-based therapeutic interventions. The critique of this as 'medicalising the social effects of war' in retrospect seems somewhat overstated (cf. Stubbs and Soroya, 1996), and some texts did give some consideration to community factors as contributing to psychological well-being (cf. Agger et al, 1995; Mimica and Stubbs, 1996). Nevertheless, there remained a relative under-emphasis on community development, not least because of limited space, at a time of national mobilisation and authoritarianism, for any perceived radical political intervention (cf. Stubbs, 1997 a).

The second involved a response framed in terms of immediate relief of suffering and the delivery of humanitarian aid. Leading roles in this were played by religious-based organisations, particularly the Catholic charity Caritas and the Muslim charity Merhamet, as well as a group of new local NGOs some of which promoted, or were based on, self-organisation, particularly of refugees and displaced persons. In areas directly affected by war, new kinds of social mobilisation occurred, often involving close links between formal and informal leaders, schools, artists, and so on.

More radical initiatives, many based around the network of groups and organizations associated with the Anti-war Campaign, Croatia, represented both a real and symbolic continuation of some of the 1980s activism, albeit in changed circumstances. These initiatives were strongly influenced by general theories of ‘civil society’ and, in particular, by concepts of ‘non-violent conflict resolution’ (cf. Stubbs, 1996a). Whilst many of the initiatives combined advocacy and lobbying with practical actions supporting individuals and groups adversely affected by the war and by authoritarian nationalism, there was, again, little explicit connection with concepts of community development and mobilisation.

From roughly 1996 onwards, in the context of a degree of relative stability and the absence of direct conflict in Croatia, considerably greater emphasis was placed on community development and mobilisation, often framed in terms of ‘social reconstruction’ (cf. Stubbs, 1996b; Ajduković (ed), 2003) and ‘community building’. In retrospect, much of the impetus for this came from external (foreign) assistance organisations, albeit with increasing input from a core group of Croatian practitioners, activists and professionals, some of whom worked within or close to these international agencies, at least for a time. The complex formal and informal links between overlapping networks in Croatia at this time is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is worthy of note that many of the most important community development organisations in Croatia were formed in this period.

It is also a fact that few texts have been written which chronicle these activities, in part at least because of the lack of space and resources for activists to write. One important text is ‘I Choose Life’ (Kruhonja (ed), 2001) which looks at the work of peace teams from the Osijek Centre for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights in six communities in Eastern Slavonia, which has a particular focus on ‘listening’ to communities. In addition, the book ‘Activists’ chronicles the experiences of women in civil initiatives in Croatia from the 1980s onwards, and explores and questions the inter-relationship between activist engagement and theoretical concepts, with explicit reference to a women’s community (*ženska zajednica*) (Barilar, et al (eds.), 2001; 70-75). A text of papers and reflections from ten years of the Centre for Women War Victims also seeks to “revive the gender dimension in the public memory of women’s participation in war protests and other political activity” (Kesić, 2003; 12). The recently published edited text on ‘The Social Reconstruction of Communities’ (Ajduković (ed), 2003), provides a valuable social-psychological perspective on community development offering theoretical and practical suggestions for work in war-torn communities, based on the work of the Society for Psychological Assistance. The manual produced by the local NGO *Odras*, the title an abbreviated form of the Croatian language words for ‘sustainable development’, also contains a range of practical tools for work in communities (Laginja and Pavić, 2001).

The EU Context

Gradually, the European Union context is becoming the most important in structuring development policy in Croatia, after a long period in which the World Bank, USAID, and a host of other bilateral donors, held sway. The importance of donor priorities is discussed more fully in the next section. Here, it is sufficient to note that Croatia is some way from a situation of ‘cognitive Europeanisation’ in terms of community empowerment, in which there is an “incorporation of the EU discourse ... into national ... discourse, preferences and aspirations” (Guillén and Álvarez, 2004: 298). In particular, despite the EU concept of subsidiarity, there has been little or no criticism of the centralising tendencies of the Croatian state in EU reviews of Croatia’s progress to fulfilling criteria for membership. Perhaps even more importantly, there has been little attempt to incorporate Croatian initiatives into wider European community development networks.

Reflecting Donor Priorities

As already noted, it is not only internal structural conditions which have hindered the development of community empowerment in Croatia. Without wishing to indulge in the practice of ‘donor bashing’ (cf. Sampson, 2002), it is certainly the case that the shifting, often fickle, nature of the priorities of external actors, particularly donors, has skewed priorities, and created a certain ‘false positive’ in which a range of local actors follow the rhetoric and language of current trends. Above all, themes and foci have tended to be narrowly defined with few connections drawn between, say, questions of economic development; refugee return; Roma; youth; persons with disabilities; and so on. Whilst gender issues and human rights more generally have been highly topical, as well as general democratisation initiatives in the context of organising around elections, these tend to be framed in terms of ‘big ideas’, and also to be centralised, rather than being integrated into programmes of local strategic development.

As a rough periodisation of donor interventions, including the dominance of different implementing agencies, the following, derived from two workshops as part of the recent ‘Community Development and Mobilisation’ action research project, captures some of the key shifts over time (1).

pre-1991 Socialist Self- management	1991- 1995 War and Crisis	1996-1998 Authoritarian nationalism	1998 – 2000 Transitioning democratisation	2000 – Consolidating democratisation Towards EU
Participation in self-management Financial crises (indebtedness)	Trauma (psycho-social intervention) Humanitarian relief and Aid	Reconstruction & Reconciliation Human/Minority Rights Gender/Domestic Violence Civil society	Minority reintegration Youth Democratisation Elections	Good governance Economic development/ SMEs Community development Inter-sectoral cooperation Philanthropy/ Corporate responsibility
Non-aligned Movement UN Agencies IFIs	UNHCR ECTF Embassies Red Cross Caritas INGOs	OSCE USAID UNHCR Embassies European/US Feminist groups INGOs OSI	OSCE USAID IOM DFID Embassies OSI World Bank INGOs	EU USAID World Bank UNDP Embassies OSI OSCE INGOs/ICCs

The implications of the initial phase of ‘humanitarian relief’ had longer-lasting consequences. In particular, it contributed to a kind of parallel structure of INGOs and their local ‘partners’, bypassing, explicitly or implicitly, networks of state institutions including Centres for Social Work, which were, and still are, highly bureaucratised and stigmatising statutory social welfare institutions but which, nevertheless, remain important. There was a degree of expectation

generated in this time of significant cash injections for community infrastructure, which fomented a kind of dependency culture, with high expectations of both the government and the international community. Later, many international actors tended to subsume development programmes within a broader democratisation discourse both in terms of support for a pluralistic development regime including the role of so-called 'civil society', and an uneven pattern of support for different political configurations at national, regional and local levels.

In addition, there is an often remarked upon lack of co-ordination and complementarity of effort between international agencies and instead more competition and confusion. This relates to the complexities of the interests and value-base of diverse agencies, with distinctions between 'neo-liberal', 'Keynesian' and a hybrid, technocratic, approach reproduced between, but also within, agencies. In particular, the imposition of the rules of the 'new public management' with its emphasis on particular organisational structures, including a US style management hierarchy, as well as on structures of efficiency, effectiveness and measurable results, has distorted and inhibited grassroots innovative practices.

In this way, there is a real danger of the 'projectisation' or 'technocratisation' of community development, in terms of a 'toolkit' or 'transplanting' approach, and a race to show results, which often involves cutting corners, not learning lessons, and utilising informal networks of influence, which ironically contributes to a lack of transparency in projects which were, in fact, set up to challenge this. An alternative approach, emphasising processes, feedback loops, mutual learning, and a recognition of problems and failures, runs counter to the 'success culture' of external assistance programmes.

A complex role in many local development projects is being played by 'new intermediaries' often with power but no legitimacy, able to facilitate communication and action between levels. In addition, external actors provide opportunities for new vertical alliances in which certain discourses lacking national or local credibility can become favoured because of their amplification internationally. The distortions here are compounded by the fact that those who work for international agencies tend to be young professionals, especially valued are those who speak English, and that salaries are much higher than in the public sector. This can also be the case for those funded by international agencies and working in the local NGO sector.

Conversely, voluntarism has also been emphasised by the state and by international donors. The importing of the concept of voluntarism, most famously in the quote by one Croatian activist in a radio interview hoping that "Croatia becomes more like the United States, where voluntary work is compulsory", bears little resemblance to a longer tradition of community and voluntary work. Moreover, in the context of freezes or reductions in public expenditure, it can represent an attempt to place more of the burdens for community development on an unpaid workforce, mainly of women (2).

In a sense, then, donor priorities were, initially, skewed against the promotion of community development in Croatia. Increasingly, in later years, the concept has been increasingly used, but this is a classic transplanting of a 'foreign' concept with little or no understanding of the long-standing tradition of community development in Croatia. Moreover, international donors have tended to technocratise community development and to create and strengthen a hierarchy of large national bodies steering smaller localised initiatives.

The Politics of NGOs in Croatia

Croatia has over 20,000 registered associations of citizens, a ratio of 4.5 per 1,000 citizens, close to levels in Hungary, with 18,000 of these registered at the local level (Starc et al, 2002). This represents an increase of almost 5,000 since 1999 although there are suggestions that, excluding sports clubs and cultural associations, only between 1,000 and 1,500 are active. For much of the 1990s, in the context of authoritarian nationalism, relationships between the Government of Croatia and leading NGOs, many funded from abroad, was strained and the 1997 Law on Associations was widely seen as highly problematic and restrictive of associational activity (Stubbs, 1997 b).

Subsequently, the creation of a Governmental Office for Co-Operation with NGOs (*UzU*); an annual grants competition, dispersing 28 m. HRK (about 2.5 m GBP) in 1999 and 17 m. HRK (1.6 m GBP) in 2002; a more progressive Law on Associations passed in 2001; the creation of a new National Foundation for Civil Society Development; and the 'Programme of Co-operation between the Government of Croatia and the Non-Governmental and Not-for-Profit Sector' in 2000, have all contributed to a more positive enabling environment. External support for the Croatian NGO sector has been extensive and is ongoing, with the establishment, mainly through USAID-funded programmes, of a network of Regional Resource Centres and a group of training and capacity building organisations. This assistance has become more focused on developmental rather than relief-based concerns, and has increasingly seen community development and mobilisation as a priority albeit, as noted above, in a way divorced from local realities.

Patterns of NGO development are geographically uneven, with a concentration in urban areas. There is also a widespread perception that 'elite', professional NGOs tailor their work according to the interests of donors, thematically and geographically. Importantly, levels of 'mistrust' amongst different NGOs and between NGOs and other actors, militates against cohesive approaches to local development. In addition, many strategies and 'top down' plans fail to engage with groups in civil society, much less to adopt more than a tokenistic approach to consultation, partnership and voice.

Many have seen multi-sectoral working as a panacea for many of the problems of Croatian society, including blockages to local development, sometimes seemingly oblivious to the deep routed nature of mistrust and complexity of interests and power relations involved. It is still the case that there are still relatively few examples of long-term, consistent, multi-sectoral partnerships for community development in Croatia, between local governments, associations and NGOs, and businesses, amongst other stakeholders. A recent pioneering report on Corporate Social Responsibility in Croatia points out a number of positive examples of business-NGO collaboration, however (Bagić et al, 2004; 53).

Perhaps the most important trend is the growth of what have been termed 'meta-NGOs' "whose primary purpose is to provide information and assistance to other NGOs" (Bach and Stark, 2001; 15) but which, therefore, rely on hierarchical relations and can, all too easily exhibit a superiority and end up 'governing' other NGOs and smaller community-based initiatives. The inverse law of NGOs, namely that NGOs are concentrated where they are needed least (Stubbs, 1997b), is now matched by a huge disjunct between the larger, more successful, but increasingly bureaucratised or rhetorical meta-NGOs, and emerging, under-funded, localised initiatives which are true sources of contemporary 'social energy' (cf. Hirschmann, 1984) in Croatia, alongside informal community leaders, including teachers, priests and local activists.

The institutional context for community development is certainly also affected by the absence of a formal organisational field given the fact that there are no formal higher education or professional courses or even generally recognized and accredited training programmes; no formal

Association for Community Development linked with international bodies; no widely recognised network of practitioners; no real or virtual resource centre for practice exchange, and so on. Of course, any moves to force such developments could be counter-productive, furthering mistrust between the diverse components of an emerging community development sector in Croatia. In addition, the relative flux and permeable boundaries of the sector is conducive to a diversity of approaches, and the absence of rigid hierarchies too often found in more institutionalised fields.

On the other hand, this lack places community development in a somewhat inferior position relative to other, more formally validated, approaches, and can put such work at a disadvantage in terms of legitimacy and, indeed, access to resources, in what remains a highly professionalised society. In addition, informal hierarchies of dominant and subordinate approaches still exist within the sector, with a kind of implicit elitism developing not sanctioned according to any open, transparent, criteria.

Our own action research on community development and mobilisation in Croatia (www.map.hr) has focused on the shifting relationship between state support and donor priorities, on the one hand, and the development of grassroots' citizens' initiatives as opposed to 'meta-NGOs' as sources of social energy, on the other. Crucially, it has tended to confirm that there is little connection between community development based on notions of geographically limited spatial communities, prone to technicism, economism and a nostalgic conservatism for a (mythical) age when all interests were reconcilable, and work on interest-based or identity communities, such as gender, Roma, Serb returnees, persons with disabilities, each of which is also disconnected, one from another. Work with a range of marginalised and oppressed groups tends to be based on a deficit model or even on a notion of cultural pathology, with little attention to rights-based approaches as opposed to the delivery of remedial services (3). In this sense, there is little focus on self-empowerment and self-help initiatives – rather professionalised or semi-professionalised NGOs still dominate. In a complex way, community work is either over-politicised, with charismatic political leaders using informal power and mobilising communities for their own interests, or under-politicised, with too little emphasis on the politicised transformation of private issue and spaces into public concerns.

What is to be done? Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter has attempted to show the realities of community development in contemporary Croatia, in the context of an exploration of structural constraints, state forms, historical legacies, donor priorities, and NGO and grassroots citizens' activities. In the end, it can be seen that Croatia exhibits some of the tendencies associated with globalization and neo-liberalization, but also some specificities, in part a product of the complex configuration of civil society activity in the early post-communist, war years.

In seeking to draw policy recommendations, it is important to stress, yet again, that there are no institutional or practice models from elsewhere which can be transplanted in Croatia as a kind of panacea promoting community development. Rather, what is needed is the creation of networks, arenas and spaces, locally, nationally, and internationally, for exchanges of experiences and the elaboration of good practice, not in terms of set formulae, but in terms of attempting to grapple with why certain initiatives appear to have had positive effects and others less so. In a global professional culture of standards and benchmarking, it is perhaps more important to create this space for mutual learning across specific themes and issues, whilst also stressing the importance of theory and politics.

Above all, donor policies, including the state (which, through the National Foundation for Civil Society, is now the biggest funder of NGOs in Croatia) and international donors, need to recognise that the 'hot spots' of social energy in community development in Croatia are far removed from their implicit, and sometimes, explicit, support of moribund 'meta-NGOs'. There is evidence of changing practices, with a number of donors willing, now, to fund smaller unregistered groups. The recent controversy when so-called leading (i.e. Zagreb-based, previously largely foreign-funded) NGOs complained because core funding from the Foundation was given to some NGOs they had never heard of is illustrative, too. In part, it suggests a recognition of shifting emphases, away from supporting politicised, albeit rhetorically more than really active, organisations in favour more of solid service-delivery organisations with the ability to mobilise volunteers. Going beyond this, to fund more fluid movements, campaigns and *ad hoc* initiatives, may be too much to expect from, essentially, a technocratic state body.

There has been increasing emphasis, in recent years, in Croatia on local social compacts, community-based partnerships and community foundations, reflecting Anglo-American influence in the entire post-communist region. Thankfully, given a strong tradition of public provision, there have been only very limited introductions of Social Funds, utilising the rhetoric of demand-driven development but, in reality, further eroding welfare provision. The key issue is, of course, to ensure that policy proposals are thoroughly discussed and debated in terms of their longer-term social impacts and, in particular, in terms of how they affect power relations. In the end, a coalition for changing dominant perceptions of community development, building an active welfare society alongside good quality public provision, is the only guarantee of challenging processes of neo-liberalization in Croatia. It is to be regretted that the most active high-profile NGOs are more concerned with their own survival than with this wider cause.

Overall, then, this chapter has argued for a more nuanced understanding of, and approach to, community development in contemporary Croatia recognising the historical legacies, as well as addressing contemporary responses in the context of international development programmes and neo-liberalism. Any comparisons with other countries in transition or the developing world is beyond the scope of this text. Others (cf. Mayo and Craig, 1995) have noted the strong historical links between community development and colonial government. It may be, in the context of the redefining of Europe's, and the European Union's borders, that the international emphasis on community development is a form of 'neo-colonialism' which exports and extends governmentalities beyond its borders. Böröcz has argued this most persuasively in terms of the idea that "the specific histories of colonialism and empire, with their deeply coded and set patterns of inequality, hierarchy, exclusion and power – and especially their techniques pertaining to the projection of that power to the outside world – are reflected in a deep and systematic form in the socio-cultural pattern of the governmentality of the EU" (Böröcz, 2001; 14). Yet, as this chapter has shown, like the global neo-liberal project, it always faces specific local and national forces and conditions which adapt and resist such that, in the end, the study of community development in Croatia takes its place as one amongst many studies of what Burawoy has termed 'grounded globalisations' which "tries to understand not only the experience of globalisation but also how that experience is produced in specific localities and how that political process is contingent» (Burawoy, 2000; 344).

APPENDIX 1

ACRONYMS USED IN TEXT

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
DFID	UK Government Department for International Development
ECTF	European Community Task Force
EU	European Union
GBP	Pounds Sterling
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union (Political Party)
HRK	Croatian Kuna (currency 1 GBP = 10.8 HRK as at 06.04.2005)
ICCs	International Consultancy Companies
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSI	Open Society Institute (Soros)
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollars

Notes

- (1) The author acknowledges the work of Aida Bagić, Mirna Karzen, Marina Škrabalo and Nataša Škrbić in the development of this typology.
- (2) The concept derives from unpublished work by Aida Bagić
- (3) The author is grateful to Jadranka Mimica for this insight.

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