



COMMUNITY-BUILDING: SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

Neil Bradford

Research Fellow in Cities and Communities,
Canadian Policy Research Networks

Department of Political Science,
Huron University College, University of Western Ontario

1 May 2004

F A M I L Y N E T W O R K



Background

- On 30 April to 1 May 2004, the United Way/ Centraide Canada held its annual conference in Winnipeg.
- This is Neil Bradford's presentation to the panel on Urban Affairs and Community Building.



Cities and Communities are Back on the Agenda

Three issues to consider

- **Why?**

Opportunities and challenges spatially concentrated

- **Implications**

Is Canada ready?

- **Moving Forward**

Governments and community organizations



The Paradox of Globalization (1)

Old Conventional Wisdom

- New information and communications technology: “The irrelevance of local place”
- Public policy assumptions: “The irrelevance of local scale”
- The action is on the world stage: transnational business, culture, governance



The Paradox of Globalization (2)

New Awareness: Globalization's Five Key Flows Converge in Cities

- People: 80% of Canadians live in urban areas
- Investment: New economy is urban centred
- Ideas: Innovation is a social process
- Policy: Municipalities/communities acquiring new responsibilities
- Security: First responders on the front lines



“Place Matters”

Jane Jacobs and Richard Florida show the difference “place quality” makes to national goals:

- Social inclusion: neighbourhood institutions vital for individuals and families
- Economic innovation: talent clusters in creative places
- Cultural diversity: cities where diversity expressed
- Ecological sustainability: sprawl, congestion, waste management



Three Messages

- The great public policy questions of our day are now urban questions
- Crucial problem solving resources – knowledge and networks – are localized
- Countries that invest in their cities and communities will be the 21st century's success stories



Canadian Cities: A Double-edged Reality

Flood of recent research shows Canada's cities are simultaneously places of most dynamic innovation and most severe exclusion

- Innovation: Spatially concentrated smart companies and knowledge networks – “clusters”
- Exclusion: Spatially concentrated poverty and negative neighbourhood effects – “ghettos”



Canadian Cities Falling Behind? The Role of Governments

Canada's spatial policy approach recently described as "disjointed" and "lagging"

- Deferred municipal infrastructure investments
- Fiscal squeeze on local services
- Political culture of non-recognition for cities
- Mistrust between levels of government
- Departmental silos persist
- Top-down design and delivery of programs
- Episodic commitment and short-term funding



Canadian Cities Falling Behind? Non-Governmental Organizations

Canada's community sector recently described as "passion and commitment under stress"

- Funding constraints
- Cookie cutter designs
- Isolated, fragmented local projects
- Developing comprehensive, longer term focus
- Stronger capacity for research and strategic planning
- More collaborative relationships



Other Jurisdictions are Moving Ahead

**1990s: A decade of urban regeneration,
community-building, and policy innovation
in Europe and the United States**

- Europe: EU Regional Development Funds expanded and decentralized to local scale
- United States: Revitalized HUD and community empowerment



Europe: Defining Features

- Principles: Cohesion and subsidiarity
- Programs: Area-based social partnerships (clusters *and* anti-poverty)
- Pilots: Road testing and scaling-up
- Networks: Cross-national knowledge transfer



United States: Defining Features

- Integrated public policies: People and places
- Local coalitions: Comprehensive community initiatives
- National intermediaries: Capacity-building
- Federal government catalyst: Investing and coordinating



Canada's Challenge: A New Architecture for Community-Building

The message may be getting through...

"We intend to make the social economy a key part of Canada's social policy tool kit... Over the course of the next year, we will work with these groups to develop the tools they require. Just as entrepreneurs are essential to a strong economy, social entrepreneurs are essential to strong communities, and they require our support"
(Prime Minister Martin, 2004).

F A M I L Y N E T W O R K



The Message May be Getting Through

“It is in communities that the elements of the national innovation system come together... By coordinating efforts, federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments can work with private, academic and voluntary sectors to build local capacity and unleash the full potential of communities across the country”
(Industry Canada/Human Resources Development Canada, 2002).

F A M I L Y N E T W O R K



A New Architecture for Community-Building

The Paradigm

- Integrate people and place strategies
- Community-driven with broad resident involvement
- Comprehensive vision and strategic sequencing
- Research-driven, asset-based
- Tailored to local conditions with regional focus
- Local partnerships and extra-local collaborations
- Valuing cultural diversity, tackling institutional barriers
- Trust relations are key

F A M I L Y N E T W O R K



A New Architecture for Community-Building

For Governments...

“There is no one government or single policy that will do the job. Governments must collaborate to adapt to place-specific assets, needs and capacities.”

- Tap local knowledge, engage local networks
- Bring cities to the table and empower them
- Combine resources across departmental lines
- Offer menu of reinvestment possibilities to communities
- Delegate authority to local departmental officers
- Establish funding and accountability relations with community-based organizations

F A M I L Y N E T W O R K



A New Architecture for Community-Building

For Non-Governmental Organizations...

“Required is a further coming-together of existing institutions in the field. This does not imply the need to form any new institution, but rather the collaboration of existing ones around the shared purpose of expanding and strengthening community building across the country” (Urban Institute, *Community Building Coming of Age*, 1998).

F A M I L Y N E T W O R K



A New Architecture for Community-Building

**National/provincial intermediaries
have a key role to play**

- Funding and advocacy
- Integration and information
- Training and learning



A New Architecture for Community-Building

Local coalitions have a key role to play

- Convening the partners (grassroots volunteers and front line organizations)
- Community visioning
- Inventorying assets/generating research
- Facilitating action
- Community-based indicators



A New Architecture for Community-Building

- United Way/Centraide is an organization that bridges the two scales of action – national and local – therefore presenting exciting opportunities for leadership in community-building.

F A M I L Y N E T W O R K



Next Steps?

Moving forward on the new community-building architecture might involve:

- Extending existing community-based collaborative initiatives such as the Urban Development Agreements or SCPI
- Bringing together representatives from the three key sectors – government, national intermediaries, local coalitions – to consolidate relationships
- Addressing specific capacity-building needs of each of the players as they engage in new roles



Some Larger Questions Remain

- Is there a tension in the community-building movement between social change and service provider missions?
- Is the current round of corporate restructuring – what some refer to as the “hollowing out of corporate Canada” – leaving businesses more detached from local communities and civic matters?
- Given that alliances and partnerships are critical for community-building, how are such trust relations established and maintained?





For additional information:

<http://www.cprn.org>

Join our weekly news service:

e-network

(see web site for details)

F A M I L Y N E T W O R K

