Reading Tips and Study Questions
CLASS SEVEN

Required reading

1. James DeFilippis and Susan Saegert, "Communities Develop: The Question is How?" in *The Community Development Reader*, chapter 1.

2. Alexander von Hoffman, "The Past, Present and Future of Community Development in the United States," In *Investing in What Works* (San Francisco: Federal Reserve Bank, 2012).

3. James DeFilippis, "Community Control and Development: The Long View," in *The Community Development Reader*, chapter 3.

4. Alice O'Connor, "Swimming Against the Tide: A Brief History of Federal Policy in Poor Communities," in *The Community Development Reader*, chapter 2.

Session overview

Having examined the broad political, economic and social context of a changing American society, we now turn to the community development "field"—really, a field of fields and, in some ways, part industry and part social movement.

We will begin to look at these dual roots and the tensions between them—between program development and movement building—and then, in the next session, take a close look at the organizations that help define the field (funders, service providers, intermediaries, and others) and the institutional arrangements that link them. Then we return to the local "political economy of place"—the settings, defined by politics and the local market, in which community developers look for support and also direction. At that point, we will consider challenges when community developers who provide services try to incorporate community organizing into their work—and the forms such organizing can take. That is, we will consider concrete examples of, not just conceptual claims about, efforts to "build movement back in" to a mostly nonprofit-based system of service delivery.

Examining community development in its particular local context—Greater Boston, the City of Boston, a particular Boston neighborhood, or elsewhere—is crucial since the field has long aspired to bring a distinctively community-*based* and even community-*driven* approach to problem solving. We will do that more and more as we move beyond historical, introductory material. Over the rest of the semester, we want to ask: is this community-based and community-driven approach possible and, if so, under what conditions, for what kinds of problems, implemented how?

Discussion questions

1. Having made a series of arguments about "why communities matter," **DeFilippis and Saegert** assert that "Community development occurs when the conditions of surviving and thriving in a place are not being supplied by capital." Is this compensatory framework, one grounded in struggle and improvisation, the only way to imagine a field with the goals they proceed to outline—providing for the everyday needs of adults and children, etc.? What alternatives do you see?

2. To what extent, and in what specific ways, according to historian **Alex von Hoffman**, did community development manage to overcome earlier shortcomings and contradictions of progressively oriented urban policy? And to what extent have those features persisted, perhaps in different form? How does **O'Connor's** account compare to von Hoffman's?

3. **DeFilippis** argues that the dominant organization form of community development—the community development corporation—grew out of protest and calls for "community control" but fairly quickly became a co-opted, nonprofit-for-hire model. What key developments led to that shift, according to the author? And why exactly does he critique the turn toward so-called *communitarianism*, assuming that turn is a real one? (Consider our discussion of "community," in concept and practice, last week.)

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