



Call for participation for the 50th anniversary conference

Why Community Development? Continuity and innovation

1st-3rd July 2015, Edinburgh

CONFERENCE FOCUS

To celebrate its 50th year, the Editorial Board of the Community Development Journal is planning a number of exciting activities in 2015, including a special issue, themed issues of critical contemporary relevance, and an international conference.

This call invites you to participate in our 50th Anniversary Conference: ***Why Community Development? Continuity and innovation***, to be held from 1-3rd July 2015, in Edinburgh.

During the last half century, the CDJ has published critically focused articles which challenge received wisdom, report and discuss innovative practices, and relate issues of community development to questions of social justice, diversity and environmental sustainability. Published 4 times a year, it is read in more than 80 countries, and is the leading international journal in its field.

At our 50th Anniversary Conference, we seek to bring together scholars, policy makers and practice-based participants and activists with a common interest in the issues of social justice, equality and community.

Together, we will examine the relevance of community development as a means to realise social justice goals within a global world and globalised society. Amongst myriad community practices, CD stands out not only because of the historical and intellectual depth of its tradition, but also for its critical relationship to established power and hence its potential to go beyond addressing immediate social problems to a genuinely transformative and liberating praxis. We acknowledge that CD is a contested practice, and it is this inherent tension that demands practitioners and theorists of CD to be reflexive, and to acknowledge and hold competing tensions and claims. It also enables the space to be created for radical alternatives that name and challenge socially oppressive behaviours and structures.

Through the contributions to this conference, we aim to explore:

- I. how CD retains its enduring relevance and importance in different contexts;
- II. the key issues for the future that CD will need to address if it is to retain this relevance;
- III. the range of meanings and strategies for community development in different contexts; and
- IV. the future role of the Community Development Journal in supporting CD internationally.

We invite proposals in the form of: paper presentations, panel proposals, workshops/interactive sessions, posters/exhibits, or colloquia. We particularly welcome presentations using visual media such as participatory video and photovoice.

Contributions should address one or more of the following themes:

1. *International / global practice*

The concern that many local problems cannot be solved locally but require national, international and global alliances challenges community development practice to reach out and make connections as never before. In recent years the heightened awareness of the spread of conflicts across continents, uprooting of indigenous cultures and environmental degradation underlines the urgency of this approach.

2. *Community practice*

An emphasis on skills and acquiring of standards has polarised debates around the merits and demerits of professionalisation as an enabling or inhibiting force. However the theme of skills and can ground community development work in important building blocks of practice and focus on what community development actually does.

3. *Reflective / educative / critical tradition – democratic citizenship*

For many, community development is rooted in an educative tradition whereby communities transform citizenship and assert their democratic rights through praxis. The recuperation of this strand of community work offers the opportunity of a reconnection with a long-standing socially progressive force, but is challenged by neoliberal instrumental understandings of CD.

4. *Contested models – consensus, pluralism, radical*

A pluralist approach as distinct from a single authorised community development model is consistent with CD values of openness and diversity, but also stimulates a rich and passionate intellectual debate. The contested nature of community development and clash of models is a testimony to the democratic strength of the wider movement, never wholly at ease with itself nor prepared to follow blindly, the diktats of ideologues, past and present.

5. *Migration, human rights and equality issues*

Discourses on migration have placed the principles of equality and human rights under new scrutiny. The ability of CD practice to navigate increasingly complex terrain of legislation and social policy amidst growing xenophobic populism in parts of the media and political class is often compromised. A consideration of dilemmas and examples of successful countervailing actions is required to enable the project of rights and equality to retain momentum.

The preferred format of the conference is ***participatory group work*** and we therefore encourage participants to use short presentations and participatory methods to present their ideas and experiences in ways which will stimulate group discussion.

Once submissions have been accepted, we will group them thematically. We will invite members of each group to meet online ahead of the conference, and to find ways to work collaboratively during their sessions. At the event, we will provide a facilitator in each group, and at the beginning of each day we will ask a leading thinker to discuss one of the key themes. Professor Marj Mayo will kick start our thinking on the first day.

The deadline for proposals for papers, workshops etc. is 1st September 2014.

To submit a Conference Proposal:

Please submit proposals to cdjconference@gmail.com

Proposals should indicate which theme they relate to, and include a 300 word abstract or description of the session.

Further information can be found on our website, CDJ Plus:

<http://www.oxfordjournals.org/cdj/cdj-events/conference/>