COMPLEX COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Collaboration, Comprehensive Programs
and
Community Coalitions in Complex Society

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Abstract

Complexity in community development is defined and a theoretical model is proposed to show how it may increase in response to societal complexity. Two case studies of large successful community development organizations are presented to illustrate how outside pressures and program opportunities led to increasingly complex patterns of collaboration, comprehensive programs, and community coalitions. The community development organizations managed this complexity through creating many semi-autonomous projects which could accomplish specific tasks by linking multiple organizations, functions, and jurisdictions around a discrete task. Complex projects have the benefit of assembling needed capacity, sharing risk, increasing legitimacy, and solving sets of highly interconnected problems. However, complexity also extracts high costs in terms difficulty, vulnerability, and management. Both organizations reevaluated their mission and organization as they became more complex. The challenge of globalization, new technologies, and policy shifts to communities will increase our need to better understand how complexity shapes community development organizations, programs, and projects.

Collaboration, Comprehensive Programs, and Community Coalitions in Complex Society

I. Introduction.

--It took 15 participants to fund an affordable housing project with 92 units in downtown Oakland, seemingly within the budget of one or two.

--Rural Community Assistance Corporation does projects in partnership with over 100 organizations, which requires at least 6 staff to simply track funds and write reports.

--Asian Design Inc. started out rehabilitating decaying buildings, added construction of new housing units, branched into job training, and then opened a factory making high quality institutional furniture, whereas any one of these functions would suffice for most organizations.

--Environmental planning has expanded from community impact analysis to bioregional sustainability.

What ties these examples together is that they illustrate how community development has become increasingly complex seemingly in response to the complexity of modern society. In small and large communities people suffer from a growing list of problems such as the lack of employment opportunities, the erosion of public infrastructure, the drop in educational achievement, the decline of public safety, the absence of basic civility, the persistence of poverty, and most troubling, the increasing uncertainty among leaders about what to do. In response to these and other needs, public programs at all levels multiplied, and communities became active in arenas that used to be outside their concern (such as transportation planning under ISTEA or environmental protection). Moreover, as disadvantaged communities expanded their development agenda, they also realized that they needed to build capacity for competing in the global

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marketplace and information age. Adding to their expanding agenda of needs to be met, government and nonprofit service providers discovered that solutions which once seemed simple grew in complexity as the interconnection of social problems became more apparent. This paper is a first step in an effort to address the question of community development complexity—*how does the rapidly increasing complexity of the global community, the expanding reach of organizational networks and funding programs, and the growing interconnection of responses to community problems, affect the complexity and effectiveness of community development organizations, programs, and projects?*

Unfortunately, most community development models and theories have lagged in dealing with the growing awareness of social complexity and the associated complexity of community development efforts. Many of the tools and strategies which were the staples of community development in the past are increasingly difficult to justify, both because they are very costly and because they fail to show beneficial results (Lemann, 1994). Community development theory has stagnated; the literature in the field lags far behind the innovations and adaptations found in practical applications at the community level (Blakely, 1989). For example, community development organizations (such as community development corporations) which were invented to concentrate all the development specialists needed to complete projects in one organization, no longer seek to be so inclusive. Funding agencies now require collaborative, comprehensive, or integrated projects even when it would be easier to deal with simpler proposals. Non-profit community based organization executive directors are not only complaining about the complexity of their tasks, but successful ones are getting sophisticated organizational management training and receiving competitive salaries.

The problem of complexity in community development is that its advantages--the benefits of collaboration, integration, and coalitions--all have costs. Effective community development efforts stand out for their ability to mediate the complexity of the society in which they work, and they are very effective and self-directed in obtaining resources and doing projects that are difficult for others to do. However, they

also risk becoming overwhelmingly complex themselves and resistant to community control and change. Complex community development efforts may also be wasteful, inefficient, vulnerable, or fragile, and some tend to grow out of control. Many complex efforts are confusing when they experience very rapid change or if knowledge of all the linkages is lacking. The argument of this paper is that the set of community development efforts that have emerged are complex responses to the increasingly complex social and economic environment, and that these "complex solutions" may have high hidden costs.

Organized Social Complexity and Community Development. This paper starts with the premise that the increasingly complex social system, and our greater awareness of it, is shaping community development for better or worse. The theoretical basis of organized social complexity involves three key concepts--increasingly complex social systems are identified by the presence of 1) a larger number of units, that are 2) increasingly differentiated and 3) more interdependent (Alexander, 1965; Simon, 1965; LaPorte, 1975). Put another way, a complex system has an increasing number of different components that are linked into a more intense web of fluid yet organized partnerships.

First, complexity increases with size. Large social systems with more parts are more complex simply because the scale of all relationships gets increased. Indeed, the number of possible relationships in a system increases to astronomical levels in even relatively small systems--in its unorganized form it is chaos[1]. While size alone is not sufficient to create complexity, as in a large audience which is organizationally simple, size tends to generate more complex social systems to the extent relations exist among components. The growing scale of modern social systems increases pressure on community development through urbanization, regionalization, and globalization, which make even very local activities part of the larger universe, propelled by better technology, communications, and transportation which give more people and interest groups access to any project.

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[1] Complexity is defined as partially structured or ordered chaos at the Santa Fe Institute, where a "new science of complexity" is being forged by scholars as different as molecular biologists seeking the origin of life, astronomers seeking the structure of the universe, ecologists explaining transitions in environmental systems, or economists seeking to find an alternative premise to rational behavior for economic systems (Waldrop, 1992).

Second, complexity increases with differentiation among the component parts. Differentiation increases as social roles and responsibility are more finely allocated among individuals and social organizations. In so far as a community or organization has a larger number of interests and skills that are identified and distinguished from others, there is a greater potential for a complex system. It is easy to identify the increased complexity associated with more species sharing an environmental niche, or more technologies and occupations in workplaces leading to a greater division of labor; community complexity increases with more people expressing their unique rights and interests, more organizations participating in a coalition, and more policy mandates and interventions affecting a local project. As local cultures and traditions have become overlaid by the variety of global cultures, and as more knowledge and information allow greater specialization within all types of social settings, communities and organizations include a greater differentiation.

Third, complexity increases with greater levels of interdependence among the units in the system. Interdependence, the most important defining characteristic of complexity, is the pattern of exchanges that constitute the relations that units within a system have with each other. In a social system, each unit contributes and/or receives direct or indirect resources such as money, political support, public legitimacy, access, information, or protection from some negative consequences. Interdependence increases with the number and variety of exchanges that take place in a system, to the point where units are linked in a web where any input or change has multiple, reciprocal, and long lasting consequences (See LaPorte 1975; Bradshaw and Blakely, 1979). For example the social environment in which low income housing projects are built involves many interdependent organizations. The project must coordinate inputs from dozens of different entities each of which has influence on other parts of the project: multiple funding sources have different levels of risk and each places different demands on the project, permits from multiple government agencies place different constraints on the project, the design and life style needs of several cultures and neighborhood groups additionally complement or compete for project resources, and program opportunities

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such as job training, child care, or health programs that address the social and economic needs of the tenants are interlinked with other program goals. Each group or program participating in or working with the project has its obligations and expected benefits woven together in a web of interdependent exchanges that constitute the project.

Community development experiencing this complexity can be thought of as in a "third phase" where the emphasis is on interorganizational linkages. In an earlier work Bradshaw and Blakely (1979) suggested that the first phase of rural community development involved technical assistance by experts to farmers, industry, or communities, usually on a one to one basis. The second phase involved organizing community members into groups through which technical information and strategies could be implemented more efficiently. In this phase emphasis was placed on founding granges, neighborhood coalitions, development corporations, and other community organizations. Technical expertise and assistance were disseminated via the organizations which also tapped local resources to help solve community problems. The second phase focused on community and neighborhood organizing and leadership, with the belief that organizations could undertake more successful projects than individuals. The third phase, which is currently expanding, builds on the previous two. In the third phase the emphasis is on networks among organizations which share resources, collaborate on projects, meet multiple community needs, and build capacity in the interrelations among agencies to solve problems. Phase three is the most complex. Similar conceptualizations are provided by Ross and Friedman (1990) among others who have suggested that the third phase of economic development moves from working with firms to working to improve the overall context in which business operates. This paper explores several case study examples of the "third phase" model of community development in order to identify ways that community based organizations are adapting to increasing complexity in their communities and task environments.

II. Toward a new Community Development Model.

Studies of recent community development practices and strategies can help build a new model of how community development operates in a complex society. It is argued that community development organizations are being forced to respond to social complexity by working within a highly complex web of collaboration, comprehensive or integrated service delivery, and multi-community coalitions. Community based organizations are sometimes pressured to adopt these strategies by outside groups or funding sources, while others select more complex programs because it is the best way to meet their organizational goals. The pressures for collaboration, comprehensivity, and coalitions are very costly for community development organizations, however, which suggests that there must be some mediating structures that prevent complexity from becoming overwhelming.

The partial solution to the problem of complexity is to isolate some of the size, differentiation, and interdependence from the organization as a whole by structuring *semi-autonomous projects* that are multi-organizational, multi-functional, and multi-jurisdictional. Projects are defined as the specific sub-organizational structures created to solve a single defined effort such as building a set of houses, running a series of training sessions, generating a community plan, establishing a small business incubator, instituting a community policing strategy, immunizing children, or operating a day-care center for the elderly. Community development organizations and professionals have always engaged in projects, with most working on several at one time. What seems to be changing is that the projects are getting increasingly complex as they absorb the organizational pressures of their parent organization, and they are becoming increasingly autonomous as they involve large numbers of opportunistic partnerships that provide local, regional, and national funding, technical assistance, service provision, and management, each of which is mutually beneficial in accomplishing a unique development effort. A successful complex community development project might involve one or more types of project complexity: 1) multi-organizational collaboration among intervention organizations contributing resources and capacity; 2) multi-functional or

comprehensive objectives, integrating efforts to solve several problems at the same time; 3) multi-jurisdictional coalitions of diverse and even conflicting communities to work on a project of mutual interest. These relations area shown in Chart 1

Insert Chart 1 here.

1. Projects are increasingly multi-organizational collaborations. Foundations like to fund projects that involve several organizations from the start, including universities, local groups, governments, and increasingly other foundations. Indeed, some of the most significant foundation funding programs recently have been collaborative programs funded by several foundations such as the Aspen Institute's Rural Development and Non-Profit Management programs, The Energy Foundation, and others. Federal grants programs also are looking favorably at collaboration; for example the Fund for Rural America (U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1997) explicitly favors very complex collaborative research centers. Local organizations are learning that by pooling resources and administrative expertise, better delivery of resources to needy communities is possible. But equally important, projects by necessity are having to become collaborative because no group wants to put all its resources into only one quite risky project, no group has all the technical skills needed to weave through the myriad regulations and tasks of the project, and no organization can effectively represent all the constituencies that have a stake in the project. This is particularly true in the case of housing and economic development projects which require millions of dollars and are typically located in areas with a history of program failure.

The proliferation of multi-organizational projects is matched by a growing body of research on collaboration. A major conference was held on multi-community collaboration, and in the keynote address Ronald Powers (1992:1) reported that there is a great need to work together because "all parties gain more of whatever it is they value in the collaborative relationship than they can gain by acting independently." Yet, he continued, the potential of achieving such a win-win relationship is complex. Strategies of

collaboration also have been studied at an interorganizational level with great success. Mattessich and Monsey (1992) for example, have summarized nineteen major factors leading to successful collaboration.

2. Community development projects have also become multi-functional with projects striving to address more than one need or task in the community. The interrelation of services means that housing, health, employment, and environmental protection become interconnected in very complex ways at the project level. The line between economic development strategies and community development strategies has become increasingly blurred as business development and community capacity are discovered to be mutually reinforcing. Development organizations and governments are looking to entrepreneurial ventures both as a means to better serve the community and to provide revenue for other projects. Projects that start out with a single focus soon find themselves including additional tasks that complement their initial mission. For example, Asian Neighborhood Design started with housing but found that the target tenant group (recent immigrants in San Francisco's China Town) lacked jobs to pay for available housing, so a training program was started in crafts trades. But trainees could not get jobs because they lacked work experience, and so a factory was started to provide apprenticeships. Thus an integrated program evolved.

Comprehensive or integrated development programs have been embraced by foundations, government policies, and program managers because they respond to the growing awareness that poverty is a complex and multifaceted problem, usually attacked by an uncoordinated set of policies and implementation agencies. Comprehensive development programs respond to this need by coordinating several service delivery efforts within a service area. Another approach, comprehensive community initiatives, solves a range of problems by focusing on linking the needs of the neighborhood and the individual needs of families and individuals living there. A recent unpublished report by the Community Development Research Center at the New School for Social Research has documented the character of comprehensive development initiatives and concludes that projects that clearly combine multiple functions

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and that build institutional capacity in the community are most effective[2]. On the other hand, one must be clear that little is known about the extent of program integration in neighborhoods and communities, or the problems that such integration generates.

3. Multi-jurisdictional strategies are being adopted to meet needs in larger regions including sets of interdependent rural communities and often a mix of urban, exurban, and rural places. Greater awareness of environmental issues and sustainable communities has led to a rapidly expanding scope for environmental impact assessments, including the requirements that communities consider impacts over a whole bio-region. Serving one nominally isolated community is no longer a cost-effective community development strategy because the economy, governmental services, social programs, and development institutions of communities are already regionally interconnected. For example, regional economic clusters are now seen as the locus for economic growth, and theorists of community are increasingly talking of communities of interests displacing the community of place as the locus of important community functions. In a growing set of experiments it has been shown that there is a great benefit in rural communities working together as a cluster (Wells, 1990), along with a growing awareness of the importance of industrial clusters in regions as the fundamental building block of regional economies.

III. Case studies of complex development.

In conversations with leaders of community based organizations, the issue of the complexity of their projects frequently surfaces. They tell how they have adapted to an increasing number of different pressures and how they have had to interweave networks of collaboration in ways they never had to do before. The analysis of two community-based nonprofit development organizations can illustrate some of the dynamics of how these organizations cope with complexity. Both of the selected organizations are about 25 years old, and both are involved in providing affordable housing to low income residents. These two organizations are similarly advantaged because they have stable leadership, superb staff, and neither

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[2] Draft report by Avis Vidal, "Voices from the Field"

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suffered long periods of funding crisis or lack of community support. There are many differences, however--for example, one is rural and the other urban, one is an intermediary providing services to other organizations while the other is primarily a community level service provider, and one is multi-state while the other started out in a neighborhood. The two organizations demonstrate different ways community development projects have reflected the increased complexity of the development task.

Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) in Sacramento, California, is a technical assistance intermediary organization, which was founded as a spin-off of Self-Help Housing of Visalia in order to initially provide community development assistance on issues of infrastructure and management in support of affordable housing throughout the western United States. Over the years their programs have broadened in response to the increasing challenges of providing affordable housing and community improvements to rural, and increasingly urban settings. RCAC's Director said in a recent interview that increased complexity was a daily factor in administration, evidenced for example by the fact that RCAC now manages programs with over 80 cost centers and that administratively it takes six staff just to manage the accounting for the large number of projects and to make proper reports. RCAC's very existence is in response to the need by rural community development organizations for training and technical assistance in the growing complexity of managing community water systems, installing solid waste disposal projects, or financing self-help housing projects. The core of their work is to be involved in "partnerships, technical assistance, and access to resources," according to key themes in their mission. They work throughout the entire western US, including Alaska and Hawaii, and serve a clientele of about 400 organizations, at least 150 of which receive intensive assistance. RCAC increasingly is an active partner (rather than just a trainer) in their client's projects, especially in communities with very complex interconnected needs. They have a staff of 25 and an annual budget of over $5 million. They manage a loan fund and publish four major periodicals. They sponsor at least 25 major training programs each year, and coordinate dozens of

projects. In large measure they exist because of the complexity of the tasks in which their clients are involved.

RCAC's projects are collaborative. Collaboration means that multiple organizations join together to work on a project. RCAC had a lead role in establishing the Pajaro Model Partnership in response to the floods of early 1995 that caused 3000 low income residents of Pajaro to evacuate their low-lying community in Monterey County, about 100 miles south of San Francisco. RCAC had already been working with the California Community Services and Development Agency, which had funded some of RCAC's other projects at the time of the floods, and they knew that the problem was a persistent one of a poor farmworker town without adequate drainage. Up to this time, no one would put money into the community to fix its recurring problems. RCAC went to Pajaro initially at the state agency's request and met with a current client, Pajaro Housing Development Corporation. RCAC then expanded the potential resource base by bringing in the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and through their long term contacts got the Secretary, Henry Cisneros, to visit Pajaro. HUD agreed to participate in a broad project *only if there were other players*. This set the concept of a Model Partnership in motion. Partners included the Monterey County Redevelopment District, several schools, many churches, several utilities and businesses, government agencies including community, county, state, and federal, and nonprofit organizations.

A key first step was obtaining a small seed grant from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation to start building collaboration among community organizations. The Pajaro Model Partnership set about doing an exemplary set of specific activities around which the partners would contribute. The first big victory for the community was the agreement by the large utility, Pacific Gas and Electric, to install Christmas decorations in the town, something no one had done before. This was important symbolically

that things were changing. Over time many small collaborative activities achieved success in the community. Specifically, in just two years the Partnership[3]:

--facilitated the opening of a branch of the county library in town,

--arranged for social service agencies to come weekly to the community to provide services,

--increased access to English-as-a-second-language classes,

--got the police to assign a full-time probation officer to the area,

--closed a substandard housing complex and relocated tenants into subsidized housing,

--approved a 53 unit subdivision for new affordable housing,

--received a donation of land for a child care facility, and

--completed the first phase of a major drainage system to prevent floods from recurring.

RCAC's role in the Partnership was to form a collaborative that included many organizations and then quickly move from the core to the periphery. RCAC was instrumental in putting the initial pieces of the Partnership together, and then worked to turn the agenda of the partnership over to the community. Church groups were initially mobilized to help expand community participation. This typical "third phase" type partnership never was intended to be, nor became, a permanent community organization. It worked by empowering people politically, but more importantly by getting local organizations to utilize their leadership base with the residents and collaboratively solve problems.

While the Pajaro Model Partnership had a multifunctional agenda to meet the complex needs of the community and utilized the capabilities of the collaborators, other multi-functional projects evolve out of the attempt by a few organizations to solve an increasingly complex problem. A recent project in Hawaii clearly illustrates how multifunctional projects can evolve. The Hamakua Sugar Company was the largest sugar cane grower and processor on the Big Island of Hawaii, and when it went bankrupt in 1994 thousands of people lost their jobs. The 400 families living in nine different camps were in danger of

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[3] Based on interviews and June Otow, "The Pajaro Model Partnership: An Innovative Planning Effort." *Pacific Mountain Network News.* December 1996, p4.

losing their plantation-provided housing, but after negotiation with the Union, the bankruptcy court agreed

to turn the housing over to the workers who created the Hamakua Housing Corporation. The families and

their new corporation, however, had no experience with housing maintenance, water systems, street upkeep,

municipal finance, and other aspects of running a complex isolated group of housing, all of which had been

previously handled by the company.

Initially, RCAC was asked to assist in Hamakua just on the issue of water systems, but

subsequently, they realized that the water problem was linked to issues of housing management and

ultimately to other community needs. The people had no experience running a water system, and did not

even understand that it would be costly to do so. A seemingly effective program by the Hamakua Housing

Corporation failed to generate participation or even a willingness by residents to pay for their services.

Outside consultants did not gain local trust. Moreover, when the people who had held good jobs for several

generation remained out of work, it became apparent that economic development was essential.

At about this time the issues involved got so complex that RCAC wrote a grant to hire a

community organizer to build capacity and leadership within the camps and camp associations to take over

the housing projects. As a result of the organizer, people became involved, community priorities were set,

and economic development issues discussed, especially ways to convert the abandoned sugar facilities to

new economic development uses, attract tourists, market local products, establish a museum, improve

transportation systems so people can get jobs in nearby towns, and generally engage in better planning and

financial management.

Thus, RCAC was only able to help work on the water system by first helping to solve a

comprehensive set of other issues. Now one of the plantation communities has a stable organizational base

and has received $1.18 million in federal funds for a new water system, and they have the capacity to run

it and pay for it. Another camp secured local resources to repair the community sewer line. The

comprehensive nature of the Hamakua project involved support from at least five collaborators and set in

motion the links between water systems, community organization, economic development, and multiple services.

RCAC is also involved in projects that are multi-jurisdictional. The ability to do a project for a single community is limited due to finances and technical reasons, especially in small dispersed rural places. RCAC has worked with many Native American Tribes on their water and other problems, and has found that one of the most effective ways to meet community needs is to form what they call, mutual aid networks. At least 15 tribes located in a region east of San Diego receive services from RCAC on water quality. Each has a "water master" who oversees the purity of the water, arranges for maintenance, and operates the system, but because of the size and dispersion of the communities RCAC services were inadequate. RCAC assisted a group of six tribes with common problems to set up a mutual aid network in which the jurisdictions share training, staffing, and many other functions such as joint purchasing. This network, called the Native American Water Masters Association[4], has achieved a number of goals including improving training and issuing certificates which allow members to have more influence when discussion water issues with tribal leaders, and the group has agreed to jointly own, operate, and maintain lab equipment to test water samples, which previously had to be sent outside the area for testing at a high cost. Technical assistance is now provided by a circuit rider who shares responsibility for the several communities.

Summary. These several examples illustrate how RCAC met the challenges of the complex housing and infrastructure needs of small and rural communities throughout the western states. Flood control in Pajaro, water systems in Hawaii, and assisting tribal water masters could not be done directly. Simple projects involving one agency, one program, or one community evolved into multi-organizational, multi-functional, and multi-jurisdictional efforts because there were either good reasons or strong external pressure to do so. In Pajaro, collaboration among agencies was mandated by HUD and it led to a

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[4] Based on interviews and Gilbert Pasqua and David Harvey, "Native American Water Masters Association," *Pacific Mountain Network News*, April 1996

significant list of accomplishments, resulting from the participation of partners who had not previously contributed to the community. The Model Partnership was successful in doing some quick, concrete tasks which were both needed and which had a strong community capacity building effect, often disconnected with the initial problem of flood control. Leadership development and the capacity to plan a community agenda emerged, not as a prerequisite to accomplishment, but as a consequence of the Partnership. In complex collaborations, leadership and community planning strategies may need to evolve out of the organizational structure.

The consequences of being involved in these and many other complex projects are significant for RCAC's organizational structure. The different functions and capabilities within the organization have become so interdependent that a hierarchical organization is unworkable. Whereas RCAC used to be organized around two discrete units working with issues of infrastructure and housing, in the words of a manager,

> "things are so connected in the outside world that we have to adapt and become more connected internally. We used to have people who did drinking water, waste water, solid waste, etc. in one unit and others who did housing design, finance, or construction technology in another. But when we are doing a project we call a meeting and everyone needs to come. We need an organization structure that is more flexible than what is on paper"

RCAC has recently restructured itself not in another variant of an organizational pyramid but as a series of concentric circles based on region or functional specialty, interconnected in a web to service groups of projects.

Finally, RCAC illustrates the advantages in complex organizations of flexibility to respond to project needs and opportunities by collaborating, engaging in integrated programs, and linking resources of many communities. At the same time, RCAC administration has had to invest organizational and staff resources in managing this structural complexity, including an innovative reorganization.

East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation. The second case study of a community development corporation responding to social complexity is the East Bay Asian Local Development

Corporation (EBALDC). At the time it was founded in 1975, a deteriorating warehouse building and designated historic landmark had stood vacant for years at the edge of Oakland's urban Chinatown, a sore reminder of the previous era when this part of Oakland was a vibrant business center. The nearby bustle of hundreds of Chinese businesses and restaurants, major investments in the Asian Pacific Center, and similar developments hid the fact that social service providers for this immigrant community were scattered, often in overpriced buildings. This was the setting into which two recent graduates from University of California, Berkeley, had a dream; they would buy the building, rehabilitate it, and fill it with tenants providing social services to the Asian community. Founders Ted Dang and Andy Gee started this $6 million project "without a nickel," creating the Asian Resource Center. The evolution of this project is a clear example of many complex projects that succeed simply because they are multi-organizational, multi-functional, and multi-jurisdictional.

Collaboration was essential to EBALDC's initial effort. A series of discouraging barriers seemed initially to block the founder's efforts until they built the coalition of nonprofit organizations and service providers who agreed to become tenants, and their rent collectively assured repayment of the loans necessary for the building. The building, now a restored jewel in downtown Oakland, houses a wide array of Asian community organizations such as the Asian Community Mental Health Services, Asian Health Services, Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, Filipinos for Affirmative Action, and the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. In addition, commercial tenants have retail and other space in the building, paying market rates.

Funding for this building, included major contributions from the U. S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the State of California Office of Economic and Business Development, the City of Oakland, the Ford Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation, and at least six other national and local foundations. Faculty members at the University provided key consulting to the founders about the feasibility of the project, how to raise funding, and how to rehabilitate the space.

A local community leader and pastor who was instrumental in founding many Asian organizations in the area helped integrate the vision. In short, EBALDC originated out of a collaborative project.

EBALDC now has assets of $33 million, a staff of 20 professionals, and a reputation for innovative development projects for which it has won numerous awards such as the World Habitat Award and the Fannie Mae Maxwell Award of Excellence. From the early focus on the Asian population in China-town, coalitions are now in place with African-American and Latino groups with whom collaborative projects are completed or being developed.

Collaboration continues in many new projects. For example, EBALDC's most recent project is the Hismen Hin-Nu housing project in a racially diverse neighborhood in East Oakland in conjunction with the San Antonio Community Development Corporation (SACDC)[5]. Hismen Hin-Nu, translated from the indigenous Native American language of the region, means "sungate"--the coming together of many different cultures and peoples. The site, long an eyesore, was an abandoned supermarket and parking lot. The Oakland Redevelopment agency provided a loan of $1.5 million for site acquisition and pre-development. The major project funding of $17 million was obtained from fourteen different sources including the City of Oakland, Wells Fargo Bank, the State of California, Fannie Mae, the Ford Foundation, and the James Irvine Foundation. Federal tax credits for affordable housing were used to make the project work, but the diverse funding from multiple sources was the key to overcoming limitations in private funding. . An interesting collaboration was forged with the Architect, Michael Pyatok and the National Endowment for the Arts which awarded the project a grant of $50,000 to secure art for the project, including a striking sculptured front gate sunburst, mural, exterior art panels, and tile work. In addition to the funding agencies which collaborated to make this project work, a large number of community organizations participated.

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[5] A paper by Cathy Cha for DCRP 268, Community Development, at University of California, Berkeley, contributed to this analysis of Hismen Hin-Nu Terrace (May 1995)

The SACDC partnership was instrumental to building the project, which was over a mile from the Chinatown area where EBALDC worked in the past. Not only did SACDC have local legitimacy in the African-American and Latino communities, it had extensive relationships with businesses in the area. They coordinated many neighborhood workshops to develop program and design the project, and their collaboration eliminated potential turf battles. Hismen Hin-Nu is now a 92 unit affordable housing complex with beautiful high quality apartments with two, three, and four bedrooms and several configurations. A high priority was assuring that the project provided affordable housing for families with incomes as low as 35 percent of the city median income. There were over 1,100 applications for the available 92 units, and EBALDC had to screen tenants for responsibility and character as well as income.

The Hismen Hin-Nu project is multifunctional. In addition to housing it includes a community room, Headstart child care center, office space for nonprofit organizations, and large ground level retail space facing the street to provide necessary retail services. An especially interesting experiment is a "retail incubator" facility called the "Markette" where 50 very small retail outlets can rent flea market sized sales space to build business in a shared facility. These small businesses will be able to take advantage of shared services, training, and some small business loans.

Housing is the programmatic lever by which EBALDC has initiated a new series of comprehensive projects in economic development. The economic development for individuals and families program represents an expression of the traditional housing mission to "help tenants build personal and financial assets and opportunities."[6] This program started as a "Tenant Survival Strategies" program, but it was expanded to emphasize expanding personal and financial assets. A key part is a training effort to build individual financial skills and savings through the Individual Development Account program, which provides classes to tenants on budgeting and financial goal planning. Tenants saving money under this program will have their savings matched by a donation from the Bank of America Foundation. Computers

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[6] EBALDC, Year End Report, 1996

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were placed at housing project sites and residents were trained in their use as part of a multi-site Tenant Computer Education Project. A donation of ten older computers became an opportunity for high school students living at one of the complexes to learn computer repair and upgrading taught by a resident manager. Other economic development programs sponsored by EBALDC include joint shopping trips to discount stores to provide access to bulk buying at large discount stores too far away and too difficult to access without a car. Job-readiness classes were held at one housing project to help people gain skills in looking for a job, preparing resumes, improving interview skills, and thus to find better jobs. A revolving micro-enterprise loan fund is available to commercial tenants and others who need small loans for their businesses. EBALDC staff provide business planning and marketing assistance for the companies located in their residential units. An addition to the comprehensive economic development effort of EBALDC has been their venture development program. Business opportunities are being explored for the tenants, initially from businesses that can receive contracts from the housing projects, and then ultimately firms located in the larger regional economy. These projects are part of a comprehensive economic development strategy linked to housing.

EBALDC with its origins in the Asian community reflects the globalization that has shaped American cities, and over the years since it was founded, EBALDC has seen its role in broader geographic terms. Future projects aim to expand the multi-jurisdictional character of EBALDC's reach. The Hisman Hin-Nu project moved into a multi-ethnic neighborhood over a mile away from other projects, and recently EBALDC collaborated with the African American Development Corporation to purchase and renovate a 9 unit building several miles further from the original downtown location. Other projects are under consideration in nearby cities. This shows how the projects move in a larger regional context and are the catalyst for development throughout the region.

Summary. EBALDC started as a community based organization with the goal of rehabilitating one building, but it is now a multi-faceted award winning organization supporting a growing complexity of

projects across many locations. The complexity of the task of building affordable housing in urban America and of using the housing to leverage improved living conditions for tenants and for their community has led to key projects that are *multi-organizational, multi-functional, and multi-jurisdictional*. However, complex award winning projects such as those done by EBALDC require exceptional management and investment. Experience with Hisman Hin-Nu and at least five other major projects of similar scale has led to major changes in EBALDC. They recognized that, in the words of the Director[7], that "building housing was not enough to help people rise from poverty".

In 1993 EBALDC expanded their mission statement to include development of community human resources as well physical and economic resources, and identified their target service constituencies to include individuals as well as community organizations. During the following several years, the EBALDC board engaged in an extensive internal review and held neighborhood focus groups from which a set of new goals was formed, including a four-pronged program of 1) real estate development of affordable housing; 2) economic development including expanded small business loan program, mixed use residential-business buildings, and expanded neighborhood hiring for all projects; 3) development of community leadership through assisting other nonprofit organizations such as the service providing tenants in the original building, facilitating youth programs, establishing tenant associations at housing projects, and promoting multi-cultural models; and 4) development of the EBALDC internal organizational capacity to manage these diverse functions. Complexity leads to changing goals and missions for those organizations that attempt to respond to its challenge.

In spite of the growth of EBALDC and its internal management capacity, it seems to retain a core focus on its original constituency of less advantaged persons and their community. Moreover, it has retained many aspects of its early organizational culture. The spirit of the founders when they attempted to buy the first building still pervades the organization as reflected in the words of one founder,

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[7] Lynette Lee in EBALDC, Year End Report, 1966.

We, the unwilling, led by the unqualified, have been doing the unbelievable for so long with so little that we now attempt the impossible with nothing. (Andy Gee quoted by Levine 1995)

The essence of the EBALDC effort is thus to be more comprehensive, while focusing on the development of several neighborhoods, including new initiatives in areas with a high proportion of Asians in nearby towns. In short, the organizational lessons from EBALDC are that community development is done by complex projects that link many organizations into comprehensive efforts that expand across many jurisdictions.

IV. Conclusion

The two organizations described in this paper are selected examples of community development organizations that have succeeded in doing very complex projects. But, why did community development have to become so complex? Both organizations became surprisingly complex while balancing the opportunities and constraints associated with meeting their original goals, rather than adopting complex strategies of community development as a management objective for some other explicit reason. Both organizations were startled by the increasing complexity that they were experiencing (though they did not use the word complexity), and both initiated a thorough review of their organizational missions and goals, which led in one case to reorganization.

Community development complexity seems to have resulted from the cumulative response to a number of factors that led to multi-organizational, multi-functional, and multi-jurisdictional projects. In many of the projects examined, collaborators were brought in to lend needed capacity, to share risk, or to gain legitimacy. In other cases, outside funding sources required collaboration. In virtually every case the community development organization perceived both the need to expand its agenda and scope of effort and it saw an opportunity to do so. Finally, other communities with similar problems wanted to collaborate or to extend what was being done beyond community boundaries. While case studies can not prove that these are the decisive factors, future research can establish the role of some of the factors shown in Chart 2:

Insert Chart 2 about here.

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If these case studies show anything, it is that complexity is not a virtue which should be pursued, and that the complexity of modern community development projects is not an accomplishment but a response to the realities of societal complexity. The purpose of this article is not to praise, nor to condemn complexity, but to articulate its character and to explore the many strategies by which complexity emerges in community development efforts. Put another way, faced by social complexity, community development organizations create projects that becomes a little niche in the overall ecosystem, a microcosm under which many dynamics are isolated. The selected case study examples have illustrated some of the dynamics by which community development organizations establish projects that respond to complex challenges of doing development work.

There are many problems associated with complexity. First, by developing projects that accomplish goals in a highly complex system, attention is diverted from the underlying source of the complexity in the first place. A case could be made that there is little justification for the complexity of funding options, the morass of regulatory and administrative rules, and the lack of coordination of social programs that necessitate complex programs in the first place. It would surely be easier on local program administrators if integrated service delivery was a starting premise and if local community development organizations did not have to manage projects in such a complex environment. If funding were available from a centralized source, projects could be more easily managed. The fact that community development organizations are coping within an overly complex system may only mask the extent of the community crisis in America today.

A second problem associated with complexity is that it is not clear if complex projects are unnecessarily vulnerable. In collaborations with many organizations with multiple goals, it is easy for something to go wrong, and case studies of successes are much easier to find than of failures. While this paper is not intended to evaluate success rates, or to compare success in complex projects with single-

organization efforts, it remains unclear how complexity affects success in the complex social environment of community development.

Third, complex projects absorb an enormous toll in terms of administrative time and resources. In RCAC the managerial effort allocated to budgeting, reporting, fund raising, and administration detracts from the ability of top leaders to be creative and to identify opportunities for future projects. The skills of a community development organization leader are increasingly the skills of an administrator rather than a community activist or technician.

Complex projects also have many strengths. First, by having fluid participation with many different organizations, projects are more robust. Each of the participants has a large amount of capacity which is not allocated to the project but which is involved in other projects. The particular project thus can easily draw on resources from several organizations as they are needed. In fact the redundancy (Landau, 1969) of funding sources, technical skills, managerial oversight, legal staff, and public participation may provide many assets to projects.

Complex projects may also generate innovation because the constant recombination of organizations and because the cross fertilization of working on multiple functional tasks break old paradigms and nurture new opportunities. Staff working on complex projects build skills for doing creative new projects for which there is no predetermined model. Boundaries between public and private, between community building and community organizing, between developed and underdeveloped blur, and solutions for the future are potentially invented from the experiences of many little collaborative, comprehensive, and coalition projects.

Complex projects, thus, are a key way in which communities manage the complexity around them, and this provides multiple intervention points for those who want to improve the overall quality of community resources. In the complex society, these complex community development projects are the backbone of a new approach to community development. Multi-institutional projects are not a sign of

inadequacy or an inability of an organization to build necessary capacity, but they are the source of strength in a complex social environment. Whereas community development efforts in the past gave primary focus to building internal community capacity in a wide range of skill areas such as leadership, assessment, planning, financing, and management, the new complex model of community development suggests that a community needs to build skills in forming partnerships around particular projects. In this way, community development networks in poor communities have moved from being strange to being the favored institutional fabric out of which effective community development initiatives must be constructed. The good news is that tapping this capacity is cost-effective, successful, and appropriate for the complexity of communities in the global age.

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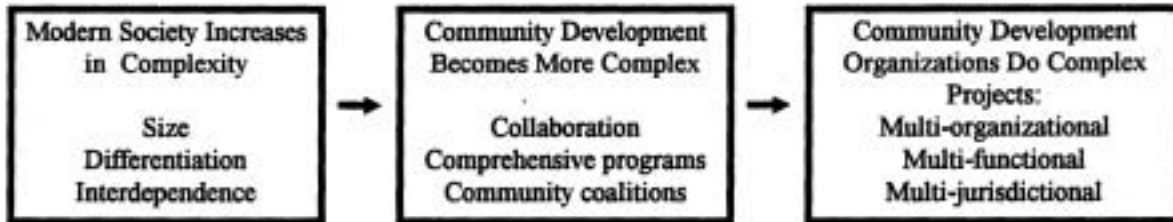
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Chart 1

Complex Society and Complex Community Development Projects

| Modern Society Increases in Complexity

Size
Differentiation
Interdependence | → | Community Development Becomes More Complex

Collaboration
Comprehensive programs
Community coalitions | → | Community Development Organizations Do Complex Projects:
Multi-organizational
Multi-functional
Multi-jurisdictional |

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Chart 2

How Community Development Projects Get More Complex

- Need by community development organizations for more capacity

- Risk sharing

- Building legitimacy with multiple constituencies and interest groups

- Pressure from policy makers and funders

- Opportunities to meet interlocking community needs

- Need to solve multiple problems

- Interests of new communities to share in successful projects