

Community Development Special Issue
Call for Submissions

Special Issue Title: The Dark Side(s) of Community Development

Announcement of Special Issue: November 22, 2021

Deadline for Article Submissions: ~~March 31, 2022~~ *Extended to February 28, 2023*

Submission Site: <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rcod20/current> (when submitting, choose “Dark Side(s)” from the special issue drop-down menu)

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Much has been made about community development and well-being, with scholars, activists, policymakers, and politicians from various perspectives working toward improving local lives and health. Despite the positive connotations of the words “development” and “well-being,” the processes and outcomes of development are not unequivocally positive in terms of impact on community well-being. As with all worthwhile pursuits, ‘dark side’ processes and impacts persist despite good intentions. Whether due to good intentions gone awry or purposeful unethical behavior, harm can and does in community development and well-being efforts. This harm and its antecedents are inextricably connected to power dynamics and (unjust) social (dis)equilibriums in communities.

For this special issue, the guest editors invite articles contributed by expert authors across different fields who will address “dark” community development (CD) as well as provide practice and policy insights. Theoreticians have pushed CD theory forward regarding what CD is and what CD is *not*. While CD theories have roots in political and sociological inquiry, CD definitions are limited regarding their philosophically darker (e.g., harmful) aspects. Current CD definitions focus on shifting equilibriums in positive directions, but might the same tools that are used to create or co-create community *good* be used for *harm, deterioration or destruction*, purposeful or not?

To bolster the positive aspects of CD, some scholars have tried to codify the field. Dale and Newman's (2010) work posits two positions, the second of which connotes sustainability. Are communities (1) getting by? or (2) getting ahead? While these are vital questions, we must also look to dark side approaches so we can ask questions about whether communities are getting worse, falling behind, or experiencing and upholding unjust power structures? Scholars and practitioners must ask: are CD efforts sustainable and positive *for all* and/or *for whom*? Thus, dark side approaches challenge naivety and bias regarding positivity in definitions (Ashdown et al., 2021).

Why the Dark Side? The “dark side approach” has shown high accessibility and interest to students, scholars, and practitioners alike (Talmage & Gassert, 2020; Talmage & Knopf, 2019). Scholars looking to unsettle how we educate others about ethics have called for practice-based but theory-informed approaches (Berglund et al., 2020). Apart from helping refine the definition of community development, dark side approaches help scholars and practitioners ask: (1) who are community developers and well-being workers? and (2) what constitutes success in CD and community well-being work? (Ashdown et al., 2021). Dark side approaches recognize that there is no single correct answer to these questions (though, perhaps, plenty of wrong answers), but dark side approaches expand and recognize the multitude of possible answers for study and practice. Dark side approaches especially emphasize action, dialogue, and reflection (Berglund et al., 2020, Talmage & Gassert 2020).

This special issue will showcase nascent work regarding the darker sides of CD, highlighting key themes and avenues for future inquiry and instruction. Specific attention will be paid to the intersections of intentions, power, and harm. Furthermore, the issue will embrace local and international perspectives, while also intentionally looking to generate pedagogical insights.

If you have any questions about this special issue, please contact either of the editors