Organising in the New Marketplace: Contradictions and Opportunities for Community Development Organisations in the Ashes of Neoliberalism

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Introduction

A number of recent commentators have questioned whether the dual pressures of the global financial crisis (GFC) and the looming global ecological crisis (GEC) will spell the end of neoliberalism, which has dominated international political and policy arenas for almost three decades. Some commentators have suggested that this is a time of great hope for progressives. Yet others warn that neoliberalism is not at all dead, indeed they argue that if the current period represents any great opportunities these are located within a minefield of great danger. As one commentator suggests,

> "This is not a moment for triumphalism, this is a moment for problematising" (Harvey, 2009).

Neoliberalism is an economically driven political ideology that emphasises the primacy of the free market and private enterprise, and promotes individualism and competition. Neoliberal policies centre on: fiscal restraint; privatization; trade liberalization and free movement of capital, goods and services; public service reform; globalised financial codes; and a reduction in the economic role of the state. The impacts of neoliberal policies on community organisations (and therefore on how community development is shaped) have centred on three core areas:

1. Governance: Managerialism has emphasised heightened controls and compliance to ensure both accountability and 'quality' (through processes such as 'quality assurance' and evidence-based practice). Further, pressure to adopt more business-like processes has resulted in greater proceduralisation of governance and management in community based organisations.

2. Practice: The advent of contractual relationships between funders and providers has resulted in a shift of practice away from community development towards service delivery. Some have also suggested a depoliticisation of community development (see for example, Shragge, 2003). Certainly there is an increased emphasis on the provision of essential services to communities, and a growth in practice around building 'social capital' and developing entrepreneurial activities in deprived communities. Community development is now seen as one method amongst many that could achieve service and social capital outcomes.

3. Funding and Financing: An emphasis on contractual funding relationships, a policy framework emphasising increased self-reliance and entrepreneurship, and a focus on enhancing funding efficiencies has left many community organisations (particularly small to medium sized organisations), struggling to find core administrative funding, to attract and retain staff, and to build any kind of long-term or strategic agendas in relation to community development.

If it is the case that the global financial crisis results in a wholesale questioning and reformation of these policies then what that might mean for community development, both in Australia and around the world, could indeed represent an exciting moment in history. Neoliberal policies have certainly trammelled the spaces in which

community development has traditionally been practiced. I agree, however, that this should not be a time for rejoicing nor for smug complacency by those who have long advocated against neoliberal policies. No. This next period represents a crucial moment for creating alternative visions and laying down strong practical and strategic foundations for how community development can represent an important part of addressing the ongoing economic, environmental, political and cultural challenges that communities will face into the future.

What is needed is not a wholesale dismissal of notions that have been overly privileged through neoliberalism, but a radical reflection and a problematising of concepts such as self-help, market-based solutions and entrepreneurship, to ask if they have anything to offer community development into the future. What the neoliberal trammelling of community development should do is to make us sceptical of *any* 'new', historically emptied and cleaned up visions of community or society. It should not in any way cause us to reject economics nor an understanding of the market in community development – but it should make us wary of any uncritical acceptance of panaceas, dogmas or analyses that offer singular causes or solutions for poverty and injustice.

This paper begins by presenting a more complex understanding of how community development workers and organisations react and respond to neoliberalism. It is not the case, as some authors have assumed, that individuals or organisations have singular or simple responses to complex policy systems. Rather, our responses are complex and contradictory and result in psychological and ideological entanglement. Understanding this complexity can help us to develop more realistic and strategic responses and avoid the disappointments that are inevitable when we believe that singular, 'purist' ideological responses will ever be possible.

Taking the potential demise of neoliberalism as a starting point, this paper then explores some of the more tricky legacies of the project for community development and more particularly for the future of community based organisations. These are legacies that cannot merely be dismissed as bastions of the neoliberal project. Rather, they represent real and current challenges for community organisations while also opening up potential opportunities within these organisations. The paper examines two particular concepts that dominate the space in which community development currently operates – concepts that have evolved or been sharpened by a neoliberal worldview or interpretation of development. These are:
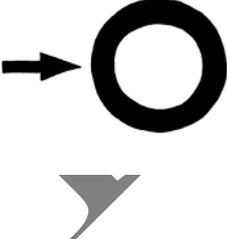
- **Self-Reliance**: a growing number of commentators have critiqued the dependence of community organisations on state funding, suggesting that they should develop greater levels of self-reliance. On the other hand, there is an emerging question with community organisations about whether they are becoming nothing more than an arm of government (see for example, Evans and Shields, 2005; Keevers et al, 2008).
- **Entrepreneurship**: with the rise and rise of social and community enterprise as a mechanism for addressing all sorts of local and social ills, it is time to reassess what we mean by market-based approaches in community development. What do they offer, what are the possibilities, and what are the challenges of such orientations?

These concepts are not 'bad' or 'good' for community organisation in and of themselves. Their impact on the ways in which organisations operate and on how they conceptualise community development very much depends on how they engage with the concepts and whether they merely accept the intellectual and practical frameworks that are built around them by policymakers. The paper will examine both

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the challenges and the opportunities for community organisations inherent in these concepts.

Neoliberal Twister:
Unlike some other analyses of community development's orientation towards neoliberalism, I do not think there are any singular responses that are or could be taken either by individual workers or by community organisations. The realities of our relationships with any hegemonic structures are, of course, much more complex than those often presented in theory – which tend either towards a binary form (you're either for or against neoliberalism), or other forms of singular response choices ("of, with or against" neoliberalism, as outlined by Geoghegan and Powell, 2008). In effect, workers and organisations are positioned in what could be seen as a professional game of twister[1] in their day to day activities, which sees them taking on any one of at least four or five different positions simultaneously, in parallel or contiguously. Four of these positions are outlined in the table below.

Frame of Engagement	Orientation or response to the dominant system (in this case, neoliberalism)
	Accepting the system Believing that neoliberalism is currently the only framework for development and accepting our place in it as an inevitable reality of life in community organisations. This position would argue that TINA (There Is No Alternative) is our current reality
	Opposition to the system Resistance and opposition to neoliberalism as a force in shaping society. Neoliberalism is the enemy and must be resisted.
	Alternatives to the system Building and developing small scale alternatives to the market economy and thereby creative alternatives to the dominant paradigm of neoliberalism.

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[1] Twister is a game developed in the 1970s where groups of people twist their bodies into complicated shapes whilst touching as many spots on a mat as possible.

	Engaging the system to create change
	Linking to and developing understandings of the market in order to deliver outcomes of social justice.

Table 1: Different responses to neoliberalism that organisations and individuals engage in often simultaneously.

In any given organisation all four responses are very likely to operate simultaneously, each with its proponents and detractors, and each serving the organisation in different ways.

For example, an organisation may be addressing the needs of people experiencing financial exclusion. They may have accepted the realities of funding and be operating a large program funded jointly by government and a corporate partner that seeks to address one of the core symptoms of financial exclusion by offering access to safe and affordable credit options. This may involve all sorts of challenges as they negotiate the high wire act of cross-sector partnerships. They may or may not be able to honestly and robustly talk with and argue with their partners about models of practice and relative impacts. They may need to engage with the public relations machines of their partners. They may be accused by other community organisations of being co-opted or compromising their values in exchange for funding. At the same time, however, the organisation may be engaging in other forms of opposition. They may be part of alliances that are lobbying government and corporations, advocating for changes in regulations, laws and policies that exclude people from mainstream financial services. They may also be engaging in small scale building of alternative services, such as credit co-operatives or savings and loans circles. And they may indeed be exploring options for establishing new forms of financial institutions that could focus on addressing financial exclusion using a synthesis of market and social analyses. Organisational responses to neoliberalism are inevitably tricky and messy.

Most organisations in the current environment have to accept the system and its foibles to a large extent (particularly when resources for funding community organisations are scarce and competitive). However, this does not preclude them from activism nor innovation in how they engage in building responses to dominant paradigms such as neoliberalism.

In order to engage effectively, however, community organisations need to position themselves strategically and to focus on building their internal and external power relations in ways that helps them to avoid the most toxic position on the neoliberal twister game – that of victim. I did not include this in the table above, however, it is definitely a response to a dominant paradigm - indeed it could represent a more sinister form of acceptance.

Frame of Engagement	Orientation or response to the dominant system (in this case, neoliberalism)
Ω	Victim of the system. Blaming the system for all the failings of an organisation. This blame is expressed in hopelessness and cynicism, bitterness and scorn for all other positions.

Table 2: A fifth organisational and individual response which could be a more sinister form of acceptance

How does this analysis help us?
Understanding that our reactions and responses to policy frameworks such as neo-liberalism are complex, messy and multifaceted, can help us to engage with some of the contradictions of our professional and organisational lives. It can also assist us in developing some frameworks or strategies about how we can juggle such contradictions in our practice. Finally it can point to the importance of naming and integrating our actions and contradictions in a way that is transparent and accessible to those around us – particularly the constituents of our organisations, to whom we are ethically and practically accountable.

Concepts that have come to represent neoliberal policy are often depicted as monolithic 'givens', in ways that make it difficult to see the myriad of interpretations that any concept can have, and to harness the opportunities for response that are inherent even in evocative discourses. One of the challenges of responding lies in opening up our 'thinking' frameworks in community development. The following sections unpack the two concepts in order to elicit a potential range of ways in which they can impact community organisations and still evoke a range of responses. It is important to emphasise that the aim of examining these concepts is not to present formulaic 'answers' but rather to unlock some of the ways in which we can move beyond 'TINA' (There Is No Alternative)[2] responses.

Self-Reliance
Neoliberal policy emphasizes self-reliance and autonomy, with agents such as community organisations pushed to take greater responsibility for themselves. But what does self-reliance really mean in this context? Self-reliance is a reliance on oneself, ones own powers and resources; it is linked to and should lead to independence. In effect, to speak of the self reliance of organisations, means that that they develop a reliance on their own capabilities, their own judgements and their own resources. There are a number of dimensions to self reliance in organisations – three of which are outlined in the table below. There may be other dimensions in understanding self reliance as it relates to community organisations (for example, cultural self-reliance may be important for some organisations), however, the point to be made here is that there are dimensions of self reliance that take it beyond a narrow 'financial independence' interpretation.

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[2] For more explorations of TINA…see Shuman, 2007; Hutchinson, Mellor and Olsen, 2002).

Dimensions of Self Reliance	Potential Understandings of Each Dimension
Economic Self Reliance	The ability to rely on one's own economic and financial resources and to develop an independent economic base which enables one to resource oneself.
Political Self Reliance	The ability to build and sustain an independent political power base which can assist in mobilizing support and strategic action.
Intellectual Self Reliance	The ability and confidence to develop independent thought and to build and apply ones one knowledge base in ones work.

Table 3: Three Dimensions of Self Reliance as they relate to Community Organisations

The neoliberal interpretation of self-reliance is one that to date has been very narrowly focused on community organisations developing economic independence.

Recent years have seen increasing commentary about the supposedly growing welfare dependence of both individuals and community organisations. Calls have repeatedly been made for reducing dependence on government funding, and seeking other forms of income such as philanthropic donations or earned income from the sale of goods and services. In taking a deeper and closer look at this so called 'growing dependence' of community organisations on government funding, however, a much more complex picture starts to emerge.

The vacuum left by government as they moved away from direct delivery of social service programs over the past two or three decades has had to be filled, in many cases, by under-funded and overworked community organisations. The service transfer from government to community organisations was, necessarily, linked to a resource transfer, but not a full resource transfer, and certainly not a transfer that represented any kind of 'gift' or bonus to the community sector. The transfers have come in the form of contractual service agreements which have been tightly controlled, competitive in nature and highly monitored. Indeed some have argued that through the contractualisation of services community organisations have effectively become an "arm of government, albeit at arms length" (Keevers et al, 2008;16).

In addition, the resource transfer has actually reduced the core funding of many organisations through a shift away from organisational funding to program and project funding. The community organisation is now seen in a more segmented fashion as playing a 'project management' role rather than as representing a wholistic entity operating within a locality or with a community of identity. This has put a greater onus on community organisations to build their own sources of core funding because traditional funders such as governments see such costs as 'externalities' to the actual provision of services to those in need. Though this has been addressed to some extent by the advent of "full cost recovery" funding measures, such measures are not yet mainstream in the Australian context, nor, it would seem in many other contexts that have been affected by neoliberal policy reforms.

In many ways, neoliberal policies have resulted in a double-bind for community organisations. On the one hand there is increased pressure for organisations to develop a level of economic self-reliance. On the other hand, there is increased managerial pressure – accountability and monitoring that takes time away from service delivery. Further, increased focus on binding service agreements have resulted in strict controls on project budgets which limit the abilities of organisations to build up reserves or savings, which over time could help them to build a measure of independence. The double bind suggests that Government is saying "we don't want you to be so dependent…go and help yourselves", while on the other hand also saying, "you can't be trusted to hold your own resources or to decide your own futures". In other words, "we are in control, but we want you to be more self-reliant within our set guidelines, which we will monitor".

Despite the veneer of 'partnership', and the rhetoric of self-reliance, no structural changes have been made that could enable greater levels of economic 'self reliance' in community organisations. Therefore what is happening in practice in many places (particularly for small to medium sized organisations), is increasingly more 'control and command' in nature, which in turn contributes to building the very dependence that neoliberalism supposedly seeks to counter.

What complicates this further and depresses much resistance to this double-bind is the internalisation of the ''arm of government'' notion that has occurred in many organisations. Community organisations who struggle to gain adequate levels of income have effectively **become** their government funded programs. There is little differentiation between the government funded programs and their core purposes or objectives, and for many of these organisations, a loss of funding would mean the demise of the whole organisation. There is a culture of fear that is built within command and control structures whereby people actually lose or forget their capacity for independence – whether that be independence of thought, word or deed.

So, organisations become stuck in patterns where the only way to develop is to apply for more and more funding, even if this takes them away from their original organisational objectives. Further, managers become fearful of robust dialogue and debate with funders or of refusing clauses in contracts, or refusing to deliver increased outcomes with reduced funds. Effectively this represents a way in which the community sector has become colonised by neoliberal policy regimes. The label of 'welfare dependency' actually hides a complex array of power relationships between those who hold the purse strings, and those who exist to address the issues of communities in need. Unfortunately such colonising donor-recipient, master-servant power relationships are never easy to address. They require multiple approaches.

Opportunities within the self-reliance agenda

In a neoliberal policy environment 'self-reliance' is framed as a narrow cul-de-sac which affords community organisations very few opportunities. However, the notion of self-reliance itself offers a much broader and more progressive vision for community organisations. This vision though is not one that can be delivered from above or implemented using funding agreements or policy structures. It is one that must begin from within organisations themselves and it engages with all the dimensions of self-reliance rather than being limited to economic self-reliance (though it does not ignore this dimension either!). Engaging with progressive interpretations of self-reliance enables organisations to hold on to what is core to their values and vision, but also creates opportunities to plan the future of their work in ways that are aligned with this core rather than be swayed by the shifting sands of

policy-driven service demands. Some of the opportunities this broader interpretation offers community organisations are outlined in the table below.

Dimensions of Self Reliance	Possible progressive actions that community organisations could undertake to build self-reliance
Economic Self Reliance There are strategic, bottom-up reasons for community organisations to develop their economic self-reliance, such as ensuring that community development and social justice objectives are able to survive and weather policy and political changes; fund experimental and advocacy work; fund innovative programs that don't fit government guidelines; and redistribute wealth and opportunities to their constituent groups.	• Strategically diversifying income streams with the purpose of building the capacity of the organisation to meet it's intended objectives in the long term. • Setting up financial systems so that restricted funding can be clearly separated from unrestricted funding and can therefore be separately reported on. • Building assets and developing a strategic focus on wealth rather than just income, but using this to maximize impact and redistribute to constituents. It's not about becoming wealthy or self-reliant as an end in itself.
Political Self Reliance This recognizes that self-reliance in community organisations is not about shunning external assistance. On the contrary, political self-reliance is about building the interdependence of smaller, community-based organisations such that they can advocate together about issues that concern the group. Of course in an ideal world peak bodies should play this role, however in many contexts now peak bodies are in very similar positions as the organisations they seek to represent!	• Developing networks, alliances and associations that create political dimensions to the work of smaller community organisations and provide the opportunity for advocacy work to progress across the sector. • Developing Manifestos for community development work in smaller organisations. • Seeking allies within mainstream bureaucratic, corporate and political structures - there are always people within structures who are willing to engage around strategic change and they are worth their weight in gold!!!! • Building new structures so that smaller organisations can develop strategic and economic advantages that some of the larger organisations have.
Intellectual Self Reliance The community sector has a great deal of knowledge and a great many skills, and many within the sector are masters of invention (particularly given that R&D are not often formally funded). Intellectual self reliance acknowledges this knowledge base, builds on it and stimulates the sector through collective learning opportunities. This dimension of self-reliance requires the development of a degree of self-confidence within organisations and the sector as a whole.	• Finding ways to develop new perspectives on the standardized and procedural materials produced *for* the community sector and develop materials *by and for* the sector • Synthesising knowledge and demonstrating the unique perspective of community sector organisations.

Table 4: Potentially Progressive Interpretations of Self-Reliance in the Community Sector

If self-reliance is to be a progressive and strategic concept for community organisations into the future, then the questions that face are not necessarily just economic and political. They are also cultural. A cultural stance in community development requires a much more reflexive approach to our work. It is not reflexive as in navel gazing sans action, but rather, reflection in action.

A cultural stance asks questions about how we form, shape, share the story, the meaning of what we're doing when we engage in community development and how

we see ourselves as organisations and as a sector :
- Are we the handmaidens of government?
- Are we the beggars holding out our bowls at the doors of corporate foundations?
- What is the character we are wanting to cultivate in our sector? What are we seeking to grow or build?
- What do we need to develop in our organisations and in our sector in order to build our objectives within the current environment?

What these questions point to is the need for understanding our context and our responses to this context in more strategic and wholistic ways. This in turn will help us to design and build the sorts of entities that we want to be into the future rather than succumbing to being defined as individualised and segmented programs and projects. In order to do this we need to build the confidence and the capacity to innovate back into our sector. This leads us on to the next concept.

Entrepreneurship

The last decade has seen the advent and growth of notions of 'social entrepreneurship' and the push for community organisations to become more entrepreneurial in their approaches. If we examine, for a moment, the origins and definitions of entrepreneurship, we see why neoliberal policies would support such developments.

Historically an entrepreneur is seen to be someone who creates value in new ways, someone who is an economic change agent and harnesses opportunities to create innovative ways to reorganises productive activities (see for example, Dees, 2001; Martin and Osberg, 2007). Martin and Osberg (2007) distinguish social entrepreneurship from both social service provision and social activism, suggesting that what distinguishes them centres on the nature of their actions, their outcomes and the scale at which the outcomes are delivered. Whilst these authors and others are keen to point out that social entrepreneurship is centred on "the primacy of social benefit" or "the pursuit of mission-related impact", there is no doubt that the notion of ''entrepreneurship'' injects social and community change with particular individualised market-oriented values and practices (which, as we shall see, represents a rather narrow interpretation of what constitutes a 'market').

Entrepreneurship is inevitably reliant on the efforts, innovations and vigour of individuals who are labelled 'entrepreneurs', those people who have the vision and the drive to create the new value in the system, which will thus lead to lasting change. Engendering a culture of entrepreneurship in the community sector necessarily leads to an individualizing of social change – a seeking out of the particular individuals who could harness and organize new ideas, and who we could reward as the instigators of the resultant change. This is not a new discussion in community development as there has been countless discussions and debates about the role of 'leadership' in change processes. What is new in the discussions of entrepreneurship, however, is the injection of business frameworks into the defining of who these individuals are. With this injection come some quite profound cultural assumptions and a new form of gendered thinking.

Within the fervour that social entrepreneurship has whipped up, community organisations are often positioned in ways that are both unhelpful and denigrating. They have been portrayed as inefficient, ineffective, unresponsive, lacking discipline and rigour, and as needing new models of change. The social entrepreneur is

positioned as someone who has seen the possibilities in this dire situation, and who is able to take the unquestionable passion that exists in the social / community sector but apply to it the discipline and rigour of the business sector in order to create ''real'' change. In other words, a core discourse underlying the advent of entrepreneurship as a force for social change is that the feminine 'passion' of the community sector needs to be tempered and disciplined by the masculine 'rigour' of business and market thinking in order to address some of it's inherent weaknesses and create the ''real change'' that is necessary.

What underlies this is an assumption that the domain of social and community change requires the know-how that has been developed in the business sector, and that as such, anyone from the business world can come in and show the hapless community organisations how they could become more entrepreneurial! This may appear to be a little overstated for dramatic effect, but this emphasis stems from a tiredness of the consequences I've seen when ''pure business'' systems are willy-nilly applied in the community sector. There are some profound contradictions and misunderstandings wrapped up in the notion that somehow if we "add entrepreneurship and stir" we will solve either local or global problems of poverty, injustice or inequality. The assumptions underpinning this position need to be absolutely challenged and disputed. This should not, however, stop us from a closer examination of what opportunities exist within the concept of entrepreneurship.

Opportunities within the entrepreneurship agenda
Despite a growing interest in strengths oriented approaches to community development (such as ABCD, Asset Based Community Development), the shadow side of the increasing emphasis of service delivery as the lifeblood in community organisations is the inevitable creeping in of deficit thinking and paternalism in relation to what is best for ''people in poverty''. As we increasingly complete logframes and structure our organisations around delivering certain kinds of outcomes, our thinking horizons in relation to the possible opportunities for alternative courses of action are often reduced. Engaging critically but actively with the notion of 'entrepreneurship' could potentially open up some of this thinking and broaden our methodological horizons.

However, given the individualised focus of 'the entrepreneur', perhaps it may be more apt for the community sector to focus on the 'action' of entrepreneurship which could be applied at collective and organisational levels. ''Innovation'' is potentially a more potent concept for community organisations than the increasingly overused and much more individualised concept of entrepreneurship. Innovation involves putting new ideas – new methods, new products, new systems and new services - into practice in the community sector, both in response to need and in preparation for new circumstances brought on by wider, structural shifts (such as will be inevitable over coming years with processes such as climate change).   However, innovation is not just about adding 'new' value – in fact, most innovations and new ideas are not really altogether new at all. Rather, innovation can involve:
   o New combinations of things
   o New perspectives on things
   o The addition of new ingredients to things (new knowledge, skills and interpretations for example)
   o The breaking of ingrained assumptions, traditions, rules and conventions about how things work.
So, innovation can occur *within* activities such as service provision and social activism and not just be a wholly new way of undertaking the work of social change. Engaging with and fostering innovation in community organisations opens up different ways of seeing issues which have become 'stuck' or stale, and it can help us

to ask the hard questions of ourselves as workers and of each other. Are the things that we are doing working? Are they making a positive difference? Are there other ways in which we could approach these issues?

Social Entrepreneurship	Social Innovation
Predominantly individualised	Can be individual or collective or systemic
Focussed in on creating new 'value', so is linked much more to generating returns, even if these are social returns	Very broad concept that looks at creation of new knowledge and skills across the spectrum of social change New methods, new products, new systems, new services or new perspectives on old traditions
Different to service provision and social activism	Can be focussed on service provision or social activism or any other form of social change
Tending towards a focus on 'market-based' approaches to social change	Not focussed on particular approaches – opens up a broad spectrum of possibility within and across many different approaches

What this engagement with innovation could open up for example, is a much less defensive exploration of the potentials of market-based approaches within community development. To some extent a relentless alignment of community development with particular ideological positions, has reduced our capacity for more complex assessments and debates about the role of the market in creating change. There is no doubt what so ever that there are some functions of a just society that should never be subjected to the whims of market-based approaches – which provide a public good that has little or no place in the market. But this does not mean that ALL activities that occur within and across community organisations are part of the public good and that therefore NO market-based approaches can or should be used. Further, it is not the case that people living in poverty (who are often the core focus of community development activities) operate in a binary marketplace – either they access goods and services that are free / funded fully by welfare systems, or they access goods and services from fully commercialized providers (as illustrated in figure one below).

Either 'Market'

or

'No Market'

Goods and Services that are free and fully funded by government or philanthropy

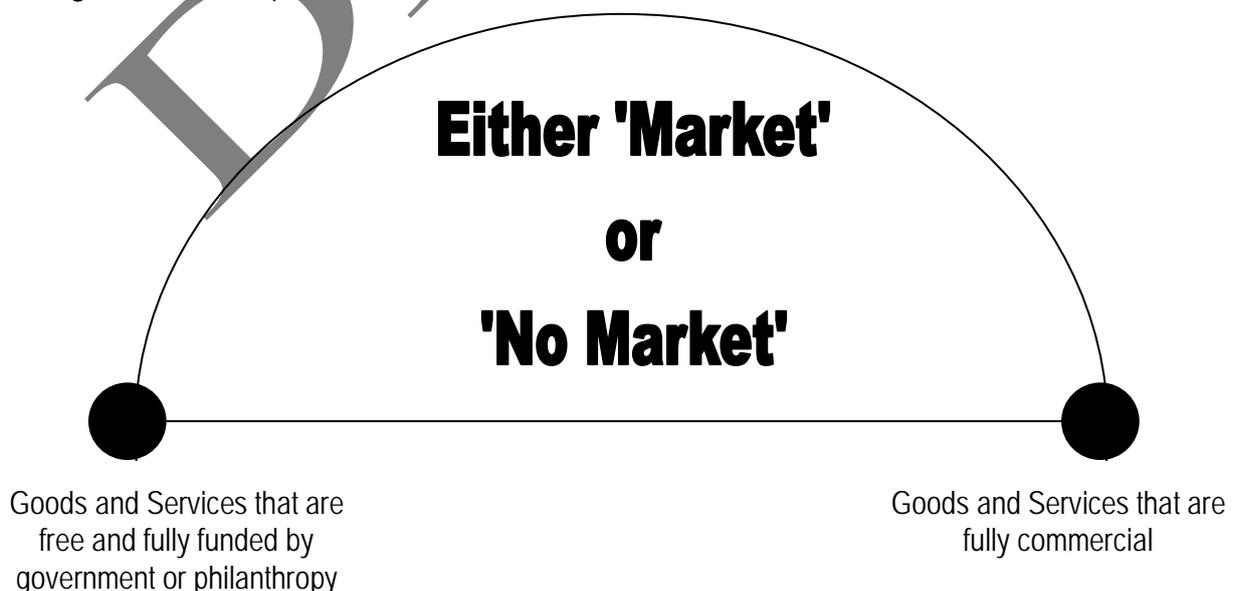Goods and Services that are fully commercial

Figure 1: Binary interpretation of the Markets that people living in poverty access

This binary interpretation does not enable workers or organisations to explore any options of market-based approaches beyond these confines. So we have the inevitably tedious arguments that erupt between welfarists (who believe that all services provided to people living in poverty should be provided free of charge) and the so called marketeers (who believe in the universal application of user-pays systems), which very rarely move beyond ideology. What if, however, we opened up our thinking to explore the full range of 'marketplaces' that people (including but not exclusively focussed on people living in poverty) actually already access? Figure two below outlines a broader spectrum of ''marketplaces'' that people can potentially access – that is, places and spaces in which and through which people are able to access goods and services that they need to survive.
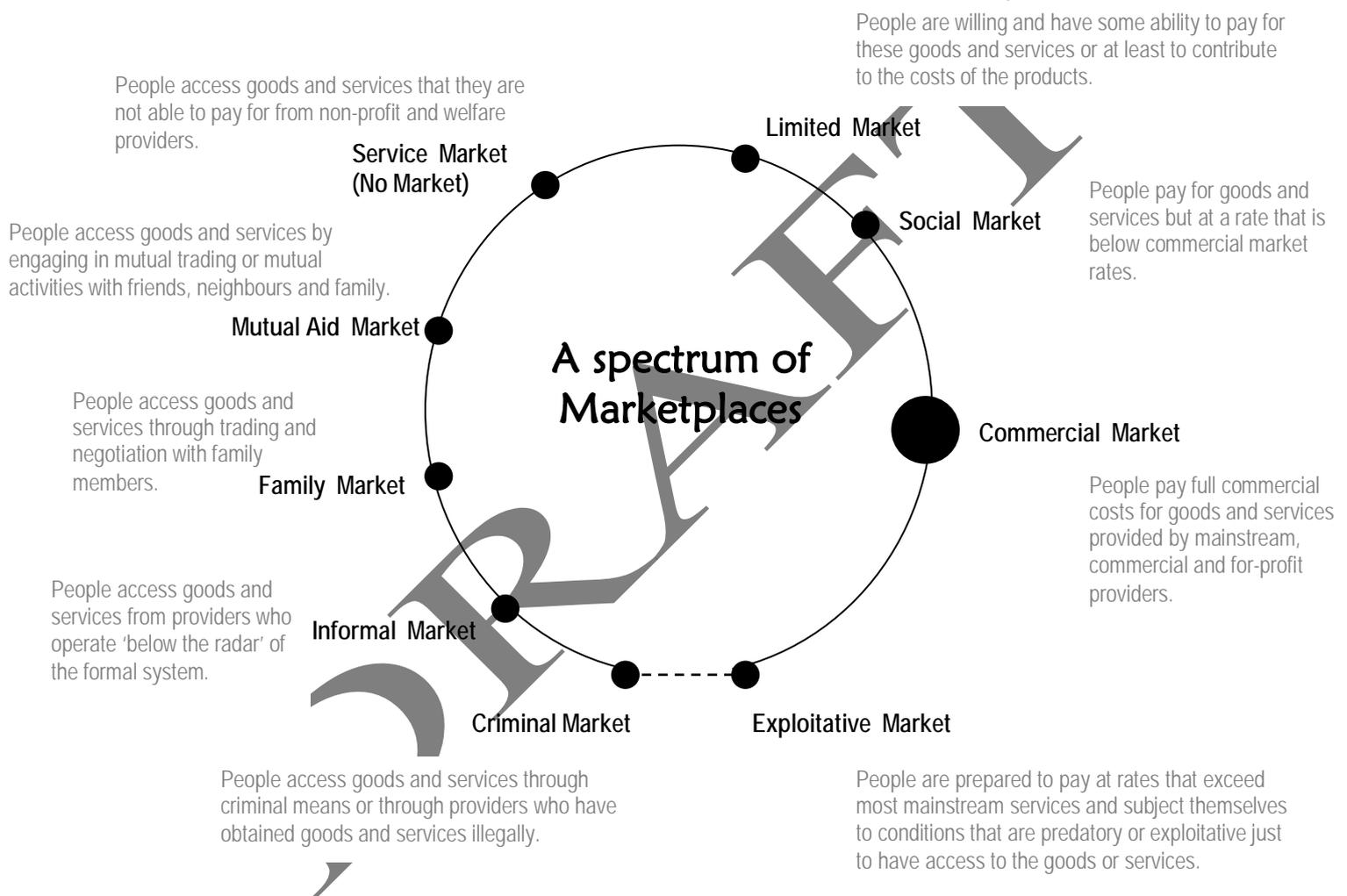
People are willing and have some ability to pay for these goods and services or at least to contribute to the costs of the products.

People access goods and services that they are not able to pay for from non-profit and welfare providers.

**Service Market
(No Market)**

Limited Market

Social Market

People pay for goods and services but at a rate that is below commercial market rates.

People access goods and services by engaging in mutual trading or mutual activities with friends, neighbours and family.

Mutual Aid Market

A spectrum of Marketplaces

People access goods and services through trading and negotiation with family members.

Family Market

Commercial Market

People pay full commercial costs for goods and services provided by mainstream, commercial and for-profit providers.

People access goods and services from providers who operate 'below the radar' of the formal system.

Informal Market

Criminal Market

Exploitative Market

People access goods and services through criminal means or through providers who have obtained goods and services illegally.

People are prepared to pay at rates that exceed most mainstream services and subject themselves to conditions that are predatory or exploitative just to have access to the goods or services.

Figure 2: A More complex understanding of the many different 'marketplaces' with which people living in poverty engage (from Burkett, forthcoming)

This presents a very different picture of potentials for engaging in the 'market' than the limited picture often presented – and that opens up all sorts of possibilities if our organisations were open to exploring market-based approaches within community development. Of course community organisations would want to avoid engagement with the bottom two marketplaces, but knowing that they are part of the spectrum and

learning from the ways in which people engage with them could be an important part of developing alternatives to them.

As can be seen from this figure, market-based responses do not necessarily refer to fully commercialized 'user pays' services. There are many ways in which community development workers and community organisations can engage with innovative and yes, even entrepreneurial, market-based responses that will not conflict with social justice principles and could even alleviate or abolish poverty.

A key challenge that entrepreneurship offers community organisations and community development is to abandon simplistic notions of the potential of 'entrepreneurial' activities for social change, but not thereby dismiss **all** market-based responses to change. Entrepreneurship can challenge community organisations to more closely examine their own 'marketplace', to more closely look at the 'marketplaces' that their constituents access and through this to open up thinking about the range of ways in which the two can intersect to best meet the social objectives that they strive towards.

Conclusion:
The neoliberal agenda may be shifting with the combined forces of the GFC and the GEC, but it is likely that this will not mean that the core tenets of the framework are burnt to the ground. Indeed what rises from the ashes may be a neoliberal phoenix that involves even greater levels of control, reform and pressure. The challenge that faces progressive in the community sector and beyond, is to respond in the spirit of idealism and creativity, and to ground this hopefulness in a clarity of purpose and in a strong value base. The principles of social justice and community development are perhaps more relevant than ever as inequality grows manifestly larger and new forms of ecological injustice become established. The push towards uniformity, bureaucracy and standardisation will no doubt relentlessly continue – however our responses to this can go far and beyond bland acceptance or cynicism or victimhood.

- **Understand what is happening** – understanding and analyzing the environment, contradictions and all;
- **Unpacking the rhetoric** – and opening up complex interpretations of monolithic, TINA concepts;
- **Acknowledging that we will have complex, contradictory and conflicting responses**…and sharing what these might be transparently and openly;
- **Positioning and framing our organisations' purposes clearly** – who we are, how we work, what we want to achieve, how we want to achieve these goals, what range of options we are prepared to engage in to resource the change we want to see.
- **Planning and Engaging strategically** – developing strategies that guide us towards our goals and that can serve as signposts for the journey ahead. Re-enlivening planning processes so that they serve organisations and their constituents rather than service agreements.

This is a time of possibilities – an opportunity for the community sector to move beyond positioning merely as ''the third sector'' caught between the two dominant players. We are more than our funded programs and we are part of a sector that is fundamental to the future of democratic and just societies. We cannot allow neoliberalism to atrophy or polarise our thinking into pure opposition. The future is much more lively than this and the possible responses are perhaps even more prevalent than we have yet dared to imagine. The future is not inevitable and TINA is merely one amongst many perspectives that can shape our community futures.

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