Flirting with Danger: Practice Dilemmas for Community Development in Disaster Recovery

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Abstract

This article takes as its focus the contribution of community development to disaster recovery. It examines the experiences of community development officers employed in response to a series of devastating natural disasters within the state of Queensland, Australia. Utilising the lens of the "dilemmatic space", the article reveals three practice dilemmas for community development workers in disaster recovery: the struggle over discourse, the difficulties of dual accountabilities and the challenges of legitimacy in intervention. The article concludes by examining the implications of these findings and the need for what is called ecological or organic practice to be applied to the disaster recovery context.

Introduction

During the past few years the world has witnessed a proliferation of government and non-government led community development (CD) initiatives responding to disasters. So great has been this increase that Jim Ife champions a whole new dimension of community development that he calls "survival development" namely, community development that takes place around major issues of human survival (2013). Building on this relatively new field, the article draws on empirical research and examines the work of state-employed community development officers (CDOs) engaged in a response to natural disasters within the state of Queensland, Australia. As a result of a series of natural disasters, government bodies made the largest new financial investment in community development that has occurred in Queensland in years. This provided a timely opportunity to examine elements of community development practice as deployed by the state. The purpose of the article is therefore two-fold. On one hand, it examines state-led community development *practice* through the lens of "practice dilemmas" (Hoggett, Mayo, & Miller, 2009), a concept that is particularly helpful in illuminating the practice-policy interface challenges. On the other hand, the article considers practice dilemmas for CD workers within the relatively *new field* of disaster preparation and response contexts. Such considerations are helpful as CD

practitioners attempt to open ongoing dialogue with more traditional emergency management practitioners and policy makers.

The article proceeds by first explaining the context of the research, and locating it within a body of literature. Following discussions about the research methodology and CDO roles, three main findings are considered through the lens of the dilemmatic space. We conclude by examining the implications of these findings and the need for what we call ecological or organic practice. In doing so we take heed of Stallings' (2007) warnings about context and generalizability. While there may be learning that can be extracted to the global south, we do not pretend to speak to this context. Our study is located in the geographic South but the political, ideological and socioeconomic global North.

Background

The impetus for this work is the series of natural disasters in Australia, beginning in December 2010, in the state of Queensland. The widespread devastation caused by flood and cyclone-related disasters was the most severe in living memory (Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry (QFCI), 2011, Interim Report, p. 27).

The Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry (2012) reveals that 33 people died in the 2010-2011 floods and three remain missing. Over 78% of the state (an area bigger than France and Germany combined) was declared a disaster zone and more than 2.5 million people were affected. The floods were immediately followed by Tropical Cyclone Yasi in North Queensland. By March 2011, 99% of Queensland was disaster-declared (Queensland Reconstruction Authority, 2011). In response to the 2010-2011 weather events, the Community Recovery and Wellbeing Package ($35.82m) was announced in April 2011. Part of this package included $20m over two years until June 2013, to enable the "implementation of a community development approach to the reconstruction and recovery of Queensland" (Department of Communities, 2011a, p.1). A key component of this package was the Community Development and Engagement Initiative (CDEI) that funded community development officers to work in disaster recovery across Queensland (Department of Communities, 2011b; LGAQ, 2011a, 2011b). The CDO positions were officially "created to help the community work out its own recovery needs and implement projects, activities, and events that contribute to the community's recovery, resilience, and future disaster preparedness…The overarching aim of all the CDO roles is to enable a strong and self-reliant community by building community ownership and supporting the achievement of community driven initiatives" (LGAQ, 2011a, p. 10). The CDOs were employed by local governments (regional councils) but also reported to the CDEI administrator, the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQb). At the time of data collection, Queensland had 73 local government areas. Of these, 17 local government areas across Queensland were considered hardest hit by the flood and cyclone disasters. These became the locations in which the 24 CDOs were deployed.

The disasters created a sense of urgency, exacerbated by the political climate of the time. At the inception of the CDEI in April 2011, Queensland was led by an increasingly unpopular Labor government, which ultimately went on to suffer a landslide defeat to the conservative Liberal National Party (LNP) in the March 2012 election. This highly demanding political environment and the urgency surrounding Queensland's disaster

recovery efforts meant that the CDEI was under pressure to deliver tangible results from the outset. Boin and t'Hart (2003, p. 546) observe that in a modern "risk society" (Beck, 1992) there is a substantial gap between citizen expectations and leadership efforts in preventing and containing crises. They argue that, "the increased scope, complexity, and political salience of crises raises the stakes for policy makers" (p. 546). In the Queensland context, the time constraints and political nature of the program – involving federal, state, and local levels of government, highly sensitive issues of death, grief, loss and distress, economic fallout, and media attention – all placed enormous pressure on CDOs to have highly visible aspects to their work.

Community as a site of policy intervention
Previous literature has identified three main purposes of state-led CD: firstly as a way of managing intra-community tensions, secondly as a way of enhancing local public participation and democracy, and thirdly as a method of local policy implementation, usually to mobilize local resources (Hoggett, Mayo, & Miller, 2009, p. 35). For the purposes of this article the focus is on the latter, as generally community development within disaster contexts has been foucsed on this third purpose, which is used as a way to mobilize local resources in the phases of community prevention, preparation, response and recovery (Mileti, Drabek, & Hass, 1975; Neal, 1997; Quarantelli & Dynes, 1977).

Central to the literature on community as a site of local policy and program intervention is the idea of "shared responsibility," most recently articulated in Australia within the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR). This strategy, adopted by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2011, advocates that disaster resilience is, "not solely the domain of emergency management agencies; rather, it is a shared responsibility between governments, communities, businesses and individuals" (COAG, 2011, p. iii). McLennan and Handmer (2014) regard the shared responsibility discourse as the articulation of a new social contract, depicting the balance of rights and responsibilities between the government and communities. They note that over the last decade or so, the connected concepts of risk, agency and responsibility have become "core mobilising concepts" in modern policy discourses (p. 29). The emergence of the new CDO positions funded and employed by government to increase community capacity in the face of disaster, can therefore be understood as the manifestation of this global discursive and policy shift.

Critics see the discursive shift as the means to off-load responsibility by public institutions to private citizens under the influence of neoliberal ideologies and new public management (Hamilton, 2012). Despite this critique, there appears to be some agreement, at least at the level of principle, to the importance of shared responsibility and a greater role for community (Pathranarakul & Moe, 2006). However, putting principle into practice is fraught with complication. Responsibilities in disaster management can be overlapping, interdependent, ambiguous, and often conflicting. At the level of praxis, the processes are less clear and the results far more mixed (Kenny, 2007; Pandey & Okazaki, 2005; Webber & Jones, 2012).

For example, how communities actually behave during disasters – the sociology and psychology of community in disaster – has long been a focus of disaster research (Fritz, 1961; Barton, 1969). This work is complemented by the extensive research into group and

organizational behaviour (Dynes, 1970; Quarantelli, 1966). More recently, and considering concepts as diverse as community resilience (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008) and community trust (Paton, 2007) through to community governance (Stark & Taylor, 2014), an exponential growth of research has been spawned in the last decade, giving credence to Fordham's claim that "community-based approaches have perhaps now become the dominant paradigm in both disaster and development" (2007, p. 343).

Community practice as dilemmatic space

As per our introduction, acknowledging that community can become a central site for local policy and programme action, our focus is on state-led community development *practice* through the conceptual lens of "practice dilemmas" (Hoggett, Mayo, & Miller, 2009), a concept that is particularly helpful in illuminating the practice-policy interface challenges. Initially articulated in the groundbreaking study *In and Against the State* (Weekend Return Group 1980), Hoggett et al demonstrate boundless contradictions for any state-employed community workers. Their discussion of practice dilemmas arises from the idea of "dilemmatic space," which in turn emerges from an analysis of the complexity of community development work within the public sphere. The challenge of contemporary work in the public sphere is linked to ambivalence that citizens feel towards state action. On one hand people want the state to intervene; and yet on the other hand, people resent it when the state does act. Citizens want the state to keep its distance and then blame the state for not "taking responsibility." This ambivalence leads to complex ethical, moral, and practice dilemmas for local development workers – hence the "dilemmatic space" of their work. Dilemmatic space can be understood, drawing on Honig (1996), as a space in which there is no clear and obvious right thing to do. Practitioners will inevitably feel pulls in various directions: external to self (different demands of groups in communities) and internal to self (different ethical pulls). Examples of just some of the kinds of dilemmatic space occupied by CD practitioners include: supporting some groups in communities to work cooperatively with the state whilst supporting other groups to contest against the state; working with as many different groups as possible within a locality versus working with particularly marginalised population groups within a locality or across several localities; or working within the tensions of an instrumental ethic of government programming versus honouring the motivations of many practitioners which often involves a solidarity ethic of struggle (Hoggett, Mayo, & Miller, 2009). At the core of this argument is that within the public sphere community development work is then filled with "risk, uncertainty and ambiguity" (Hoggett, Mayo, & Miller, 2009, p. 27). Therefore, despite any clear job or role descriptions, any official codes of ethics or principle guidelines, community development practitioners will be left to draw on other resources or ethical frameworks to guide them in daily "street-level" practice (Lipsky, 1980). Of significance to this article is the idea that despite these ambiguous and uncertain dynamics, state agents – for example, those engaged in design, monitoring, and evaluation of programs – tend to, and in many ways have no choice but to proceed with attempts to coordinate and administer programs as if there are few ambiguities and uncertainties. Hence increasing attempts by the state to demarcate roles, clarify job descriptions, monitor progress, and articulate successful initiatives (Webber & Jones, 2012). With this conceptual lens in mind

and the accompanying challenges to community development practice foregrounded, the research methods are now discussed.

Methods

To examine the dilemmas facing newly funded state CDOs in building capacity for disaster resilience, this research employed a mixture of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Participant observation occurred during four regional forums across Queensland. In addition to introducing CDOs to our research project and recruiting participants, observation at these forums helped the researchers deepen their understandings of the CDEI and its interpretation of CD processes and thinking. The researchers were based in Brisbane and travelled across Queensland to enable interviews to occur at a time and place of convenience to the participants. This resulted in a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews. Of the 24 CDOs, 19 agreed to be interviewed. Thirteen of the interview participants were female, and six were male. Table 1 provides a list of local government areas in which CDOs were employed and the corresponding number of interviews conducted with CDOs from those regions.

Table 1

Number of CDOs interviewed, by region and government area

Queensland Geographic Region	Local Government Area	Number of CDOs employed	Research Interviews
Far North Queensland	Table lands	1	1
	Cassowary Coast	2	2
North Queensland	Hinchinbrook	2	1
Central Queensland	Banana	1	0
	Barcaldine	1	1
	Bundaberg	1	1
	Central Highlands	1	1
	North Burnett	1	1
	Rockhampton	1	1
North Coast	Gympie	1 (position shared across two people)	1
	Moreton Bay		1
Brisbane	Brisbane City	2	1
South West	Toowoomba	1	1
	Ipswich City	2	2
	Lockyer Valley	2	1
	Somerset	1	1
	Western Downs	2	2

As Table 1 shows, the interviewers were able to access CDOs from all funded LGAQ regions except one.

Nine stakeholders were also interviewed to provide a broader policy and practice context for the work, and to provide clarification where facts were contested. As shown in Table 2, stakeholders included line managers, state government representatives, and professionals in the disaster management field. Documents from the Queensland State

Government and from LGAQ provided additional history and context. Four stakeholders were located in Brisbane, and five were from regional offices (including one from the Central Queensland area not represented by a CDO interview).

Table 2

Stakeholders interviewed

Stakeholders Interviewed	Number of Interviewees
Manager, Local Government	2
Manager, State Government	2
External consultant to the project	1
Representatives of the disaster management industry	3[a]
Regional community development worker	1

[a] 1 from a community-based organization and 2 from state government bodies

All three authors were engaged as researchers in data collection. To ensure rigor, two analytical cycles were employed. Firstly, the interviewing of CDOs and stakeholders was split between three different researchers. Interviews were conducted, transcribed, coded and themed separately by each researcher. Interview transcripts were sent to several interviewees to ensure accuracy of the transcription process. Secondly, the information was analyzed collectively to test emerging themes and provide a check on bias and interpretation. This two-stage process was also a useful means of guarding against groupthink whereby researchers might reach for consensus and achieve conformity at the expense of their own individual ideas. Thematic analysis was employed, meaning that the themes emerged from the data, with the researchers looking for patterns of both convergent and divergent ideas. These themes are explored in the findings section that follows. Ethical approval for this component of the research was provided by The University of Queensland Ethical Review Committee.

Findings

Before turning to the main subject of this article, namely to explore both the dilemmatic space of state-led CD practice and any particular dilemmas within disaster recovery work, it is helpful to provide a brief overview of diverse program context, experiences, and work activities.

The context of the work

The first point for observation is that it is extremely difficult to represent this work succinctly, as the work was often complex and not served well by traditional output-based metrics (as discussed later in this article). It is impossible to directly compare the work of each CDO as their work differed depending upon the geographical region they were located in and the populations they were serving. This diversity can be seen in comparing just two of these local government areas. The Western Downs Regional Council has a geographical area of 38,039 km^2 in which 32, 071 residents are spread across six discrete towns and their surrounds (Western Downs Regional Council, 2012). In contrast, Brisbane City Council has an area of just 1, 338.1 km^2. It is the largest local government in Australia, serving 1,131,191 residents in 192 suburbs (Brisbane City Council, 2013). Yet both local government regions

had two CDOs assigned to them. The administrative arrangements in which workers were located also differed dramatically. For example, the Western Downs Council has 700 employees. Brisbane City Council is ten times larger, with 7000 permanent staff members. This automatically affected governance arrangements, management lines, networks, access to infrastructure, and the resources available. As the CDOs themselves reminded us, the experience of the populations they served also varied dramatically. For those in Brisbane for example, floods of such a scale were relatively unheard of, with the 1974 flood the most recent and oft-cited reference for a similar-scale disaster. Yet in other locations, such as the Western Downs, floods and droughts were considered part of the rural experiences, often occurring annually. Alternatively the floods were an additional complication to townships struggling with the impact of mining booms, transient populations, and facing economic viability and livelihood issues.

Backgrounds of the CDOs

In terms of qualifications, ten CDOs came to the role with academic qualifications. These were from highly diverse fields such as business administration, fine arts, and social science. Only one CDO held any formal qualifications in community development (a diploma of community development, although one CDO gained a diploma in community development after commencing the role. Over half (n=12) of the CDOs identified that they had no previous CD experience, although some felt that their experience in the community sector gave them an understanding of a CD approach. Previous roles held by the CDOs were also diverse and included employment as a journalist, a prison officer, and a game ranger, as well as work experience in the corporate and not-for-profit sectors. At least two people had held positions in the disaster management industry.[i]

The outcomes of the work

As part of their evaluation and promotion of the CDEI program, LGAQ highlighted a "demonstration project" from each local government area (LGAQ, 2013) to showcase the range of activities CDOS were engaged in. Table 3 utilizes Jim Ife's integrated community development framework to categorize these demonstration projects (2013). Alongside the diversity of projects emerging from the program, the table reveals that all but two of Ife's dimensions are present (with an absence of external political and environmental CD initiatives). This demonstrates that although it is named "survival" development, this work also spoke to the social, political, cultural, economic, and spiritual dimensions of CD.

Turning now to the substantive focus of our article, our exploration of both the practice dilemmas for state-employed CDOs and particular dilemmas for disaster oriented CD work, revealed three main findings. They are: the dilemmas of language; the dilemmas of being immediately responsive to the accountability/audit culture of government and the longer-term relational and partnership needs of community work; and the dilemmas of "hard" versus "soft" interventions.

Table 3

Demonstration projects for the CDEI, categorised according to Ife's CD framework

CD Dimension	Project Name (and Local Government Regional Area)
Social community development	The Chinchilla Family Support Centre (Western Downs)
	Halls in the Spotlight (Western Downs Regional Council)
(Internal) political community development	Bundaberg Flood Recovery Interagency Forum (Bundaberg)
	Community Health and Wellbeing Reference Group (Central Highlands)
	Mentoring for Grant Writing (Lockyer Valley)
	Natural Disaster Resilence Leadership (Brisbane City)
	Gympie Get Ready (Gympie)
Economic community development	Pro-Social Funding Program (Hinchinbrook)
	Fordham Park Alpha Jockey Club Inc. (Barcaldine)
	Penning Park Redevelopment (Cassowary Coast)
	Jellicoe Street Program (Toowoomba)
Cultural & spiritual community development	Junction Park Mosaic Wall, Community Project Theodore (Banana)
	Jumbun Cultural Engagement (Cassowary Coast)
	Somerset Flood Photography Book (Somerset)
	ROC Up North Burnett Concert (North Burnett)
Survival community development	USB Scanning Project (Ipswich City)
	Be Prepared Brisbane (Brisbane City)
	Disaster Prepared! Together, We're Stronger (Cassowary Coast)
	CALD Disaster Preparedness (Moreton Bay)
	Exercise Whirlwind (Tablelands Regional Council)
Personal community development	Health & Wellbeing Expo - Active Healthy Lockyer (Lockyer Valley)

Source: adapted from LGAQ, 2013.

Dilemma 1: The dilemmas of language

The official language of the disaster oriented CD program included crucial terms such as "recovery," "resilience," and "preparedness." Our research indicated that for CDOs attempting to operationalize these terms, such words were often points of tension within everyday practice.

CDOs revealed that words such as "recovery" and "resilience" were generally not used in everyday grassroots practice, or were re-interpreted when working within communities. In contrast, the technical language and work of "disaster preparedness" was accepted by community members and did not appear to require modification. Our analysis of language use is that most of the CDOs changed their language according to what was reflected back by community and/or according to the needs of reporting and working within the organizational context. This translation between programmatic and non-programmatic agendas is not unusual for people working at the interface of government and community. However, what is interesting in this situation is that language was not simply translated but fiercely debated. According to CDOs, community members were reluctant to use the language of "recovery." As one CDO stated, "People want to know very little about recovery

now … I don't use the word recovery because people roll their eyes when they hear recovery and say 'I'm over it'" [CDO11].

This was a regularly occurring theme, with half of the CDOs arguing that the language of "recovery" was experienced as "backwards looking" within communities and that they therefore adapted their language accordingly. CDOs reported that tensions emerged between themselves and local residents as people asked questions such as, "recovery from what?" The language of recovery implied a deficit among local residents – an implication many were adverse to. Other CDOs struggled with what official program terms meant and how they would be translated into CD practice in a post-disaster context. The dilemma was further compounded by CDOs needing to identify when communities they worked with "were over it" or had "moved on" from particular stages of the recovery process. Analysis also indicates that many CDOs wanted to be future oriented, and hence chose language more reflective of this aspiration. The language of resilience was understood, for some CDOs, as forward looking, and it was this time-dimension that made it generally much more palatable than that of recovery. For example, "The work is very forward looking – not backwards – the focus is on resilience building, which means to me bounce-back-ability" [CDO1]. At the same time, practitioners also spent time wrestling with what they understood the terms to mean. The language of resilience also incurred scepticism, seen as empty rhetoric by community members and CDOs:

> Resilience is a buzzword amongst the agencies and the government and the workers and everyone else. It's one of those words that people in the community either just blink at you or say 'What are those words?' We don't use it. [CDO3]

The third finding in relation to language and discourse was that "preparedness" was the most palatable word for most community members, and therefore easier to use for CDOs. As one CDO reflected,

> Our focus has been much more on preparedness because being prepared gives you a way to help you recover. It gives you back some degree of power. We won't be using resilience as a main focus because it doesn't resonate with people but the "be prepared" focus was okay. [CDO3]

While there are fewer problems with the concept of disaster preparedness, the points of tension around language use can reveal deeper understandings of roles and practice. In particular, it reveals whose voice is privileged in CDOs' practice and how CDOs positioned themselves in relation to policy. As the quotes and analysis above demonstrate, for some CDOs, the dilemma was how best to understand the intent of the policy language – their goal was to work out what was meant by recovery, resilience, and preparedness – and how best practices could support that intent. For other CDOs, rather than simply assimilating program language and/or trying to interpret it, they worked hard to find an everyday language thereby avoiding technical language or government jargon. For this latter group, the struggle about language indicates a dilemmatic space of legitimacy and mandate with a policy language and

program that clearly did not speak to the needs of the community being served. This tension of legitimacy is considered in the next set of findings.

Dilemma 2: Being responsive to the accountability/audit culture of government and the longer-term relational and partnership needs of community work

A second key finding was the tension for CDOs who were caught between being responsive to the accountability/audit culture of government and the longer-term relational and partnership needs of community work. The program had extremely tight accountability mechanisms that most CDOs described as "onerous." Tools placed emphasis upon quantity. This experience accords with a global shift in development practice, where practice is being strongly driven by what is being called "the results agenda" (Eyben, 2013). LGAQ points to the success of the initiative with the recording of almost 300,000 points of engagement through the delivery of over 320 projects, activities, and events (LGAQ, 2013).[ii] Points of engagement included active forms of engagement in projects – such as the 60 people directly involved in the creation of a mosaic wall – through to the passive engagement of hundreds of people via attendance at a community music concert. There was little recognition or celebration of the less tangible and slower processes of community work. This was articulated by one CDO as the difference between the longer-term processes of community work as opposed to quick service-delivery mode,

> You know what, you just can't go out there and provide a service, you have to build a relationship. And that relationship means having some CD skills about how to build a relationship with communities and that's when your work will start flowing for you once you start using that framework. [CDO11]

The issue of time was crucial, with the relational practices of community work seen as requiring more time than the program allowed. While some CDOs saw the time pressures imposed upon the role as a welcome guarantee against building dependency, other CDOs expressed explicit frustration about the two-year time limit of their role. This limit was perceived as a constraint in terms of their CD practice and for the communities they were placed in. As one CDO explained,

> CD is years, it's lifetimes, it's not, "Here's a bucket of money for two years," it doesn't make an ongoing, sustainable community; it makes a short-term fix. It's been great, it's been a benefit and we've been able to do a lot but in some ways it's gone against those communities too because they haven't had to sit back and think about it…two years isn't long enough, two years isn't anywhere near the time…[CDO5]

The timeframe was also further complicated by the complexity of the roles' administrative demands. As one CDO reflected,

> [T]wo years really isn't long…I know it would take people a good three to six months to work out what really happens in local government. If you were someone with no local government experience working in a local government environment it would be quite challenging. [CDO12]

Our observations of four regional CDO forums reinforce these findings. CDOs, often cognisant of the longer processes required of relational practices underpinned by a partnership approach (Burkett & Ruhunda, 2010), were frustrated by the auditing requirements of multiple layers of accountability.

Dilemma 3: "Hard" versus "soft" interventions

The third dilemma reported in our findings is that of "hard" versus "soft" interventions. In many ways this dilemma is illustrative of community perceptions of needs and assets, and the clear demarcation within government of "siloed" approaches to intervention (for example, one department responsible for roads and another for people's mental health). In contrast, CDOs employing a more holistic understanding of communities and their needs, engaged "on community's terms." However, they were then left with dilemmas when communities identified their needs in ways that were beyond the purview of the CD program . There were tensions between community perceptions of what a CDO should be doing and what a CDO was mandated to do within their role description. The issue of chainsaw use provides an illustration of this dilemma. One CDO explained,

> Every community consultation led to chainsaw needs being the number one issue. Without a chainsaw ticket you cannot use a chainsaw. After a disaster everyone buys chainsaws and/or an axe. We need to encourage this – our role is to make it safe. [CDO1]

Community members saw that what they needed was help to get "tickets" (that is, a formal qualification) to enable them to use their chainsaws in the aftermath of a disaster. For them, the crucial issue after a cyclone or flood is clearing fallen trees so that they can go and check on neighbours and then start clearing debris to quickly "normalize" the surroundings. The CDO dilemma is created when the CDO hears such a request but is not mandated within their job description or the program policy guidelines to support the residents' initiative. As the CDO explained,

> [The program management] had an issue with it because they don't see it as disaster preparedness and argued that it fell outside the CDEI guidelines. They didn't ever ring me; they didn't ever confer with me to say, "What the hell has chainsaw tickets got to do with storm preparation?" They just said it fell outside the CDEI guidelines. [CDO1]

The official program focus is on "soft" or psycho-social recovery work. Our findings indicate that the CDOs are mandated to facilitate psycho-social recovery but local people's understanding of recovery is often more focused on the "hard stuff" of clearing and fixing roads and bridges or acquiring necessary infrastructure. As the same CDO summarized, "Disaster Management is hard and blokey – CD is soft and gay!" [CDO1]. The "soft" "fluffy" and "woolly" skills of CD were contrasted with the hard visible skills of physical infrastructure, hazard management, and reconstruction. The dilemma became acute as community members lost patience, and a number of CDOs gave accounts of residents getting angry. One CDO observed, "I really needed my Kevlar vest and bash hat when I first went out there" [CDO15]. Another CDO explained, "the majority of community [sic] don't

understand the community development approach ... they just want people to come in and fix the problem and then leave again" [CDO4]. The soft nature of CD is further illustrated by investigation into the recruitment processes for the role of CDO. While the state government constructed the job descriptions, employment of each CDO was undertaken by local councils. That so few workers had previous CD experience speaks to an ongoing myth that community development is something that anyone can do, and that having community connections or being a good networker is seen as all the knowledge or experience required. Unlike the obvious and highly visible skills of those people in formal disaster management roles (for example, fire officers or medical emergency staff) the technical knowledge of community development, being largely invisible, is undervalued.

Discussion: Dealing with dilemmas – moving towards organic practice
The dilemmas of language, accountability, and program limitations are not new and designers of the program, if familiar with CD literature, could easily predict these tensions. However, what is new is the particular complex context of disaster management for CDOs in Queensland, and flowing from this particularity, several new dilemmas. Thus we see an ambiguous role for CDOs, with heavy accountabilities in a complex, sensitive, and evolving context. In trying to understand what could assist the navigation of this practice space, we therefore return to the CD literature and give consideration to two crucial themes: (1) a CD workers' need for responsive, flexible, or what we have called an organic or ecological practice – in relation to language, politics, and engagement; and, (2) the need for a different approach to *in-situ* education and training of CDOs within government-led programs such as this.

In relation to the first discussion point, the disaster management literature, which has deeply influenced policy and program alike, has clearly constructed models. The most commonly cited approach is a four-phase model known as the PPRR (Drabek, 1986; Mileti, Drabek & Haas, 1975; National Governor's Association, 1979; Neal, 1997; Quarantelli & Dynes, 1977). This model depicts a Disaster Prevention phase, which includes appropriate town and infrastructure planning; a Disaster Preparedness phase, occurring prior to the event which covers advance warnings, release of dam waters, securing property, and so forth; a Disaster Response phase during and immediately following the event, including managing hazards, evacuation, emergency provision of food and shelter, rehousing, and clean up; and a Disaster Recovery phase, with longer term post-disaster work to help rebuild infrastructure and revitalise townships. Within this model, the four phases are represented as a cycle of intervention, because while the events themselves may not be entirely predictable, the patterns of the event quickly become evident once in motion. However, what is interesting from the findings reported above is that CDOs differed enormously in terms of where they thought the emphasis should be, the language they used, and their analysis of where they directed their efforts and resources. This speaks to many of the dilemmas reported above.

What is also interesting is to compare the Queensland CD experience with the Victorian experience. In the latter, "details of how community development was to be conceptualized were only written down two years later" (Webber & Jones 2012, p. 4), and were therefore very unclear for the workers. By contrast, the Queensland program had access to an abundance of literature surrounding CD, including detailed position descriptions and

papers from LGAQ describing the role of the CDO in a local government context (LGAQ, 2011b). Thus some CDOs found themselves using the program to externally motivate community to achieve "compliance and participation" as opposed to practitioners who focused on the "existing intrinsic motivation" for development (Toomey, 2009, p. 193). This lends support for the idea that while previous research might have pointed to the need for policy (on CD definition, job description and so forth), and subsequently policy documents may now be clearer, the *in situ* experience of CDOs still moderates policy at a community level. As per the thesis of Hoggett et al (2009, p. 29), despite efforts around "coordination and clarity," ambiguity, uncertainty, and complexity remain. Here we also draw on Tesoriero (2010), who sees community work as an alternative model at risk of being "co-opted" into incompatible structures and frameworks. For us, the crucial issue at hand is not so much policy clarity nor program design, but community level practice issues and how practitioners navigate the policy/programme terrain. Reflecting on practice issues, we wish to foreground the idea of practice as conscious and contextualised responsivity and flexibility. As one CDO, defending variations from the program workplan explained, " ... stuff popped up in communities organically and I thought I would have been rewarded for doing organic responsive work" [CDO1]. As the CDO went on to explain, this was not the case. Responsivity and flexibility were not rewarded within the programme monitoring processes.

These ideas signpost what we have come to understand as a conscious organic or ecological understanding of community practice. Within this frame the community worker is in a "responsive dance" with the shifting policy, political and program context (including the official roles and program goals/objectives, indicators) – while also being responsive to the community's use of language and their understanding of the need at hand. Our sense is that previous understandings of community practice have not explored this enough. Responsivity within a holistic frame is underpinned by an organic practice whereby a community development worker employed in a program, such as that being discussed here, is conscious that they are working within a complex living ecology of shifting politics, programmatic goals and objectives, and community feelings and aspirations (Kaplan, 2002). The fact that a community worker is inserted into the living and shifting dynamic of disaster response in and of itself also shifts the ecology, leading to nuanced changes to a community's sense of their own obligations, needs, and language.

An alternative organic or ecological approach to CD would need to separate conceptual processes of: (1) observing – seeing what is going on within the living and shifting organism (without overlays of program or professional language) of both the community and program/policy context; and, (2) then interpreting – that is, in dialogue and collaboration with local people searching for accurate analysis about what can be done; and finally, (3) designing or co-designing an intervention, or "community response" within a partnership approach, while also working together to challenge policy/programmatic barriers to resourcing such a community response.

Such an approach is underpinned by an anthropological and phenomenological understanding. What this means is seeing local people's perspectives on preparedness, recovery, resilience such as "I don't want connections," or "Help means rebuilding the fence, not giving me counselling." Such an approach is less interested in whether a community should be preparing, recovering, or becoming more resilient – a concern of policy makers and

program designers – but is instead more focused on local explanatory models (Kleinman, 1980) of a community's social experience, and also understanding the contextual representations of their social experience through political, media and service-oriented discourses. This approach restores the social and moral dimensions to disaster recovery, shifting the gaze away from instrumental technical interventions.

Furthermore, what emerged in discussions was that for those workers with relatively strong CD experience and a clear practice framework (Westoby & Ingamells, 2011), this kind of organic or ecological practice was complex but manageable. Their primary goal was to work flexibly and responsively to the communities themselves, albeit remaining conscious of their own organizational and political context and being responsive to that, and at times challenging of it. Their language remained adaptable; however, they were still clear that they were working towards a process of supporting community in a partnership approach that gave firm foundations for the policy of shared responsibility accounted for within the literature review. This is an important point, because while arguing for an ecological approach, we recognize that bureaucracies will not adopt such thinking. A practitioners' framework enables them to navigate their practice within bureaucracy and hold this tension.

At the same time, our analysis indicated that those CDOs who were not formally trained as CD practitioners, often themselves taking a more ad hoc approach, were easily assimilated into government technical language and tended to "impose" that logic on communities, often with adverse effects on the practice. This is not to argue for credentialism, but rather we observed that for those without a clear framework through which to organize and make sense of the work, the language and understanding of their role was much more difficult to navigate, which in turn led to enormous frustration with the official program.

Turning to our second discussion point, an interesting aspect of the Queensland program is that while workers did attend regional forums and training days, these appeared not to meet the needs of workers to explore the complexities of the work and were largely about understanding the accountability demands of the program. The instrumental and audit culture of government overwhelmed any imperative for a more organic and responsive "training" program for the workers, and our analysis indicates that this was a serious mistake. At the inception of the program, an external CD consultancy firm was employed by LGAQ to formally evaluate the program. As part of their work, they delivered training and offered resources to help build capacity and provide support. However, this was about developing capacity of people to evaluate the program. Not all CDOs understood this distinction. Many of those who did believed it was a program shortcoming. This echoes a shift occurring globally, whereby the "results agenda" is sacrificing learning to accountability (Whitty, 2013).

Reporting on their research into the Victorian bushfire program Webber and Jones argue that, "it was assumed that the workers would have a common understanding of what it [community development] involved" (2012, p. 4) and that this clearly was not the case. By contrast, in our Queensland research, there was understanding – at least at an espoused level – that workers were resourced to understand the intention of the role. But what appeared to be missing was a broader training role, focused more on the building of CDOs capacity to do the work itself alongside the creation of the reflective space in which to safely negotiate and

speak about the application of those intentions in praxis. Good practice experiences of *in-situ* or horizontal learning processes (Chambers, 2005; Ubels Acquaye-Baddoo, & Fowler, 2010) were not drawn upon to inform the learning processes that would have enhanced the program substantially. Our analysis is that the dilemmatic space reported in the findings – related to accountability/audit culture versus partnership building – created too many pressures for the CDEI program managers. These pressures undermined the reflexive space for supporting learning that was more oriented toward CDO needs. As Maureen Fordham notes, "exhortations to appropriate action can suggest that the melding of disaster and development is a matter of simple common sense but this deceptive simplicity masks both conceptual and practical complexity' (2007, p. 335).

Conclusion

This article has sought to understand the implications for CD workers located in the emerging field of post-disaster development, through the experience of the 2010-2011 Queensland flood recovery work. Utilizing the lens of the dilemmatic space of practice, this research has shown the complex and often compromised space in which CD is being undertaken, and the way in which a results-oriented agenda and the political imperative of a program can often override community agendas and bottom up practices. Our discussion argues that this dilemmatic space requires CD practitioners to re-conceptualise their practice accordingly; and in doing this we argue for a conscious organic or ecological approach to community practice. This conscious organic or ecological approach enables a practitioner to hold "their own centre" so to speak, as changes occur around them.

Furthermore, we argue for a reconsideration of the kinds of learning spaces, training, and support required of CD workers to be effective in such large-scale CD programs. Underpinning this article is awareness that CD is not simply a set of skills and techniques, but an ongoing process of learning and engaging with context. This requires reflexive processes to engage consciously with the emerging environment. For the state, this means that there needs to be a whole new way of imagining learning, education, and training of community workers in contexts such as disaster response. For CDOs, reflexive practice requires activating personal agency and engaging in supervision, peer learning, mentoring and ongoing learning and reflection. Reflexivity may also require the creation by CDOs themselves, of these supports where they do not currently exist. In this regard, community development has a lot to learn from the disaster management field and its commitment to continuous improvement and systems thinking. Finally, for the broader field of disaster management, this article suggests some additional thinking is still required to understand the role of community in disaster response in a way that does justice to the idea of shared responsibility. CD programs clearly have potential to enrich the field. However, the location of CD programs directly within the state simply subjects these initiatives to state command and control structures and regimes of accountability. Only by utilising a systemic understanding and a more organic approach to developmental work can the intended policy shift of genuine partnership with community be realized.

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[i] Only two self-identified as working in the disaster industry, but others CDOs were referred to in this way during the interview process.

[ii] See also https://lgaq.asn.au/cdei for a summary of the program, details of the programs' history, funding allocations and outcomes.