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The Course of Community Development and Community Change in Cyprus

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Abstract Scientifically/theoretically the perception that holds true is that for the existence and smooth operation of social life the sequence "social action – social change – community development" must be in place. The component parts of this sequence are interlinked and have a cumulative effect on the final outcome of the process, defined as community development. From the war of 1974 to the present, the course of community development and community change in Cyprus is one of many tangible examples of the effort to document the necessary actions/adjustments to new conditions. However their results, i.e. the eventual changes they prompt, are indirect, and as they require time to become perceptible, they cannot easily be recognized as elements of progress by the average person who is often hesitant or even critical of anything new and doubts their effect.

Keywords Community Development, Community Change, Models of Community Development

A Historical Recount of the Events of Community Development and Change in Cyprus

Currently, we are facing major socioeconomic changes in all aspects of everyday life, which bring about readjustments in the organization and operation of agencies and services, but also in their scope. Quite a few structures and cultural activities of the past, which had become established as a matter of habit, are being doubted as new elements emerge. The course of adjustment, but also the development of structures and human activities in these new conditions becomes possible by taking specific organized action.

Development is not a new social phenomenon, despite the extent of the innovations/changes and discoveries taking place. Actually it dates millions of years, to the first men who used their intelligence and imagination in order to survive and evolve. Each change and discovery was part of development; they constituted the building blocks, undergoing constant improvement, in a long-term process that gradually led to the development of current civilizations. Thus, the development of our society is the long-term outcome of numerous changes, probably endless, as it is a continuous, dynamic rather than static development, which is perpetual and diverse, and influences our activities. The differences observed in various countries are due to the particularities of each region and the subjects active in it, i.e. the influence of culture, but also the circumstances of historical events.

"Community development provides a wide macro-perspective which focuses on communities and societies, emphasizing planned intervention, promoting a dynamic approach geared to change, which is comprehensive and global, and above all seeks to harmonize community interventions with economic development efforts. The community development approach unifies economic and community objectives in a unique manner" (Zaimakis, 2002, p.154). The comprehension of community development, not only in Cyprus but in every country, presupposes the investigation of the factors that affected its development in its current form. Hence it is important to outline the factors, through a brief historical recount, whose effect was crucial to community development in Cyprus.

During its long history, Cyprus was rendered the victim of foreign interventions on quite a few occasions on account of its important strategic position. The Cypriot society experienced a number of regimes, subjugation, occupation, independence. Occupational enforcement altered and affected its operation; it came in contact with elements which strongly contributed to the acquisition of local peculiarities, but also to the manner of thinking and action of its inhabitants. Just like every other country, contact with administrative, cultural-economic elements brought along with every conqueror did not leave the life and evolution of the development course unaffected (Konis, 1984, pp.1-2; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Historical Review, 2013).

In the newer era, an especially significant historical fact for the process of community development, but also for Cyprus overall, is the bearing/consequences of the coexistence of two different population groups –Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot– and their effort for political and governmental coexistence. A course marked by many difficult situations which culminated in the war of 1974. The unequivocal shift and differentiation of the two population

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groups and the manner in which their communities developed "took place in December 1963, when on account of a proposal made by the President of Cyprus Archbishop Makarios to amend 13 points in the Constitution, clashes erupted between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. (…) In 1964, the Republic of Cyprus as a bi-communal state, as provided by the Constitution of 1960, essentially ceased to exist. What was left, was a purely Greek state, while the Turkish Cypriots tried to establish their own state on the island" (Drousiotis, 2005, foreword). The separate courses in the development of the two population groups, as a consequence of the bi-communal split, was for the time concluded with the unofficial, at the time, division of the state in two different ethnic communities.

Each community pursued its own distinct development model, mostly in line with the standards of their respective national support centres. Initially, community development was rather one-sided, tending towards economic recovery; however, it was based on the ethnic element, homogenization, but also on the exclusion of the rival side. Within the context of this flattening "controlled development course", the cultural background, the mentality, religion and the chosen economic model of each side played an important role. From the outset, the Greek Cypriot side followed the liberal economic model, open to commercial and entrepreneurial connections, and a cultural course not unlike western standards. This fact established the political sovereignty of the Greek Cypriot side as a state and provided the opportunity to achieve economic autonomy, to recover considerably –later on– from the consequences of the war and helped it along the much desired development course and further evolution. On the contrary, the Turkish Cypriot side became exclusively attached to its protecting power Turkey, adopted the hoarding model of agrarian economy, became directly dependent on Turkish funding and spent considerable time in the eradication of, nearly all, elements of Greek origin, while at the same time regressing towards colonial dependence models (Kaikitis, 1998, p.2; Kranidiotis, 1985, pp.395-415). Based on the different courses selected by each side, many structural elements of development and their implementation, which were held in common until that time, were differentiated and, in the name of ethnic self-determination, modified.

The differentiation of the two sides regarding the course followed by the process of socioeconomic development was concluded with the tragedy and consequences of the war of 1974. "By occupying the northern part of Cyprus, in 1974 the Turks expelled 180,000 Greek Cypriots, a quarter of the total population. These people were forced to flee from their homes and seek refuge in the free areas, becoming refugees in their own country. The inevitable result of the displacement was the collapse of the social structure" (Konis, 1984, p.6). Initially, the Republic of Cyprus, through the social welfare services, made an effort to provide temporary housing in settlements in order to cover the basic survival needs especially of the refugees. The actions implemented at the time, some of which are still in place today, aimed at development and instilling especially a feeling of safety to the displaced citizens, the relief of human suffering and the gradual re-operation of the state and society in order to address the pressing needs of the population.

In current terms the model implemented in order to deal with the consequences of the war, the invasion and the occupation was that of intervention in emergency situations, with actions rather focused on addressing the refugee situation, the reinstatement of the structures and the operation of the divided state. According to the classification of the collective report Community Work and Social Change (Mayo, 1998, p.71), the method used was field work with communities in crisis, which focused on need assessment and the undertaking of the relevant community actions. Actions were focused on civil participation and community work at the local level (neighbourhood, district, refugee settlement, village) and included work with individuals, families and groups. These actions were undertaken in the context of people's everyday lives and aimed at immediate interventions in order to satisfy basic needs in crisis situations, but also preventive practices with an ulterior developmental orientation (Zaimakis, 2011, p.85) by utilizing existing resources. The help of volunteers, through collective initiatives, was invaluable and their contribution to refugee areas significant. The innumerable actions of volunteers were crucial in dealing with the multiplicity of common needs, both at the local and national levels. The restoration of normality was a unifying element which predominated the period after the invasion and occupation, since the entire population had to cope with much the same problems, such as employment, education, health, and were required to handle their solution.

The Restoration of Community Life Using the Reconstruction Model

After the Turkish invasion and occupation of 40% of the island, the Cypriot society suffered from a near total collapse of its social system as 1/3 of the towns and communities were torn apart or destroyed. More than half of the remaining communities saw their population rise to numbers considered dangerous to their normal operation. The relocation of refugees in settlements resulted in the development of 42 new communities which were scattered all over free Cyprus (Konis, 1984, p.4 ; Neofytou, 2011, p.177).

The devastation of many areas and the immediate establishment of other new communities, without the necessary structures in place, rendered the task of intervention much harder. However, the existing communities in free Cyprus responded to the post-war events quite well, given the extent and the complexity of the problems. The reception and rehabilitation of the very large number of those displaced was completed within a short time and quite smoothly. Nevertheless, this did not mean that problems of distrust or insecurity between existing

inhabitants and new-coming refugees were nonexistent. After all, the totality of the effort was linked to the highly charged political climate of polarization and assignment of blame for the national disaster and the future of the country. The so far uncontested course of social life was disturbed and replaced by doubt and suspicion of people and institutions.

According to Konis, there was a prevailing contrast between the new population and the members of the existing communities. Local particularities were altered as the newly arrived population brought together their own customs, mores and traditions. The tents, in the new communities where they were set up, did not substitute the homes from which the refugees were expelled simply because these were not their actual homes in their own communities. The tents were very cold during the winter and very hot during the summer. All the families were deprived of privacy and the tents did not offer the essentials for a normal life (1984, p. 9). Personal relationships became overall more impersonal – comparable to those in the middle classes, socially stratified, due to, among others, discontinuity/alienation between locals and refugees; a fact which affected the process of development and the subsequent course of Cypriot society in the long term.

The state in order to restore social/community life –very successfully as it became evident in the long run– used community reconstruction as its basic instrument and effected substantial changes, mainly in the field of covering material needs. Initially, the objectives of the reconstruction were to care for and house the displaced population, combat unemployment, relieve widespread hardship, restart administrative operation of services and communities, and attain economic recovery. Social welfare services were used methodically in order to restore tangible and intangible damages, redress the smooth operation of institutions and society and, later on, in the subsequent development and prevention (Social Welfare Services, Historical Background, 2013). Their role was to support local areas in all critical matters of management and restoration of normality in the new multi-problem social reality.

Gradually the reconstruction interventions shifted towards more intangible actions, which focused on the empowerment of the community, the participation of citizens, the reinforcement of self-help and self-determination (Midgley, 1995). The ulterior purpose of these targeted actions was to achieve changes at the level of the community's convictions and perceptions, the shaping of community unity and the development of active policies to combat discrimination between the local population and the refugees and incidents of social exclusion due to class, financial and/or political differences. Hence, the reactivation of community life and the administrative support of communities were among the first planned actions. The reason was that beyond material support, the most significant challenges that remained were actual reintegration, the assimilation of the displaced and refugee population, and the restoration of normality in everyday life without any sort of exclusion for any population group.

In the context of restoring community life, the multi-service Community Welfare Centres were created in order to reinstate the community spirit that had been disrupted. "Social welfare is one of the institutions that has been designed and employed in order to prevent and restore the poor operation of society as a whole. Social welfare promotes development and the smooth operation of social institutions and social life" (Konis, 1984, p.4). Commissioners of Community Welfare were put in place, tasked with a supplementary function to the boards of Community Welfare, and were assisted by community members. More specifically, according to the testimony of Mrs. Neofytou, a pioneer in the whole effort, the organizational reconstruction model that was developed provided for:

a) "In communities where organized social groups are in place, coordinating bodies, the Councils of Community Welfare, are established under the guidance and support of a social worker, in order to deal with social issues pertaining to the community.
b) In small communities, without organized groups, key players and individuals form the Committees of Community Welfare.
c) In every province, the Councils of Community Welfare and the Committees of Community Welfare, as well as other social welfare groups form the Provincial Community Welfare Councils.
d) The Provincial Community Welfare Councils and social welfare organizations with a national scope form the Pan-Cypriot Welfare Council" (Neofytou, 1998, speech).

By utilizing the dynamics of local communities with their great inner strength and despite the scant resources, the operation of essential services and social institutions was restored. The instrument of local reconstruction was decisively employed in all the communities of the free areas of the republic channeling the initial dejection and despair of the disaster and prompting people and the state itself to start anew (Konis, 1984, pp.3-4). With such actions of creative change, the utilization of local human resources, the significant volunteer contribution, but also with the contribution of the solidarity of kindred and family-centered care networks (Koffas, 2009, p.171), the reconstruction advanced and normality was attained to a great extent.

In the free areas, this massive effort of restoration and change brought, over time, the much desired development, beyond any expectation if one considers the brief period of time in which it was achieved and its size in economic terms. However, rather soon and as a consequence of the explosive economic growth the importance of collective values diminished and the community sense atoned. Elements of competitiveness and individualism began to prevail and a climate geared to consumerism and personal prosperity began to evolve. The disparity, based solely on financial criteria, between refugees, those in enclaves and

non-refugees began once more to become very obvious and to affect the operation of the state; this was mainly due to various demands for increased financial support to refugees and those trapped in enclaves in occupied territories, as well as the demands of the Republic of Cyprus against the conqueror on issues related to the invasion and occupation. Community reconstruction and the ensuing development, as a result of targeted actions, was limited to the free areas of the Cypriot republic without achieving any significant relief or change regarding those in enclaves or the property of those displaced, due to continuous obstacles presented by the administration of the occupied areas.

The Influence of the EU on the Development of Cyprus

From the beginning of the 21st century, the European Union had a significant contribution to how the process of development was being shaped in Cyprus. After the Republic of Cyprus acceded to the European Union in July 2004, changes in all sectors become apparent, including the benefits of the common European development policy. The European Union with a series of mandatory or non-mandatory directives on the coordination of policies and actions, and co-financing of projects has actively contributed, to structural and institutional changes with services, programmes and projects that encompass all sectors of economic, social, administrative and cultural activities of the citizens of member states (Koffas, 2011, p. 15; The history of the European Union, 2013).

The EU follows the strategy of "convergence" between member states, which is being promoted through targeted policies such as the Cohesion Policy and territorial cohesion. The idea behind the strategy of convergence is to promote conditions favourable to development, as well as factors which lead to the true convergence of the less developed member states and the periphery. The purpose of convergence is to reinforce the competitiveness and attractiveness of the periphery as well as employment opportunities through a two-fold approach. First, development programmes will help the periphery foresee and promote economic changes through innovation and the promotion of a knowledge society, enterprise, environmental protection and improved accessibility to said regions; second, support the creation of more and better jobs through workforce adaptation and investment in human resources.

Regarding the cohesion policy, the European periphery development policy endeavours to attain true solidarity in the European Union by ensuring economic and social cohesion, a prerequisite of which is the reduction of development disparities between the various regions. European regional policy is implemented through three funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund. The aforementioned funds contribute to the achievement of three objectives: "convergence", "regional competitiveness and employment", and "European territorial cooperation". The European periphery policy contributes to the funding of specific projects for the benefit of the periphery and its inhabitants. The end goal is for the periphery to possess the potential to contribute to the development and competitiveness, and to exchange ideas and better practices (Ministry for Development and Competitiveness, European Cohesion Policy, 2013).

Territorial cohesion concerns the need to balance spatial development, to discover the assets and constraints of each area during policy planning in order to achieve the best results (European Union, The Funds, 2013). Territorial cohesion is of special interest to Cyprus, because it draws attention to its geographic particularities; the Republic of Cyprus is the easternmost point of the EU and, being an island, has no land borders with other member states. Great interest is placed on projects that will support economic and social cohesion, including the reconstruction of industrial areas in decline, in an effort to reduce disparities as a result of the geographic distance from the central core of the EU, as well as between regions within the country given the particularity of its division in free and occupied areas. Great importance is also placed on development projects for rural areas, on local activity and products/activities, especially the utilization of the coastal zone and the promotion of marine activities, which contribute to the support of the potential of rural areas.

Thus, the effect of the EU-promoted development essentially encompasses three mechanisms. First, the process of mutual learning, since it is a process that incorporates a true potential for learning from pioneers and those more experienced. The EU uses, among others, the open method of coordination (OMC) as a process of mutual learning between member states. It is based on the exchange of information, ideas, knowledge and practices from programmes and services that produced good results. The transfer of positive experiences from other countries and their adaptation to the national particularities of each country improves effectiveness and promotes cooperation through the dissemination of knowledge. The states acquire knowledge, develop alternative solutions and test new methods and instruments. Second, the enrichment and revision of development policy, and ways of implementation/planning as a result of the transfer of knowledge, practices, the emergence of new ideas, and the testing of those ideas in practice. And third, the actual changes that take place within local government agencies by funding programmes and actions on their development (Aggelaki, 2011, pp.71-72).

The contribution of the European Union is on issues of social planning at the European, regional and national levels; through the participation of state and local government structures, it aims to prompt the development of actions that will lead to certain controlled changes (Mayo, 1998, p.71) in the convergence between EU member states. This approach of planned changes, through convergence policies, aims to reform the organizational model of administration and to overcome mentalities that give rise to social and

administrative dysfunctions, to, ultimately, attain socioeconomic advancement and economic development. This type of development has a top-down approach (Zaimakis, 2011, p.85), a strategy to transfer knowledge of planning and administration; it uses planning, programming, and the utilization of knowledge and experience in order to achieve the desired changes and the Pan-European course of development.

However, the implementation of the European *acquis communautaire* in Cypriot reality is taking place between two opposing forces. On the one hand, the duty to adjust to the needs, and the operating and development conditions of the European zone is heavily emphasized; on the other, everyday life confirms the particularities of the southern-European model embellished with elements of intertwined interests (*diaploki*) in a very small country, where despite the efforts, the proximity of personal relationships is expressed by the prevalence of clientelistic forms of interaction, between individuals but also in their transactions with the business world and state agencies (Koffas, 2013, pp.87-88).

Afterword

Forty years after the catastrophic results of the invasion and the successful course of community reconstruction, today the Republic of Cyprus faces a different set of problems, those of the globalized economic crisis. The immensity of social needs and problems as a consequence of the crisis, necessitate the disentanglement from the usual methods of intervention and bring forth the imperative need for a different kind of development.

As development models must adjust to the needs and conditions of each era, it is considered that in the current conditions it is necessary that, mainly funds, from development actions based on the "giver-recipient" scheme be essentially moved to synergies characterized by the principles of cooperation and the participation of citizens based on criteria of merit. Today, such an effort of merit-based synergy between the "state – local government – citizens" is considered not only instrumental in fighting the crisis, but also an element of development, which in its proper context should combine the economic and social elements by considering anthropocentric terms and values.

The implementation of such a development goal requires the awakening of a sense of solidarity, the realization of the interdependence of the participants and the renunciation of individualistic, materialistic and anti-collective orientations of the past.

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