

Lecture Six: What is Community?

1 Introduction: What is Community?

A common definition of community emerged as a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings. The participants differed in the emphasis they placed on particular elements of the definition. Community was defined similarly but experienced differently by people with diverse backgrounds.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1446907/>

A community is a social unit of any size that shares common values, or that is situated in a given geographical area (e.g. a village or town). It is a group of people who are connected by durable relations that extend beyond immediate genealogical ties, and who mutually define that relationship as important to their social identity and practice. Although communities are usually small, community may also refer to large groups, such as national communities, international communities, and virtual communities. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community>

1.1 Ofcom – Community Radio

Community radio stations provide a new voice for hundreds of local communities across the UK. Fuelled by the hard work and enthusiasm of volunteers, they reflect a diverse mix of cultures and interests and provide a rich mix of mostly locally-produced content.

<http://licensing.ofcom.org.uk/radio-broadcast-licensing/community-radio/>

1.2 Bowling Alone - Robert Putnam

Bowling Alone: Putnam warns that our stock of social capital – the very fabric of our connections with each other, has plummeted, impoverishing our lives and communities.

<http://bowlingalone.com/>

The Collapse and Revival of American Community is a 2000 nonfiction book by Robert D. Putnam. It was developed from his 1995 essay entitled Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital. Putnam surveys the decline of social capital in the United States since 1950. He has described the reduction in all the forms of in-person social intercourse upon which Americans used to found, educate, and enrich the fabric of their social lives. He argues that this undermines the active civil engagement which a strong democracy requires from its citizens. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bowling_Alone

One of the most destructive problems is the breakdown of community, and it is this breakdown that has often led to the breakdown of persons. Though we may put many around us, we are alone. Relationships have become superficial, there is no longer concern for the other, and we are pressed by societal and financial pressures to focus on our own survival. We do not concern ourselves much with the plight of others except a few we may call family or friends, and even then, our concern and attention is waning.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/extreme-states-mind/201304/distress-and-the-breakdown-community>

What causes community breakdown? One could argue that the problem is poverty - a growing divide between the rich and the poor, between individuals in Canadian cities, and also between wealthy and poor regions of our country and our world. We believe the problem is deeper than this and poverty is just a surface issue or symptom of the problem. We believe community breakdown is related to public attitudes and society's weakening belief in the power of community and communal responses. It is about a growing cynicism in people; they no longer believe positive change is possible. This has resulted in the breakdown or reduction of centrally or politically-driven social interventions.

http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/index/PB_comm_breakdown.pdf

For many decades, under successive Governments, UK poverty has been defined narrowly by a measure of national income inequality. That is to say, households have been classified as living in poverty if they fall below a set income level, typically taken at 60 per cent national median income. Although this technique can be helpful in mapping low income areas, it is an arbitrary measurement of poverty, which reveals little about the reality of life in low income communities, and it offers no explanation or understanding about the root causes of poverty.

<http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/about-us/social-breakdown-and-poverty>

1.3 UK Poverty Map 2012

<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/interactive/2012/mar/06/poverty-map-england-experian>

2 Community Volunteering

Research carried out by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has found that voluntary organisations such as cancer charities, homeless shelters and advice services have experienced greater demand for their services as a result of welfare reforms. The report reflects on the experiences of voluntary organisations and the extent to which the government's objectives of simplifying the benefits system, protecting the most vulnerable and incentivising work are being met. <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/1191-voluntary-organisations-under-pressure-due-to-welfare-reform-ncvo-report-finds>

At our recent Joint Forum (17 July) we asked the 50 voluntary & community sector (VCS) organisations present to discuss the issues they are facing as an organisation.

Here are five of the key messages we heard:

1. Commissioning is difficult to take advantage of
2. It is hard to keep up with the pace of change
3. Personal budgets present challenges around cash flow and visibility
4. The sector needs affordable premises
5. Volunteers are great but cost money

<http://casouthwark.org.uk/focus-southwark/five-issues-facing-voluntary-organisations-southwark>

As communities face change and try to surmount the challenges before them, it might be useful to remind ourselves of what its like being a leader as we approach the millenia. Wall offers up some observations.

<https://www.aae.wisc.edu/pubs/cenews/docs/ce282.txt>

This research project funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council explored how community visual arts practice can help young people flourish and connect with their communities despite adverse experiences they may have faced. The research focused on young people with disabilities and young people facing mental health challenges, and explored the potential resilience benefits of visual arts for these people.

<http://www.boingboing.org.uk/index.php/research/our-research?id=90:community-arts&catid=1>

Arts projects have become an important part of community development strategies. In addition to any creative achievements, projects are expected to have positive and measurable impacts on local social capital.

<http://www.barnardos.org.uk/commarts.pdf>

From income inequality and unemployment to poverty, education and healthcare, communities around the world are facing critical challenges that require creative ideas and solutions. Any of these challenges could use an artist's mind, a creative question or a critical thinker to help us find our way to a more healthy and just future.

<http://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/2015/feb/12/creative-ways-artists-improve-communities>

3 Communities of Identity

Helping you focus on what statistics and people say about being part of a community of identity or experience

<http://www.knownewcastle.org.uk/AreaSummary.aspx?cookieCheck=true&JScript=1>

Shared identities are thought to contribute to a number of progressive goals, such as fostering communities in which people from different backgrounds get along well together, encouraging citizens to participate actively in public life and generating wider support for a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and income.

<http://www.ippr.org/publications/the-power-of-belongingidentity-citizenship-and-community-cohesion>

3.1 Integration & Assimilation

So this week, I thought I could shine a bit more light on the projects here in the Playa del Carmen Community program.

<http://www.gvi.co.uk/blog/community-breakdown/>

Central to the question of integration and assimilation of post-war settler communities in Britain is the increasingly salient issue of identity. The western world since World War II has become both racially and ethnically increasingly heterogeneous (Glazer and Young, 1983), which makes the question of identity all the more relevant. The maintenance and formation of identity and community mobilisation within the diasporic minorities is a multi-dimensional process which takes place as a consequence of social, cultural and political factors both internal and external to diasporic minorities. <http://www.rcpbml.org.uk/wdie-07/DiColdFo.htm>

3.2 Community Engagement

The charity sector often talks about community, be it community action, community engagement or local communities. But when it comes to defining the concept of community, things start to get trickier. <http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2013/may/03/community-spurs-fans>

3.3 Self-Defined Communities?

My community, these two simple words can say so much about a person. It can say where they come from and by association what he/she believes or at least the context in which their beliefs were shaped. It can give us insights into their friends and connections, who their family is and their lifestyle. The words my community can also label a person as in, “they are part of the Gay community, disability community or feminist community. I have chosen four words to help us fully embrace this understanding. <http://deepeningcommunity.ca/content/community-identity>

3.4 What does "identity in community" mean to you?

http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/clife/pborn/survey_responses_6.pdf

4 Communities of Interest

A community of interest is a community of people who share a common interest or passion. These people exchange ideas and thoughts about the given passion, but may know (or care) little about each other outside of this area. Participation in a community of interest can be compelling, entertaining and create a ‘sticky’ community where people return frequently and remain for extended periods. Frequently, they cannot be easily defined by a particular geographical area. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_interest

4.1 Communities of Common Experience

Groups of people who share an identity, for example the Afro-Caribbean community, or those who share an experience, for example the homeless community. <http://www.healthknowledge.org.uk/public-health-textbook/organisation-management/5b-understanding-ofs/social-networks>

4.2 Community Challenges

Gentrification is a trend in urban neighborhoods, which results in increased property values and the displacing of lower-income families and small businesses. This is a common and widespread controversial topic in urban planning. It refers to shifts in an urban community lifestyle and an increasing share of wealthier residents and/or businesses and increasing property values. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gentrification>

<http://www.theguardian.com/cities/gentrification>

4.3 Gentrification

Gentrification means the world is now one giant flat white. Or a private members’ club full of “creatives”. The freaks who used to trip around Soho and tell you in which particular basement you could find another necessary drink are an endangered species. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/commentsfree/2015/nov/18/gentrification-world-giant-flat-white-stand-up-sleaze-old-dives-london>

4.4 Sustainable Urban Change

The “it,” as you may have guessed, is gentrification. If you live in one of these cities, you probably think you know how it works. Artists, bohemians, and gay couples come first. They move into run-down—but charming and historic—homes and loft spaces close to the urban core. Houses are restored. Funky coffee shops appear. Public safety improves. Then rents and home prices start to go up. The open-minded, diversity-loving creative types who were the first wave of gentrifiers give way to lawyers, bankers, and techies. As rents and home prices continue to rise, the earlier residents—often lower-income people of color—are forced out.

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2015/01/the_gentrification_myth_it_s_rare_and_not_as_bad_for_the_poor_as_people.html

4.5 The Affluent Society

The Affluent Society is a 1958 (4th edition revised 1984) book by Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith. The book sought to clearly outline the manner in which the post-World War II United States was becoming wealthy in the private sector but remained poor in the public sector, lacking social and physical infrastructure, and perpetuating income disparities. The book sparked much public discussion at the time, and it is widely remembered for Galbraith's popularizing of the term "conventional wisdom." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Affluent_Society

5 Community Sustainability?

The world is a newly affluent place. Economic growth has brought enormous changes to the ways in which the populations of the Western world live. Such change ought to be accompanied by a broad revolution in ideas associated with the management of a national economy and society. Running a rich country is entirely different to running an economy that is struggling to survive; and yet so many of the ancient ideas persist into the present day, entirely inappropriate to the new challenges which society faces. The purpose of this book is to highlight the divide between the old ideas and the current reality and to suggest successors to the current view.

http://abridge.me.uk/doku.php?id=the_affluent_society

6 Communities of Practice

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people who share a craft and/or a profession. The concept was first proposed by cognitive anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in 1991. A CoP can evolve naturally because of the members' common interest in a particular domain or area, or it can be created deliberately with the goal of gaining knowledge related to a specific field. It is through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group that the members learn from each other, and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_practice

6.1 Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems

This essay argues that the success of organizations depends on their ability to design themselves as social learning systems and also to participate in broader learning systems such as an industry, a region, or a consortium. It explores the structure of these social learning systems. It proposes a social definition of learning and distinguishes between three 'modes of belonging' by which we participate in social learning systems. Then it uses this framework to look at three constitutive elements of these systems: communities of practice, boundary processes among these communities, and identities as shaped by our participation in these systems.

<http://org.sagepub.com/content/7/2/225.short>

6.2 Community Interaction

Communities of practice are for people who share common job roles, responsibilities or remits. They do well through regular interaction and common goals.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-development-handbook/community-development-handbook>

6.3 Collective Engagement

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope. In a nutshell: Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. <http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

6.4 Performance & Accomplishments

The purposes of this paper are twofold. Firstly, it aims to clarify the concept of community of practice by foregrounding differences between four seminal statements of the concept (Lave and Wenger 1991, Brown and Duguid 1991, Wenger 1998 and Wenger, McDermott and Snyder 2002). That Wenger's work is increasingly "performative" rather than "analytic" has been recognised (Contu and Willmott 2000, Davenport and Hall 2002), but the argument here is that confusion about the concept has been generated by the seminal works having very different central concerns, even if the

epistemological underpinnings are common (cf Osterlund and Carlile 2003). The second purpose of the review is to summarise critical views of each account.

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wbs/conf/olkc/archive/oklc5/papers/e-4_cox.pdf

6.5 Community Organising

At its core, community organising is about empowering communities and harnessing the power of individuals to work together in their shared self-interest. Community Organising involves building relationships in communities, mobilising people to take action and supporting projects which make a difference to people's lives. Community Organising creates social and political change through collective action. Community Organisers listen to what people want to see change in their lives and communities and help them to achieve this, working in and through democratic structures. Community organisers have no agenda, and do not lead or do things on behalf of people. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415860/Community Organisers Programme Summary Report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415860/Community_Organisers_Programme_Summary_Report.pdf)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government>

6.6 Understanding 'The Community'

Broadly speaking there are three types of communities. These are not mutually exclusive as we all are members of these types concurrently. http://www.unesco.org/education/aladin/paldin/pdf/course01/unit_06.pdf

What Issue Would Galvanise Community Solidarity?

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