TECH2503-17 Community Media Production

Lecture Seventeen – Community Cohesion Problems & Issues

Contents

1   Community Nostalgia

"Community is a ubiquitous word in social policy" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 187).

"The word community has been said to be a 'weasel word' – useful precisely because its meaning is so unclear and attractive because it implies a nostalgic image of a time when conflict and difference were absent from social relations" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 187).

"The word community has been popular in twentieth-century histories of the UK, but social historians are vague about how much community or community feeling actually existed. The word hints at an identification with a particular neighbourhood or street, a sense of shared perspectives, and reciprocal dependency" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 187).

"We find the idea of harmonious, traditional working-class community (which some people think has decayed with deindustrialisation) in two separate discourses – a backward-looking romanticism and a forward-looking socialism" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 187).

2   Historical Accounts of Community

"But historical accounts show that, while there was some solidarity and mutual sympathy, there were also less attractive features, like the neglect of children, exhaustion and sickness, and the rejection of 'weird' people and outsiders. The truth is probably that there was always a mixture of good and bad, with different combinations as different times and in different places" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 188).

2.1   Who Cares, Liverpool – 1971

https://youtu.be/GF-_5PDU6s4

3   Modern Communities

"Most people today do not live in ways that fit with the idealised image of community. They live in suburban settings, characterised by privatisation and weak social ties and neighbours" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 188).

4   Problematic Communities

"The idea of a 'problematic community' is something of a contradiction in terms. If communities are thought to be good, how can there be problematic or bad communities? Problematic communities have often been seen as disorganised, disadvantaged or frightened" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 188).

"When areas come to be seen as unsafe or dangerous and threaten to pollute or spread contagion to mainstream society, they become the focus of policy attention, and typically there are calls for 'something to be done'" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 188).

"All the fears and discontents that lie in society are externalised onto these unfortunate places. By locating threats in them, attention is distracted from deep rifts in society at large. Defining 'the

problem' as one of drugs similarly serves to place the blame on a simple external enemy, different and originating outside Britain, thus again diverting attention from the problems that lie in society as a whole" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 189).

"The [criminal] markets may be located in poor areas, but the customers often come from so-called respectable society" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 189).

5   Life Expectancy

"And the gap in life experiences is not as great as the images make out. Divorced women plummet down the housing market; refugees escaping persecution drop from skilled and professional employment to life on a council estate; the children of respectable working people in deindustrialised areas cannot find work" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 189).

"Chorionic illness dramatically alters a household's income and lifestyle" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 190).

"Some other themes constantly crop up in perceptions and explanations of problematic communities. Spatial segregation – geographical concentration of rich and poor – has had an impact on local administration. The very local authorities trying to deal with the situation end up being blamed and accused of incompetence. The solution in the nineteenth century was to call for more involvement by 'men of property' in local administration; the modern equivalent is the call for more involvement from the business community" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 190).

6   Poverty & Pauperism

"The problem identified here is not one of poverty but of pauperism. The pauper is someone who gives up and becomes coarse, brutish, drunken and immoral – or, in contemporary terms, 'welfare dependent.' The solution is to do away with alms and welfare, and to encourage poor people to be more self-reliant. The more important policies, it is thought by those who take this view, are those which make work more attractive" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 191).

"What can be considered initially a solution to the problem, council housing, came to be seen as the cause of the problem" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 191).

"Other broader social trends noted have been the spread of drugs and a 'crisis of masculinity'" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 191).

6.1   Undeserving Poor

My Fair Lady

https://youtu.be/aAQb_iGQmFo

7   Deindustrialisation

"Underlying these social developments is the deep beat of deindustrialisation and the deincorporation of the working class. In spite of advances in technology and the standard of living, some commentators consider that in other ways the shape of society is changing back to that of the nineteenth century" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 191).

"Bauman's analysis is that contemporary society has ceased to be a society of producers and become a society of consumers. Consumers are divided into two groups, 'satisfied consumers and flawed consumers,' and the plight of the latter is used to frighten the former into satisfaction. The shift from a citizenship defined by the work ethic and a sense of duty to a citizenship based on

shopping has undermined the effectiveness of the integrative processes of the old welfare state" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 191).

7.1 Alan Bleasdale: Boys from the Blackstuff

A clip from Alan Bleasdale's 1982 five part drama series, Boys from the Blackstuff, the sequel to the television play The Black Stuff. https://youtu.be/yAPz-tlJGoE

8 Relative Deprivation

"Relative depravation also helps to explain crime, because for some people life is considered unjust and unfair. This erodes the social controls that might encourage conformity. Other factors cited as leading to a widening gap between poor communities and the rest of society are policing practices, immigration, racial tension, poverty and unemployment, the concentrations of disadvantage and deviance, and the flight of the middle class" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 192).

"Poor communities are subject to a greater surveillance than others, so the data may be distorted by the mechanisms of data collection" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 192).

9 Concentrated Poverty

"Large urban areas and older industrial areas are the context for concentrated poverty. Labour market policy is a crucial influence because of the increasing salience of educational qualifications in the labour market, the spatial mismatch of job opportunities and the places where most disadvantaged people live" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 193).

"The frequent turnover of residents undermines a community – length of residence is a mark of a neighbourhood's stability. It takes time for a sense of identity and pride and investment in a neighbourhood to develop, and for elders or leaders to emerge, who set the tone and intervene to protect it if things start to go wrong. The key to the strength of a community is whether people want to stay living there. If outsiders consider a community problematic, often its residents do too. Those who can leave" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 193).

"A community may need to be identified a problematic before it can obtain selective, targeted funds for its renewal" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 193).

10 Declining Neighbourhoods

"Once a neighbourhood is defined as in decline, it is difficult to change its image: banks leave, people feel depressed and apathetic, they are rejected by outsiders, and young people in particular feel unwanted" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 193).

"The problems of 'estates on the edge' are not separate from wider societal trends. The problems are more concentrated and more clearly defined only because they are area based" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 193).

11 Foundational Assumptions

"The explanations for problematic communities fall broadly into two camps: those that find individuals responsible for the situation and those that blame the environment. Some argue that the innate pathology of the 'degenerates' who live in these areas accounts for the problems. Others see their difficult behaviour as a response to the situations they find themselves in, especially their rejection or neglect by conventional society" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 194).

"Culture of poverty" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 194).

"Cycle of decline" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 194).

"Lewis (1964), considered the culture of poverty to be the pragmatic reaction of poor people to their being marginalised in a class-stratified and individualistic society. The culture provides support to cope with feelings of helplessness and despair, as poor people realise that their achieving success in conventional terms is unlikely" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 194).

"The notion of culture of poverty is tenacious in government and influences many of New Labour's responses to what they see as poverty of expectations in poor communities (and among the teachers and others who work in these areas" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 194).

"Contained within these ideas is the notion of a cycle of decline. Poor families are caught in a vicious circle: they become trapped and are sucked further and further down. Ill health may lead to financial difficulties, children suffer from deprivation and they exhibit delinquency and an inability to adjust to adult life. They enter unstable marriages and show emotional problems and ill health, and the cycle repeats itself in the next generation" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 195).

12   Compounded Problems

"Power (1997) has a rather different but related explanation for decline. She sees the pressures falling on three main areas – the buildings, the people and the services. When they compound each other, the near breakdown of communities can appear" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 195).

"The perception that there is a general problem with young people in contemporary society partly explains the definition of problematic communities as those with large concentration of young people, especially those without education or jobs, who are disaffected and alienated" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 195).

13   Government Responses

"Community Development Projects (CDPs)… concentrated on social problem groups in deprived areas" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 197).

"The inner city-riots of the early 1980s are the key to explaining the pattern of policy development in that decade. Earlier inner-city policies were seen to have failed. The solution lay in creating an enterprise society. A contribution of Thatcherism was to add to the notions of the 'culture of poverty' the idea that this was compounded by 'welfare dependency'" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 197).

"Markets replaced politics, urban entrepreneurs mattered more than public servants, physical capital was targeted more than social capital, and the creation of wealth was considered more important than its redistribution" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 198).

14   Community Regeneration

"Increasing stress was placed on the role of communities in urban regeneration and the 1990s developments in City Challenges initiatives expressly aimed to involve local communities. City Challenge involved competition between local authorities for funds, and areas were selected because of high deprivation and indicators of high levels of crime" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 198).

"Riots and the growth of fear of crime are thus a key backcloth to late-twentieth-century developments in policy regarding problematic communities. The steady 'criminalisation of social policy' in the past two decades (by which social control rather than social care becomes the dominant policy concern) is starkly exemplified in policy responses to problematic communities and those who live within them, especially the young" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 199).

15 Multi-Agency Work

"Multi-agency working, linking the police, the health authorities, the local authorities, business and the voluntary sector, become established practice through schemes to prevent crime and deal with the drugs problem" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 199).

"'In inner-city areas, outer-city estates and an increasing number of rural areas, excluded communities are teetering on the point of collapse, their resources of self-organisation and resistance overwhelmed by the sheer scale of economic and social change which they had endured" (Hoggett, 1997 quoted in MacGregor, 2001, p. 199).

16 Social Exclusion

"Social exclusion refers to the problematic poor, the poor in problematic communities. In EU discourse, where the term originated, social exclusion refers to the denial of access to social rights such as employment, housing and health care. Policies built on these perceptions stress breaking down barriers to access, such as job opportunities, transport and childcare. It is also assumed in this discourse that if areas become progressively cut off from the mainstream they begin to develop alternative cultures, which can be a breeding ground for crime, disorder and deviance. Another assumption is that these conditions have proved resistant to traditional policy solutions, so something new must be tried" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 199).

"The right response is to establish more effective control" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 200).

"Top-down, prescriptive programmes were thought to have little impact: economic regeneration without attention to social regeneration will do nothing to solve the problems of poor communities" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 200).

17 Dismantling the Welfare State?

"One question remains: how can we effect social control and bring about social cohesion in the absence of a welfare state? What mechanisms could adequately take in its place? So far the alternatives appear ineffective – mere plasters which peel off quickly, revealing festering sores beneath. Why is it always so difficult for us to hear the message that what problematic neighbour-hoods need is decent housing, basic social amenities, improved transport, some opportunity for entertainment and more jobs? Is it perhaps because if we are to meet these needs we should require a commitment to redistribution, which is presently off the political agenda?" (MacGregor, 2001, p. 203).

Regression dressed up as "reform": how rhetoric helped dismantle the welfare state

The word "reform" was revived with great fanfare by the coalition government in 2010; but this no longer referred to the damage inflicted by an economic and social system. It now claimed to deal with the baleful effects of the welfare state, paradoxically, the result of earlier "reforms" the government is eager to dismantle. Such a project was possible, because while only the ghost of industrial manufacture remained in Britain, the structures of welfare, designed to humanise it, were still in place. It is this tottering relic which, like the factories long fallen into rubble and splintered glass, is now ripe for development by the realtors of modernity.
http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/welfare/2016/03/regression-dressed-reform-how-rhetoric-helped-dismantle-welfare-state

18 Community Based Solutions

"One of the reasons for turning to community development as an alternative to more traditional

forms of human services is that it holds out a promise of a more adequate solution to many of the most pressing contemporary social problems. Such problems as unemployment, poverty, crime, loneliness, mental illness, substance abuse and domestic violence seem to be insoluble. Despite the best efforts of policy-makers, social and behavioural scientists and human service professionals, these problems remain intractable and, if anything, appear to be becoming more serious" (Ife, 2013, p. 125).

19 This is How People Can Truly Take Back Control: From the Bottom Up

"Our atomised communities can heal themselves. Through local initiatives we can regenerate our culture and make politics relevant again" - George Monbiot.

"Without community, politics is dead. But communities have been scattered like dust in the wind. At work, at home, both practically and imaginatively, we are atomised. As a result, politics is experienced by many people as an external force: dull and irrelevant at best, oppressive and frightening at worst. It is handed down from above rather than developed from below. There are exceptions – the Sanders and Corbyn campaigns, for instance – but even they seemed shallowly rooted in comparison with the deep foundations of solidarity movements grew from in the past, and may disperse as quickly as they gather. It is in the powder of shattered communities that anti-politics swirls, raising towering dust-devils of demagoguery and extremism. These tornadoes threaten to tear down whatever social structures still stand."

19.1 Taking Back Control

The Liverpool locals who took control of their long-neglected streets. Granby Four Streets in Toxteth is a rare success after New Labour initiatives drained the area of life. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/nov/27/liverpool-locals-took-control-long-neglected-streets

Residents of Granby Four Streets in Toxteth celebrate Turner Prize nomination for community regeneration project http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/residents-of-granby-four-streets-in-toxteth-celebrate-turner-prize-nomination-for-community-10254083.html

Granby Four Streets - Liverpool's shining example of community action http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/granby-four-streets-liverpools-shining-11575281

Toxteth Residents Demand Fresh Start from Housing Minister http://www.welshstreets.co.uk/?p=848

20 Communities Working for Themselves

"There are hundreds of examples of how this might begin, such as community shops, development trusts, food assemblies (communities buying fresh food directly from local producers), community choirs and free universities (in which people exchange knowledge and skills in social spaces). Also time banking (where neighbours give their time to give practical help and support to others), transition towns (where residents try to create more sustainable economies), potluck lunch clubs (in which everyone brings a homemade dish to share), local currencies, Men's Sheds (in which older men swap skills and escape from loneliness), turning streets into temporary playgrounds (like the Playing Out project), secular services (such as Sunday Assembly), lantern festivals, fun palaces and technology hubs."https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/08/take-back-control-bottom-up-communities

"An alternative community-based model would focus on skill-sharing, and on helping community members to develop skills and to use their own existing skills and wisdom in providing services to

others. Knowledge and skills would be 'owned' at the community level, and would be shared widely among community members. Services would not, for the most part, be provided by outside professional experts but would be relocated in the community itself (which is where they have always been throughout human history, except for the past 200 years)" (Ife, 2013, p. 127).

20.1 Ragged University

"Ragged University is about the free exchange of knowledge and skills in social spaces. It is about people who love what they do sharing what they have invested their time in. At the heart of this is that we should enjoy knowledge and talking over ideas whilst breaking bread…

- It is about valuing knowledgeable people
- It is not about certificates
- It is about exploring what is possible
- It is not about CVs
- It is about creating something
- It is not about making money

https://www.raggeduniversity.co.uk/about/presentations/

20.2 Timebanking

" Timebanking is a means of exchange used to organise people and organisations around a purpose, where time is the principal currency. For every hour participants 'deposit' in a timebank, perhaps by giving practical help and support to others, they are able to 'withdraw' equivalent support in time when they themselves are in need. In each case the participant decides what they can offer. Everyone's time is equal, so one hour of my time is equal to one hour of your time, irrespective of whatever we choose to exchange. Because timebanks are just systems of exchange, they can be used in an almost endless variety of settings" http://www.timebanking.org/what-is-timebanking/what-is-timebanking/

20.3 Transition Network

"Transition is a movement that has been growing since 2005. It is about communities stepping up to address the big challenges they face by starting local. By coming together, they are able to crowd-source solutions. They seek to nurture a caring culture, one focused on supporting each other, both as groups or as wider communities. In practice, they are reclaiming the economy, sparking entrepreneurship, reimagining work, reskilling themselves and weaving webs of connection and support. It's an approach that has spread now to over 50 countries, in thousands of groups: in towns, villages, cities, Universities, schools. One of the key ways it spreads is through telling inspiring stories, and that's what we aim to do on this website" http://transitionnetwork.org/about-the-movement/what-is-transition/

20.4 Playing Out

Simply 'playing out' – having the freedom to step out of your own front door and kick a ball about – is nothing new. There are still some streets and estates where this happens and that's great. But the reality is that for various reasons, most children have far less freedom to play out than their parents or grandparents had. Yet though the world may have changed for today's children, their need for free play close to their homes remains just as strong. And we think this dwindling freedom means that they, their families and communities are losing out on something important.

The 'playing out' model: In response to this problem, we developed a model where neighbours close their street to through traffic for a couple of hours, creating a safe space for children to play out. More detail about how this works can be found here. It has now become possible in many areas to 'play out' like this on a regular basis but even a one-off session can have a dramatic effect. In

short, this model:

- Gives children a chance to play out freely and safely on their own street.
- Builds the conditions needed for street play to be normal again (safer streets, more connected communities, safety in numbers)
- Creates a vision of streets as vibrant, playable spaces http://playingout.net/

20.5 UK Men's Sheds Association

A Men's Shed is a larger version of the typical man's shed in the garden – a place where he feels at home and pursues practical interests with a high degree of autonomy. A Men's Shed offers this to a group of such men where members share the tools and resources they need to work on projects of their own choosing at their own pace and in a safe, friendly and inclusive venue. They are places of skill-sharing and informal learning, of individual pursuits and community projects, of purpose, achievement and social interaction. A place of leisure where men come together to work. http://menssheds.org.uk/

20.6 Sunday Assembly

The Sunday Assembly was started by Sanderson Jones and Pippa Evans, two comedians who were on the way to a gig in Bath when they discovered they both wanted to do something that was like church but totally secular and inclusive of all—no matter what they believed. The first ever Sunday Assembly meeting took place on January 6th 2013 at The Nave in Islington. Almost 200 people turned up at the first meeting, 300 at the second and soon people all over the world asked to start one. Now there are over 70 Sunday Assembly chapters in 8 different countries where people sing songs, hear inspiring talks, and create community together. Why do we exist? Life is short, it is brilliant, it is sometimes tough, we build communities that help everyone live life as fully as possible. https://www.sundayassembly.com/

20.7 Fun Places

In the early 1960s, Joan Littlewood and architect Cedric Price conceived the Fun Palace as a 'laboratory of fun' and 'a university of the streets'. It was to be a temporary and movable home to the arts and sciences, open and welcoming to all. For many reasons it wasn't possible in 1961 and the Fun Palace never came to fruition as a building. The idea however, of a space welcoming and open to all, bringing arts and sciences together, where everyone is an artist and everyone a scientist, remained a GREAT idea.

Co-Director Stella Duffy has written a blog post about the leap from the 1960s idea to now, and explaining how the campaign got going. Fun Palaces is both an ongoing campaign for culture by, for and with all, and also an annual weekend of events, where arts and sciences are a vital catalyst for community engagement and full participation for everyone, from the grassroots up. http://funpalaces.co.uk/

20.8 TechResort

TechResort is making Eastbourne a great home for digital, tech and creative people. We're a Community Interest Company http://techresorteb.com/

21 Thick Networks

Turning such initiatives into a wider social revival means creating what practitioners call "thick networks": projects that proliferate, spawning further ventures and ideas that weren't envisaged when they started. They then begin to develop a dense, participatory culture that becomes attractive and relevant to everyone rather than mostly to socially active people with time on their

hands.

The advantage of online social networks, according to Jones & Hafner (Jones & Hafner, 2012), is that they improve our relationships with our core group of close friends with whom we already have strong ties, and that they help us to meet new friends that we might not otherwise have encountered before. Communicating with already established friends is reinforced and the ties become stronger, while the weak ties are given scope to facilitate contact with casual acquaintances.

Social networks are comprise of 'connectors' and 'mavens', according to Malcolm Gladwell. Mavens are people in possession of, or access to things that are beneficial to other people. Connectors act as bridges, facilitating the flow of information, goods and services between different groups or clusters of people. The first step in understanding how to mange connections in social networks understands the nature of those connections.

In a social network such as Facebook or Twitter people are joined together not just by an interest in a topic, activity, or cause, but also by social relationships. Bonding between friends with strong ties increases motivation and commitment for a cause, and bridging relationships help spread this commitment to other groups linked to one another through weaker ties. The combination of bonding and bridging is one reason social networking sites are an effective tools for memeing and sharing content, such as images and videos. Social networking sites make it easier to 'crowdsource' information and to collaborate in the production and development of work.

21.1   The Strength of Weak Ties: New animation from Dalton Conley

It is the people with whom we are the least connected who offer us the most opportunities. Latest animation from Dalton Conley's You May Ask Yourself. Learn more at wwnorton.com/soc
https://youtu.be/-Bm93gN1zJg

22   Summary

"The community development approach challenges some of these structures, and seeks alternatives to the taken-for-granted assumptions of the existing social, economic and political system. In so doing it holds out a hope that some of these problems might indeed be adequately addressed" (Ife, 2013, p. 125).

"In a community-based system, however, services to address these issues would be organised very differently" (Ife, 2013, p. 126).

COMMUNITY BUILDING
Initiatives that improve collective benefit / utility e.g. by improving health, education, hygiene, access to public services and the environment.

COMMUNITY BRIDGING
Initiatives that boost social cohesion or social capital e.g. through community / cultural, outreach, participation in governance and collective action.

COMMUNITY ACTION
Initiatives that identify, condemn, curb or otherwise reduce social evils like early marriage, violence against women, terrorism, drug abuse, corruption etc.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

http://suchintafoundation.org/community-development/

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