

TECH2503-18 Community Media Production

Lecture 003: Community Media as a Development Practice

Introduction – Community Media as a Development Practice:

1. Development Alignments

“The central premise here is that shifting toward development processes that dramatically reduce the consumption of natural resources environmental damage is contingent upon a strong alignment of equity and social justice concerns with environmental goals” (Oden, 2016, p. 30).

2. Equity

“Unless a clear concept of equity moves to the centre of sustainable development practice the information, political engagement, and coalitions necessary to achieve substantial progress will be lacking” (Oden, 2016, p. 30).

3. Inequality

“Growing economic inequality in the U.S. is strongly shaping valuation and distributions in other social spheres including educational opportunities and political voice, access, and power. This, in turn, undermines the ability to change civic culture, draw upon a broader base of information, and mobilise the political coalitions necessary to advance meaningful sustainable development initiatives” (Oden, 2016, p. 31).

4. Growth & Distribution

“Yet the realities of climate change have prompted many to question the claim that sustainable development is contingent upon, or intrinsically consistent with, economic growth or better distribution of wealth” (Oden, 2016, p. 31).

5. Social Justice

“Consideration of equity and social justice has always been a central theme in political and moral philosophy... Embedded in the social contract theories of Hobbs, Rousseau, and Kant are ideals of equity and fairness. The benefits of submitting to the laws of a state are seen as flowing from security, equal treatment of similar cases (lack of arbitrary rule), and a degree of guaranteed personal freedom” (Oden, 2016, p. 32).

6. Differentiation

“Evolution and the fabric of human society are based upon differentiation and division of activity. Yet all theories of politics and ethics argue that individuals be treated equally across some social or cultural dimension” (Oden, 2016, p. 32).

7. Veil of Ignorance

“Rawls imposes a veil of ignorance on all citizens in what he terms ‘an original position.’ Behind the veil of ignorance agents are completely ignorant of their social position or past (status, race, gender, family background). In this original position, rational agents would seek to minimise the potential harms of ending up at the low end of economic or social resource distributions” (Oden, 2016, p. 33).

8. Rationalism

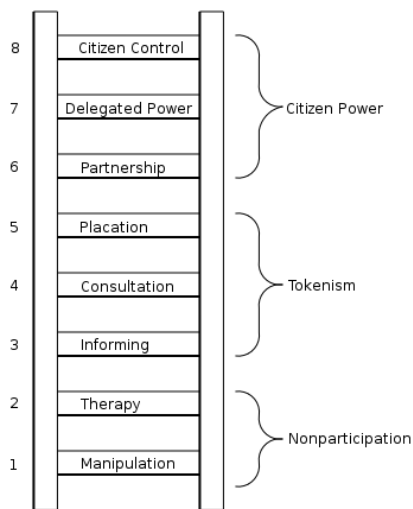
“Rational agents would agree on three basic principles:

- 1) Each person has the same claim to the most extensive basic liberties, compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all;
- 2) Social and economic inequalities are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and
- 3) Social and economic inequalities are justified if they provide the greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of society” (Oden, 2016, p. 33).

9. Spheres of Social Life

“Walzer does not believe there is any ‘right’ or intrinsically equitable distribution of resources, but instead argues that each sphere of social life – economic, political, educational, religious, etc. – is subject to unique distributive standards” (Oden, 2016, p. 34).

10. A Ladder of Citizen Participation - Sherry R Arnstein



The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of "non-participation" that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable powerholders to "educate" or "cure" the participants. Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by powerholders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no "muscle," hence no assurance of changing the status quo. Rung (5) Placation is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide.

Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into a (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. At the topmost rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power.

<http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html>

11. Standards of Distribution

"It is not inequalities within individual spheres that constitute the principle problem of equity, rather it is inequalities in one sphere spilling over and shaping distributions in another sphere with different values and standards of distribution" (Oden, 2016, p. 34).

12. Economic Inequality

"In the contemporary U.S. setting, for example, the problem of equity is not economic inequality per se, but the fact that highly unequal wealth distribution strongly influences distributions of educational opportunity, political access and power, exposure to environmental costs, and outcomes in other domains" (Oden, 2016, p. 34).

13. Exclusion

"Why then should the principles of complex equity be more deeply integrated into the sustainable development discourse? Sever violations of complex equity imply that there is exclusion of large numbers of citizens from economic opportunity, power, voice, and hence meaningful participation in society. Widespread exclusion can stifle meaningful progress toward a more sustainable process of social and environmental development in a number of ways. First, complex inequalities undermine the habitus of mutual respect between citizens of a liberal democracy" (Oden, 2016, p. 34).

"Where the issue of localism becomes problematic is how the worth of local content can be measured and evaluated. Localism is treated here from a production angle rather than as a provision based service. Although community broadcasting may in fact serve the needs of local communities, it is the desire for access that drives local content as much as need" (Rennie, 2006, p. 121).

14. Social Distance

“As inequality in one sphere spills over and corrupts distributive standards in other sphere exclusion, marginalisation and demoralisation grow. When some social classes, groups, and individuals are disconnected from influence or even meaningful participation, while a small group retains strong influence, this fragments communities, depletes public discourse, and undercuts the conditions for coalition building. Social and psychological distance prevails and inter-group trust or what has been termed ‘bridging social capital,’ become exceedingly to build. A broad powerful movement pushing for a meaningful shift toward sustainable development can only emerge when trust can be built across groups about the real shared sacrifices and shared benefits of a new course” (Oden, 2016, p. 34).

15. Maintaining Relationships

“If we do not... develop and maintain relationships among agents with diverse interests and perspectives, we are severely handicapped in generating approaches to complex and often non-linear challenges of sustainable development” (Oden, 2016, p. 35).

16. Complex Inequalities

“Social exclusion associated with severe and worsening complex inequality implies that an inclusionary alternative coalition can only be built by a transformative engagement that builds trust and consensus between environmental groups and interests focused on social equity. This in turn requires a sustainability discourse and action program that understands and is energetically engaged in resistance to growing inequality” (Oden, 2016, p. 35).

17. Special Interests

“Profane special interest power demoralises citizens and influences highly unequal participation in basic political and civic activities. Individuals in higher income strata are much more likely to vote, engage in voluntary associations, contact public officials, or work on a political campaign” (Oden, 2016, p. 36).

18. Market Economics

“A basic principle of market economics is that business firms should carry the full costs of producing or selling their products. Violation of this principle undermines the fundamental operation of competitive markets. If some external costs (either social and environmental) are borne by third parties, this creates an implicit subsidy that unfairly lowers the prices of the subject firm below their true marginal costs. Requiring companies to carry the true costs of their own business operations is a fundamental requirement of the fair and efficient operation of the market” (Oden, 2016, p. 37).

19. Social Assets

“Some evidence suggests that strategies that treat labour and material inputs as assets rather than mere inputs correlates with reduced environmental damage, and stronger firm commitments to the health and quality of life in host communities (to attract and keep skilled workers and managers)” (Oden, 2016, p. 38).

20. Advocacy

“These potential links between labour standards and environmental outcomes should persuade environmental sustainability advocates that workplace equity issues are integral to the broader environmental agenda” (Oden, 2016, p. 38).

21. Voices and Debate

“If the marginalisation and exclusion experienced by many urban communities is not addressed, urban sustainability efforts risk failure for two reasons. First, unless the needs, voices, and information provided by existing low and working class residents are incorporated in the plans, environmental performance may not improve, or even decline, as changes in physical and infrastructural conditions are implemented to advance sustainability goals. Second, without a strong and direct inclusion of equity advocates in urban political coalitions, more difficult policies to regular development, make larger scale infrastructure changes and investments, and to extend rights and voice to marginalised communities will be derailed” (Oden, 2016, p. 39).

“All of which is to suggest that community media are part of a wider movement encompassing direct action campaigns, trade union and media work reform efforts, culture jamming, and communication scholarship, among other critical interventions, committed to struggle for ‘communicative democracy’” (Howley, 2005, p. 2).

22. Marginalisation

“In this planning process the existing residents were unheard and virtually unseen by the developers, consultants, and city personnel. This profound marginalisation and exclusion, an outcome of complex inequality, involves a critical loss of

information, insight and know-how. If environmental advocates and city planners had fully integrated the voices and needs of the existing residents, an alternative corridor plan might have been fashioned that preserved affordable housing, upgraded the energy efficiency of the existing units, and kept low income residents connected by transit to jobs and good public schools. In this case inclusion would have yielded substantial social and environmental benefits” (Oden, 2016, p. 40).

23. Regime Theory

“Urban growth regime theory as it has developed over the past two decades stresses bonds of association and interest among privileged groups in urban regions which tend to align values and norms within and between group members” (Oden, 2016, p. 40).

24. Local Democracy

“Members of the local growth regime have... a ‘privileged voice’ within the context of liberal democracy; they get backroom access to political decision makers – the meetings, lunches, fundraisers, while other more diffuse interest groups (environmentalists, social justice advocates) get more limited ‘front room’ access” (Oden, 2016, p. 40).

“To buy unlimited amounts of political speech are based upon a ‘thin’ vision of democracy that views the political realm as little more than a sphere of competing interests” (Etzioni, 1995, p. 11).

“The best way to keep the public sphere functioning is to encourage what might best be described as principled decentralisation. That is, communities, institutions, and individuals have a responsibility to cultivate a variety of different venues so that alternative voices are expressed. At the same time these venues must maintain open frontiers with one another and with the larger public sphere. In this way pragmatic coalitions can be built around common goals where an overlapping consensus has been established. Without such as commitment decentralisation can only lead to Babel and, ultimately, Balkanisation” (Etzioni, 1995, p. 11).

25. Reform & Transformation

“An important feature of regime theory that distinguishes it from structuralist accounts is that regimes are contestable; they can be reformed, reconfigured, and even overturned by alternative bases of interest and power” (Oden, 2016, p. 41).

“From a political economic perspective, then, community media represents a significant intervention into the structural inequalities and power imbalances of contemporary media systems. By providing local populations with access to the means of communication, community media offer a modest, but vitally important corrective to the unprecedented concentration of media ownership that undermines local cultural expression, privatises the channels of public communication, and otherwise threatens the prospects for democratic self-governance” (Howley, 2005, p. 4).

“These shifts have implications for the exercise of democracy, power, inclusion, comprising the right to communicate and to be represented in the media, and public participation in the political, public sphere both through engagement with the ongoing politics of recognition of different social groups and/or the global social struggles of broader political causes” (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpenter, 2008, p. xii).

26. Social Capital

“Bonding social capital... bridging social capital...” (Oden, 2016, p. 41).

“By analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital – tools and training that enhance individual productivity – the core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value. Just as a screwdriver (physical capital) or a college education (human capital) can increase productivity (both individual and collective), so too social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups” (Robert D. Putnam, 2000, p. 18).

“In societies with severe complex inequality those with inordinate economic and political power may have ‘surplus’ social capital while others have little” (Oden, 2016, p. 41).

27. Participation

“On the other hand community, social justice, and environmental groups are at a real disadvantage. They may have strong within group associations, but very weak between group ties and/or vertical ties to higher level representatives (at the state and or national levels). These differentials, the direct effects of complex inequality, have a strong influence

on the processes and outcomes of public participation. They can lead, through a kind of path dependence, towards non-participation and exclusion” (Oden, 2016, p. 41).

“One lesson is that creating robust social capital takes time and effort. For the most part, it develops through extensive and time-consuming face-to-face conversations between two individuals or among small groups of people” (Robert D Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen, 2003, p. 9).

“It takes person-to-person contact over time to build the trust and mutual understanding that characterize the relationships that are the basis of social capital. So we see no way that social capital can be created instantaneously or en masse” (Robert D Putnam et al., 2003, p. 9).

28. Solidarity

“Only when social justice groups see environmentalists on their front lines will they fully appreciate the natural links between environmental improvement and economic and political access and participation” (Oden, 2016, p. 42).

“Michael Walzer from his book *Thick and Thin: Moral Arguments at Home and Abroad* (Walzer, 1994). In this work he notes that moral and ethical values are not, as Kant claimed, some abstract inheritance that we all share, but are rather built out of obligations and trust relationships embedded in ‘local’ social relations (families, schools, local communities). When equity concerns are seriously addressed at home, this may prepare us to address international inequality in more meaningful ways” (Oden, 2016, p. 42).

“Meanwhile, the small community media outfits with no core funding are forever trying to stay financially afloat, looking for the next pot of funding for the next project, and the work piles up with the capacity shrinks, again knocking on the door of the funding body. Such fragmented working landscapes are all too common in this sector, and the cry for sustainability is a loud and frustrated one” (Shawn Sobers in Howley, 2010, p. 192).

29. Counter-Hegemonies

“Interest group power, stemming from inordinate wealth in limited hands, has distorted market processes and dominated other social media and natural realms. This unnatural hegemony of wealth didn’t ‘just happen,’ it is supported by discrete interests and by a strong ideology of market fairness. Both must be confronted in clear terms if we are to shift to a meaningful sustainable development path” (Oden, 2016, p. 43).

- “Sustainable development is based on the activating premise that the natural environment is under grave threat at the local, national, and global levels and that future growth and development cannot occur at the expense of the environment.
- Sustainable development is based on a belief that growing inequality of access and outcomes must be reversed to sustain social solidarity, vibrant and inclusive democratic decision making, and environmental balances.
- Sustainable development strives for forms of economic growth that support greater equity and lower levels of natural capital consumption.
- Sustainable development presumes that basic individual rights of property must intrinsically be negotiated in the context of externalities and problems of the commons” (Oden, 2016, p. 43).

“What issue in your city might galvanise enough solidarity to realign municipal policy?” (Oden, 2016, p. 44).

“The practical approaches are emerging that seek to utilise the community sphere as a means to subtle and context-sensitive political change” (Rennie, 2006, p. 7).

“It does not make sense to ignore community media when the starting point of media studies is the way in which the media represents our own – or others’ – reality, which in turn influences our status and the repercussions flowing from our actions (symbolic power). Ordinary people’s efforts to put themselves within the media frame may be only a small contribution to the mediascape compared with the large amount of material generated by the media industry. However, this alone should not make it marginal as an object of study” (Rennie, 2006, p. 20).

30. References:

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