# Towards Understanding Community

People and Places

Edited by

Christopher J. Clay, Mary Madden
and Laura Potts

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Christopher J. Clay
York St John University

Mary Madden
University of York

Laura Potts
York St John University

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Notes on Contributors

Stuart Billingham is Professor of Lifelong Learning and Pro Vice Chancellor at York St John University, UK. His role includes oversight of the University's widening participation and lifelong learning strategy, collaborative (and especially regional) academic partnerships, and working across the university to ensure and enhance the quality of the student experience. He is active nationally and internationally in promoting wider access to university education. His academic roots are in politics and sociology, specialising after completing his PhD in (in)equality of opportunity in post-school education. His most recent publications have focused on widening participation in higher education.

Geraldine Brady is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) at Coventry University, UK. Her primary research interests are children's perspectives of health and social care and the development of child/young person-inclusive methods; these interests were reflected in her doctoral research, 'Children and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): a sociological exploration'. Since joining the CSJ in 2004 she has been involved in a number of research projects which have explored the experiences of marginalised or socially excluded groups, in particular young parents and pregnant teenagers.

Geraldine Brown is a Senior Research Assistant in the Centre for Social Justice at Coventry University, UK. She has extensive experience of undertaking research for the voluntary, community and academic sectors. Her particular focus has been the extent of social exclusion and the effectiveness of efforts to challenge it. The research she has undertaken has covered a broad range of areas. These include health and social care policy and practice, the health and social care of teenage parents and Black and minority ethnic communities, the health and social care interface, partnership working, community regeneration and housing. A key aim of her work is to promote the voices and views of those who tend to be marginalised.

Steve Cinderby is a geographer and has been Deputy Director of the Stockholm Environment Institute centre at York since 1999. He has been involved in developing participatory geographic information system (PGIS) techniques since 1995. First, in developing countries addressing common property land management and subsequently in the UK investigating diverse environmental concerns ranging from air pollution to urban regeneration.

Christopher J. Clay is currently Head of Programme for Community Studies at York St John University, UK. Over the last 30-plus years he has occupied a variety of roles within York St John including a period in the 1970s and 1980s as a community worker, first in Hoyland (near Barnsley) and then in York. Teaching and research interests include the social construction of HIV/AIDS, surveillance and social control, and teaching and learning.

Julia D'Aloisio recently completed her graduate studies in the Faculty of Physical Education and Health at the University of Toronto, Canada, with interests in gender and health and health communication. Her thesis research explored the marketing of breast cancer fundraising events, including the discourse of 'community' and the way in which risks are communicated to women about breast cancer. During her studies she worked as a research assistant with the faculty's Centre for Girls' and Women's Health and Physical Activity, and is currently working with an NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Leigh Keeble is a 'Translational' Research Fellow working on the ESRC e-Society Programme in the Department of Sociology, University of York, UK. Her research interests are in the areas of community informatics, the use of ICTs by the voluntary and community sector, and the role of ICTs in empowering young people in public care. Leigh is also the Reviews Editor for the journal *Information, Communication and Society* (iCS).

Lynnette Kelly gained a PhD from the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations at the University of Warwick in 2001. She worked at Warwick as a research fellow, first in CRER and subsequently at the Institute of Health until 2005. Her main research interests are the settlement and integration of minorities, especially refugees. She is now a city councillor

in Coventry, UK. Lynnette would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Fraser Murray of Oxford Brookes University for his assistance in researching for this chapter.

Gayle Letherby is a Professor of Sociology in the School of Law and Social Science at the University of Plymouth, UK. Before moving to Plymouth in October 2005 she was Reader in Sociology and Deputy Director of the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) at Coventry University. Research and writing interests include reproductive and non/parental identities; working and learning in higher education; deviance, crime and criminology and the sociology of trains and train travel. Throughout her career Gayle has been fascinated and excited by issues of method, methodology and epistemology – including feminist approaches, auto/biography and the relationship between knowing and doing. Recently she has become even more interested in research praxis: the relationship between research, politics and practice.

Mary Madden is a Research Fellow in the Department of Health Sciences at York University, UK. She has an inter-disciplinary background in English Literature, Critical Theory, Sociology and Social and Community Work. Her work history combines practical field experience with complex epistemological and methodological challenges to forms of enquiry in the social sciences. It includes a range of field-based research and evaluation projects, the provision of social welfare and community development services and teaching on both academic and practice-based courses in higher education. Her doctoral thesis, completed in 2001, draws on her experience of working with young homeless people in Manchester. It takes the reader on a Feminist Gothic exploration of the dilemmas facing a social researcher working in the urban poverty industry under Thatcherism.

Simon Parker is Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of York, UK. His most recent book is *Urban Theory and the Urban Experience. Encountering the City*, 2004. He is currently working on a book manuscript *Cities*, *Politics and Power* which will examine the role of cities in the wider regional and global system and the social, political, military, economic and cultural manifestations of urban power in comparative and historical perspective.

Kristina Peat is the Sustainability Officer for the City of York Council, UK. She trained as an Environmental Planner and has a Post-Graduate

Diploma in Conservation Management. Her first job was as a tree officer in a London borough. She moved into Local Agenda 21 work in the early 1990s. A move to Cambridge offered an opportunity for further work in Local Agenda 21 and sustainability. After a short break to have a family, Kristina moved to York to take up her current post in 2003. In addition to this role Kristina has delivered seminars for York St John College and will be offering an adult education course on sustainable lifestyles starting in 2007.

Richard Phillips is a Researcher in the Division of Community Health Sciences at the University of Edinburgh, UK. He is currently involved in a qualitative study exploring smoking in the home within the context of recent smoking legislation in Scotland.

Laura Potts is Reader in Public Health and the Environment at York St John University, UK. Much of her work has been concerned with breast cancer: the social movements that have given political momentum to understanding of the disease; the environmental risks implicated in causing it; and with policy making for its primary prevention. Recent projects have been characterised by an emphasis on building bridges between science and its publics at national and international levels. Such a perspective also shapes the work she does locally for the City of York, as a member of the Sustainable York Steering Group. At national level, she chairs the UK Public Health Association's Environmental Pollution and Health Group, and is on the board of Trustees of the Pesticides Action Network UK. She publishes regularly in academic and popular health journals, and maintains an engagement as an activist involved in UK and international campaign networks. She is also passionate about real food, and has had an organic allotment for over 20 years that feeds her and her friends well.

Adam Short graduated in Community Studies from York St John College, Leeds University in 2005. During 2005–2006 he was the England Co-ordinator for the impetus human rights and ethical values awards programme at the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust in London. Previously he held many roles with Changemakers Foundation and worked with the All Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs. Adam presented European work at the UN World Youth Symposium in Tokyo in 2003 and during 2004–2005 visited civil society projects in Bangladesh, Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia with the British Council. Since completing his chapter he has taken up a new post with Oxfam.

Simon Sweeney is Head of Programme for the MA in International Studies: Contemporary Societies and Culture at York St John University, UK. He also teaches Education and Development at the University of York. In 2006 he won a National Teaching Fellowship from the Higher Education Academy. He is also a UK Socrates Council Bologna Promoter. He is doing PhD research at the University of Leeds on the evolution of European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) since the Iraq War in March 2003. He is the author of *Europe, the State and Globalisation* (2005).

1

People and Places: An Introduction Towards Understanding Community

Christopher J. Clay, Mary Madden and Laura Potts

The idea for this book grew out of a public seminar series where academic and activist speakers were invited to present case studies and engage in discussions about contemporary ideas and initiatives related to the concept of community. Given the pervasiveness of community in British political discourse, we hope this collection will enable a wide academic and practitioner audience to engage critically with the range of ways in which contemporary ideas of community are being used and contested.

The key focus of the book is on understanding community from action into theory and theory into action. To this end, the book is organised into three parts:

- Locating community,
- Justice within and between communities and
- Building healthy communities.

A chapter from one of the editors introduces each part providing summaries of key debates to set the wider theoretical and research contexts for the authors' contributions. The contributors to each part examine the current theoretical and practical challenges of building and sustaining convincing senses of community. Throughout the book, practitioner perspectives are included alongside those of key academics.

Reflection on our involvements in the discourse of community is timely: the contributing chapters were written in the temporal and political context of the New Labour Government's ongoing reliance on the word 'community' such as the setting up of the Department

for Communities and Local Government. At the same time, paradox-
ically, the Community Studies course on which we all taught is being
withdrawn because it is no longer seen by higher education managers as
a commercially viable degree route (see Clay's introduction to Part one).

We have chosen to include *people and places* in the title of this volume
in full awareness that much contemporary theoretical literature seeks
to break the presumptive links between community and place. One
of the reasons for this choice arises from the context of ongoing UK
domestic anxieties about community conflict. In the pursuit of multicul-
tural community cohesion, recent New Labour Government policy ideas
highlight 'place attachment and an intertwining of personal and place
identity' (Cantle Report Home Office 2001). It is clear that 'community
cohesion' is an implicitly racialised discourse in which limited versions
of such 'intertwining' are welcomed while others are viewed as problem-
atic and requiring intervention (see Madden's introduction to Part two).

Another important influence on our choice of title is the burgeoning
surveillance culture in the UK which serves as a means of keeping people
in and out of accorded places (Ball and Murakami Wood 2006 provide a
useful overview); in particular, the increased deployment of surveillance
technologies and practices in the name of crime and terrorism control.
Furthermore, while the instigation of virtual worlds such as *Second Life*
(http://secondlife.com) may mean that geographical places can be tran-
scended in pursuit of community; there is an interesting rise in territ-
oriality and exclusivity accompanying the coming of property rights of
ownership within virtual lands. The rise of social networking sites such
as MySpace, Piczo and Bebo may provide a new means of marketing
and promise opportunities for increased interaction that again tran-
scend the fixity of geography, but social divisions do not disappear
in cyberspace. They are being explicitly reconstituted in private online
communities such as aSmallWorld that exist for a niche market of like-
minded individuals and are accessible by invitation only. Somewhat
against expectation, nationalism does not seem to be waning in the
light of global population movements, deterritorialisation and commu-
nications technology. For example, Erikson (2006) argues that diasporan
'virtual communities' use the Internet to strengthen rather than weaken
members' attachments to their national identities.

A further contemporary practice clearly linking people to place is
the burgeoning market in geodemographics, such as the Mosaic UK
system, which classifies people via their postcodes into 61 distinct 'life-
style types' describing their socio-economic and socio-cultural behaviour
(Mosaic website 2006). While we have not been able to include specific

chapters on all of these areas, we acknowledge their significance and their influence on the selections we have been able to make here.

A focus on people and places also usefully challenges the construction of unhelpful dichotomies between what Pahl (2005) terms, 'community-on-the-ground' and 'community-in-the-mind' definitions. Our approach throughout this project has been informed by a methodological tradition of biographical grounded research, which is analytically and not merely descriptively concerned with how we come to understand what we do (Stanley 1992). Most of the resulting written contributions in this collection are not explicitly autobiographical, but all are products of critical reflection on experiences of active involvement in constructions of community. We hope that this approach helps to keep a firm focus on materiality while also acknowledging that meaning is constructed in personal narratives – stories of belonging and exclusion, and of how we understand the communities that frame lived experience.

2
The Signature Quilt

Roxy Walsh

In 2005 I was invited to make an artwork in response to an historic site in Lincolnshire as part of the Beacon Art Project, 'sense of place, place of sense'. I was inspired by the physical similarity of the farmhouse site to my grandmother's childhood home, Tardree. The texts presented here formed part of the resulting installation and publication which I based around the quilt pictured on the cover, a Signature Quilt made in rural County Antrim in 1896 and passed down through my mother's family. The quilt is a document of one community that by its nature excludes what was not there at the time, at the Connor Presbyterian Church Bazaar in 1896. Through family objects, letters and locations, the texts evoke senses of connection and distance between people and places, the past and the present.

Tardree was a long, low house with two main rooms on each of two floors, one on each side of the staircase. To the right of the front door was the room that was most used. It was a plain room with a hard floor furnished with a range, a table with a wipe-clean tablecloth and plastic placemats, a sideboard with letters and pictures on it, one or two leather armchairs and a brown painted wooden chair where Uncle Matt sat. There was a kitchen at the back of the house that may have been part of a more modern extension and always seemed a bit superfluous and cold. I do not think that I went more than once into the room to the left of the door or to the left at the top of the stairs.

Our family home was a 3-bedroom brick bungalow. It gradually grew into the roof-space and into the built-in garage to become a 5-bedroom house with a granny flat. My father designed and supervised the building of the house in 1966 on 6 acres of land that had belonged to his father in the townland of Edentrillick. In the early 1980s a hall was knocked through what had

been my brother's room to bring together the flat and the house. My parents still live in the house. Now there are two sets of stairs and two kitchens and four bedrooms. One former bedroom is a store, and another is the study. The wardrobe in my brother's old room is trapped there, as the new door is too small to get it out.

After Auntie Dorothy died, Tardree was cleared and sold. In the saleroom my mother found her grandfather's diary from 1895–1897, and the chest he had carried on his journeys to Australia and New Zealand on the SS *Cuzco* during the years covered by the diary. In it he notes seasickness, bad food, expenditure, quarantine at Melbourne and visits to the theatre, moves between different claims, deaths and the buying and selling of stock. He also describes a lazy summer back in County Antrim and lists letters written home from his travels.

My mother has had an interest in family history since I can remember, and had rolls of paper stuck together in shoeboxes with sections of family trees on them. The shoeboxes were in the bottom of a cupboard in the study that was otherwise stuffed with old bits of fabric and button tins and wool. For years she went twice a week to the variety market in Belfast, buying linens and quilts, bric-a-brac, clothes and shoes. When my sister or I come home from England we are still in the habit of rifling cupboards, territorially, checking what has appeared or disappeared since we have last been.

I was given this quilt in 1995. At the time I had just moved to Newcastle and was to have an exhibition in New York in Spring 1996. I included a photograph of it – a cropped detail from a snapshot taken of my mother and I holding it up outside in the snow, with bright blue reflections – in the catalogue.

There was a cupboard in the dining room of my parents' house that for years was hidden by the piano, and it was here that I found the fur boots. They were white sheepskin inside, black sealskin outside, with leather toecaps and tassels on the ends of the laces that danced when I danced in the freezing cold of Saint Edward's Confraternity Club for Men. I had these boots for years in Manchester, in damp cold studios and in overheated bars, until the crepe soles detached and refused to be mended, even at the point of my brother's silicon glue gun.

The quilt was made to raise money at the Connor Presbyterian Church Bazaar in 1896. My understanding is that people signed their names in groups of pews or stalls, individually and in families – sometimes,

like Roxaline Manson, more than once – and paid the girls and women running the stall to have them embroidered.

When I cleared my house in Manchester I had to throw a lot of things out. A few things I liked so much that I made drawings to remember them by, but now I think that I have lost the drawings – one of a pair of slippers and the other of the fur boots. Maybe they are in a suitcase in Newcastle, or under the television, or in a bag of letters. Maybe they are in a book that I thought I would re-read, but sent to Oxfam.

The quilt was auctioned in aid of the church and bought by Hugh Jack. It has been handed down through the Bell family who lived at the Barnish, via my Great Auntie Martha and my mother to me. My Great Grandfather, Robert Gawn Bell, is one of the few members of his family not represented on the quilt. As the youngest of 12 children on this 100-acre farm, he had served his time in a shop in Ballymena but having raised money from each of his siblings for the trip, had gone off in search of gold and quartz in New Zealand. According to family legend he might have stayed, were it not that Rose Manson would not go with him.

The slippers were soft sheepskin moccasin bootees. I bought them on West Broadway. By the time I drew them there was slightly more hole than slipper, the soles shiny and slippery, one half eaten by a silent South African dog. They returned to New York several times, and were once left behind in anger after the slippery soles and I slipped down the stairs two nights before leaving, breaking my toe-bones on banister rods. The next slippers were not so soft, but they fastened with a zip and were less slippery.

November

Wrote to Martha from Plymouth

To John from Gibraltar

Martha from Naples

Wrote to George from Port Said

Wrote to Jim Ferguson Colombo

Martha from Colombo

Wrote to Martha from quarantine

Wrote to Andy on 19th

During the time our house was being built we stayed with my father's parents who lived in a low cottage about a quarter of a mile down the road, in Aughandunvarran. I don't remember much about this house except the scullery, and my father making toasted sandwiches over the fire in the kitchen. The stile in the wall outside had sand at the bottom and was called Newcastle, after Newcastle, County Down, which was the seaside. When the house creaked someone would always say, Oh don't worry, it's only old Isaac, after Isaac Mahood who had lived there before them.

The signature quilt is quite large and vulnerable to damage, and though I have allowed another, finer, hand-stitched red and white quilt from the market in Belfast to fray to tatters over the past 20 years on successive beds and washing lines, this one is too precious and particular for that, and is kept, as it has always been, in a cupboard, carefully wrapped in a flour bag that may be as old as the quilt itself.

After our house was finished my grandfather decided to build a new house for himself on land between the two houses. His house was built to the same plan as ours, but without the granny flat. When my brother was first married, he and his wife lived in the granny flat in Edentrillick, but a few years after that they swapped with my granny when she needed more care and they needed more room. My brother and his daughter still live in the house that my grandfather built. Mounted into the wall above the fire is the stone plaque from the school in which my grandfather taught in Backnamullagh.

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

James Norman Culbert Walsh
Born 19th September 1934
Rosemary Chapman Cairns
Born 26th February 1938
Married 25th March 1959

Roxaline Rose Walsh
Born 6th October 1964
Tyrone County Hospital

Omagh 1964–1966
Aughandunvarran 1966
Edentrillick 1966–1980
Jordanstown 1981–1982
Longsight 1982
Fallowfield 1983–1984

West Didsbury 1984–1989
Longsight 1989–1990
Rusholme 1990–1995
Walker 1995–1997
Battlefield 1997–2006
Lambeth 1997–2000
Surrey Quays 2000–2004
New Cross Gate 2004–present

Part I
Locating Community

3
Locating Community: An Introduction

Christopher J. Clay

This first part of the book is about the ongoing quest for understanding community and the dilemmas associated with such a quest. Contributors explore policy and practice implications whilst also raising critical questions about the contemporary significance of the idea. The problematic nature of the term is often represented by the use of single quotation marks – as in 'community'. However, to simplify expression throughout this introduction, the quotation marks will be taken as given (unless included as part of a quotation), in the sense that the whole book is about trying to make sense of the term.

In the introduction I seek to chart elements of the changing fortunes of community as both an idea and as a focus for practice, utilising a range of personal experience of involvement in community for over 30 years, including teaching and developing community studies curricula at degree level, and community education and community work practice. As my analytical reflections will hopefully indicate, although community studies has been waning in influence since the 1970s, the notion of community as something lost or alternatively rediscovered, remains as a powerful normative idea in social and political thought and increasingly practice. In areas as diverse as planning, health care, social work, education and local politics/business, the idea of community has become a way into understanding social change and also a means of improving service provision and even the quality of life. Frequently used without critical insight, the term has taken on what John Bennington (1974) described as an 'aerosol' quality, to be sprayed wherever it was felt necessary to improve.

Community as an idea

Raymond Williams in his *Keywords* talked about the complexity of the development of the idea of community, but made the interesting assertion that community,

> . . . can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important is that unlike all other terms of social organisation (state, nation, society, etc) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term (1988: 76).

Attempting to give substance to or locate the idea of community has seemingly always posed problems. MacIver in his early tome *Community – A Sociological Study* commented that:

> . . . . one of the greatest of the difficulties which at the present day beset the social analyst is the confused nature of his vocabulary. Unlike the students of most other sciences he must accept the terms of everyday life. These terms are lacking in all precision (MacIver 1924: 22).

In their introduction to the influential book *Community Studies*, Colin Bell and Howard Newby rehearse similar arguments: 'one of the problems we shall encounter in this book is the extent to which "community" can be considered a justifiable object of sociological study at all' (Bell and Newby 1971: 1). Furthermore by 1978, Philip Abrams observed:

> The concept of community for its part is slowly being evicted from British sociology: not because there is agreement on the empirical collapse of community, but rather because the term has come to be used so variously, and different relationships, identified as those of community, have been discovered in so many different contexts that the word itself has become almost devoid of precise meaning (Abrams 1978: 13).

Yet it is not possible to dismiss the term so easily. Nisbet identified community as one of the 'unit-ideas of sociology' which, 'includes, but goes far beyond local community to encompass religion, work, family

and culture; it refers to social bonds characterised by emotional cohesion, depth, continuity and fullness' (1967: 6).

Seeking the historical context of the contemporary interest in ideas of community, both Williams and Nisbet point to the social and political upheavals of 19th century Europe where community is somehow in opposition to the formal organisation of the state. This echoes the interest of both Tönnies (1957/1887) and Durkheim who both reflect on social change in terms of its impact on civil society as distinct from "the state" '. Kumar picks out the way in which the idea of community in the 19th century represented significant change in absentia, 'regretfully or triumphantly. . . . the decline of the community was one of the most commonly remarked and agreed-upon features of the emerging industrial society' (1978: 79).

Abrams may have been partly right in his observation concerning the usefulness of the term but it is perhaps this inherent difficulty in terms of meaning, or as more than one writer has described, its 'slipperiness' (Day 2006: 1; Nash 2003: 88) that makes the term even more significant in the contemporary context. For a subject of analysis that has no agreed meaning, the term is remarkably well used in modern parlance and indeed continues to attract authors willing to spend time discussing its significance in everyday life (see for example Day 2006: Preface; Yar 2003).

From the early part of the 20th century to the late 1960s and early 1970s the idea of community was still something elusive, to be unearthed or exposed through the study of particular locations. The work of Bell and Newby (1971, 1974) in the UK gave weight to the study of community as something that could be observed (or not) on the ground. They also brought together earlier and contemporary work from the UK and further a field (in particular, the USA) to support their interest in community studies, opening up the academic debate considerably. Margaret Stacey's writing in the late 1960s suggested that locality studies was a better name for the work she was part of and preferred not to use the word 'community' at all offering instead the idea of 'local social systems' (Stacey 1969: 139). What needs to be taken from this, however, is the fact that whether the idea of community was seen as useful, outdated, value-laden or too vague, it still formed part of a debate which has not been confined to the 1960s or 1970s, but continues today.

Community as part of political ideology has become something of a football – kicked around by different ideological positions and appearing as part of distinctly opposed political agendas. Community thus can

never be seen as *just* an idea, despite the shift away from studies of community as tangible locality or place. It has to be understood in its particular historical, moral and political contexts and seen as a construct within and shaped by various contemporary discourses. What is clear, though, is that community in whatever form, continues to have significant resonance for not only academics but also a wide range of practitioners.

Reflections on a life with community

Here I reflect, albeit briefly, on how I was introduced to community as an idea and context for practice and the different discourses around community that have informed and influenced me as a contributor to past community initiatives and as a current Head of Programme for Community Studies at a British University. Over 35 or more years, as both a student and later lecturer, I have been involved in a succession of community initiatives – all of which, one might suggest, have been in one way or another trying to make sense of community. In many ways my own history echoes that of the college of higher education I entered as a student in 1968, and the same institution – now university, I work within today.

To start at the end. At the close of 2004 the decision was taken to withdraw the Community Studies undergraduate degree programme at York St John University with the last cohort graduating at the end of 2007. The programme had been running since 2001, but unfortunately had never managed to recruit sufficiently large numbers of students. This book drew its inspiration from a level-three module on that programme which invited outside speakers to deliver lectures on a varied range of topics, all related to the process of understanding community. The decision to close the programme threatened at one stage to undermine the attempt to produce this book but ironically, ultimately, hardened the resolve of the editors to ensure that the debates and questions raised over the short life of the programme could be shared with a wider audience.

When the programme was developed in the late 1990s there was some feeling that community as a subject was rather passé and that its time had come – and gone – back in the 1960s and 1970s. While in some respects the low recruitment figures might be seen as a vindication of that particular view, the rolling out of the programme over the next few years and the teasing out of the detail within the modules that made up the programme, clearly demonstrated that community was far from

being a dead subject. The reality seemed to suggest that community as a subject for academic enquiry was more apposite now than it had been at any time in the past. However, what was also made clear by the students themselves through their studies was that the term 'community' was a highly charged and contested term and that no simple process of definition was going to be able to pin it down. In fact the goal was not one of definition but one of exploration and investigation into *why* community was such a popular and widely used term. This book reflects some of the debates and discussions offered by academics, practitioners and students around the quest to understand community.

As a student (1968–1972) I was involved in work linking York St John College and the West Riding of Yorkshire Education Priority Area project (EPA) at Denaby, near Doncaster. In 1974 I was appointed to develop a new initiative for the college, a community education centre, Hoyland Hall at Hoyland, near Barnsley. Funding for this came from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in partnership with the West Riding education authority and the college. The involvement of the Gulbenkian Foundation was crucial from a financial perspective but also added status to the project in that the organisation was heavily involved in the national debates about the future of community work (Younghusband, 1968). Throughout the life of the project a yearly evaluation and report attempted to locate the developments on the ground within the project, in a wider national context. Although these have never been published they do track the life of an innovative project that gradually 'moved' from being largely educational focused to one where the emphasis was more clearly targeted at community development/education. This reflected in part the shift in the institution (and sector) from almost entirely teacher education to a broader higher education agenda.

In 1980 I moved back to York and took on the new Lowther Street community education centre in York, acting as both a lecturer in Community Studies and centre warden/manager. Despite the popularity of courses that drew on the work of this and the Hoyland Hall centre, and the enthusiastic involvement of students in community ventures, the deteriorating financial climate within higher education constantly led to a questioning of the involvement of York St John in this kind of activity.

By the end of the 1980s both centres were closed, and I was teaching within a department of Educational and Community Studies – and still drawing on the work I had developed at both Hoyland Hall and Lowther Street. Through the 1990s the department changed its

name to Social Sciences under my leadership, but by 1999 discussions were taking place concerning the future curriculum direction of the department as psychology established its independence from the social sciences grouping. Initially social and political studies were the favoured choice but ultimately the decision was taken to develop a new degree programme under the heading Community Studies. The new programme was launched in 2001 but, as already indicated, finally closed to new students in 2004.

While community has been central to my work life over the last 30 plus years, it would be wrong to see this as an unchanging influence. In fact what I hope comes over from this necessarily sketchy, but reflective, engagement with my own history is the way in which there have been significant changes in the use and debate around community yet constant, albeit reworked, perspectives continue to surface.

The idea of the rediscovery or realisation of community has been picked up by different commentators (Delanty 2003: 19; Kumar 1978: 313). In my teaching I often talk about the 19th century rediscovery of community but also suggest we can identify significant 'rediscovery' taking place at the end of the 1960s and in the late 1990s onwards. By rediscovery I refer to the way in which community emerges as almost a rallying cry for policy and other forms of intervention and a focus for understanding social change. While I did not have access to the idea of discourse back in the late 1960s when I was a student engaged in community education, I can look back now and recognise that there did exist what we might now call a powerful discourse that underpinned a lot of the work that was going on in both the EPA projects and the almost parallel Community Development Project (CDP) which was being developed in different parts of the country at that time. In fact through the 1980s I talked about community as ideology and referred the students to the dominant normative–prescriptive element that accompanied its usage. Too frequently, I now realise, the thrust of the work in the community in both Hoyland and York was unquestioning in its acceptance of community as both a *good* thing and something that our work *ought* to seek to enhance.

Community, as something that 'should be', represents a thread that has remained almost constant throughout this period. Taylor (2003: 65) talks about the way that under the current social exclusion banner community has become something that is 'prescribed to the poor'. However, she also notes that over the years the language used to describe the 'problem' has changed and that words such as disadvantage, deprivation and of course, poverty, are examples of some of the terms social

exclusion has replaced. The links with my early involvement at Denaby are relevant here. The EPA projects were a development stemming from the recommendations of the Plowden report, *Children and their Primary Schools* (HMSO 1967). This report in turn reflected a growing concern about the growth of poverty and deprivation in the UK – a concern that drew support from the awareness of the implications of such poverty in the United States. The idea of compensatory education, the buzzword for the EPA movement, came from the USA. The CDP (at least initially) was, similar to the EPA, firmly underpinned by the ideological conviction that emphasised individual and social pathology as the main underlying causation of the social problems being tackled. Whether it be the poor educational achievement and aspiration of children, the high level of unemployment, poor-quality housing and generally run down locality, the answers lay within the community in the people and social structures themselves. This dominant pluralist view underpinned the deficit model that shaped compensatory education and indeed my own view of the community at that time, at Denaby.

Within the CDP a more radical perspective began to take shape that led to a rejection by some workers of this pluralist viewpoint/deficit model and the application of a more conflict or class-based analysis, which provided a critical rebuttal for much of previous work in the CDP (Loney 1983) and indeed, by association, the EPA projects. This shift in perspective by some in the field resonated with my own working class upbringing and I found the class-based analysis compelling. However, rather than rejecting the philosophy of compensatory education I became more determined to demonstrate to myself and my peers (and perhaps the tutors) that what appeared to be an unpromising locality in terms of educational enrichment could be shown to be a rich resource in terms of the learning experienced by the children. In so doing I suppose I felt I was affirming working class culture and community and in some small way helping children to better achieve their potential. My actions here and later at Hoyland Hall, where I continued to engage in a community development model of community education, could be seen now as capacity building, to use a term much loved by New Labour in the years since 1997. The long-term goal for my work at Hoyland Hall was to increase the capacity of the people I worked with (through informal education and participation in various activities) to bring about social change through their own actions. The model/approach I found most influential within my own practice stemmed largely from the work of Tom Lovett in Liverpool (as part of the EPA) and later in Belfast (Lovett 1973, 1975). He talked about a network approach

to community development that stressed the importance of getting individuals to articulate their own learning needs but also the power of developing networks within the community (and to an extent outside of it) to facilitate the learning process. There are echoes here of the social capital thesis prominent today (Field 2003; Putnam 2000) and it is also worthy of note in the context of a recent text on community development by Gilchrist (2004) which espouses a similar networking approach, albeit 30 years later.

It is not my intention to suggest here that nothing has changed since 1968. However, what seems apparent is that some of the crucial ideas that shaped our understanding of community back in the late 1960s/early 1970s are still around albeit wrapped in a different language cloak. Capacity building, social capital, active citizenship, social exclusion may be part of the contemporary lexicon but to a large extent they mirror the work I was engaged in during those early years in Denaby, Hoyland Hall and later Lowther Street. What is also evident to me, and reinforced by Taylor (2003), is that one key discourse around community (particularly in the policy field) still reflects a largely deficit or negative element. Communities are lost, in need of regeneration, unsustainable, and populated by people who are in one way or another, the cause of their own problems. This discourse, applicable not only to community as place but also to communities of interest, echoes the pluralist approach that underpinned both the EPA and CDP projects at inception. Despite the attempts by some practitioners in the CDP to turn the tables and introduce a more radical, class-based critique of this position in the 1970s, one could argue that apart from the actual language used today, much appears unchanged.

While the individualism stressed by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s in her denial of 'society' and further woven into the fabric of the New Right philosophy, in many ways took community off the main agenda, the focus on individuals and families rekindled some of the language of individual and social pathology that had been present in the 1960s/1970s concern for community. There was no single focus on community, but either as a result of grass-roots community action or developing social movements – for instance, around the poll tax (in this context see, Hoggett and Burns 1991) and the miner's strike which ironically started in the area around Hoyland, community remained key, despite the discourse of individualism, and still provided an important focus for my students to question during the 1980s and into the 1990s.

In 1994 Crow and Allan published *Community Life – An Introduction to Social Relations* (1994) which was to become, for a while at least, a

key textbook in the community studies programme. The authors argued that community was a 'key term in the sociological vocabulary' and set out to provide an accessible textbook covering a wide range of topics with community at the centre. At about the same time Amitai Etzioni published *The Spirit of Community* (1995), which offered one analysis of the communitarian agenda – ironically, yet another analysis of social problems with a rekindling of community at the centre of its recipe for reform. Both the above authors (in different ways) offered academic reason for reconsidering the significance of community. This was further strengthened when elements of the Labour party and sympathetic academics began to develop a new political agenda that was purported to be neither left, nor right, in terms of the old designations and which, initially at least, seemed to borrow heavily from the communitarian agenda with a renewed emphasis on community (Blair 1997b; Giddens 1998; Hughes and Mooney 1998).

Another influential and seminal text was Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* which had been published originally in 1983, but perhaps achieved more recognition when revised and republished in 1991. This offered a route into understanding the way in which people made sense of their national identities often despite the absence of defined territoriality. This provided a framework for understanding the response to the so-called decline in importance of the nation state in the context of globalisation. It was also influential in the acknowledge-ment of the importance of key communities of interest such as new social movements around the environment, disability and sexuality. Ten years later Zygmunt Bauman published *Community – Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (2001) which picked up on the idea of community in the post-modern context. As his subtitle suggests he sees community as an aspiration or refuge in a globalising world that fragments people's sense of belonging at the level of the nation state. Although his work covers a wider field, in this he echoes Anderson's work, although interestingly, without explicit acknowledgement.

The idea of community used as metaphor can also be traced throughout some of the observations above. The 19th century call on community as representing all that was good about the pre-industrial society runs through Tönnies' work. In the 20th century it becomes again a metaphor for a good society, held up against the reality of the lived experience (or at least for the poor and excluded). Equally community as somehow a utopian alternative or in critical opposition to the state, or perhaps in the 1980s and 1990s, community as a positive

force to be recovered as the state withdraws from everyday life (Delanty 2003: 7), reflect this metaphorical application.

Community as place or as territory has also not completely disappeared as an object of study. In an attempt to try to understand the nature of relationships within geographical areas a range of techniques has been used to study community on the ground. Community profiling (Hawtin et al. 1994), ethnographic studies and anthropological enquiry (Amit 2002; A. Cohen 1985) have all been used in the period from the 1980s until the present day – often resembling the community studies that characterised the USA and European studies of the 1950s and 1960s (Bell and Newby 1971; Klein 1965). Students have continued to investigate what provides the basis for the sense of belonging that allows individuals to talk of 'their community' or why certain estates, villages or other areas of settlement are identified as having lost community or it being under threat.

From the late 1980s onwards community as part of the analysis of crime, deviance and social control figured strongly in the curriculum of both the social sciences and community studies students. Stanley Cohen's work on social control in particular (S. Cohen 1985) helped bridge the gap between the interest in deviance and control and the emerging field of surveillance and control (Lyon 2001). Latterly the impact of new technology on community and the rise of virtual community as a concept (Castells 2001; Smith and Kollock 1999) have taken a more central position in our understanding of community (see also chapters by Cinderby and Keeble in this text). Technological advances in the area of surveillance and communication have raised interesting questions about the nature and form of community but in reality, along with the discussions regarding cyber- and virtual communities, deserve a publication in their own right and have only been touched upon in this book.

Locating community

As will perhaps become clear in later chapters several of the contributions could have been positioned in more than one part of the book. Many have elements of attempting to make sense of community as both an idea and as lived experience.

In his wide-ranging and challenging piece, Simon Parker attempts to locate community in the context of contemporary politics and in particular New Labour policy and discourse. Community, as somehow both preferable to, and in opposition to society, is shown as a key component

of the development of New Labour thinking and policy. The words and publications of New Labour are used extensively to support his analysis, and Parker raises questions about the communitarian threads that run throughout New Labour politics, embracing both global and local dimensions.

In an academic context in more than one sense, Stuart Billingham takes the idea of learning communities or communities of practice (Wenger 1999) and seeks to apply this to education in the tertiary sector (universities/colleges). In so doing he offers a series of questions about the idea of a learning community but more specifically the difficulties encountered whenever the term 'community' is used – echoing concerns raised within other contributions both in this part and elsewhere in the book.

Julia D'Aloisio offers a piece on what is ostensibly a health area in her work on breast cancer and seems, at least initially, perhaps better located within the final part of this book. However, she develops a thoughtful and critical analysis of the way in which community is used by the media, charities and in marketing around breast cancer campaigns which in many ways leaves the health aspects secondary and gives primacy to the various powerful and controlling applications of the idea of community.

Finally, in a very different context Lynnette Kelly explores how gaining community might be seen as a necessary first step for particular minority groups seeking official recognition from policy makers. She suggests the idea of 'contingent community', where groups have to act as if they are conforming to particular discourses or constructs of community. The piece raises questions about the normative–prescriptive nature of community and, the perhaps unintended, consequences of the uncritical adoption of community as a desirable outcome or goal.

As is perhaps inevitable and as is suggested earlier, the quest for community – the attempt to 'locate', define, rediscover, realise, rebuild or whatever term is used – cannot be isolated within one single chapter or part, and the reader will hopefully recognise the themes introduced here as threading throughout the book. *That community remains elusive, contested and difficult to locate is not really the issue. What matters is that it continues to provide impetus for critical enquiry and debate – to which hopefully this book will contribute.*

4
The Politics of Community: New Labour and the Eclipse of Society

Simon Parker

> Never was the word 'community' used more indiscriminately and emptily than in the decades when communities in the sociological sense became hard to find in real life
>
> <div align="right">Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Extremes (1994: 428)</div>

> I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand 'I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it!' [...] and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first. [...] There is no such thing as society.
>
> <div align="right">Margaret Thatcher, Interview for 'Woman's Own'
(23 September 1987)</div>

Introduction

In political discourse, 'society' has been out of fashion for some time, having become eclipsed by the more fashionable 'community' as a collective noun for the interaction of individuals and groups above the level of the family and household but below that of the state. Why this should be so requires an understanding of how in Britain (but not only here) political leaders from both of the two major parties have sought to disassociate their political vision from one that identities too readily with the impersonal, instrumental, anonymous, mass, distanci-ated world of human relations which the notion of 'society' appears to

summon up, in favour of the altogether more benign term community – which we are led to believe – is about the familiar, the local, the 'here and now', the cooperative and the altruistic aspects of civic life. In following the discursive shift in the policy statements and positions of the Labour Party and its leadership, this chapter aims to show the influences that communitarian and 'Third Way' writers and thinkers have had on the shaping of New Labour's social vision, and to highlight the close relationship between social scientific and theological notions of 'community' and those propounded by the political elites who seek to depoliticise the concept of the social for the rhetorical purpose of an inclusive, conflict-free construction of collective identity which seeks to elide difference rather than, in Stuart Hall's words, developing 'the capacity to *live with difference*' (original emphasis) (Hall 1993: 361).

In 1913, Webster's Dictionary offered the following definitions of 'Society':

> A number of persons associated for any temporary or permanent object; an association for mutual or joint usefulness, pleasure, or profit; a social union; a partnership; as, a missionary society.

> The persons, collectively considered, who live in any region or at any period; any community of individuals who are united together by a common bond of nearness or intercourse; those who recognize each other as associates, friends, and acquaintances. Specifically, the more cultivated portion of any community in its social relations and influences...

The seventh edition of *Chambers English Dictionary* provides the following definitions for 'Society':

> Fellowship, companionship: company: association: a community: the body of mankind (1988).

While the *Dictionary of Government and Politics* offers the following interpretation:

> A group of people who live together and have the same laws and customs (1997).

It is worth noting in these definitions the seeming interchangeability of 'society' and 'community', the clear implication being that the terms are

synonymous. But if this is so, why has community and a particular sense of community come to dominate political discourse, as Eric Hobsbawm comments, in such an indiscriminate and empty way in recent decades? Although Britain has been an industrial society for the best part of 200 years, in the context of the social sciences as Robert Nisbet has observed:

> Sociology, above any other discipline in the [twentieth] century, gave primacy to the concept of the social. The point to be emphasized here, however, is that the referent of the 'social' was almost invariably the communal. *Communitas*, not *societas* with its more impersonal connotations, is the real etymological source of the sociologist's use of the word 'social' in his studies of personality, kinship, economy, and polity (Nisbet 1967: 56).

Community studies pioneers such as Michael Young, who together with Peter Willmott wrote the seminal study of East End working class life in the 1950s (Young and Willmott 1986), were also very influential on post-war Labour policy making, Young being closely involved with the 1945 Labour Manifesto (Parker 2004: 75). The post-war generation of Labour politicians derived their political beliefs from the ethical and Christian socialism of writers such as G.D.H. Cole and R.H. Tawney along with popular writers such as Robert Tressell, George Bernard Shaw, George Orwell and H.G. Wells (Bevir 2005: 54). Like Orwell, many Labour politicians tended to view Britain's problems as stemming not from its mode of production but from having as Orwell put it 'the wrong family in charge'. Once political control had been wrested from the incompetent aristocracy and their placemen, then a New Jerusalem could be built on the pragmatic solidarities that had given rise to the guild movement, the non-conformist chapel, the friendly societies, the trades unions, cooperativism and Fabianism.

'Old Labour' and society versus community

The sociological distinction made by Tönnies between *Gesellschaft*, the modern, industrialised, mass society and *Gemeinschaft*, the traditional, agrarian, small-scale community was not one, as we have already noted, that had much impact on either popular definitions of 'society' or among its academic interpreters in Britain. However, with the arrival of the welfare state and the nationalisation of key sectors of the British

economy after the Second World War, there was a more willing readiness among leading Labour politicians and trade unionists to embrace the notion of *Gesellschaft* as a positive image of a modern Britain which was at odds with the social hierarchies of the grouse moor and the country estate favoured by Conservative leaders such as Sir Alex Douglas-Home.

Despite Margaret Thatcher's denial of society, Conservative election manifestos actually mentioned the 'S' word on average more than six times during her leadership of the party – though admittedly this was frequently paired with the word 'free' in order to emphasise the difference living under a Conservative government would mean to living under a socialist government. Interestingly, however, while 'community' and 'society' were used with mostly equal frequency by Conservative manifestos in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; by the 1990s it was more common to encounter references to 'society' than to 'community' in Tory election addresses. With the curious exception of 1997, Labour election manifestos display a general trend from the mid-1970s onwards towards a preference for 'community' over 'society' as the collective popular noun (see Figure 4.1).[1] In the 2001 election manifesto, the Labour Party used the term community in a non-specific sense no less than 34 times compared to three mentions of community in the Conservative manifesto. One could therefore argue that by the
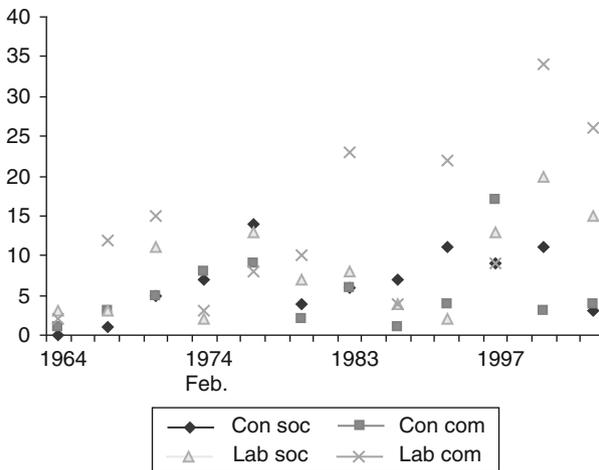

Figure 4.1 Occurrence of 'Society' and 'Community' in Labour and Conservative UK election manifestos.

new millennium, 'community' had become something of a New Labour trade mark which its official spokesmen and women deployed routinely and unthinkingly in what following Gramsci we might describe as a new depoliticised vernacular of the 'national-popular' (Gramsci 1971: 132–133).

Anthony Giddens seeks to explain the renewed interest in community in contemporary politics as being connected to a perceived decline in civic culture more generally:

> On each side of the political spectrum today we see a fear of social disintegration and a call for a revival of community (Giddens 1994: 124).

The reasons put forward for this conclusion are that the ties that once bound society together are thought to have weakened to breaking point with disastrous consequences in terms of anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol use, lone parent family households, declining respect for authority – especially political authority, and a reluctance to engage in pro-social activities (such as sports clubs, choirs, voluntary groups, *etcetera*). From the point of view of British Conservatism the explanation for the 'moral collapse' of Britain is to be found in the 'permissive society' of the 1960s. However, although New Labour is less willing to condemn a decade in which it was responsible for the introduction of a number of key progressive reforms, it has been more willing to concede that the emphasis on personal rights at the expense of an equivalent focus on civic responsibilities was, in retrospect, a mistake. As the Labour MP and political historian Tony Wright puts it:

> . . . society is not to be understood (either morally or empirically) as merely a maelstrom of atomized individuals but as a moral community embedded in a dense fabric of social relationships and obligations and capable of framing common purposes. There is nothing monolithic, oppressive, or nostalgic about this (Wright in Beech 2006: 187).

Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* published at the time of the Suez invasion in 1956 is often invoked as a blueprint for New Labour communitarianism with its talk of 'organic unity' and its contention that socialism would come about through a better distribution of resources rather than through the controlling force of the state (Rubinstein 2006: 112). This much Crosland did have in common with

New Labour, but Crosland who was instinctively libertarian and against the state acting too much 'the prig or the prude' (Foote 1986: 219) remained largely silent on the subject of the responsibilities of citizenship, which Blair's brand of communitarianism puts at centre stage. Thus in his 1997 Fabian pamphlet on the 'Third Way', Blair wrote:

> Strong communities depend on shared values and a recognition of the rights and duties of citizenship [...] In the past we have tended to take such duties for granted. But where they are neglected, we should not hesitate to encourage and even enforce them... (Blair 1997b: 12).

New Labour and community

A number of scholars have made connections between communitarianism and the political philosophy of the Labour Party under the leadership of Tony Blair (Beech 2006; Freeden 2003; Hall 2003). However, communitarianism is far from a coherent body of social thought. Gerard Delanty (2003) distinguishes between four strands of communitarianism. Liberal communitarianism associated with writers such as Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer and also Charles Taylor (whose work is especially associated with the cultural rights of national minorities); radical pluralism which emphasises group rights, for example the feminist communitarianism of Marion Iris Young; civic republicanism or civic communitarianism associated with writers such as Robert Bellah, Philip Selznick, Robert Putnam and David Miller and governmental communitarianism especially that associated with the work of Amitai Etzioni. It is governmental communitarianism, particularly as espoused by Etzioni and what some consider to be his Scottish precursor, John Macmurray, that I want to concentrate on in this section of the chapter, for this is the strain of communitarianism I believe that most helps to explain the Blair government's discomfort with the notion of society and its embrace of the altogether more tractable notion of community.

Tony Blair's debt to communitarian thinking is well acknowledged; in an interview to *Scotland on Sunday* on 24 July 1994 Blair said, '[i]f you really want to understand what I'm all about, you have to look at a guy called John Macmurray' – he went on to add that he considered Macmurray to be 'influential–very influential. Not in the details, but in the general concept' (cited in Hale 2004). Tony Blair's biographer John Rentoul even goes so far as to describe Macmurray as Blair's 'philosophical mentor', and Rentoul states that 'Blair's idea of community, which

is perhaps his most distinctive theme as a politician, derives directly from Macmurray' (Rentoul 1995: 479, 42 cited in Hale 2002: 16). John Macmurray was a philosopher and Christian writer, the bulk of whose work was published in the 1930s. Macmurray died in 1974, but while a student Blair made friends with an Australian theology student by the name of Alan Thompson who introduced Blair to Macmurray's particular brand of Christian socialism and even persuaded the young Blair to accompany him on a trip to Edinburgh shortly before Macmurray's death (although apparently Blair did not actually meet Macmurray in person). Sarah Hale is right to warn of too easy a reading between Blair's views and Macmurray's notion of community, and that the differences between Macmurray's communitarianism and Etzioni's may be more important than the similarities. However, certain essential assumptions appear to be shared. In particular both writers hold to the view that social relations are instrumental whereas communal relations are mutual and reciprocal. For Macmurray, '[a] community... rests upon a positive perception by its members of the relation which unites them as a group. It is a personal, not an impersonal unity of persons', and this he contrasts with both the Hobbesian and Rousseauian vision of society, which 'depend upon negative motivation, so that the bonds of relation between individuals which constitute them are impersonal...' (Macmurray 1961: 147, 145). As Macmurray goes on to claim:

> A community is for the sake of friendship and presupposes love. But it is only in friendship that persons are free in relation; if the relation is based on fear we are constrained in it and not free. Society is maintained by a common constraint, that is to say by acting in obedience to the law (Ibid: 151).

In other words the social or societal is extrinsic, compulsory and rational; whereas the communal or communitarian is intrinsic, elective and affective. However, in the version of communitarianism that underpins New Labour's social policy the idea of social interaction being engaged in for its own sake is replaced with a 'something for something' relationship between citizen and state which has more in common with the instrumental contractarianism that Macmurray associates with the monadic interdependence typical of society. Julian Le Grand lends weight to this thesis in his interpretation of the 'Third Way' (Blair 1997b; 2003; Giddens 1998), which has been promoted as a philosophical mission statement for New Labour, in seeing community as implying contracts

between people and their governments and partnerships between individuals and local organisations (Le Grand 1998 cited in Freeden 2003: 44). As Sarah Hale notes:

> . . . the relationship of rights to responsibilities is conceived in New Labour rhetoric as a fundamentally contractual one, and what is more, of a contract between unequal parties. Duties are from individuals to the state or government, while 'rights' are portrayed as being in the gift of the state (in contrast to the classical conception of rights as being absolute and inhering in the individual) (Hale 2004: 6).

In the aftermath of Labour's return to power for the first time in 18 years, the newly elected Prime Minister addressed one of the largest and most benighted public housing estates in Europe with the words, '[y]ou only take out if you put in. That's the bargain' (Blair 1997a). This statement is worth contrasting with the more famous unattributed quotation from Marx's 1850 *Preface to the Critique of the Gotha Programme* which featured in the Labour Party's 1964 election manifesto, 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his need' (The Labour Party 1964). Unlike the 'something for something' Blairite social contract, Marx's version allows for both the possibility of an unequal contribution to the common wealth and an uneven distribution of resources in order to achieve a minimum standard of living to ensure human dignity for each citizen.

However, for Tony Blair this is an anachronistic understanding of socialism whose aim should be 'to give greater freedom to the individual', or rather to allow the individual greater freedom to choose from a range of publicly funded (though not necessarily publicly provided) collective goods. Coupled with this is a belief that 'talent and effort should be encouraged to flourish in all quarters', the task of government being to 'end discrimination and prejudice' (Blair 2003: 29). This is not the equality of outcomes favoured by previous Labour leaders but the equality of opportunity promoted by more mainstream liberal thinkers such as L.T. Hobhouse or William Beveridge (Freeden 2003: 43). Linked to it is the neo-liberal view that, other things being equal, groups and individuals function best without the interference of the government or the state. As Blair writes, '[i]n deciding where to act on behalf of the national community, whether as regulator or provider, governments must be acutely sensitive not to stifle worthwhile activity by local communities and the voluntary sector' (Blair 2003: 29).

Terms such as 'stakeholding' and 'partnership' along with 'community' have become permanent features of New Labour's discourse because they serve to depoliticise the existence of conflict while pretending to an apparent social consensus that is often the result of statutory regulation (such as in the case of Health Improvement Programmes) or through central government-sponsored competitive funding bids involving local authorities, businesses and voluntary sector organisations (Davies 2001; Elston and Fulop 2002; Fremeaux 2005; The Labour Party 1995) but unlike communitarian writers such as Etzioni, New Labour is less candid about admitting that community has a darker side. When Britain is presented as 'one nation, one community' (Blair 1996 in Blank 2003: 81), then social conflict can be safely depoliticised as a set of social inclusion goals, anti-social behaviour measures and 'respect' agendas – or what the playwright David Hare (1993) in his eponymous drama set during Neil Kinnock's leadership of the Labour Party characterised as the *Absence of War*.

I want to suggest that there are two main reasons for this rhetorical strategy. The language of New Labour (and especially that of Tony Blair) is directed at the elimination of sectoral conflict, especially class conflict, at the level of the economy and the polity – as Labour's 1997 manifesto put it:

> Many of these conflicts have no relevance whatsoever to the modern world—public versus private, bosses versus workers, middle class versus working class. It is time for this country to move on and move forward. We are proud of our history, proud of what we have achieved—but we must learn from our history, not be chained to it (The Labour Party 1997).

This assertion of a politics free from conflict derives from the imperative to further homogenise the electoral market as the Labour Party moves from its catch-all variant – 'Old Labour' to its cartel variant – 'New Labour'. Cartel parties differ from 'catch-all parties' (Kirchheimer 1990) because the latter, while appealing to the widest possible electoral constituency generally do so from the basis of a core support that is often associated with branch party activism, a high membership to voter ratio, internal democratic accountability of the party leadership, dissemination of information through media owned or sponsored by the party and finance largely drawn from personal members or organisational affiliates. By contrast, the cartel party is typified by a low member-to-voter ratio, the exercise of a monopoly of policy-making powers by the

political leadership of the party, a heavy reliance on the mass media to communicate its messages to voters and supporters, and a dependency on wealthy private donors and/or state funding rather than individual membership dues (Blyth and Katz 2005).

Modern political cartels work by addressing their voters as if they share the same beliefs, fears and desires as one another. Hence the frequent reference to 'our communities' or 'our people', or 'our villages, towns, cities' invokes the notion of the 'people of the covenant' and promotes the figure of the Prime Minister as a Moses-like custodian of the destiny of the nation – a populist trait that requires a considerable degree of self-belief and a conviction that the leader is uniquely placed both to interpret the popular will and to safeguard its citizens from all threats and dangers (Grainger 2005). At the same time there is a broader agenda of depoliticisation in which terms such as community and partnership are used as often as possible to manufacture consensus, especially in policy areas where Labour is perceived to have been too liberal or passive in the past – particularly in relation to law and order, military conflict and anti-terrorism. By invoking the highest common denominator 'the people of Britain' rather than the more restrictive collective nouns favoured by Old Labour such as 'working people' or 'ordinary men and women' – Blair and New Labour aim to cleanse the leadership and the public image of the party from any historical associ-ation with class, and especially with class conflict. As Tony Blair stated in 1998:

> My vision for New Labour is to become, as the Liberal Party was in the 19th Century, a broad coalition of those who believe in progress and justice, not a narrow class-based politics, but a Party founded on clear values, whose means of implementation change with the generations (Blair 1998).

Crucial to this project was the abandonment of the Labour Party's commitment to public ownership through the extension of the state in Clause 4 of the party's constitution in favour of a belief:

> ...that by the strength of our common endeavour, we achieve more than we achieve alone so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many not the few, where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe, and where

we live together, freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect (The Labour Party, New Clause 4 1995).

As Blair commented in a speech at Tübingen University in June 2000,

> . . . you can't build a community on opportunity or rights alone. They need to be matched by responsibility and duty. That is the bargain or covenant at the heart of modern civil society. [. . .] Community is where they know your name; and where they miss you if you're not there. Community is society with a human face (Blair 2000).

Such a view was also strongly held by Tony Blair's likely successor, Gordon Brown who as far back as 1990 was complaining that in Britain there was 'too little community':

> What the community can achieve by acting together to further individual well-being and freedom can be greater than anything individuals working only a free market ideology can achieve together . . . the new agenda sees Britain as a community of individuals enabled by a public interest that ensures for them opportunities at critical points along the way (Brown 1990 in Frazer 1999: 12).

Given the limitations of space it has only been possible to offer a small representative sample of New Labour's communitarian discourse, but its main features can be summarised as follows:

- the stress on community as a collection of individuals rather than a complex of groups or classes,
- the idea that membership of the community involves responsibilities as much as rights,
- the belief that the role of the state should be limited to ensuring access to opportunities rather than equality of outcomes,
- the conviction that taxation should be set at a level that most voters deem reasonable rather than one that would reduce the income gap between rich and poor,
- the belief that the private and voluntary sectors should as far as possible supplant the state as the providers of public services and goods and
- the assumption that ends are more important than the means employed to achieve them (i.e. what counts is what works).

While the focus of this chapter has centred on the domestic policy agenda, the compass of New Labour's communitarianism extends far wider than domestic British politics. In the aftermath of the World Trade Centre attack in New York of September 2001, Prime Minister Blair made an important speech at the Guildhall in the City of London in which he said:

> Some say it's Utopian; others that it is dangerous to think that we can resolve all these problems by ourselves, but the point I was making was simply that self-interest for a nation and the interests of the broader community are no longer in conflict. There are few problems from which we remain immune. In the war against terrorism the moralists and realists are partners, not antagonists [...] The starting point is to make a leap of imagination from this grand hall and splendid banquet to the streets of the Arab world where bright, angry disaffected young men—by no means always from poor families, but still with neither work nor prospects—seek outlets for their feelings of betrayal and frustration (Blair 2001).

In this account of New Labour's communitarianism, globalisation is seen as both an opportunity and a threat. The opportunity comes from a neo-liberal conviction that free trade will lead to greater prosperity for all – especially the poorer and less developed countries of the world – while the danger comes from the free movement of people, especially illegal migrants, criminals and terrorists in an increasingly borderless world. Thus Blair's assertion that the interests of the nation-state and the broader community are 'no longer in conflict' presumes a time when the remote, rapacious and interfering state was constantly at odds with 'the community at large'.

It has taken the crisis of the 'war on terror' to dissolve this antagonism, even at the cost of generating what Blair has called 'different views' on the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. The unprecedented peacetime extension of the state's monopoly of violence and control, both within and without its own borders, under New Labour is portrayed as a response to the fears and security needs of the 'broader community', and like the 'free economy in a strong state' project that defined the Thatcherite governments of the 1980s (Gamble 1988), the reconciliation of state and community requires common cause to be made once more against the unincorporable other. Thus the 'enemy within' of striking trade unionists, peace protesters, Irish republicans, militant Labour councillors, and

welfare cheats of the Thatcher era has now given way to a new demonology of 'bogus' asylum seekers, Muslim fundamentalists, 'out of control' judges, irresponsible lawyers and 'neighbours from hell'.

New Labour's assertion of community is semantically linked to terms such as 'freedom' and 'democracy' which perform the task of outriders for an ideological reassertion of western hegemony in an era where the old polarities of the Cold War have disappeared to be replaced by an invisible and unfathomable adversary. As the geography of fear, misapprehension and distrust expands to fill the uncharted territories and failed states of the new global society, the rhetorical assertion of community as a space of shared civic values avoids the difficulty of recognising not only that many young Muslim men are disaffected, but the globalising neo-liberalism of which Blair and Brown have been such enthusiastic promoters is widening social, cultural and ethnic divisions throughout 'the international community' with potentially devastating consequences for the fairness and social justice that Tony Blair claims is at the heart of New Labour's enduring mission.

Note

1. Where either term is used as a proper noun in upper case (e.g. Community Care, European Economic Community or the Information Society) the term is ignored as are any references to 'community' in international affairs (e.g. the 'international community' or 'community law').

5
Learning Communities and Tertiary Education

Stuart Billingham

Introduction

Type *learning community* into Google and within much less than a second this Internet search engine produces several hundred thousand sources of information. Your search will reveal references to learning communities as part of local housing and health initiatives, the work of a wide range of voluntary organisations, as well as projects and developments in schools, colleges and universities.

Though the search will reveal some references to the practical application of this concept in the UK, as well as Australia and Africa, the majority refer to literature and initiatives in the USA. The proportion of these, which describe learning community developments in education, suggests that if you asked a school, college or university teacher in the USA about this term they would probably know something about it. Certainly some would have experienced courses *explicitly* described as 'learning communities' when they were a student (most probably as a 'fresher') or during teacher training. Some would be part of 'learning communities' in their current university or college teaching. Ask a UK college or university teacher the same question and, except for specialists in the theory and practice of learning or in organisational theory and behaviour, you would probably be met by a blank stare. In contrast in the USA, the concept found its way out of these specialisms and into the more general discourse of tertiary education policy and practice some time ago.

In 1985, for example, Washington State founded and funded a new centre (based at The Evergreen State College) to work with higher education institutions across the State to improve the quality of undergraduate education. This included the creation of a Washington State Network

for practitioners to develop learning communities. In 1996 this network became a National Resource Centre for learning community work. Professor Vincent Tinto of Syracuse University, a prominent researcher into and writer on learning communities, is cited on the National Resource Centre website as saying, 'Learning communities are now part of the vocabulary of higher education' (Tinto cited in MacGregor and Leigh Smith 2005: 2–8). The same cannot be said of the UK.

The key element which distinguishes learning communities as a pedagogic model (and relates them to the sister concept of 'communities of practice') is the idea that learning isn't the acquisition of knowledge but is about participation in a social process. As Lave and Wenger (1991: 29) first put it, 'Learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners . . . This social process, includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills'. Some of the features of learning communities or communities of practice have been identified for some time by educational researchers in the UK as features especially of adult learning strategies (for critical overviews see for example Illeris 2002; Rogers 2003). Such work highlights that student-centred and interactive learning maximises student's success and is preferred by students themselves (see for example Warren 2003). Some researchers note that these pedagogies also maximise the levels of motivation and sense of belonging among students (see for example Thomas 2002). All these, and other, features of student-centred interactive learning resonate with the concept of learning communities but it is very rare for this conceptualisation itself to figure in theorising or developing such strategies, especially in UK work related to widening participation in higher education. One exception to this is the work by Thomas (2005) who makes explicit reference to the research by Tinto (1998; 2000) in the USA on learning communities as part of building her case for significant change in learning and teaching strategies and practices in UK universities to achieve wider participation and to maximise the success of all students and especially those from 'under-represented groups'. Thomas would probably be one of the first to acknowledge that even though the building blocks for developing a learning community approach to learning and teaching in UK universities are well understood and documented, the conceptualisation itself is not a central part of the discourses of higher education, or of widening participation, in the UK in the same way as Tinto claims it as in the USA. Why is this trans-Atlantic difference at all noteworthy?

Widening participation in higher education has been at the very top of the New Labour government higher education policy priorities for

at least the last 5 years: driven by its public commitment to achieve a 50% participation rate in higher education by 18–30 year olds by 2010 (DfEE, 1998). There has been very significant government financial investment in access and widening participation, and since 2003 a recognition through earmarked funding to universities that widening access to higher education without a corresponding concern with the success and retention of those students once they are at university will not deliver the economic and social benefits which the widening participation strategy is designed to achieve. Is it not curious, therefore, that a concept which has become inextricably linked in the USA with opening up opportunities for *successful* college and university study to those groups which have traditionally been under-represented in higher education, and which has been shown to help achieve these goals, has not featured in the official policies and most other literature produced about widening participation in the UK?

The higher education sector in the UK, and especially in England, has also been regularly encouraged over at least the last 5 years to look to the USA for ideas about how the provision of university and college education might be better organised to deliver the widening participation agenda. A powerful and prominent advocate of looking to models of tertiary education across the Atlantic and a passionate advocate of widening participation was Sir Howard Newby, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) between 2001 and 2005. Howard Newby's admiration for aspects of tertiary education systems in the USA probably derived initially from his experiences as Professor of Sociology and Rural Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the early 1980s. His concept of lifelong learning networks (LLNs) – briefly, partnerships between further education colleges and universities (plus other organisations as appropriate) to deliver greater opportunities for progression to university mostly aimed at those with vocational qualifications – appears to have been influenced by the so-called 'Wisconsin model' of tertiary education in the USA (Newby 2004).

Newby first outlined the idea of LLNs in his memorial lecture for Colin Bell, the eminent sociologist and former vice chancellor of Stirling and Bradford universities, in 2004. In this lecture Newby made four comparisons between features of tertiary education in the USA and the system of higher education in the UK in relation to widening participation (Newby 2004). His proposal for LLNs rests squarely on this comparative analysis. LLNs, funded by HEFCE, are now part of the higher education landscape in England. We will return to examine more fully what

they are, and how they relate to the idea of learning communities, later in the chapter. For the moment, it is simply worth noting that despite the encouragement for higher education to look to the USA, this did not result in either Newby or other policy makers highlighting the idea of learning communities as part of a strategy for widening participation.

So, why is the general absence of references to the concept of learning communities in these debates in the UK not just curious but also important? I wish to argue, it is significant because it highlights how the debate about widening participation in higher education has typically avoided terrain which *fundamentally* challenges what universities do and how they do it. Properly understood, the idea of learning communities poses such a challenge.

- The idea of learning communities challenges the distinction between, and the differential attention given to, formal and informal education. When we debate tertiary education policy or practice we are actually talking about *formal* learning that which takes place in highly structured ways in institutional settings such as universities. That 'education' means *formal* education is taken-for-granted in this discourse. This taken-for-granted assumption is understandable: formal education is what universities do, it justifies their existence; it is that in which governments invest very large sums of money. But will this pre-occupation with formal learning, often defined in quite traditional ways, be sufficient for a world demanding ever-greater flexibility in the skills and knowledge of the 21st century workforce and their constant renewal through lifelong learning at virtually all levels in the occupational structure? Is this sufficient to create a 'learning society'?
- The concept of communities of practice reminds us that communities are more than 'networks'. Networks of various kinds may be a common feature of a post-modern, globalised world. However, it is argued, unlike learning communities they are not built on the dynamics of collective *social* identity formation and it is this which lies at the heart of effective (lifelong) learning and especially the chances of success in higher education for so-called 'under-represented groups'.

These features of learning communities sit uneasily with key aspects of contemporary university education and higher education policy. The contention in this chapter is that unless universities, colleges and

policy makers are prepared to engage practically with the philosophy of learning communities then the chances of universities making a major contribution to significant and sustainable change in patters of participation and success in higher education are limited.

The theory and practice of learning communities

The basic theoretical roots of 'learning community' can be traced to critiques of traditional perspectives on learning and teaching and the related development of the concept 'communities of practice' in the early 1990s. The emergence of theories of 'the learning organization' (Pedlar et al. 1992), at about the same time, was also part of this development. However, it is in the work of Etienne Wenger (originally with Jean Lave) that the general direction of all these challenges to traditional models of learning and teaching is developed into the idea of 'communities of practice' and 'learning communities'.

   Lave and Wenger (1991) first explored the idea of 'communities of practice' in the context of developing a theory that genuine learning is always 'situated'. According to Lave and Wenger, knowledge is always produced within a context. By 1999, Wenger summarised the idea of 'communities of practice' as follows:

> Being alive as human beings means we are constantly engaged in the pursuit of enterprises of all kinds, from ensuring our physical survival to seeking the most lofty pleasures. As we define these enterprises and engage in their pursuit together, we interact with each other and with the world and we tune our relations with each other and with the world accordingly. In other words we learn.

> Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These relations are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore, to call these kinds of communities, *communities of practice* (Wenger 1999: 45).

Communities of practice do not follow a particular model: some are formal and may have names; others are very informal and fluid. The key point is that members of the community come together because of what they have learned/are learning through their mutual engagement with each other and because of what they have done/are doing together. So, communities of practice can be distinguished generally from

'communities of interest' or 'socio-geographic communities' because they involve some types of shared *practice*.

However, what defines a 'community of practice' is not simply that members share a skill or knowledge-set related to a task. Crucially, they are defined by the social relationships that exist and/or develop over time between the members. This is why the concept of 'community' struck Lave and Wenger as appropriate to describe this phenomenon. This is a key point. The concept of community, as used here, sees learning as being about *participation* rather than *internalisation*. Learning is 'an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations' (Lave and Wenger 1991: 50). This is much more than 'learning by doing' or 'experiential learning'. Effective learning takes place within and through social relationships and these are built within communities of practice. However, participation in the sense used here is not only about engaging in activities with others (as in small group work activities as a student) '...but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities' (Wenger 1999: 4).

There is much more that can be said about the conceptual features of communities of practice or learning communities but this brief outline highlights what are, for the purposes of this discussion, the key aspects. The complete concept raises significant challenges for educational policy makers and practitioners especially where systems are based primarily on measuring individual student performance in terms of outputs – what have you learned, as demonstrated in examination answers, essays and so on – rather than process – how did you learn, what you have learned. Finding ways to overcome these obstacles is important because the pedagogy associated with learning communities can be shown (see for example, Tinto 2000) to significantly enhance the chances of successful participation in tertiary education especially for those from social, economic and/or educational backgrounds which have not typically provided a platform either for access to, and/or success in, this stage of formal education.

Learning communities and higher education

In this section we critically examine three features of contemporary higher education in the UK, and especially England. The examples have been chosen because they illustrate the tensions between the idea of learning communities and the provision of contemporary higher education at different levels of experience and because they affect very large

numbers of students and staff. The first operates at the micro-level of experience and will affect potentially quite a large number of students and teachers. The second is an example of an institutional strategy explicitly informed by the concept of communities of practice. The final example examines the major policy initiative known as LLNs.

Modularisation

Contemporary university education in the UK, not just in England, tends to be delivered through modular programmes. Modularisation of degree courses is now long-established in many universities. The basic idea, borrowed largely from the USA, is that there is more flexibility for students to choose those aspects of their degree subject which interest them most if the degree is broken down into distinct 'chunks' (modules), enabling the students to build their degree much as one might construct a tower from children's toy blocks. Inevitably, there are different versions of this basic idea. In some universities rules governing which modules can be studied to build a particular named degree, or the sequence in which they must be studied, are quite 'liberal', whereas in others there is much more constraint on the ways students can construct their degree route. In some cases, modules are not so much like simple building blocks but more like Lego ones: modules may 'interlock' with certain others, for example by requiring that in order to study a particular module a student must have previously studied specific others (prerequisites) or even that some modules must be studied at the same time (co-requisites).

Whatever the particularities of the model, modularity sits uncomfortably with building a learning community/community of practice to enhance student learning and to maximise the chances of successful transition from school to university study especially for those from family, social or school backgrounds where going to university is not the norm. Of course, it is possible to generate a sense of 'shared enterprise', to foster mutual engagement, and work towards a 'collective social identity' among students studying a particular module. The use of collaborative learning strategies, development of 'community web pages' for the particular module cohort, organising trips, events or social occasions all move in this direction. However, the nature of modular learning means that these strategies will (indeed must) be mainly focused on ensuring students can demonstrate the required module learning outcomes by the time the module finishes. Activities and strategies tend to become highly task- and objective-focused. This emphasis is understandable and pragmatic from both the teacher's and the students' perspective. Teachers

have an obligation to ensure all students have a fair and equal chance to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully complete end-of-module assessments. Students, if on a full-time undergraduate programme, will be studying at least three modules simultaneously with submission of final assessments for each probably falling at roughly the same time. Balancing and meeting these demands requires a certain single-mindedness and pragmatism. What does this imply for learning communities?

The theory of communities of practice emphasises that they are not primarily task-focused nor are they bounded by particular structures of formal versus informal learning. Compartmentalising learning can lead to an overly task-oriented approach and tends to create boundaries between ways and types of learning. Another defining characteristic of learning communities/communities of practice is that they shift focus and purpose, as well as membership, *over time*. This runs counter to the typical structure of the academic year in modularised universities where modules are delivered within semesters, each lasting anywhere between 12 and 15 weeks. At the end of the semester, students move on to other modules and may or may not find themselves studying these with the same students as on their previous modules.

If we accept the theory of communities of practice – essentially, that they are a more effective way of organising learning because they mirror how learning takes place naturally – then it becomes difficult to accept modularisation as the best way to structure formal learning in universities, colleges or elsewhere. However, to abandon modularity would bring disadvantages. For example, for those potential students for whom full-time study is not possible modularity brings the possibility of being able to study a subject, and eventually achieve a qualification, at their own pace as best fits their lifestyle, family and/or employment circumstances. Similarly, modules enable universities to offer 'taster' experiences for students who might not otherwise see university education as being open to them or who are poorly informed about what higher education is actually like. In brief, modularisation is a key element in strategies for widening participation.

The strategic role of a community of practice

In 2006 the present author saw and heard explicit reference to 'communities of practice' as a member of a team conducting an extensive external audit of the arrangements made by the University of Plymouth with various partner institutions – mainly further education colleges – for delivery of its undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

The audit team identified several features of what it believed to be good practice in the arrangements put in place by the university. Among these, the formal report commended the university for:

> the deliberate construction of an academic culture supporting 'communities of practice and scholarship' across the collaborative partners, as demonstrated by: subject fora; University fellowship schemes; the operation of the Higher Education Learning Partnership Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching; the funding of scholarly activity and research in some partners; and other targeted investment of resources (QAA 2006: 40).

The use of the term 'communities of practice' in the report was not the result of the authors superimposing a concept on the strategies, policies and practices it saw: this was how university and partner college staff described the partnership strategy of the university themselves. All the features of a community of practice were evident (though inevitably some were further developed than others) in this partnership network. One element of this strategy which possibly best illustrates the translation of the philosophy into practice is the Subject Forum.

These forums had two essential characteristics which reflect key elements of communities of practice:

- Designation and organisation of a forum was not constrained by structures. Even though each forum related to a subject area and had a subject name (e.g. Science, Technology, Business and Management) the definitions crossed typical faculty or departmental boundaries. So, the Science subject forum included Agriculture and Sport; the Technology forum included Engineering, Mathematics and Computing; Business and Management included Accountancy, Law, Tourism and Hospitality Management.
- Membership was open to academic staff from partner colleges and staff from cognate subjects within any university faculty. Staff could participate in the activities of more than one forum, and collaborative working across fora was formally encouraged.

The main point to be made here about this example from the University of Plymouth is not just that it is an embryonic community of practice in action, or that the strategy is very unusual in describing and understanding itself in this way. More importantly, it demonstrates that to create such communities requires deliberate, targeted and articulated

policies to cut across and challenge existing structures, boundaries and cultures, including deeply embedded ones such as those between organisations and/or academic disciplines.

Lifelong learning networks – why not learning communities?

In August 2006 there were 30 HEFCE-funded LLNs in England. Twenty-three of these had full funding and seven had development funding. There were nine in London and the SE, three in Yorkshire and the Humber, four in the North West and six in the Midlands. There were also national networks such as the National Arts Learning Network. The number of such designated and funded networks confirms that LLNs are now a significant part of the landscape of higher education in England.

The joint guidance by HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council to universities and colleges wishing to form partnerships to be designated and funded as an LLN (HEFCE Circular Letter 12/2004) repeated the basic outline provided by Newby in his Colin Bell Memorial Lecture. Such networks would 'combine the strengths of a number of diverse institutions', 'support learners on vocational pathways', 'give clarity, coherence and certainty to progression opportunities', 'develop curriculum . . . to facilitate progression', 'value vocational learning outcomes' and show a commitment to lifelong learning by ensuring learners 'can move between different kinds of vocational and academic programmes as their interests, needs and abilities develop' (HEFCE 2004: 1). The briefing for consultation with potential partners provided by the funding council stated that 'there is no single model [of a LLN] applicable everywhere' (HEFCE 2004 Annex A: 6) but it did outline some basic essential features including linking what networks do to local and regional skills agendas, needs and strategies, working towards the development of local credit frameworks and even credit accumulation and transfer systems, and developing new curricula aimed at increasing choice for learners. Interestingly, in terms of our interest in learning communities, the guidance stated, '[a]bove all the LLN will add value because it is learner centred, and learner driven, but on a scale and with a variety of provision that no single provider can offer' (HEFCE 2004 Annex A: 6). However, in terms of how this 'learner centredness' was seen as impacting on learning strategies the only direct reference is to the development by LLNs of 'individualised learning plans'. These are presented as being about more effective (vocational) career and education planning and would need to take account of learner needs in terms of different modes and types of delivery including e-learning, distance learning and on- or

off-campus provision (HEFCE 2004 Annex A: 8). The interpretation of learner centredness and the understanding of LLNs as being learner-driven is overwhelmingly in terms of increasing the transparency, availability and diversity of progression routes between different levels and types of post-16 study related to the (apparent) needs of a wider range of students than is presently the case. There is no sense at all in the guidance of LLNs being required to have any impact on the learning strategies of the partner institutions.

To this extent, then, it is unsurprising that Newby opted to describe these new structures for the provision of higher education as LLNs rather than *communities*. Conceptually, 'networks' are looser associations than 'communities'. They do not demand or imply any sense of a collective identity, or changes in behaviour by members. In the case of LLNs, partner institutions could continue to do much as they did before the network was publicly designated. Indeed, this was fundamental to the LLN vision. As the guidance stated: 'Our view of LLNs is that institutions are invited to "play to their strengths", building on their commitment to research, to teaching, and to involvement with local and regional economies' (HEFCE 2004 Annex A: 4). The concept of learning communities, as we have suggested earlier, challenges more fundamentally the conceptualisation of learning which underpins much if not most higher education provision and had it been the philosophical perspective underpinning LLNs it would have been much more difficult for them to operate effectively without some very significant changes to the ways in which universities and colleges structured and delivered the learning experience. This would have been seen as a direct challenge to universities' autonomy.

Conclusion

A debate about the role which learning communities could play in the drive to widen participation in tertiary education is not marginal to the issues nor to the people who work and study in universities and colleges: the matters noted in the case studies affect the lived experience of very large numbers of staff and students in universities. At the same time, it is possible to romanticise learning communities and communities of practice – a trap which befalls many who use the concept of 'community' – and this was true to some extent of Lave and Wenger (1991). Nevertheless, the conceptualisation offers the possibility of re-thinking our approach to university and college education in ways which are likely to significantly enhance the chances of

success of all students and those from 'under-represented groups' in particular. To re-think the higher education experience in these ways would undoubtedly challenge the structures and distribution of power within institutions but unless a move in this direction is made it is less likely that sustained change in patterns of student participation and success in higher education (and the wider social and economic benefits this can bring) will be achieved.

6

'For All the Women Out There': Community and the Ethics of Care in the Marketing of a Breast Cancer Fundraising Event

Julia D'Aloisio

> Community is almost always invoked as an unequivocal good, an indicator of a high quality of life, a life of human under-standing, caring, selflessness, belonging...Communities are frequently said to emerge in times of crisis or tragedy, when people imagine themselves bound together by a common grief or joined through some extraordinary effort.
>
> (Joseph 2002: vii)

Introduction

Over the past few decades, corporate-sponsored fundraising events have been growing in popularity across North America and Europe. In particular, the fight against breast cancer has become most visible in public events that combine a massive fundraising initiative with mass parti-cipation in physical activity. The *Weekend to End Breast Cancer* (*WEBC* 2005) (known as the *Weekend to Breakthrough* in the UK) is one such event that asks participants to walk 60 km over the course of a weekend while raising a minimum of $2000 in funds for breast cancer research, education and services. As part of a larger study on the marketing of breast cancer fundraising events, this chapter examines the ways in which the language of 'community' is deployed through the text of an 'orientation video' used to recruit participants to take part in the Toronto event (D'Aloisio 2006). In particular, I argue that discourses of self-care and care of the 'community' market directly to women,

imploring them to take action on behalf of their own health causes, and effectively exploiting their ethic of care toward a cause that is intimately significant in their lives.

Theorizing 'community'

This research is situated within the growing body of literature critiquing the deployment of the language of 'community', especially in relation to health and health care (Bullock 1990; Joseph 2002; Petersen and Lupton 1996). Joseph (2002) for example has drawn attention to the 'romanticization' of the term community, including the ways in which charities and non-profit organizations are understood to be unquestioned maintainers of community. As such, this chapter follows Joseph's (2002) definition of 'community' as the 'social practices that presume or attempt to enact and produce identity, unity, communion, and purity' which may induce a 'diverse range of oppressions' (xix). In this sense, I refer to community as a practice, an enactment and a subject identity, rather than a specific spatial location. In addition, I draw upon research which critiques the ways in which women's caring and unpaid work both supports and maintains the values – such as giving, sharing and belonging – which have become inseparable from our understandings of 'community' (Bullock 1990; Joseph 2002).

As the most prominent media text involved in the marketing of the *WEBC*, the 'orientation video' is an important setting to examine the ways in which discourses about breast cancer and women's health are constituted. Drawing from Cheek's (2000) method of discourse analysis, the video was 'interrogated to uncover the unspoken and unstated assumptions implicit within [it] which have shaped the very form of the text in the first place' (43). In conducting a textual analysis of the video, I created coding sheets where I recorded the visual, textual and auditory dialogue and corresponding time frames in the video. These time frames are noted (showing minutes and seconds) each time I refer to data from the video. The process of coding took place at both the descriptive and thematic levels, and yielded a number of emerging themes which are examined in the following section.

Mobilizing 'community'

The *WEBC* event and, in fact, the breast cancer movement in general are understood to be part of a unique and cohesive 'community'. This aspect of the event is emphasized as an empowering and affirming

experience for participants, and one which is necessary in working toward the elimination of breast cancer. The discourse of 'community' is explored in more detail under the themes of (1) caring for/about; (2) united by disease; (3) working together; (4) admiration for others in the community and (5) enduring pain on behalf of others; with some of these themes being broken down further into sub-themes therein.

Caring for/about

Other participants

The supportive relationships and experiences that transpire between participants throughout the walk are celebrated and positioned as evidence that the *WEBC* is a caring community. The comments from this woman are typical: 'you know, nobody sees someone who is limping without stopping to ask if they're okay. Everyone has been very courteous of one another, and very helpful' (7: 15–24). Here, women's status as helping, caring, nurturing supporters is reinforced and applauded as proof of the moral integrity of the community. The notion of taking care of one another and sharing a common experience is a central premise when discussing the challenging aspect of the walk. One woman explains: 'we were very tired at the end of the day one, and we were actually like, it was pretty much hurting at every step. And there were just so many people there just clapping us on, and that really felt good to walk into a camp like that - and it was all the other walkers!' (8: 23–35). In this narrative, the pain of the walk becomes bearable when rewarded by other members of the community. The support and camaraderie that develops between participants is repeated as one of the most important messages in the video's marketing. For example, the event organizer explains: 'part of what this event is about is the communication between the walkers, the ability to talk to people you've never met before' (6: 56–7: 15). In this narrative, meeting other people and forming relationships while talking during the walk are the means to membership in this valued, caring, community.

The visual images on the screen also reflect a gendered understanding of who is doing the caring. Long lines of women clap, cheer and smile as other groups of women cross the finish line. As a speaker announces the start of the walk during the opening ceremonies, he reminds participants to 'Be safe! Take care of each other' (5: 58–6: 21) suggesting that the walkers are in this challenge together and should look to each other as a reassuring base of support. These public shows of caring between women stress that walkers are never alone, and that the community of

walkers will work to help each other in reaching a common goal. It is in public displays such as these that 'identity-based social movements invoke community to mobilize constituents and validate their cause to a broader public' (Joseph 2002: vii). In this conception women have a natural aptitude for caring which can and should be nurtured and reciprocated by others like them.

Crew, staff and 'coaches'

The staff and crew of volunteers for the event are also represented as caring members of this community. In the video, a walker reflects: 'one thing I thought was very helpful was that every pit stop you go to, there were medical staff all over the place, they were just taking care of you' (8: 8–15). The simultaneous visual image flashes to a close-up of a pair of hands treating a blister on a woman's foot with a bandage. Again, the experience of being 'taken care of' is represented as a comforting and reassuring aspect of participation in the walk, with any injuries sustained serving as the 'badge of honor' for participation.

Perhaps the biggest emphasis on caring from the crew comes from the existence of 'coaches' who assist participants in physically and emotionally preparing for the event. Coaches are available to assist and support participants in training their bodies, fundraising the required amount of money and fostering notions of community by encouraging participants to help each other in reaching their goals. This system of structured caring is toted as one of the most important, celebrated and unique aspects of this event. As the website explains: 'no matter what ails you from the inevitable blister to a sprain or strain you're always cared for' (endcancer.ca).

The discourse of being 'cared for' by the crew is meant to allow walkers to focus on the challenge of the walk, rather than fretting over minor details or worries. One woman says, 'the thing you have to do is show up with your bag and your shoes and your socks, your motivation and your energy, and just about everything else is pretty well taken care of, it's very well supported' (7: 37–52). The idea here is that as long as you are willing to do your part, there will be others there to care for you, nurture you and support you. Similarly, the event organizer promotes the event reminding walkers that they will be 'well looked after, and that's an important component' (7: 0–15). However, there is also real pleasure to be found for women in being cared for. Through participation in the walk, women are offered the opportunity to be cared for, when so often they are called upon to do the caring (see Kasper and Batt 2003: 67 for example).

A caring environment

The 'nice environment' (7: 00–15) of the event and the way the event is physically supported for the participants is another re-occurring narrative. There is much emphasis on the excellent food, sleeping and bathing arrangements available to walkers, suggesting that walkers will be cared for and treated to the same luxuries they have been accustomed to in their daily middle-class lives. In addition, the video refers to a multi-tude of care services on-site and available to support the walkers. One woman explains: 'there was chiropracting, there was the medical team there available, there was a massage therapist available . . . ' (9: 21–28). The reliance on expert medical services and the reassurance that one would have access to them, should they become necessary, is a uniquely middle- and upper-class phenomenon. It is a minority of people who regularly visit a chiropractor or massage therapist in their everyday life, let alone during a weekend event. These narratives highlighting the existence of 'professional' caring services reveal assumptions about the class and position of those participating in this event, and subsequently, those who are in need of breast cancer services – assumptions which have traditionally marginalized communities of poor women, and women of color, often most in need of cancer care (Eisenstein 2001; Kasper 2000; Kasper and Batt 2003).

The broader community

The *WEBC* is also represented as a point of connection between walk participants and members of the broader community. The overarching narrative maintains that members of the larger social community are compassionate and eager to support a worthy cause such as breast cancer. In regards to his fundraising experience, one man explains: 'you'll be surprised at how easy it is, and how much your friends and family and people you do business with want to help' (2: 35–47). At the orientation session where the video is shown, a member of the *WEBC* committee recommends that participants ask their business colleagues and employers to show their support with a donation. In this narrative, the broader community is envisioned as members of a participant's busi-ness community, carrying particular assumptions about the class and resources of all walkers.

The caring and support of the broader community is represented as inspiring and motivational for the walkers. One woman explains: 'the greatest part I think is the people from the community just coming out and cheering us on and just providing support and encouragement'

(10: 1–6). Here, the enthusiasm from the community also serves as evidence of the merit and value of the cause. In this narrative, the cause of breast cancer, and specifically the actions of the *WEBC*, builds relationships, brings people together and acts in the best interests of 'the community' as a whole.

A unified community

'Instantly bonded'

The orientation video represents the *WEBC* as a community of people unified because of their shared commitment to ending breast cancer. One walker refers to the physical gestures and body language as evidence of the unity between walkers saying, 'it was very emotional because we started holding hands, and I think that was well thought of because it did give this whole idea that we're in this together and you could really feel it' (5: 2–16). These narratives invoke the unity of the community as an embodied, visceral experience, founded on the shared experience of breast cancer. As one woman explains: 'the people I've met today and some of the stories I've heard – we're all united by this disease in one way or another' (9: 45–52). In the marketing of the event, the notion of being part of a united and connected community of other women is often given more emphasis than the disease itself. As another walker explains the experience: 'I think that was the moment that I recognized how happy I am to be doing this, it was just so moving, you just felt instantly bonded' (6: 21–37). This narrative invokes the idea of an 'instant' community of women, coming together and gaining strength through a shared commitment.

The event organizer explains that participants 'hail from all walks of life ... they're judges; they're secretaries; they're nurses; they're teachers; they're health care workers. They are everybody from every walk of society who have come together because they want to make a difference' (Pulse24, *Running for Hope* 2004). In this narrative of 'coming together', participants are represented as responsible, like-minded individuals, united in purpose and vision regardless of their personal backgrounds. However, the suggestion that these professions are representative of 'all walks of life' is based in middle-class assumptions, blurring the differences and inequalities between women and making invisible the absence of women from less-privileged means, who would not have the resources or networks from which to fundraise $2000[1] (Cartwright 1998). Further, the reality of Canada and of Toronto

in particular, as locations of multiple racial, cultural and socio-economic identities disrupts this belief in a universal subjectivity.

Strength in numbers

The vastness of the crowd itself is represented as a source of strength and evidence of the unity and steadfastness of its participants. As one woman describes, 'the first morning is so exciting to see the stream of people headed out' (6: 21–37). The visual images of the crowd are filmed using an overhead panoramic shot as a means of emphasizing the enormity of the crowd. It is clear from the screen that this is a mass of *white* bodies surging through the streets, which is particularly striking given that Toronto (the venue of the event) is one of the most racially diverse cities in Canada. The accompanying dialogue explains the emotion of being part of such a large gathering; as one walker explains the experience: 'how often do you stand around in a group of 4000 people and feel that this is exactly where you need to be, you know usually you're trying to get out!' (6: 41–49). In this narrative, the crowd appears as a symbolic net of support, carrying the participants through the challenge and protecting them together as a community. The embrace of the crowd as an enriching experience contrasts with what psychologists typically refer to as the bystander effect, wherein people are *less* likely to show consideration and caring for those around them as responsibility becomes dispersed (Darley and Latane 1968). Rather than a crowd where individuals become anonymous and accountability is diffused, the *WEBC* is represented as a place where feelings of responsibility are literally enhanced from the sheer number of people present. This environment is depicted as a place from which to draw strength and energy from one other, and commit to goals that might seem unthinkable when working alone.

Perhaps one of the most visual representations of this strength in numbers is in the many images and references to the 'sea of blue tents' where participants sleep together overnight. The imagery of the sea suggests the notion of a vast, deep and encompassing entity surrounding the walkers. In the video, the closely lined, long rows of identical blue tents appear symbolic of an imagined unified, homogenous community of women. The event brochure plays on the potential pleasures of this experience, encouraging walkers to, 'imagine yourself surrounded by a sea of caring, committed people'. One woman exclaims the experience as follows: 'sleeping all together like that, like with our tents side by side, gosh that was incredible, it was just part of the challenge. I think that was the one thing that a lot of people were really nervous about, some

of them had never done it before' (8: 44–56). These words touch on the notion of people coming together and bonding over the challenge of walking a large distance and camping outdoors. The understanding is that the sacrifice of sleeping in tents and pushing the boundaries of one's comfort level are necessary, even important, because they will strengthen the bonds of the community and are in the name of a good cause.

Working together

In the *WEBC* video, committing oneself to an important cause is imagined as best accomplished in the company of others. In these narratives, an emphasis on personal accomplishment is combined with the assurance that any goal is achievable in this environment of talented, extraordinary individuals. As event organizer Audrey Loeb explains:

> When you've raised that $2000 and you've trained and you've finished that 60 km, the sense of accomplishment is enormous. I mean you really sit back and say, I did something that's not ordinary, I did something that's really special, and look at all these other special people who have done it with me (3: 48–4: 5).

This narrative invites participants to feel personal pride for fulfilling their duties as responsible citizens, and collective pride, for the achievements of their higher order community. In these comments, there is a sense that the feelings of satisfaction and achievement gained from the walk are some of the most important reasons for participating. In 'doing something bold against cancer' (endcancer.ca) participants are asked to feel good about being part of a community that takes responsibility for health issues rather than sitting back, as the 'ordinary' person might do.

A faith that anything can be accomplished if we 'put our minds to it' and work together is essential to constructing the *WEBC* as a worthwhile cause. For example, one woman explains: 'the fact that everybody is working towards this goal, it's pretty amazing you know, that if people want to do anything, we can work together and do it' (9: 52–10: 1). While this sense of teamwork might be read as inspiring, it also solidifies particular notions of community while excluding others. In this conceptualization, health problems are framed as goals to be solved by the volunteer work of individual citizens rather than collectively by the state (Brown et al. 2001; King 2001, 2003). Further, it represents a real hope and desire – albeit a difficult one to fulfill – that cancer, and perhaps ill health in general, can be eliminated through individual willpower

and 'the right attitude': ideas which have been critiqued extensively (King 2001, 2003; Klawiter 1999; Lupton 1994; Seale 2001; Sontag 1978).

Admiration for others in the community

The most obvious targets of admiration in the community are breast cancer 'survivors': women who are celebrated as direct evidence that the *WEBC* will save lives (Ehrenreich 2001; King 2001). It is survivors in particular, who are publicly triumphed as 'beacons of hope' and recognized for their courage, strength and fortitude in combating the disease (King 2001: 138). The public display of survivors is extremely emotional and moving, and is important in signifying the authenticity of the event, and thus, that of the entire community. As one woman explains in the video: 'I think just seeing some of the survivors is when it really hits you, why you were doing this, and it was very overwhelming' (5: 16–26). The admiration of survivors serves to validate the cause of breast cancer, as well as the actions of the community in their quest for a cure to the disease.

While survivors are a significant focus of praise and admiration, programmers of the event also reinforce and celebrate *all* walkers for 'taking action' against cancer. During a scene of the opening ceremonies on the video, a motivational speaker opens the event by saying, 'It is my honor, to thank you, for your unspeakably brave commitment to ending breast cancer, and to tell you, that yes, the Weekend to End Breast Cancer officially begins!' (5: 58–6: 21). This public acclamation of participants is a crucial aspect of the event, wherein walkers are affirmed for their courage and 'brave' decision to be part of the walk. In this way, the actions of individuals undertaken 'for the community' are represented as morally superior, serving as recognition of a responsibility for, and commitment to, one's own health and the health of others.

Enduring pain on behalf of others

Part of showing admiration for others in the community, especially 'survivors' involves a willingness to endure pain and suffering on their behalf. This pain may come in the form of the hardships experienced when attempting to fundraise the $2000 minimum, or in the physical suffering experienced in committing one's body to walking 60 km. Regardless of these feelings of pain or frustration, participants are encouraged to compare the insignificance of their problems to the suffering of women living with breast cancer. As one participant explains: 'you know it's really quite interesting, because at first I thought

it was really overwhelming, but then, as a really good friend of mine pointed out, this is nothing compared to what women who are suffering from breast cancer have to deal with, so this not overwhelming, this is not daunting at all' (4: 5–22). Drawing from a similar tactic, an email marketing solicitation for the event reads as follows:

> If people are still thinking about signing up, but they are a little scared, or a LOT SCARED, I just tell them to think about the people who have Breast Cancer. Think about the struggles they endure in their daily battle with the disease. Walking 60 km may seem like a lot, and raising at least $2000 is definitely a challenge. But it is nothing compared to what they are going through (email communication, 16 March 2004).

These narratives encourage participants to sympathize with those who have breast cancer by symbolically accessing their pain through participation in a strenuous and physically demanding walk. Here, submitting and sacrificing oneself to the pain involved in the challenge is represented as a means of uniting with others in the community. In accessing the pain of survivors (women who are already marked as morally superior individuals), other women declare themselves as committed to the cause, and as better individuals, just for walking in their presence. However, the notion of enduring pain on behalf of others is also related to an imperative of caring for and about other women. In fact, fundraising – especially that which is performed for breast cancer causes – is almost exclusively work performed by women on behalf of their own health causes. It is precisely these types of messages that market directly to women's duty of care and sense of responsibility in wanting to *do something* about breast cancer, with the emphasis on personal responsibility having the potential of inciting feelings of guilt and failure in those incapable of participating.

Capitalizing on 'community'

The work of caring

A critique recognizing women's unpaid work as caregivers and volunteers has been well established (see for example Armstrong 2002; Armstrong and Armstrong 2004; Baines et al. 1998). Particularly relevant to a discussion of the *WEBC* is the way in which women's caring work becomes intertwined with, and provides much of the basis from

which we are able to imagine the concept of 'community' (Bullock 1990; Joseph, 2002). As Bullock (1990) has argued, women are central to the notion of community because its formation depends implicitly on their unpaid labor (68). In the discourses of the orientation video, it is overwhelmingly women who are depicted as engaging in the work of caring for the needs of others throughout the walk. This caring work tends to be couched in the language of 'community' as a 'natural' aspect of an event participated in by and for women.

In reality however, women's sense of responsibility as caregivers is drawn upon in the discourse of the fundraising video. Women are reminded of their (often heteronormative) roles as wives, mothers and friends and how these roles can be enhanced and preserved through participation in the walk. Throughout the video, women are explicitly encouraged to ignore their own concerns or fears, comparing the 'insignificance' of their sore feet or fundraising frustrations to the horror of cancer. In so doing, it asks women to put aside their own feelings for the betterment of others – a sentiment reinforcing cultural constructions of femininity which celebrate women who privilege the needs of others ahead of their own (Saywell et al. 2000: 49). When women are asked to walk on behalf of 'all the women out there' (13: 37–52) the imperative to *do* something is not only represented in relation to responsibility for one's own body, but also for the bodily care and protection of other women's bodies. This is significant, because in neo-liberal societies, participation in creating a 'healthier' community has become more of a duty than a right of citizenship; one which is this case, is paired with gendered norms to hail women in particular to the cause (Petersen and Lupton 1996: 146).

The discourses of the *WEBC* are productive in garnering participants because they do more than simply position women as natural nurturers and volunteers; they also suggest that women themselves *deserve* to be cared for and supported, and that the *WEBC* is a desirable venue in which to experience these pleasures. As such, the *WEBC* offers women the opportunity to be cared for (through massages, gourmet meals and medical attention), when so often, they are the ones expected to do the caring. While there has been much progress made since the women's health movement in bringing support to women with cancer, this narrative may be particularly compelling because it speaks to real absences in care that are still being experienced by women in terms of social support or access to treatment (Kasper and Batt 2003). Unfortunately, the women most excluded from these support networks (poor women and women of color, for example) remain largely absent in the

images of this caring environment and many lack the resources necessary to participate at all in the event (Cartwright 1998; Kasper 2000; King 2001; Nelson and Agyapong 2004).

Theorizing an ethics of care

While I have critiqued the relationship between gender and 'community' in the marketing of breast cancer fundraising events, I do not want to imply that caring or emotional displays of support have no place in the realm of breast cancer. In fact, it is arguable from the large number of current and repeat participants in the event that this aspect is lived as rewarding by many women. I want to caution, as Kasper (2003) does, against the pressure on feminists to abandon 'compassion and protection' for 'confrontation and conflict' as though the two were mutually exclusive (Adams 1971, cited in Kasper and Batt 2003: 66). In other words, it is not necessary for the two responses to remain in a binary with one supporting a system of inequality and the other working against it. Rather, the work of feminists has the potential to blend these boundaries, and perhaps is the space from which to work toward anti-essentialist understandings of gender, while allowing for experiences that are meaningful and speak to a multiplicity of 'women's' needs. Under this premise:

> working for social change is part of an ethic of caring – because we care about the world, we work toward the goal of making it a more sane and humane place. Our tools may be protest, writings, or grassroots movements, and our goals may be structural changes to laws, institutions, and governments. But caring for each individual in need is a measure of our goodness as human beings (Kasper and Batt 2003: 66).

This perspective is a step toward recognizing and valuing women's caring work, while at the same time demanding that it reflects their interests. It means that there is potential to maintain, preserve and strengthen the caring relationships that make us want to work for a better world, while at the same time refusing to accept that what benefits some, should come at the expense of others.

Conclusion

The language of 'community' and its deployment in the marketing of breast cancer fundraising events works to depoliticize both philanthropy and breast cancer by positioning women's volunteer labor as a

natural phenomenon, and breast cancer as a cause best addressed at the individual level through the efforts of 'communities'. These ways of envisioning community reproduce particular ideas about appropriate gender norms, while at the same time expropriating women's volunteer labor around causes which are intimately significant in their lives. There is an irony however in these notions of community; while becoming part of it is envisioned as positive and rewarding, it also requires an affiliation with a disease that is horrible and debilitating. Further ironic is the fact that participants are working toward ending something that actually forms the link from which this valued community has formed. While these appear as contradictions, they are powerful in revealing the ways in which 'community' serves to validate and support even the most paradoxical of statements. As the language of community becomes further embedded within the sphere of health causes, these will remain pressing concerns for those working for equitable and ethical responses to social issues.

7

Contingent Communities: British Social Policy and the Invention of Refugee Communities

Lynnette Kelly

Introduction

Policies for the incorporation of immigrants and ethnic minorities into British society have been based on a particular, British, form of multiculturalism. The British version considers that people with similar geographical origins can be considered as a community, that they will have common interests and a common outlook, and that spokespersons for the community will be able to articulate the interests of the group. These policies were developed initially in the period of post-war large-scale economic migration into Britain, but have been refined and extended to encompass all forms of inward migration. Although refugees and labour migrants are different in law, and have different backgrounds and reasons for entering a country, they are often considered together when issues of settlement are discussed. As the number of refugees in Britain increased there was little discussion of settlement issues, and these policies were repeated for refugee groups. In this chapter I question the applicability of these policies for refugees and the ability of refugee groups to form communities. However, refugee groups do form community organisations, and I suggest that among refugee groups this can lead to the formation of 'contingent communities', which are consciously constructed as a response to policies and practices in British society.

Settlement of refugees in Britain

In Britain there have been few new policies developed around the settlement of refugees, and instead policies designed originally to accommodate immigrants who came as economic migrants have been used

towards refugees (Wahlbeck 1999). Theories of multiculturalism became popular in Britain from the 1960s onwards, and were adopted as the dominant political model for the incorporation of immigrants into British society (Abercrombie et al. 1988; Anthias and Yuval-Davies 1992; Rex and Tomlinson 1979). Multicultural theories propose that individuals can maintain their individual identity, and their membership of a minority group, whilst at the same time becoming part of the wider society. Multiculturalism recognises that different cultures can exist within one society, but that individuals at the same time are equal to each other. A multicultural society therefore is one which is equal in the public domain, but where diversity is encouraged in private or communal matters (Rex 1996). Implementation of multiculturalism can take place in different ways (Alund and Schierup 1991; Favell 1998), and in Britain the model of multiculturalism that has been adopted places great emphasis on the role and existence of 'communities'. It is assumed that all individuals will be members of a community, which is culturally defined and has clear boundaries (Anthias and Yuval-Davies 1992; Goulbourne 1991). This assumption has some advantages for minorities, since it allows the expression of cultural values and behaviour, but assumptions on communities have been challenged by some authors. Divisions can occur within minority groups, and the preoccupation with community can obscure these differences (Werbner 1991). In addition the assumption of a community brings with it an assumption that there can be community leaders who can represent that community, although these leaders are rarely elected or democratically chosen (Anthias and Yuval-Davies 1992). Policies based on multiculturalism emphasised self-help, and the role of communities and their formal associations in providing services tailored to the needs of ethnic communities (Candappa and Joly 1994; ECRE 1998). When directed towards assistance for refugees, they merely transferred the focus to refugee communities and refugee associations.

Community organisations

The role of formal organisations and associations in the settlement of immigrants and the incorporation of ethnic minorities has been examined and found to have many positive aspects. Rex et al. (1987) found that community associations have four main functions: overcoming isolation, providing material help to community members, defending the interests of the community and promoting the community's culture. In addition, it has been suggested that through

networking and information sharing, associations can play an important role in assisting the adaptation of the community members to the host society (Joly 1996).

For refugees, community associations can also perform many useful functions. They can help to rebuild and reinforce a sense of belonging for people whose lives have been disrupted by exile, and they can play an important role in empowering the members of the community (Salinas et al. 1987). The benefits of community association formation are well known to the different agencies involved in work with refugees, and organisations such as Refugee Action devote a considerable proportion of their time to community development work.

The focus on association formation by various refugee agencies reflects an agreement with Rex's assessment of the functions of associations, but fails to take into account the idea that rather than being a 'natural' process, it may be a reflection more of British society than of immigrant inclinations. It has been suggested that the basis for group formation may lie in the way British institutions create spaces for the recognition of groups rather than individuals (Joly 1996), and individuals need to form themselves into an association in order to enter into dialogue with the state (Favell 1998). There is also a failure to consider whether the needs of the group are best met by a formal association, or indeed whether there actually is a community. When considering the associations formed by refugees it must be remembered that there are important differences between refugees and members of minority ethnic groups, and these differences may adversely affect the nature and functioning of those associations.

One of the differences between refugees and minority ethnic groups, who in the British context were initially labour migrants, is that for labour migrants there is often a pattern of chain migration. This is where new arrivals are following in the steps of earlier arrivals, and gain support and advice from those people (for example see Shaw 1988). These pre-existing links between those who have migrated to Britain have meant that community formation has not been difficult, since the emotional link between the members of the group has already been established. The combination of chain migration and the pattern of settlement in areas close to others from the same country has created conditions which favour the formation of communities (Candappa and Joly 1994).

For those that come to Britain as refugees, the same pattern of chain migration is often not evident. Refugees tend to arrive in Britain as a result of a sudden upheaval in their country of origin. They frequently arrive without knowing anyone in the country, and kinship links with

other members of the group are often absent. The formation of an association can be very difficult for those who arrive en masse as opposed to groups who arrive through chain migration (Gold 1992).

Among refugee groups there is often little group-wide organisation, and a typical feature is factionalism and segmentation (Gold 1992). There are often divisions within refugee groups based upon differences in class, politics, religion and so forth (Salinas et al. 1987). This factionalism can inhibit attempts to create a formal association, or where an association is formed it may be unrepresentative.

Lack of familiarity with the working of a society can hamper attempts at organisation, especially for newly arrived groups. If this is combined with an internally divided and economically disadvantaged situation, then there will often be considerable difficulty in forming and maintaining community-based organisations (Dorais 1991; Gold 1992) (Griffiths, D., 1998 *Aspects of Refugee Community Organisations: Somalis and Kurds in London*, Unpublished work).

Despite the difficulty that refugee groups can face in forming formal associations, they remain the main focus of much of the work that takes place with refugees, but there has been little attention paid to whether their basis, refugee communities, actually exist.

Community

The term 'community' is widely and loosely used, and a careful definition is needed if the term is to have heuristic value. 'Community' is used without being defined by both civic authorities and minority groups, and has become an important feature and rationale for ethnic mobilisation (Vertovec and Peach 1997). It has been suggested that its use is now so widespread that its meaning has become elusive and vague, and that community has become a term largely without specific meaning (Abercrombie et al. 1988). However, as long as notions of community are used within social policy, the term must be engaged with and its meaning investigated.

There are two themes existing at the same time within the common-sense notion of community. The first implies both a warmth and interconnectedness between members of the group, giving community strongly positive connotations. The second implicitly assumes that all the members will share values and goals (Alund and Schierup 1991; Vertovec and Peach 1997). Both of these themes can be seen within social policy towards ethnic minorities, for whom 'community' is considered to be the best way of organising and who are assumed by

policy makers and funding organisations to have much in common with each other.

The question of what constitutes a community has been debated throughout the history of sociology. Community has been defined as a form of relationship:

> ...characterised by a high degree of personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion and continuity in time (Nisbet 1967: 47).

Other definitions of community are possible, but an important feature of definitions of community is the notion of the community as a form of collective. There is something that the members of the community feel they have in common, and which provides a link between members of the community. This commonality can take many forms, and may be real or imagined (Jenkins 1996). Because of the feeling of interdependence and mutual interest, communities are able to act in unison in order to defend the rights of the group.

Different types of community have been identified, including ethnic communities, transnational communities and diasporas or scattered communities. These different typologies have been created to try to account for both the continuing salience of notions of community in the context of migration, and the different ways in which migrants adapt after migration.

The usage of 'community' within social policy concerning minority groups is usually referring to an 'ethnic community', and this ethnic community is assumed to be a bounded and easily identifiable entity (Inglis 1994). For an ethnic community, the sense of belonging together comes from a belief in a shared ethnicity. In this respect an ethnic community is similar to Barth's (1969) 'ethnic group', which he defined as having four characteristics. The group is largely self-perpetuating, it shares certain fundamental cultural values, it forms an identifiable field of communication and interaction and finally the group defines itself as being a distinct group and is considered by those outside the group to be distinct. Ethnic communities have been associated with many positive traits. They are considered to be of positive value to the community members, both socially and economically (Gold 1992).

The idea that groups of refugees will form a community has rarely been challenged. Research on refugees often looks at one or more refugee 'communities', and more recently groups of refugees have been considered as transnational communities (Al-Ali 1999; Al-Ali et al. 2001)

or as diasporas, that is, scattered communities (Wahlbeck 1999). I suggest that before taking this step, consideration should first be made as to whether a particular group of refugees can be described as a community. The internal construction of community is of paramount importance. For all types of community, the prime defining feature is that the members believe themselves to be linked to the other members. If this linkage is based on ethnicity, then it is not important whether that ethnicity is real or imagined, only that the members of the community believe it to be real.

Community formation among ethnic minorities has been questioned by some writers. They have questioned whether the communities which have been formed are collectivities which will endure and which are based upon ethnic solidarity, or whether they are a response to external forces within society such as racism and discrimination (Inglis 1994). If community can be questioned for ethnic minorities, it must be examined even more carefully when considering refugees, whose experiences in the conflict that they have sought refuge from may mean that there is no political unity, and there may be strong differences within the group (Wahlbeck 1999). If the existence of communities is being questioned, then policies towards refugees based upon assumptions of community and encouraging the formation of refugee community associations must also be questioned. This also creates an apparent anomaly, in that the existence of refugee communities may be questionable, yet there are formally constituted refugee community associations.

Contingent community

To understand this possible anomaly, I use the term 'contingent community'. For me, a contingent community is a group of people who will to some extent conform to the expectations of the host society in order to gain the advantages of a formal community association, but the private face of the group remains unconstituted as a community.

Refugees are not merely objects of policy, but are social actors in their own right. As such they are affected by the policies around them, but since they remain social actors and individuals, their responses may differ. One way that refugees may respond to the particular form of multiculturalism in Britain is through the formation of contingent communities. This is a concept I have developed through my research, in order to try to account for the apparent contradiction in the research findings, that there are formally constituted refugee community associations, yet there appears to be no refugee community on which they are

based. A contingent community is one that appears from the outside to be a community, and to reflect the interests of that community a formal association is formed or an attempt is made at its formation. However, the interests that are articulated are not the common interests of the group, but rather their like interests.

Conformity is apparent rather than actual, and among the members of the group there is no strongly held belief that they are interlinked and interdependent. Whilst there are benefits to be gained from constituting themselves as a formal community, then the group may strive to appear as such. What is viewed from the outside as a community may in fact be a construction without the linkages and interdependence associated with communities.

A contingent community enables members of a group to gain some of the benefits that British society gives to communities, such as financial and practical support, when the internal construction of a community is not present. However, the lack of an internally constructed community means that the continuance of the contingent community is dependant on the presence of a strong leader or leadership, and the suppression of differences between members of the group. It is also dependant on the accrual of benefits to the community, since its formation is in response to the perceived benefits of community formation.

At a later stage, the members of the contingent community may develop an informal community, and feelings of interdependence and interconnectedness may emerge. In that case, a community may form and it will no longer be contingent. Without true community formation, though, the continuance of a contingent community will require consistent input and support from both those who take on the task of leadership and of outside agencies.

Refugee community organisations

Every town and city in Britain that has a significant refugee population will have within it a plethora of refugee community organisations. In London at any one time there will be up to 500 refugee community organisations, supported financially and practically by various Trusts and foundations (Gameledin-Ashami et al. 2002). London was traditionally the main location for refugees in Britain, and is still home to large numbers of refugees, and the number of organisations is a reflection of this. Attempts to identify and create directories of these organisations are difficult, though, since the exact number of refugee community organisations changes frequently. This situation is reflected throughout

Britain, with myriad refugee community organisations attempting to represent the interests of specific refugee communities. Research has found, though, that these organisations may be short-lived and struggle to maintain themselves.

In the case of organisations established by refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina, several reasons can be identified for the difficulties they faced. One important aspect was the lack of organisation along ethnic lines in pre-war Bosnia, along with the major disruption of kinship and friendship links within the Bosnian population in Britain as a result of the conflict (Kelly 2004a). These factors were compounded by the dispersal of Bosnian refugees, which was based largely on availability of housing and which meant that any kinship or friendship links were often further disrupted (Kelly 2001, 2003). Together these factors meant the establishment of a community of Bosnian refugees which met Nisbet's definition (Nisbet 1967) was very difficult, if not impossible. At the same time, the establishment of community organisations was presented to the population as a way of accruing benefits for the group and of promoting their common interests (Kelly 2001, 2004b). The result was the establishment of formal organisations, but an absence of a real community. These could be maintained in the short term, but their existence depended on them continuing to give some benefits to the groups, in the form of a realm for social interaction and information sharing and the continuing support for the organisations from outside bodies.

Similar patterns can be seen with other refugee organisations. Dispersal of refugees throughout the UK has meant that, as happened with refugees from Bosnia, refugees can be placed in areas where there is no history of refugees, or no history of refugees from their country, and can be placed in areas away from existing family and friends. Refugee community organisations become established by groups of refugees, and these can fulfil a valuable role in providing emotional support, practical assistance and in raising awareness of the needs of the group (Gameledin-Ashami et al. 2002). However, Zetter (2005) found that refugee community organisations were often formed as a response to crisis and social exclusion, and groups were in competition for scarce resources with which to fund their activities. In addition, as Kelly (2004b) found with Bosnian refugee organisations, the community organisations that emerged were founded as a result of interventions by NGOs, and this is a reflection of the model of incorporation with which refugees were presented (Zetter 2005). Social networks existed amongst groups of refugees, but the existence of social networks did

not always result in the establishment of a formal organisation. Where refugee organisations were established, it could not be automatically assumed that they acted as the locus for community activity or that they lay at the centre of social networks. In other words, as with Bosnian organisations, refugee community organisations are sometimes a forced response to a particular set of policies, and not necessarily the expression of the needs and desires of an underlying community. They may be representing the mobilisation of a sub-group within a population, rather than being a community organisation.

Conclusion

There are benefits to minority groups in the formation of formal community organisations, since that is the level at which British social policy engages with group. NGOs encourage the formation of formal organisations by refugee groups in order that they too can gain some of these benefits, and have a forum where their needs are articulated and information can be disseminated. However, the policy of dispersal of refugees has meant that the process of community formation has been difficult for some groups, but no alternate model of incorporation has been offered. The associations that develop can be considered as contingent communities, whose existence is dependant on the continued efforts of a few individuals and the availability of funds and NGO support which can only be accessed through a formal association. Rather than being a formal expression of an informal community, the associations are a formal construction of an ideal, and do not reflect the reality of their members. Bosnians were urged to form formal associations, and shown how to go about creating them, but there was little consideration of whether there was an informal community that could underpin the formal one. There are kinship groups, friends and networks, but there is no community, and no feeling of obligation to others. The associations were formed because there was no other way for the group to get support or finance, and instead of reflecting the desires of Bosnians, they reflect the expectations of British society. Similarly with other refugee groups, dispersal further weakens the links of kinship and friendship within a population, as individuals are dispersed to where places are available rather than to where they have existing linkages. Formal organisations are seen as the solution to problems of isolation, lack of information and lack of opportunity that many refugees face. They remain for

many groups an artificial construct dependant on the accrual of bene-
fits and support from outside agencies, and not a formal expression
of a distinct and coherent community. Whilst policy continues to
focus on the promotion and support of formal associations, without
examining the underlying basis of the organisations, this will continue
to be the case.

Part II
Justice Within and Between Communities

8
Justice Within and Between Communities

Mary Madden

> Because there ain't no justice
> Just Us
>> Ruthless Rap Assassins, *Justice (Just Us)* (Hinds et al. 1991)

This part explores links between ideas of social justice and ideas of community in national and transnational attempts to alleviate inequality, poverty and 'social exclusion'. In their pursuit of senses of justice in 'community', contributors examine gendered, classed, aged and racialized power relationships and question the idea that diversity undermines social capital. In keeping with part three we try to be mindful of equality not only in terms of socio-economic distribution and cultural value but also quality of environment. The introductory chapter introduces key themes through an exploration of links between community and citizenship in recent British debates about multiculturalism.

The context of writing is an ongoing, if faltering, process of neoliberal globalization (Ralston Saul 2006), featuring the diminution of the welfare state in the last decades of the 20th century and a neoconservative resurgence of military imperialism at the turn of the 21st century. The idea of community is once again being evoked to challenge the perceived loss of local senses of identity and feelings of solidarity within post-industrial and post-imperial Britain. The invocation of community by New Labour has been a key aspect of its attempt to forge a 'new' political agenda.

As Stuart Hall (1996: 229) noted, 'the "promise" of modernity had become, at the end of the twentieth century, considerably more ambiguous, its links with socialism and the left much more tenuous'. While organized opposition to the Right in Britain went through a

process of fragmentation and re-orientation, disparate people and places were becoming identified as communities in proliferating ways, as in for example the somewhat paradoxical terms 'business community' and 'international community'. However indiscriminate and empty its use (Hobsbawm 1994), 'community' remains an affective word. Social movements have long invoked communities of identity as a means of uniting in difference, promoting solidarity and establishing resistance in adversity. Community is a term that has also proven itself useful in party political discourse for mediating the perceived gap between the individual and the collective because of its power to tie together ideas of solidarity, co-operation and partnership with sentiments of warmth, belonging and sharing.

For example, 'community care' can be seen as an attempt by the Thatcher Government to reconcile the language of socialist ideals of fraternity and collectivism with an individualistic New Right agenda. In exchange for collectively organized, centrally funded provision, those without appropriate family or close friend support were to be 'cared for' by the nebulous community, an unstable amalgam of atomistic individuals. Westminster Council's use of the phrase 'building stable communities' for its strategy of privatization is possibly the most notoriously weasel-like use of the word by a British Conservative administration. Here, the implementation of 'Building Stable Communities' involved squeezing labour voters out of marginal wards by selling off and gentrifying council accommodation (Diski 2006: 13–14).

The ideological battle to become the British political party most associated with the good life promised by community was clearly evident in Douglas Hurd's (1994) claim that:

> Mr. Blair is trying to clamber onto our platform, paint it a different colour, and claim it as his own ... when he tries to capture the fundamental Tory concepts of citizenship and community ... The Conservative Party needs to stress our belief in our institutions, in the community, and the bonds and values which make us a community, no less than we emphasise the market and its promise of material wealth ... We must also show that our understanding of our community and its values is deeper than theirs.

In reporting Blair's first speech to the Labour Party conference as party leader, Stephen Bates (1994) notes the 'buzz words' that had been counter-claimed by Blair:

> 'They [Tories] fail because they fail to understand that a nation, like a community, must work together in order for individuals within it to succeed'...Mr. Blair spoke of his belief in society, using the buzz words 'solidarity', 'co-operation', 'partnership'. 'These are our words,' he said. 'This is my socialism and we should stop apologising for using the word. It is not the socialism of Marx or state control. We are the party of the individual because we are the party of community'.

Here Blair's use of 'solidarity', 'co-operation' and 'partnership' attaches sentiments of warmth, belonging and sharing to a New Labour socialism that is conflated with individualism through the deployment of 'community'. New Labour includes a communitarian aspect in its discourse on community, yet it has produced a remarkably similar 'cocktail of free-market fundamentalism and moral authoritarianism' to that of the New Right project of the 1980s (Calder 2003).

Before getting too carried away with the positive connotations that can be conjured by the term community, it is worth remembering Georg Simmel's (1964: 193) claim that, '[i]n general, common enmity is one of the most powerful means for motivating a number of individuals or groups to cling together'. This has recently been manifest in Britain in community action against paedophiles and asylum seekers (Allison 2000; Grillo 2005). To put it crudely, 'the community' can also be the lynch mob (see Drury 2002 for a critique of such crudity). As Majid Yar (2003) notes, the debate about the loss or decline of community is an intensely normative issue full of explicit and implicit references to what ought and should be. Talal Asad (1993: 12) reminds us that, '[t]he desire to make the world in one's own image in the name of good intentions is hardly new' and the consequences of such intentions are not always benign. In short, constructions of community are as much about exclusion as they are about inclusion.

For example, Lydia Morris (1994: 34) gives us the example of British laws against vagrancy explaining that such laws inhibiting the inward mobility of labour had been in existence since 1388, 'but when local parishes were made responsible for the destitute there was all the more reason to oppose vagrancy; no parish wished to provide for any from outside its boundaries'. As she says, '[the] desire to protect a community of interest and resources from the claims of outsiders finds a parallel in many and varied social circumstances', including immigration policy.

So, community promises safety and belonging, but uncomfortably it also bears the unpleasant trace of potential or experienced exclusion. It is stable, solid and reliable but also fragile, elusive and lost; and it is this contradictory tension that makes it such an effective vehicle for nostalgia. For example, the development of increasingly harsh public conditions of neo-liberal capitalism made visible in the images of urban street homelessness and 'sink estates' can promote desire for enclaves safe from conflict, threat and competition. The ensuing quest for safe and cohesive community can become part of nostalgia for 'what seems an old order, a "traditional" society [that] keeps appearing, reappearing...' (Williams 1973: 33). Paul Gilroy (2004: 98) identifies part of this nostalgia for 'tradition' as, 'post-imperial melancholia' – 'a guilt ridden loathing and depression that have come to characterise Britain's xenophobic responses to the strangers who have intruded on them'.

Gilroy's diagnosis is in recognition of the fact that despite their invitations to work, productivity, British passports or other bonds with the 'mother country', immigrants to Britain have often been treated as trespassers. For example, Michael Collins (2004) claims in his biography of the white working class that discomfort at support for Enoch Powell's 1968 'rivers of blood' speech led community to become at that time:

> [A] dirty word, to those champions of the proletariat who previously believed the word was inextricably linked to the British working class... [because] many of the urban white working class saw themselves more as part of an ethnic group united by colour and culture, than as a class united by their work...the greatest threat was the arrival, en masse, of black immigrants (188–189).

It is by achieving citizenship that individuals secure a national identity, a relationship to a state's social institutions, a legitimized chance to join its communities and a right to call a nation, 'home'. The rights and responsibilities of citizenship and decisions about who shall be included within the category of citizenship remain the subject of controversy within liberal pluralist democracies. While it is a norm of just constitutional arrangements to try to eliminate those structures of inequality that lead to the unjustifiable alienation of some groups of citizens from the institutions of the state, there is an ongoing problematic about recognizing and reconciling connections between individual freedom and the recognition of particular group identities (O'Neill 2003). Issues of social justice are therefore not only about the fair distribution of material resources

and opportunities but also how, 'dominant cultural patterns of inter-pretation and valuation' serve to produce inequitable bases of respect for different social groups (Fraser 1998: 39).

John Solomos (1992) has described post Second World War British immigration policy as one of 'ideological racialisation', focusing on the 'threat' of too many black immigrants and quietening discussion of white immigration. Between 1945 and 1954 Europe, especially Ireland, provided the most important source of migrant labour to Britain. By 1972, although the children of white families in the remnants of the Empire or the former colonies could enter Britain, their black counter-parts could not. While restrictions on 'black' immigration were being put into place, the focus of State concern about 'race relations' expanded to include the (alleged lack of) integration of black immigrants and their offspring. At the start of the 21st century, the influx of workers from the European Union (EU) and the declaration of a 'war on terror' have widened the focus of racialized concern to include other 'others'. The new pool of concern can perhaps be seen as more 'racially' inclusive, extending as it does to anyone who follows Islam, 'economic migrants' (everyone arriving in Britain to seek paid work) and people fleeing direct violence from their own nation states.

In the midst of recent scares about potential terrorist activity, British Home Secretary John Reid has been linking matters of national security with the need to strengthen the external borders of the EU and the need to control migration. He alleges that 20 years after the end of the Cold War British people are experiencing insecurity as, 'one of the highest concerns for daily living' (Reid 2006a). Reid identifies this insecurity as one of the consequences of global population movements stating that, 'mass migration and the management of immigration [are] the greatest challenge facing European governments'. The arrival of workers from former Communist states, which joined the EU in May 2004, has prompted concerns about extending unrestricted rights of residency to those still waiting to join the EU including Romania, Bulgaria and possibly, eventually Turkey.

It is worth broadening the context for a moment to consider sources of insecurity that cause populations to move. For example, in evidence submitted to the House of Commons Select Committee on International Development in November 2003, the New Economics Foundation (NEF) states that the majority of global population movements take place between developing countries. Many of the world's poorest countries are coping with huge refugee movements (including, in some places, semi-permanent refugee camps) as a result of populations attempting to

escape civil wars and natural disasters in their own countries. 'Natural' disasters arising from the environmental impacts of pollutants are not confined within national borders. NEF also reminds us that while international travel may be cheaper and more accessible than at any other time in history, the cost of a plane or train ticket is still well beyond the reach of the majority of the world's population.

Since the 1970s, political discourse about British immigration policy has sought to combine promises of strict controls on entry with the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities. New Labour has continued in this vein, sending potentially conflicting messages to those children of immigrants in British society who, alongside their British citizenship, retain senses of diasporic identity. Together with its expressions of concern about the perils of immigration, New Labour has taken steps to acknowledge and deal with institutional racism by passing the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act which draws public bodies such as the police into the remit of the act for the first time. New Labour has also delivered radical constitutional reconstruction in the form of devolution which acknowledges and accommodates some of the nationalist aspirations that exist within the UK (O'Neill 2004).

The economic benefits sought by the British Government from immigration (Glover et al. 2001) have been quietened amidst strongly expressed fears that newcomers are at worst a potential threat not only to, 'the British way or life' but as potential terrorists, to life itself:

> They try to turn to their advantage our society's great strengths like our free media, ease of access to travel and goods – to turn them into our weaknesses. They endeavour to drain our morale and resources by misrepresenting every mistake or overreaction as if it is our primary or real purpose. Some fight for their right to asylum in the UK from repressive regimes not to spread liberty but to plan and plot for more repressive regimes. Some come as students yet freely express contempt for the intellectual freedoms that have been the bedrock of our academic institutions. Some claim to detest usury but fund their plots through fraud, corruption and organized crime (Reid 2006a).

This alarmist concern about an undermining 'them' is also present in a letter sent by the British Prime Minister to Ruth Kelly at the time of her appointment as the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Tony Blair (2006) alerts Kelly to his wish that 'local

communities need to be able to challenge robustly the ideas of those extremists who seek to undermine our way of life.' This implies the presence of a dangerous few at complete odds with, and identifiable by, otherwise unified and consensual communities. Yet, as Les Back et al. (2002) point out, 'in complex multi-ethnic and multi-faith settings "the community" is not a simplistic or homogenous formation. Rather than the arbiter of moral worth it becomes a battleground of competing ethics.'

Five years after the Cantle report (2001) following civil unrest in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, Ruth Kelly has announced another Commission on Integration and Cohesion. Kelly's concerns echo those of Trevor Phillips (2005), the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality that too great a focus on 'multiculturalism' has led to a potentially dangerous diversity, in which communities (meaning racialized or ethnic groups) are too separated. Claire Worley (2005: 483) argues that New Labour's pairing of 'cohesion' with 'community' is a means of bypassing more overtly racialized discourses while drawing upon 'earlier discourses of assimilation through notions of "integration"'. The failure of some citizens to fully integrate themselves is being seen now not only as a source of potential local unrest but also as a potential source of British citizens prepared to become suicide bombers like the young men who planted bombs on the London transport system on 7 July 2005 (cf. Townsend 2006). Hence, John Reid's (2006b) call on Britain's Muslims to do more to root out possible extremism among their own children by exercising more surveillance. Problematic 'communities' are constructed as at odds with an implicit (and impossible) 'ethnically neutral civic-national culture' (Jenkins 2005: 8).

Rose (1996) argues that community is no longer being treated as a territory of government but is itself becoming a means of government. Derek McGhee (2003: 380) identifies a New Labour tendency to conflate ideas of civil society and community:

> When the concept of civil society is transposed into the concept of community it seems that all individuals are automatically defined by their attachments to places (geographical communities), to localized social relationships (neighbourhood communities) or to social groupings (communities of identity).

Defining citizens by their religious identity, long established in the conflict over Northern Ireland is now commonplace in regard to

'Muslims'. This is a move that particularly concerns Amartya Sen who is mindful of the sectarianism that fragmented India in the period before partition:

> This is the way . . . that the British tried to interpret community divisions in India between Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Christians. To Indian nationalists, it looked a further example of divide and rule, emphasising the divisions. The way that the British are handling it today makes one wonder whether the cultural confusion that the British had then has now been brought back home (cited in Harkin 2006).

The long history of dispute and home grown terrorism arising from nationalist struggles within the United Kingdom is also of relevance; in particular, as noted above, the use of a language of sectarianism to describe political struggles in Northern Ireland. Kenan Malik (2006) shares Sen's objection to the assumption that a British citizen should rely on clerics and other self-appointed 'community leaders' to speak on their behalf:

> Far from promoting integration, government policy encourages Muslims to see themselves as semi-detached Britons . . . It is time that politicians dropped the pretence that there is a single Muslim community and started taking seriously the issue of political engagement with their constituents, whatever their religious faith.

Multiculturalism has long been a much-contested term and as Schuster and Solomos (2001: 4) note, 'there is little agreement about the meaning attached to "multiculturalism" from either a conceptual or an empirical perspective.' Malik's work (2002) is part of a long and rich seam of criticism that challenges the liberal ideal of multiculturalism or, as Sen (in Harkin 2006) characterizes it, 'plural monoculturalism' from many perspectives (Bhabha 1990; Escoffier 1998; Fraser 1997; Goldberg 1994; May 1998; Sen 2006; Shohat and Stam 1994). In particular, as Donald and Rattansi (1992: 2) point out, Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* has been a key source for critique of forms of multiculturalist research that exoticizes displays of culture at the expense of a focus on issues of power and legitimacy. This has been termed the 'saris samosas and steel bands syndrome'. Attention to this potentially very useful body of criticism is not much evident in the current policy debate.

It is important to note that debunking wholesome myths of community offers little comfort to those seeking places of refuge and belonging. Whatever its empirical truths, sometimes community is an ideal that makes life more meaningful:

> Unless you've lived on the streets, you can't begin to understand what life is all about. Down here, there's a sense of community, a sense of what's really important, not your two weeks in Majorca and your weekend shopping trip and your empty, meaningless lives. We're the ones who have true wisdom (Jock 17 in Grant 1997: 13).

The journalist who interviewed this young homeless man dismissed this as him, 'constructing for himself a cod philosophy that made life bearable'. But, as Weeks (1991) argues about identity, perhaps constructions of community are also 'necessary fictions . . . both artificial and essential'. The idea of a community of homeless people may be something of a contradiction in terms but Jock is clearly asserting a knowingness that is outside of the taken-for-granted everyday consumerist citizenship from which he is alienated. This is his imagining of the economically polarized communities of Britain (see Anderson 1991). It may well change as his circumstances change. Rather than assuming fixity in definitions of community, what is perhaps more useful is to attend to the processes, categories and knowledge by which definitions of and differentiations between communities are produced (Donald and Rattansi 1992). As Roxy Walsh (1995) says of her experience in the Northern Irish context, 'surrounded by a public political language of intransigence, languages of doubt and enquiry, of provisionality, become more attractive' (12–15).

In a self-defeating version of the familiar deficit model, it seems that the communities deemed most in need of cohesion are currently being identified as the source of problems which they must make their own cultural efforts to solve. If the source of the 'cohesion' problem is too much defensive 'intra-community bonding' then it would perhaps be useful to attend to the means by which such tightly bound communities are formed and to question the extent to which any construction of community remains fixed and static through time. This involves paying attention to the histories which bring about the spatial and racial segregation of wealth and poverty in our cities and to the 'intra-community' bonding of more affluent citizens (Paxman 1991; Williams 2006). Doing so involves re-thinking the formation of 'us' and not just targeting solutions at the pathological few in areas that are deemed 'social capital problematic' (McGhee 2003).

Apparent in the community cohesion debate are the contradictions of a neo-liberal capitalist discourse that advocates the minimization of state intervention and maximization of individual autonomy for affluent citizens while extending disciplinary intervention into the lives of the poorest (Dean 1991). For all its relative prosperity, inequalities in wealth and well-being between UK citizens remain persistently high and parental social class and ethnic background still heavily influence life chances (Gordon et al. 2000; Karlsen and Nazroo 2002; Lister 2004). The Cantle report points to the importance of perceived and actual material deprivation in creating urban unrest but, as McGhee (2003: 392) notes, the solutions proposed in cohesion strategies, 'de-emphasise contributory factors e.g. poverty, exclusion from the workforce, exclusion from consumption'. The new policy direction is about improving cultural communications. Ironically, this sounds very much like the old-fashioned, much criticized multiculturalist approach.

The idea of social capital is an important constituent of contemporary discussions on community cohesion. The term refers to connections between individuals that create effective 'social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (Putnam 2000: 19). The World Bank claims that, 'increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable'; in short, conflict impedes economic development (World Bank n. d.). Disturbing disparities of wealth and well-being of various extremes continue within and between the nations of the world. It is worth asking how norms of 'reciprocity and trustworthiness' marry with the spirit of competitive individualism which is integral to capitalism, especially when 'development' is being led by the militarily interventionist United States (see Caufield 1998 for a critical take on the World Bank).

Although explanations deriving from Marxist and Feminist theories are unfashionable, it is still worth considering class conflict as a means of explanation for civil unrest and the rarely mentioned gendering of such events. Lord Justice Scarman's (1981) report on the April 1981 unrest in Brixton attributed the cause to (male) unemployment and resentment of [a racist practice of] authoritarian policing and not abstracted 'race' as represented in the media at the time. Beatrix Campbell (1993: 244) describes the 1990 'riots' on the 'white' Meadowell estate in Newcastle as, 'an entirely and explicitly *gendered* formation'. In *Britain's Dangerous Places* she argues that such urban unrest and lawlessness is a particularly masculine reaction to the frustrations of social deprivation that manifests itself in an attempt at mastery of space which

carries particularly negative and confining consequences for women (168). Back et al. (2002: Para. 5.1) point to the work of Philly Desai which views conflicts between young British Bengali men and their white peers as rather less to do with the failed history of 'race relations' but more indicative of their successful integration into patterns of masculine culture and 'cultures of conflict that both predate immigration and prefigure the experience of growing up in these urban locations'. In similar argumentative vein, the opposition of some British Muslims to British foreign policy in the Middle East can be read as in keeping with, rather than opposed to the views of many non-Muslim British citizens.

The following chapters in this section aim to challenge dichotomous thinking about 'us' and 'them'. Three authors directly address the transnational context, exploring the problematic of reconciling competition with co-operation and determining the level of obligation the citizens of one nation should have for the well-being of others; if indeed any such obligation at all. Relevant here is the research of Szerszynski and Urry (2002) exploring the culture of cosmopolitanism which found respondents had difficulty extending, 'the taken-for-granted sense of moral connectedness in their grounded communities to the larger and more abstract global community' (474). Compassion seemed to 'decrease with distance'. Some who were, 'otherwise engaged in much localised care, expressed considerable cultural hostility to various categories of immigrant' (476).

Simon Sweeney explores the origins of globalization and seeks to free the term from becoming a synonym for the over-arching fears of untrammelled capitalism. Challenging the idea of monolithic inevitability, globalization is viewed as an active construction made up of the cumulative actions and inactions of governments and communities. Sweeney calls for a radical, multilateral and reformist agenda to develop a genuine 'culture of multilateralism' which can respond effectively to globalization and the associated challenges, especially climate change.

Kristina Peat traces the origins of the concept of 'sustainable development' in a discussion of the extent to which the ideal of a sustainable community is manifested in UK community regeneration programmes. Peat argues that while social and economic issues are clearly being addressed through such programmes, attention to environmental issues is not so apparent. Truly sustainable communities would consider their impact on the global environment. Like Sweeney, Peat is particularly concerned about the consequences of climate change and is hopeful

that after the publication of the Stern report (HM Treasury 2006), this is beginning to be taken seriously.

Leigh Keeble argues that the structure and experience of community relations in the UK and elsewhere are being profoundly influenced by the dynamic diffusion of information and communications technologies (ICTs) such as the Internet, mobile telephony and geographical information systems. This has given rise to a debate about whether such new media are beneficial for community development or instead provide a threat to civil society. Her chapter raises concerns about the emergence of a 'digital divide', arguing that UK policy rhetoric about the benefits of increased electronic connectivity is somewhat overstated. Keeble suggests that where ICT adoption is high it may be leading to new forms of 'individually preferenced communities' which are characterized by fragmentation and social exclusion. Such developments are in sharp contrast to the mutually supportive civil community networks envisaged by those who saw ICTs as facilitating social cohesion.

Through a critical review of their work at the Centre for Social Justice at Coventry University, Gayle Letherby, Geraldine Brady and Geraldine Brown present a challenge to the view that academic research achieves little of practical use for the lives of 'real' people. Letherby, Brady and Brown provide detailed examples of their work with pregnant teenagers and young parents in the UK.

Finally, through a discussion of the work of the impetus youth programme of the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust, Adam Short promotes an optimistic view of the Human Rights Act (1998) as a means of developing the knowledge, understanding and skills to incorporate ethical values and human rights into global, national and local decisions.

9

Globalization, Multiple Threats and the Weakness of International Institutions: A Community-Centred Response[1]

Simon Sweeney

Introduction: globalization as context

Globalization is a process with a long history, arguably as long as trade itself. In recent years however, it has been dominated not simply by technological change, but by consumerism where everything is a commodity and individuals are on 'a treadmill of glut' (Maley 2005). Contemporary globalization is marked by the neo-liberalism favoured by the so-called 'Washington Consensus' of the 1980s and 1990s. Gray (1998) describes neo-liberalism as a political project to construct a global economy based on free market capitalism and suited to the interests of corporate America. The dominant characteristics are the privatization of public assets, free movement of capital and the liberalization of key industries, notably telecommunications and finance, sectors where the United States (of America) already enjoyed competitive advantage. This cocktail brought major changes and social upheaval to industrialized and industrializing economies alike, and while many people enjoyed material advantages, others suffered marginalization. 'Restructuring', 'outsourcing', 'downsizing' and 'flexible labour markets' became watchwords of the management gurus, while critics such as Gray (1998) and Bauman (1998) argued that globalization was fuelling job insecurity, family breakdown, crime and the burgeoning prison population in many industrialized countries. Worse still, while some economies prospered, others, notably in the southern hemisphere, appear cast adrift into a spiral of poverty and exclusion. It is far from clear that the pious

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[1]A version of the text was presented to the Japanese Committee of UNICEF in Tokyo on 14 November 2006.

promises made at the G8 Gleneagles Summit in 2005 will truly result in significant improvements for the world's poorest people.

This chapter examines how communities should respond to globalization. The term 'community' is used to denote formal and informal social organizations whose members have common identities, experiences and aspirations. Communities may be large or small, local or dispersed, and the degree of cohesion they exhibit will vary enormously. One may refer to 'the Christian community' in a particular place, or the 'international Christian community', or the 'community of those who campaign for the environment' or 'the academic community'. At a narrower, more local level, a group campaigning to save a particular hospital from closure would also be an example of a community. Typically communities have a high degree of local organization but may also be composed of extensive networks benefiting from electronic technology. There may also be considerable links between different communities, political organizations, campaign groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Technology has brought many benefits, but increasingly it serves to promote levels of consumption that change the relationship between wants and needs. Contemporary capitalism depends upon the marketing imperative of creating an ever-increasing demand in the face of ever more fierce competition. Survival means selling more, more of the same and more of the slightly different. Citizens have become mere consumers in the service of powerful marketing operations. While supporters of globalization argue that increasing consumption brings improved living standards in developing countries, taking millions of people in China, India and elsewhere out of poverty, critics contend that the short-term gain will be outweighed by eventual loss on a catastrophic scale.

How can this be? Two demons cast long shadows over the rosy assumption that capitalism makes us all richer. First, increasing consumption requires the manufacture of more products at a cost that is probably unsustainable in terms of the impact on climate and on natural resources. Secondly, competition for scarce resources, notably oil and water, is likely to bring conflict between states and perhaps between regions (Klare 2001). This could eventually bring about the clash of civilizations envisaged by Huntingdon (1996). Arguably the USA, the United Kingdom and Australia (all English-speaking countries) have unwittingly brought such a clash closer through their ill-advised so-called 'war on terror' post-11 September 2001. The threat from terrorism emanates primarily from unresolved crises in the Middle East, with Israel–Palestine as 'the heart of the issue' (Pilger 2002). The region also has a high concentration of

oil reserves, notably in the Gulf States, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. This combination of political and geological circumstances ensures the centrality of the region in international affairs, not least because the United States wishes to retain a strategic foothold in an area so rich in the basic commodity which fuels capitalism: oil.

It is necessary to discuss globalization, not as a distinct phenomenon, but as the context within which several major challenges present themselves. Any number of these could consume contemporary globalization with spectacular and even catastrophic consequences. The greatest challenge is global warming and climate change. There is abundant evidence that the preoccupation with terror since 9/11 is misplaced since climate change poses a far greater threat to far more people. Terrorism however offers a convenient pretext for powerful states to retain military and strategic interests in faraway places.

Meanwhile there are other threats: resource wars, weapons proliferation, endemic and preventable diseases, food insecurity and mass migration. The list can appear so daunting that many are tempted to despair at the hopelessness it all. It is almost comical if it were not so serious that against this background advertisers and lifestyle gurus in the west continue to exhort us to consume still more. The use of the word 'consume' is apposite: we may continue to consume, like the frog which stays in a bowl of water even while the water is being heated, until it dies (Handy 1990).

How should we respond to these challenges? What can be done with the great conundrum of globalization, now that it seems to be a sack full of threats to stability, to human life and even the entire ecosystem? At the outset however it is necessary to point out that globalization is 'not a force of nature' (Giddens 1998: 43). *It* does not *do* anything. It is human beings that have created the threats that could overwhelm us and it is human actions which will either make things worse or better.

A significant part of the response to globalization and the threats that appear so numerous is to address the issue of disjuncture between governors and the governed, what in European Union (EU) studies is called 'democratic deficit'. This relates to the perception that we are witnessing an impoverishment of democracy: there is a widespread sense that money buys power, the system supports only the powerful, and voting is pointless. Many believe that the system concentrates power in the hands of an unrepresentative few, and all the candidates on offer are effectively system maintainers, not changers. Apathy and disillusion set in and at worst, extremist factions believe that the only way to protest

against powerful elites and to highlight injustice is through violence. The most extreme reaction is terrorist attack.

Dealing with the fragile health of democracy and the risk of a descent into chaos requires action from states, and from institutions. It also requires positive engagement from communities, so that their (our) greater contribution to and participation in the process of governance flows from a two-way communication: between states and institutions reaching out to communities, and communities engaging in a dialogue with the states and institutions that represent and govern communities.

This essay argues that international institutions (composed of states) offer the most realistic framework for making things better. This is a difficult case to make, in part because many anti-globalization campaigners see international institutions as part of the problem, not part of the solution. But the deficiencies of international institutions cannot be blamed purely on the institutions themselves. Rather, the states that make up their membership lack commitment to multilateralism: the idea that states can, should and must co-operate for the common good rather than merely seek to protect their own narrow sectional and national interests. Indeed, the promotion of national interests in competition with others is the road to chaos. The alternative must be to build a genuinely worldwide culture of multilateralism.

The failings of international institutions

Unfortunately, international institutions often appear to be in hock to corrupt or self-serving governments. Many seem to serve existing elites, perhaps the very forces that drive contemporary capitalism: multinational corporations, the military–industrial complex, oil companies and specialist consultancies that shape legal and accounting norms to suit the already rich and powerful. Many seem remote and untouchable, and indifferent to the concerns of the weak and the dispossessed.

The World Bank charter states that it should foster human development in the poorest countries. Too often the bank has obliged governments to serve not their own people, but foreign corporations. The structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank provide lending which is conditional on the privatization of state assets, including the sale of natural resources such as forests and water. The consequences for some of the most vulnerable people on earth can be horrendous, both in terms of deforestation and access to clean water (Ellwood 2001; Hari 2006).

The EU, while espousing free trade, appears unable to abandon an agriculture subsidy regime that benefits European farmers at the expense

of producers in developing countries. Even the Common Fisheries Policy seems incapable of protecting the very resource on which it depends: fish. Stocks have plummeted in European seas, as they have worldwide.

The United Nations is routinely unable to enforce its own resolutions, whether imposed on Israel for the occupation of land beyond the 1967 borders, or on the Lebanese government which was supposed to disarm Hezbollah. The result is the disaster of summer 2006, leading to the loss of hundreds of lives, the destruction of a million homes, the indiscriminate scattering of thousands of cluster bombs throughout orange and olive groves and the wrecking of Lebanon's emergent economy. Meanwhile, the Rwandan genocide of 1994 is fresh in the memory, but a similar atrocity is unfolding close behind in Darfur, Sudan. In spite of much hand-wringing in the west and in the face of indifference from other Muslim countries, millions of Muslims are being killed by a government-backed militia (Alibhai-Brown 2006).

The World Trade Organization at Doha in 2002 promised a Development Round to benefit poorer countries, but it is far from achieving such an outcome, mainly because of vested interests in rich countries. The International Monetary Fund, tasked with upholding financial stability in world capital markets, is routinely condemned for serving the interests of the rich and powerful, both in terms of states as well as private interests (Stiglitz 2002).

The record of multinational institutions seems poor indeed. In various respects these bodies may work well, but public perception, whether fed by powerful media corporations or by various protest movements, is that they do little good, and may even do much harm. Soros argues that the WTO has achieved much in promoting private goods (ownership, wealth and trade) but that public goods (food security, health and safety, environmental protection and human rights) have been neglected. He points out that the protection of public goods is not actually part of the WTO's brief, but that public goods must achieve at least a comparable level of institutional backing, and arguably more (Soros 2002).

More globalization, not less

Defenders of globalization argue that its deficiencies are the consequence of poor governance and insufficient commitment to free trade (Legrain 2002; Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2000). Legrain says that since most of Africa is not involved in international trade, the continent's problems can hardly be blamed on globalization. But it is impossible to separate the lack of international trade for African agriculture from the impact

of protectionism in the rich northern hemisphere, or the sequestration of assets and raw materials by multinational corporations hungry to control natural resources, or arms and financial support provided to corrupt governments. Some agricultural production in developing countries is oriented towards western consumer demands rather than local population needs, in spite of local food shortages.

The impression for critics of globalization is that individuals are swept along like flotsam in the aftermath of a flood. While this observation could be made of the human condition throughout history, the difference nowadays is that globalization is a convenient target on which to pin the blame for just about everything. A more useful response is to engage constructively with globalization and ensure that it works better and to our common advantage. This, I would argue, means taking aim at governments, rich or corrupt – and often rich and corrupt, while supporting a community-based and reformist agenda.

Soros recommends strengthening international institutions to protect public goods. Legrain proposes something like a World Environmental Organization alongside a strengthened WTO to ensure that trade agreements take account of the related environmental impact. Proposals to fund support for public goods, and to assist sustainable development in LDCs, include a so-called Tobin Tax on international capital transfers, something which governments could enforce if they had the will, just as they could also enforce more efficient corporation tax collection if they could be confident that others would not collude with the corporations to enable them to avoid paying tax altogether. Governments can control what goes on inside their borders, and it is ridiculous to assume that they cannot act against corporations which breach the law or avoid tax. Several governments acting in concert, as evidenced by the EU and the Single European Market (SEM), can impose a stronger regulatory environment.

Soros proposes a financial support system based on a Special Drawing Rights plan where applicant states can draw funding from a centrally managed resource created by all states with contributions proportional to GDP. Any new system would be subject to a common consensus on what represents public goods, and how the aims of such a system could be monitored and sustained.

These proposals are rooted in the principles of multilateralism: the assumption that single states operating alone can achieve little, but co-operation and agreement between many states can achieve a lot. The danger is that while many states engage in multilateralism at a regional level (EU, North American Free Trade Agreement, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Association of South East Asian Nations, etc.)

there is a risk that such organizations fail to act in their *common* interests and instead compete – like traditional nation states writ large. The possibility of interbloc conflict may increase. To counter this, there needs to be a commitment to build a culture of multilateralism, identifying shared interests, beginning with the need to combat not so much terrorism, but climate change. A simple change of emphasis, a change of rhetoric, in the west could bring massive benefits, even in the short term.

The decline of the state?

The notion of the independent sovereign state, grounded in a traditional realist view of international relations, is anachronistic. Walker (1994) writes that sovereignty has diminished in the two areas where it once had most salience, the management of the economy and the ability to declare war. Nowadays markets govern economic decisions and limit government freedom of manoeuvre, while international alliances and caution in the face of nuclear threat limit state action in terms of fighting wars. But since the end of the Cold War the US has engaged in wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq (twice) and Afghanistan. The US may be less restrained given its unchallenged military superiority and its inflated expectations of favourable outcomes. At least in the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq, there can be no guarantee of success. In the former Yugoslavia, in contrast, US intervention ultimately had a stabilizing effect and arguably was necessary because of the weakness and disunity of the EU, unable to impose peace in its own backyard.

It may be that the traditional hard power (military and strategic strength) of the USA is much less effective in an age of what Keohane (2002: 276) calls 'asymmetrical violence' whereby terrorist cells have access to detailed information about their targets, but the societies they attack have less information about potential attackers. Some terrorist activists and suicide bombers who bring particular religious frameworks to their actions expect martyrdom and eternal life, concepts with little relevance in modern secular western societies. While the west may have enormous technological and military power, and access to media, it remains vulnerable to attack, in part because these very technologies can be used to subvert the state. Such vulnerability represents a weakening of traditional state power.

Globalization is sometimes represented as an assault on state authority. Bauman (1998: 64) writes how governments have lost power

to a gallery of 'bizarre characters' (lawyers, accountants, technocrats, currency traders, investment consultants, stockbrokers, marketing and market experts, business analysts, etc.) and how the traditional tripod of state sovereignty comprising economy, culture and military has been critically undermined by marketization. Strange (1996) makes similar claims but stresses how governments have conspired in their own demise by giving up power to market forces. Others focus on how multinational corporations use their market power to usurp government authority (Ellwood 2001; Monbiot 2000).

Scholte writes that some products and services have gone beyond transnationalism and have assumed supraterritorial status: the NASDAQ exchange was established as a 'transborder cyberspatial network' and has developed into a supraterritorial stock market (Scholte 2005: 611). But in spite of the emergence of a supraterritorial aspect to contemporary globalization, he claims that the state has maintained a large measure of control, albeit in alliances with other states and regulatory agencies. This means that rather than focus on the decline of the state, we should reflect on the 'altered state' of the state, and highlight its failings, for example where tax is concerned. Corporations and individuals are able to limit their tax liability by sheltering in tax havens. The four richest members of the Rolling Stones rock group have paid only $7.2 million on earnings of $450 million since 1972, or 1.6 % (Hall 2006). Tax avoidance occurs on a massive scale, benefiting terrorist groups, money launderers and mafia-type organizations as well as large corporations (Sikka 2006). The irony is that governments could, if they wished, close loopholes, especially if they engaged in concerted action. Such initiatives could contribute to the development of a culture of multilateralism, and make a vital contribution to the struggle against international crime, arms, drugs and people smuggling. The benefits of multilateralism are wide ranging.

It is an irony of the neo-liberal experiment that governments have supported marketization, or at the very least acquiesced in the handover of control to markets. They have 'engineered their own reduced roles' (Sweeney 2005: 353). Governments seem reluctant to control corporations. Selva (2006) reports on how western corporations export waste to Africa, despite a 1998 EU ban on toxic waste dumping in line with the UN Basel Convention. The USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand refused to sign up. The dumping of mobile phones and computers leaches cadmium, mercury, lead and other poisons into soil and waterways. Most exported or 'recycled' e-waste goes to developing countries and ends up in landfill or being burnt. Meanwhile Shah (2006) reports

that the overwhelming majority of the world's top 500 corporations have no detailed plans or explicit targets on combating greenhouse gas emissions.

What governments should do

Why do governments fail to take responsibility for controlling multinational corporations? The answer I think is twofold: first, they are locked into a mindset of competition instead of co-operation, even when faced by catastrophes that threaten the survival of the human race. This competitive ethos is difficult to reconcile with a culture of multilateralism. Secondly, they acquiesce in the ambivalence, ignorance and apathy of their populations, a condition encouraged by dominant corporations and media interests. This is where communities can play a substantial role in providing information to the public and awakening the political classes to the need for drastic action to confront climate change, rather than being sidetracked by lesser issues such as terrorism. Weapons proliferation and the arms trade are far more serious threats to peace than terrorism – a statement so blindingly obvious it is hard to imagine how a government can hoodwink so many people into accepting that terrorism is such a major threat to our lives. Or perhaps, it is merely the case that the poor, struggling to find clean drinking water, having their limbs blown off by American-manufactured cluster bombs, or being poisoned by noxious fumes from landfill containing our waste and dying from preventable diseases, are simply out of sight and out of mind. Terrorism is a convenient distraction.

It is not the case that governments have given up all significant decision-making. They remain exclusively or primarily responsible for taxation, policing, military deployment, transport and education. They can call on citizens' loyalty, albeit to a lesser extent than was once true. Furthermore, governments of smaller countries may have actually gained power through participation in international forums and through their acceptance of multilateral policy making. The European integration experience suggests that 'pooling sovereignty' helps states, particularly the small- and medium-sized, to be more competitive and to achieve access to international forums, thus they can more effectively shape their destiny. In other words, multilateralism, far from negating state power, can actually enhance it. This principle is recognized by even the most powerful states, as when after 9/11 President Bush called for 'a coalition of the willing' to combat terrorism. Regrettably though, Bush's interpretation of multilateralism was a partnership based not on burden

sharing or genuine debate, but on the principle of 'we lead, others follow'. This is not a community-based response, despite Bush's frequent appeals to the 'international community'. This flawed strategy risks leaving the US and its few staunch allies, notably the UK and Israel, looking increasingly isolated, and paradoxically, more vulnerable to terrorism. US Intelligence recently reported that the war in Iraq had increased, not diminished, the terrorist threat (Cornwell 2006).

Multilateralism can strengthen states in the face of threats, whether military, economic or cultural, or a combination of all three. The SEM emerged from the desire of EU member states to protect national interests, so in the 1980s policy makers shared a common view that they could achieve more by pooling sovereignty and exploiting economies of scale than by acting alone (Moravcsik 1998; Milward 2000). The prospect of improved security has also been an important factor for states acceding first to NATO and then to the EU since the end of the Cold War (Mayhew 1998; Sweeney 2005).

European integration has concerned mainly economic and security interests, but it provides a clear signal that multilateralism could bring benefits in other areas. In summary, communities of states acting in concert can strengthen international governance for the common good, and respond more effectively to the problems facing humankind, namely poverty, endemic disease, food insecurity, environmental degradation and weapons proliferation.

Nevertheless, multilateralism is no panacea. Most, if not all, international institutions are dysfunctional to some degree. They are also for the most part intergovernmental, which means they operate through negotiation between their members. Kapteyn (1996: 131) refers to the members of the EU being 'united in permanent negotiation'. The deficiencies of international organizations have to be resolved by their members through interstate negotiation.

The challenge of multilateralism and the role of communities

Citizens and communities should have an increasing role in more transparent and more accountable institutions. A key threat to international organizations is their disconnection from the public they are meant to serve. This leads to apathy and declining participation in the democratic process, and even outright hostility. Governments and international institutions are primarily responsible for dealing with the challenges we

face, but the wider society, NGOs, community groups and individuals all have a role.

This chapter argues that only multilateral responses can effectively shape solutions to long-term threats or regional conflicts. It is nonsensical to expect individual states, narrow coalitions or self-selecting elites with particular agendas to resolve major conflicts or environmental crises. How could the US, the UK and Australia bring peace to Afghanistan, or democracy to Iraq? Multilateralism, by definition, involves creating a genuine consensus involving many partners with different perspectives, faiths and cultures. This is a difficult task, especially where individual powers have veto rights, or where resolutions are routinely ignored. Nevertheless, multilateralism, defective though it is, is the least bad system for managing international affairs.

There have been catastrophic failures in the UN (notably the lack of peace in the Middle East, the Rwandan genocide of 1994, the violent disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, the unfolding catastrophe in Darfur). However, failure is no reason to give up on the world's primary multinational organization. On the contrary, failure underlines the imperative to enhance UN democracy, and to resolve the anomaly that any of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (US, UK, China, Russia and France) has veto rights. The current structure reflects a different age and needs to be re-examined, probably with a different assignation of 'permanent' status or veto rights. Any 'world system' also requires workable sanctions – a situation not established at the present time.

The strategy pursued by the Bush administration that assumes it has leadership rights and that others will simply follow is flawed. Such pretensions on the part of the US would have to be supported by a long history of even-handedness and support for democratic values on the part of successive US administrations. This has decisively not been the case, so the US is ill-suited to such a role. Indeed, where it is perceived to be an 'occupying force' it merely strengthens extremist factions. British government support for the US has probably lowered Britain's standing in the world, contributed nothing to international security and arguably damaged community relations and civil liberties in Britain itself. It also contributed to a damaging foreign policy split in the EU.

In contrast to the US over Iraq, the EU is attempting to play a 'soft power' role in negotiating with Iran over apparent Iranian nuclear ambitions. This is another high-risk area. So far the Union, represented by Britain, France and Germany, has maintained a common position, promising Iran engagement and trade instead of pariah status in the eyes of states with which Iran might wish to trade.

How can one's own community or communities become more involved? The answer relates to both a top–down and a bottom–up approach to community involvement. First, multilateral institutions must enhance their moral authority by reaching out to communities, local interests and NGOs. EU institutions are surrounded by pressure groups of all kinds. The lobbying in Brussels has a poor reputation among those unprepared to examine how it actually works: lobbying can be a vital source of real experience, constructive input and democratic accountability (Greenwood 1997). It is vital that legislation has the support of the expert groups it affects. Examples are the institutional links to employers' organizations and labour groups, or trade unions. Sectoral interests must be properly consulted. The EU and other multilateral institutions must connect with such groups, and with environmentalist organizations, research communities, poverty action interests and development agencies. Politicized and reformist NGOs should be integrated with all aspects of governance. This is a major avenue for a genuine community-based engagement. The Internet, the quintessential tool of contemporary globalization, has facilitated the dramatic increase in the size and number of NGOs. It is a powerful tool for community engagement, and for the future of democratic governance.

In terms of the responsibility of communities to interact directly with government and related agencies, at a sub-state level, community groups and citizens must engage constructively with all levels of representative politics up to and including international institutions. The Internet provides an opportunity to achieve this, although the surfeit of information and the proliferation of activist groups may create a problem of seeing the wood for the trees. Not only that, but opponents of change, those with vested interests in doing nothing, will welcome the confusion resulting from too many agencies competing for scarce resources and for public attention. Indeed, a useful trick for the no-change brigade is to offer still more choice in what to protest about and how.

Academics find themselves in a difficult position, as our role is not to simplify things, but in some ways to add to the complexity. Major challenges rarely involve simple solutions and any analysis should recognize this. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that at a community level, organizations can coalesce around core objectives and bring pressure to bear on those elected to public office so that policy making brings tangible benefits and supports not sectional interests but the common good. A debate about building a culture of multilateralism would be a useful start.

10
The Ideal of a Sustainable Community, 2006

Kristina Peat

Introduction

Currently in the UK, politicians, local government officials and the media are often heard employing the term 'sustainable communities' (see for example, Academy for Sustainable Communities 2006; Conservatives.com 2006; Local Works 2006). The term underpins the UK regeneration programme, such as the Communities Plan which is attempting to breathe life and prosperity back into impoverished communities around the country, north and south (ODPM 2003). Through an examination of the origins of the concept of 'sustainable development' and with a particular focus on the environmental pressures facing communities, this chapter explores what is meant by 'sustainable community' in the hope that a better understanding may make the attainment of sustainable communities more likely.

The origins of sustainable development

A sustainable society was described by J. Coomer (1979) in *The Nature of the Quest for a Sustainable Society* as one, 'that lives within the self-perpetuating limits of its environment. That society...is not a "no growth" society... It is rather, a society that recognizes the limits of growth...[and] looks for alternative ways of growing' (cited in Murcott 1997). Growth in this sense is meant as the physical, population and economic growth of a society. The Natural Step, an international organization founded in Sweden working to build an ecologically and economically sustainable society, takes a science-based approach to this view that a society must learn to live within its limits. The Natural Step argues that an understanding of the Earth's systems and how we rely

on them is at the heart of sustainable development. The Natural Step International (2003) framework provides four rules, or system conditions, for achieving sustainable development. This states that, '[a]n organisation, policy, material or community is not fully sustainable if it is contributing to breaches of the following principles':

In the sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing:

1. concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust,
2. concentrations of substances produced by society,
3. degradation by physical means,
       and, in that society...
4. people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.

The most well-known definition of sustainable development is probably that contained in the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987) report entitled *Our Common Future*. This is known as the *Brundtland Report* after the Commission's chairwoman, Gro Harlem Brundtland. The *Brundtland Report* claimed that critical global environmental problems were chiefly the result of the enormous poverty of the South and non-sustainable patterns of consumption and production in the North. Sustainable development is defined in this report as, 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The report firmly established the view that sustainability and sustainable development are about quality of life as well as living within the limits of the resources provided by the planet. It called for a strategy to unite development and environmental issues. This shift in emphasis away from the limitations of the Earth to the actions of its people is further endorsed in comments such as those by O'Riordan and Yaeger (1994) that:

> Sustainable development means adjusting economic growth to remain within bounds set by natural replenishable systems, subject to the scope for human ingenuity and adaptation via careful husbanding of critical resources and technological advance, coupled to the redistribution of resources and power in a manner that guarantees adequate conditions of liveability for all present and future generations.

The emphases of the principles of sustainable development are now people-centred rather than Earth-centred. They are commonly described

as the legs of a three-legged stool with each leg representing a social, economic or environmental issue. If the legs are not kept in balance then the stool will not be stable. This balancing act of sustainable development; that each of the three issues is kept in balance, with all benefiting or at least none suffering any negative impact, is now fundamental to current thinking in all areas from national to local government, in the international arena and in decisions concerning the planning and funding of local community-based projects.

UK Government initiatives

Sustainable development can perhaps be viewed as a journey with sustainable community as the destination. This promising journey is dramatically represented in the UK Government's declarations (HM Government 2005) that:

> The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations.

> . . . for the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations, that goal will be pursued in an integrated way through a sustainable, innovative and productive economy that delivers high levels of employment; and a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well being. This will be done in ways that protect and enhance the physical and natural environment, and use resources and energy as efficiently as possible.

It is clear here that the maintenance of economic growth is paramount but coupled with the efficient use of resources and energy. As part of this strategy, all government departments undertook to produce a sustainable development action plan to demonstrate a sustainable approach to policy delivery and in operations and management. Departments had to report on their actions by December 2006 and regularly thereafter (Sustainable Development Commission 2005). The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now replaced by the Department for Communities and Local Government, DCLG) published its *Sustainable Development Action Plan* in March 2006. This defines sustainable development as, 'a broad concept which may apply equally at any level, from global to local. Delivering sustainable communities is a more specific

goal relating to practical decision-making at the level of individual communities, with regard to the wider and longer-term impacts' (ODPM 2006). The Department of Communities and Local Government now has the responsibility for the sustainable communities agenda and delivering the current government's £38 billion *Sustainable Communities Plan*, known as the *Communities Plan* (ODPM 2003).

The Communities Plan

The *Communities Plan* was launched as a new agenda 'for tackling the challenges of a rapidly changing population, the needs or the economy, serious housing shortages in London and the South East and the impact of housing abandonment in the North and Midlands' (Prescott 2003). Guided by this plan and the sustainable development agenda, the DCLG defines sustainable communities as:

> [P]laces where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all (Communities and Local Government website 2006a).

The DCLG website goes on to state that sustainable communities should embody the principles of sustainable development by:

- balancing and integrating the social, economic and environmental components of their community,
- meeting the needs of existing and future generations,
- respecting the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally to make their own communities sustainable.

Sustainable communities are described as, 'diverse, reflecting their local circumstances. There is no standard template to fit them all. But they should be':

> *Active*, *inclusive and safe* – Fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities ...
> *Well run* – with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership ...
> *Environmentally sensitive* – providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment ...

Well designed and built – featuring quality built and natural environment . . .

Well connected – with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services . . .

Thriving – with a flourishing and diverse local economy . . .

Well served – with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all . . .

Fair for everyone – including those in other communities, now and in the future . . .

This is clearly a definition that reflects the principles of sustainable development, but practical implementation is the key to determining what a sustainable community might look like on the ground.

The Deputy Prime Minister's Award for Sustainable Communities gives us an insight into the practical implementation of the 2003 *Communities Plan*. The 2004 winner of the award was the Grange Park Community Project in Blackpool (Communities and Local Government website 2006b). Grange Park is a mainly council-built estate of 1800 dwellings mostly built between 1940s and 1970s and it is located in one of the most deprived wards in the country, away from local industry and commerce and with few local employment opportunities. The Grange Park Community Project was started in 1997. Led and facilitated by the Borough Council, it has produced and implemented a strategy created by residents. Initiatives have included community safety, resulting in a 55% reduction in burglaries, fire prevention, leading to a 61% reduction in fires on the estate, a new primary school and learning centre, health initiatives, a community nappy laundering service to reduce costs for new families (and reduce waste), quality green spaces, quality cycling provision and local bus services, resulting in a 40% increase in the use of public transport.

The project is clearly a great success and worthy of such an award for the improvements it has brought to the estate and its residents. It clearly addresses a regeneration agenda but is it a sustainable community that fulfils the principles of sustainable development? While social and economic issues are clearly being addressed, attention to wider environmental issues is not so clear. Those initiatives provided are to be welcomed but the inclusion of such things as higher levels of house insulation, renewable energy and life-time homes could all have additional social and economic benefits by reducing fuel poverty and CO_2 emissions. Other finalists have included the sustainable design and construction elements mentioned above but as a small part of

the whole regeneration process (details of all finalists are available on the Communities and Local Government website). These are clearly inspiring regeneration projects which create such immediate environmental improvements as pedestrianization, landscaping and the provision of street furniture and planting. Yet, in terms of the three principles of sustainable development and putting the local into global context, the environmental leg of the sustainability stool is perhaps receiving less attention than it should.

Local area agreements and local authority initiatives

One of the methods of delivery for sustainable communities in the UK at the moment is Local Area Agreements (LAAs) (Communities and Local Government website 2006c). The aim of LAAs is to improve partnership working between organizations in a community (note 'community' here is defined as a local government administrative area):

> An LAA is a three year agreement, based on local Sustainable Community Strategies, that sets out the priorities for a local area agreed between Central Government, represented by the Government Office (GO), and a local area, represented by the local authority and other key partners through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)...

> LAAs are structured around four blocks (or policy fields): children and young people, safer and stronger communities, healthier communities and older people, and economic development and enterprise (Communities and Local Government website 2006d).

The purpose of the LAA is to add value to existing services and delivery mechanisms through organizations working together under a common vision. Closely linked to local authority community strategies these are seen as its delivery mechanisms (see Syrett 2006 for a useful overview). There is no requirement to consider environmental issues and the mandatory indicators to measure action, progress and ultimately success of the LAA do not include measures for carbon or greenhouse gas emissions but instead rely on graffiti and litter levels as a measure of environmental protection.

I currently work as a Sustainability Officer for the City of York Council and have been involved in Local Agenda 21 work (the process of drawing up and implementing local sustainable development plans) since the early 1990s. From my own perspective, the local experience of producing LAAs has been of a battle for the inclusion of environmental issues

to ensure the three-legged stool of sustainable development principles are kept in balance. For example, this has manifested itself within existing partnerships between the health, economic and crime prevention sectors, where each state clearly that CO_2 emissions are nothing to do with them and all question why indicators of performance relating to these areas are being suggested. I do not think that the holistic nature of producing sustainable communities is fully understood.

It is true to say that these sectors and the partnerships representing them at LAAs are struggling under existing more traditional indicators and targets but I see this as no reason why those goals relating to sustainable development should be ignored. A difficulty in understanding and acceptance is clearly linked to a feeling of responsibility or more accurately lack of responsibility for these issues. All of these sectors are already contributing substantially to the sustainable communities agenda and in many cases it is in the detail of how they carry out this work, for example in the resources they use, that there are issues that need to be addressed. This can be relayed as a positive message and perhaps environmental groups and those working in the sustainability field need to explain this more clearly.

It is also my experience that existing groups representing environmental and sustainability issues have found difficulty getting their voices heard. In some cases they are viewed as wacky, unreasonable and unrealistic. In York considerable work has taken place to have sustainability indicators in the LAA. This has been most successful in the theme related to Economic Development and Enterprise, an area that has enormous environmental impact – however this success may have more to do with the officers responsible for economic development and sustainability being in the same directorate of the council than anything else. Kirklees Borough Council is another LAA with a strong environmental agenda (Kirklees Partnership website, accessed 08/11/2006). This is due to the council's long history or action in the environmental field which is well established as a corporate aim. The Regeneration and Sustainable Development partnership is a vital part of the LAA and has resulted in the inclusion of more sustainability issues than most other LAAs.

The local Sustainable Community Strategy for a Local Authority (LA) administrative area also forms the basis for Local Development Frameworks (LDF). The New Labour Government introduced a new system to manage how planning takes place in cities and in the countryside. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks are replacing Local and

Unitary plans for LAs and setting out the vision, policies and priorities for areas in terms of spatial planning (Office of Public Sector Information website 2006). The LDF is being seen as the physical manifestation of the vision in the Local Community Strategy and so must be centred on sustainable development principles and undergo a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or a Sustainability Appraisal that encompasses a SEA (SEA-info.net website 2006).

The planning system in the UK, in theory, in its high-level strategies and in some government policy, has for many years put sustainable development at its heart (see planning policy statements published on the Communities and Local Government website 2006e which set out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. See also Owens and Cowell 2002 for a critical review of endorsements of planning as an instrument of sustainable development). With the new LDF process this has been taken a step further to provide a means of practically implementing these principles through the planning system. Where the sustainable communities agenda as initially promoted by the ODPM may be failing in terms of environmental protection, the planning system could help to fill the gap. Many LAs now have policies in place that take government policy further and provide high standards and requirements. These policies recognize and try to reduce the environmental impact of building development – particularly in its use of resources and as a generator of waste. Some very notable progress has been made by some local authorities. The London Borough of Merton was the first to introduce a policy requiring 10% of the energy used in a development to be provided by on site renewable generation (London Borough of Merton website 2006). The so-called Merton Rule has been adapted by many other LAs.

It is not only through the planning system that LAs are attempting to change development and construction but also through their own actions and projects. Woking Borough Council has had a long history of policies to reduce energy consumption and promote the use of renewable energy (Woking Borough Council website 2006). While LAs develop new policies to require applicants for planning consent to provide more sustainable buildings, so councils are also building them for themselves. An example is the City of York Council's EcoDepot, a council depot that provides a showcase of innovative construction techniques and technologies as well as renewable energy, water conservation measures and learning and educational opportunities (City of York Council 2006). The fundamental aim of the development is to provide an operational depot

with reduced embodied greenhouse gas emission and reduced emissions in operation (embodied greenhouse gas emission or embodied energy are the emissions or energy required through the whole life of a product or material; from the extraction of the raw material to make it, to the energy used in manufacture, to the fuel used in the final delivery). There are examples like this where the environmental impacts of development and lifestyles and particularly greenhouse gas emissions are being monitored and actions taken to reduce this impact. Examples of good practice are extremely useful in driving the agenda forward; however, co-ordination and endorsement by central government is vital.

The challenge of climate change

The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change was published in October 2006. This is described by HM Treasury (2006) as, '[t]he most comprehensive review ever carried out on the economics of climate change'. Its publication comes at a time when it is now readily accepted by nearly all countries and world leaders that the climate is changing and that this is occurring due to increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and that these increasing levels are being created by human activity. A recent report by the US Climate Change Science Programme and the Subcommittee on Global Change research stated that, '[t]he observed patterns of change over the past 50 years cannot be explained by natural processes alone, not by the effect of short-lived atmospheric constituents (such as aerosols and tropospheric ozone) alone' (Karl et al. 2006). There are still a few who deny the dangers of climate change but the precautionary principles developed at the United Nations Conference on Environment Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (known as the Earth Summit) are prevailing (United Nations 1997). While we do not know all the answers, we know that there is a clear link between our activity and climate change and that we should be doing something about it.

A BBC news report from Siberia by science correspondent David Shukman (2006) bears witness to the immediate effects of global warming: 'In the regional capital, Yakutsk, I saw huge holes torn in major roads where the permafrost had melted. I also saw an urgent effort to shore up a large office block in danger of collapse'. As global temperatures increase the permafrost melts and soils become unstable and unable to support the developments resting on them. This effect is also being seen in Alaska. In addition, as the melt continues the peaty soils release more of the carbon dioxide that has been locked up in them

for thousands of years. Some scientists say this is the start of the 'tipping point', the point at which the globe enters 'runaway climate change' as carbon dioxide that has been locked in the earth is released (for examples see Pearce 2005: 12 and the work of the Global Carbon Project 2007). This is a natural process started by the rise in global temperatures as a result of human-created carbon dioxide emissions (see UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre website 2006). We have upset a fine ecological balance.

   Climate change, arguably the greatest threat to society and therefore the attainment of sustainable communities, has until recently been hidden in the detail rather than being explicitly stated in UK plans for sustainable communities. Now statements about the need to tackle climate change are becoming more central. Significantly, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Development Action Plan published in 2006 states that:

   Climate Change is one of the most significant threats facing the country in the 21st century. Since the publication of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, the scientific evidence and modelling on the extent, timing and impacts of global warming have become more alarming and serious. ODPM regards action on climate change as a central priority for its future strategy across the board, and in the short term for its current review of the sustainability of existing buildings.

The development action plan goes on to claim that ODPM is making significant progress in reducing carbon emissions from housing and anticipates a saving of 2.5 million tonnes of carbon per year by 2010. However, it also goes on to say that:

   ODPM recognises that the urgency and scale of the problems posed by climate change require ambitious and long-term action. Accordingly ODPM is also reviewing its position on climate change across the whole Sustainable Communities agenda, with a view to developing new initiatives and long-term programmes that will contribute to the achievement of a 60% cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 and to intermediate targets from 2010 onwards. ODPM's aim will also be to highlight areas for long-range collaborative work with other Government Departments to achieve the goals of the Sustainable Communities programme and also secure required cuts in carbon emissions and gains in resource efficiency in new and existing

buildings. The Government has introduced a range of measures to stimulate take up of energy efficiency measures in the home.

This new emphasis on climate change is important because to date, progress on taking the concrete steps needed to tackle its implications has been slow. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (United Nations 2006) adopted in May 1992, established a framework for addressing climate change. Following difficult negotiations in Kyoto, Japan, a Protocol to the UNFCCC was agreed in December 1997. The Kyoto Protocol on climate change is only a beginning and its main supporter the European Union (the EU-15 member states) is having a hard time delivering its Kyoto commitments. The new member states (EU-10) are below their Kyoto targets but this may be due to the restructuring of their economies; in the last few years their emissions are also rising again (European Environment Agency 2006). On 27 October 2006, the European Environment Agency warned that, with existing measures, only two EU-15 countries (Sweden and UK) would reach their reduction targets (euractive.com website 2006). The UK will be on course to meet its Kyoto target for the basket of greenhouse gases, assuming the government is able to curb rising carbon dioxide emissions between now (2006) and the period 2008–2012. Yet, overall, annual net carbon dioxide emission levels in the UK have risen by around 2% since 1997 (Defra 2006a).

The reality is that in the global economic system that exists today, economic growth still means high and increasing levels of greenhouse gas emissions, particularly carbon dioxide. This does not bode well as the massive economic growth of China and India continues. Such growth is positive for the countries and their people in social and economic terms, but if this results in increased greenhouse gas emissions and environmental damage it is not supporting the principles of sustainable development and the environmental effects will have a negative impact on us all. Sustainability indicators collected annually by the UK (Defra 2006b) demonstrate that while the growth in the economy has continued, the growth in carbon emissions has slowed but it is still proving hard to decouple the two. Balancing social, economic and environmental issues in the three-legged stool of sustainable development seems unobtainable, while on the one hand carbon-emitting economic growth provides quality of life, jobs and a means for a nation to provide health care and social support systems, and on the other it is directly contributing to a potential ecological disaster – which no amount of economic growth alone will solve.

Some progress is being made towards change in the UK as some of the examples given here show, but the biggest losers from the climate change/unsustainable communities gamble are in the developing world or global south. Those countries who are presently contributing least to global warming will be the ones who will feel the full force of its impacts first, and it is these countries who are offering a solution to the failing global action on climate change. The Global Commons Institute (GCI) presented an agenda for solving the global crisis of climate change at the Second World Climate Conference in 1990. This was called, *Equity for Survival*. GCI argued that, 'whilst the traditional proposition of equity for its own sake was a dream, unless the new and more rigorous proposition of equity for survival was adopted, the nightmare of global climate destabilisation would follow' (GCI website 2006). In 1996 GCI devised a greenhouse gas abatement methodology based on *Equity and Survival* called, *Contraction and Convergence*. GCI argue:

> Limits to growth – certainly of fossil fuel consumption – must now be observed if we are to avoid this climate crisis. Until now however, the limits-free expectations encouraged by the success of laissez-faire economics have been obscuring this. It will be impossible to observe these limits unless, from now on, implementation is internationally configured in a way which corrects the skewed distribution between the rich and poor. This converts a merely moral dilemma into a moral imperative. Because everyone – regardless of status – is now increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the rich have little choice but to share the burden of contraction fairly (GCI website 2006).

Essentially the GCI felt that, '*Contraction and Convergence* is the only long-term framework for regulating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions which does not make carbon dioxide production a luxury that only rich nations can afford' (Meyer 2006). *Contraction and Convergence* appears to provide a straightforward model for an international agreement on greenhouse gas emissions. It sets stable and safe targets for greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and a date by which those concentrations should be achieved; all based on best-scientific evidence. The atmosphere is regarded as a 'global good' and *Contraction and Convergence* states that everyone on earth has a right to emit, and under the framework will be given an equal right by a future date. This allowance for each individual will be derived from the safe global targets: 'So from the grossly inequitable situation we have now, per capita emissions from

each country will "converge" at a far more equitable level in the future; while the global total of emissions will "contract" ' (Meyer 2006).

Contraction and Convergence was starting to be seen as a 'plan B' for climate change by 2003 and has been increasingly gaining support:

> The idea has been around for a decade, but lately it has been gaining ever more influential converts, such as the UK's Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, the UN Environment Programme, the European Parliament and the German Advisory Council on Global Change, which last week released a report supporting the idea (Pearce 2003).

A framework such as *Contraction and Convergence* could be the late solution that those advocating sustainable development have been looking for. It is a way to ensure that the hardest part of the sustainable development balancing act – that of protecting the environment – is tackled properly. Its implementation and impact remain to be seen post-Stern.

Sustainable communities challenge global inequalities

The world and its many communities have come a long way since the first definitions of sustainability and sustainable development: there is starting to be an understanding of the principles of sustainability, and more importantly, necessary actions to implement positive change. The sustainability agenda started with an acknowledgement of the need for the communities of the world to live within the ecological limits that are provided by the planet. This message became diluted by social and economic imperatives. In addition, the scientific data was not available or easily denounced by those in whose interests (usually financial and political) it was to avoid tackling environmental problems. Now the scientific evidence is stronger and the reality of climate change is proving the truth of the predictions of decades ago. The definition and action for sustainable development has gone full circle with environmental limits of the planet becoming prominent again. A question still remains about whether the government-sponsored work in this area that is taking place in many parts of the nation is truly going to provide us with sustainable communities? There is no doubt that many of these initiatives are improving the lives of people and the life chances of the next generations. However, I would argue that we cannot build truly sustainable communities unless we address the fundamental truth that we all need to live on this one small planet with the resources it provides

for us. Many of us are exceeding our share of these resources and many aspire to do the same because of the benefits history has shown this to bring for the affluent minority (while affluence is also thought to bring its own afflictions, see for example Samuelson 2004). The unequal impacts of these lifestyles are increasingly becoming apparent. Those who are least able to prepare for and adapt to climate change are the communities who are already suffering its impacts. Is it possible to justify such inequalities? At the very least it is not sustainable to keep on behaving in this way. In the interests of sustainability, each community must assess its impact on and its contribution to the wider global arena. The challenge for us all in the future is to make changes to our own lifestyles and attitudes and to ensure that our neighbours, families, local and national governments do the same.

11
Community Informatics: Building Civil Society in the Information Age?

Leigh Keeble

Introduction

The ubiquitous spread of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as the Internet, mobile telephony and geographical information systems have given rise to a debate (Barlow 1996) about whether such new media are beneficial for community development or instead are a threat to civil society. Community Informatics (CI), the practices associated with the adoption and study of how new ICTs can facilitate the social, economic, political and cultural developments of communities, provides us with a field of exploration in which to contextualise this debate.

In recent years there has been a growing number of CI initiatives across the world. Such initiatives have been designed to explore the potential transforming qualities of the new ICTs for community development, economic regeneration, democratic renewal and social support. These initiatives have been designed to reduce or remove the growing concerns about the emergence of a 'digital divide' (for discussions on defining the digital divide see Gurstein 2003 and Selwyn 2002). As the new media and their adoption become increasingly important for educational achievement, employment opportunities, access to public and commercial services and other life choices, people living in deprived neighbourhoods are likely to be significantly disadvantaged (for a discussion on conducting CI projects see Stoecker 2004).

This chapter outlines the debates which surround CI as a tool for development and/or social regeneration. The chapter will firstly contextualise the debate and then go on to present some of the issues and challenges

facing CI. The chapter argues that the spread of new technologies is considerable, and although potentially CI can offer opportunities for some digitally excluded to gain connectivity, the policy rhetoric is over-stated. ICTs tend to be more beneficial for those already 'information rich' and can contribute to a social sorting that further locks out some places. In conclusion, the chapter suggests that it is naïve to assume that CI or indeed ICTs in general can offer any sort of fix to longstanding structural inequalities.

Contextualising the debate

A significant amount of public funding has been devoted to challenging the digital divide. In the UK, the government invested £400 million to support over 6000 ICT centres in deprived rural and inner city areas based in England (Office of the e-Envoy 2003: 8). However, little was known about the actual effectiveness of public access centres and related CI approaches for tackling exclusion. With this in mind, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation funded a review of CI initiatives (Loader and Keeble 2004). The review focused on published studies that were critical rather than descriptive. The studies were primarily based in Europe or North America and were published in the 10 years prior to the review. All of the papers reviewed were concerned with an examination of the use of ICTs for community development or social and/or economic regeneration.

The review found that there is little evidence-based research which supports the contention that CI initiatives have yet made signi-ficant challenges to the social inequalities associated with ICT adop-tion. Many active CI projects were supported by those who were already better educated and familiar with ICTs so potentially reinfor-cing divides and inequalities. As such, the better educated were able to take advantage of the opportunities that the Internet offers. The review found that the relationship between new media and community development is an ambiguous one which is shaped primarily through a complex interaction of social, political and commercial factors which can, and frequently do, produce a mixture of intended and unin-tended outcomes for the participants. The review identified a number of common thematic ambiguities which critically influence policies designed to challenge the digital divide and which provide a frame-work with which to present the different perspectives and arguments surrounding current approaches to investigating CI and the digital divide.

The notion of community

The concept of 'community' is ambiguous and vague with the term frequently appearing to mean different things to different people at different times. It can, for example, be place-based or based on shared interests or shared beliefs (for a full discussion of the different interpretations of the term see Crow and Allan 1994). Despite the suspicion about the utility of the concept (see for example Abercrombie et al. 1994), 'community' has remained a popular notion and has, more recently, proven particularly resilient when linked to discussions around the emergence of virtual communities (Rheingold 1993) or developments in CI. The introduction of technologies which potentially foster more and perhaps better communications between people can, it is argued, contribute to a greater sense of 'community'.

This need to somehow reinstate the somewhat romantic ideal of communities fostered by UK sociological literature of the 1960s and 1970s continues to resonate. As Shaw and Shaw (1999) note in the context of technological change, ICTs and the rhetoric of the lack of community cohesion, this notion of an ideal 'community' is one that many people yearn for. The associated idea of a breakdown of community (particularly in relation to place-based, neighbourhood groupings) has recently been highlighted by Putnam (2000) who argues that social regeneration depends upon rebuilding community life. CI, the social adoption of ICTs, is regarded as a powerful set of tools with which to reconnect people and engage them in social relationships. Through community technology centres, where local people can meet and undertake computer courses, take advantage of the provision of community hosts and servers and undertake the development of community websites, the new media have become indispensable to community development in the information society (Day and Harris 1997; Shearman 1999).

Dutta-Bergman (2005) in his study of community participation and Internet use found that community-orientated individuals not only actively engaged in their local community but also used the Internet to find community-related information. Individuals active in their local communities were more likely to use the Internet to gather news about their community, look for information about community events, email public officials and look for information about local government services. However, the research also found that individuals who participate in their local communities are more likely to be satisfied with them and tend to be older, better educated and have a higher than average income.

The optimistic notion of community life as an embodiment of the ideal way to live may not itself be shared by all citizens. Whilst many champion the positive benefits of strong communities, far fewer, it seems express concerns over how community relations may act as a means of domination. For many women, for example, community may be a place where they are trapped and already overburdened with the roles of primary carer and social supporter (Green and Keeble 2001). Moreover, communities can be characterised as one-dimensional and intolerant of differences and diversity. What therefore may constitute 'community' for some may for others, located in the same geographical area, be the site of repression and exclusion.

Thus the new ICTs may be technologies of empowerment for community groups and members but also the means of their subjugation. Community can be a means of social control as much as a wellspring for social capital. Polly Toynbee, a UK journalist, has continued to note, often when 'community' is discussed it is related to poorer, deprived areas, areas in need of 'regeneration'. The term is seldom used to describe wealthier, middle-class areas (Toynbee 2004). As Loader (2002) argues, this suggests that wealthy social groups do not constitute 'community', nor do they need the same social benefits ascribed to community life.

Defining the digital divide

The aim of many CI initiatives has been to provide a community location for those unable to access the Internet from home or work with free or low-cost connectivity. In the UK there has undoubtedly been increasing opportunities for accessing ICTs. However, there has also been increasing acknowledgement that the digital divide is not simply an issue of access (or not) to technologies. What people use the Internet for and its perceived relevance to their everyday life experiences influences not only levels of access but also different types of access according to socio-economic origins.

How the digital divide is defined is relevant to CI practitioners. Typically, notions of the digital divide have referred to the social cleavages between the information rich and the information poor within countries. Gurstein (2003) outlines a number of definitions of the digital divide and argues that what many of the definitions and 'solutions' to the problem of the digital divide do not do is provide any sort of useful response to the impact that the digital divide is having.

Selwyn (2002) in his attempts to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the digital divide argues that in seeking to examine

the digital divide we should be interested in the levels and contested nature of individuals' *access* to technology (in particular their effective access as opposed to what is formally available to them in theory), their actual *engagement* with this technology and, importantly, the short-term outcomes and longer term consequences of this engagement.

Consistent with top–down policy models, the emphasis on many CI projects has tended to be placed upon the necessity of providing access and training for CI citizens. Southern (2002) suggests that there is to date, no evidence of real regeneration outcomes from community technology or CI projects. Whilst there are a few examples of projects which have developed commercial aspects to its work to sustain projects (see for example, Liff and Steward 2001 and Morino Institute 2001), other research has found that those already disadvantaged in terms of skills, educational attainment and income are less likely to have access and skills required to benefit from using ICTs as a tool for job searching or job creation (McQuaid et al. 2003).

Debates relating to the digital divide acknowledge that whilst access to the technology may be important, it is not the only factor or indeed the most important one influencing the adoption of the Internet by disadvantaged groups (Mansell 2002). Whilst the new media may be attractive to middle-class users already highly literate, well-educated and keen to exploit the interactive potential of the media in their own information- and communication-rich lives, such qualifications may act as significant barriers to take-up by the socially excluded.

Interactivity requires a self-confidence which is more important than technological ability as well as a relevance to the communication needs of the user's life experiences. For CI projects to be empowering they must be socially contextualised. Simply showering communities with technology will not address the digital divide. Such communities may become wired, but their use may be very different from that of the information rich. Video on demand, shopping over the Internet or online gaming may be evidence of access but it hardly constitutes empowerment through interaction.

Shaping the technology

CI projects appear to be significantly influenced by the ambiguity of the technology itself, in particular the competing notions of how the technology may change social behaviour and transform social relations. On the one hand there are what may be termed 'techno enthusiasts' who

believe that the empowering capabilities inherent in ICTs will enrich people's lives as soon as they come into contact with them. They point to the global reach of the Internet, available 24 hours a day containing unimaginable amounts of information, enabling people anywhere to communicate and share resources, to the commercial opportunities and its potential for enhancing democratic deliberation (see for example, Barlow 1996; Rheingold 2000). For techno enthusiasts all we need to do is show people the potential of the media, train them in computer skills and provide them with access to the Internet, and the 'information age' is born.

The alternative view, known as 'the social shaping of technology' perspective, is that the technology is of secondary importance to the social, political or cultural objectives of a programme (MacKenzie and Wajcman 1985). Technology, it is claimed, is not value neutral. It is designed by humans and does not exist in some parallel universe. Thus the adoption of ICTs is heavily influenced by the intentions of the designers, the perceptions and expectations of the users and the unintended uses which emerge over time (for a full discussion on the Social Shaping of Technology see Williams and Edge 1996).

But how is this relevant to CI? The ambiguity surrounding the role of technology is very important for CI practitioners to understand. The literature suggests that many projects are technologically led and flounder because of a mismatch between the communication needs and social structure of community networks and the presumed perspectives of the techno enthusiasts (Loader and Keeble 2004). In many instances these groups simply do not speak the same language let alone share a common vision. Moreover, since the technology is shaped by social circumstances it is more important that community groups are involved in that process if they are to 'own' and drive the initiative for themselves. Yet this 'bottom up' or grassroots approach may be at variance with the 'top down' policies which emphasise computer literacy targets, jobs created and inward investment often associated with government policies and funding strategies such as UK Online.

Connecting community places to community spaces?

Much of the debate about the benefits of ICTs in the information age centre around the opportunities they offer for the 'information rich' to span geographical locations. A growing literature demonstrates the potential benefits to those accessing computer-mediated social support (see for example Burrows et al. 2000; Hardey 2001; Miller and Slater

2000; Nettleton et al. 2002; Nip 2004; Richardson 2006). However, when demographics of the participants are considered they again tend to be characterised by reasonably high levels of education and skills.

Wellman et al. (2003) argue that sociable community relations continue to be abundant and strong with face-to-face community interaction in pubs or cafes and in personal homes continuing. However, they argue that it is the individuals 'community' that has expanded well beyond the neighbourhood so that in the developed world, the 'modal' community is probably one of shared interests, be they shared friends, child-rearing or cultural pursuits. Neighbourhood communities can be seen as just one particular community of shared interest, that pertaining to shared proximity.

It is suggested that people may be going online to chat with friends on instant messenger, visiting online communities by playing games or whatever. Wellman et al. argue that their civic involvement may increasingly be taking the form of e-citizenship, networked rather than group-based, hidden indoors rather than visibly outdoors. Their research suggests that the Internet is not a self-contained world. Rather than operating at the expense of the 'real' face-to-face world, it is an extension, with people using all means of communication to connect with friends and relatives. The Internet is just another means of communication that is being integrated into the regular patterns of social life. Because connections are to people and not to places, the technology affords shifting from work and community ties from linking people in places to linking people at any place. As such Wellman et al. contend that computer-mediated communication (CMC) is everywhere but situated nowhere, 'it is I alone that is reachable wherever I am . . . the person has become the portal' (2003: 16).

This shift facilitates the building of personal communities that provide the support traditionally associated with the idea of communities as 'places'. The person rather than the household or group is the primary unit of connectivity, what Wellman et al. describe as 'networked individualism'. As such, rather than a unified neighbourhood, people are increasingly operating in a number of specialised communities in ways and at times suited to them.

Wellman et al. argue that household units are losing their solidarity with the individuals in households increasingly living separate lives. They argue that the lure of CMC is drawing people away from their household relations and as such, network individualism could have profound effects on social cohesion.

Whilst the work of Wellman and his colleagues has been fundamental in offering a different perspective on the real and potential network benefits of ICTs, it is underpinned by research conducted in an area which is extremely well 'wired'. As such, the findings when applied to areas without high levels of connectivity must be treated with some caution. The work of Crang and Graham (2006) found that whilst there was hidden and forgotten usage of ICTs by people in a deprived area (through friends, neighbours, etc), such use was deliberate and for specific purposes. There was no sense that these people were somehow 'always on', a state necessary to create a 'modal' community.

Pigg and Crank (2004: 69–70) in their exploration of the functionality of various ICTs and resulting ties to social capital formation conclude that, '[m]ore research and further documentation is necessary before we can say for certain that ICTs can and do create social capital and, thereby, build community. Enhancing social networks is obviously necessary but this analysis suggests it is certainly not sufficient to support the claim of ICT advocates'. Thus the jury is still out on whether or not ICTs generate the social ties that constitute positive social capital, and vice versa. However, from a review of literature Cordell and Romanow (2005) argue that the same may not be said about computer-mediated community networks. Rather they suggest that where community networks exist, they prove beneficial to some extent.

The term 'community networks' used by Cordell and Romanow is defined by Hall (n.d.: 12) as 'a network of computers with modems that allow users to connect to a central computer which provides community information and a means for the community to communication electronically . . . community networks are based in a physical place . . . The common element of users of community networks is their physical proximity and interest in local issues that affect them all'. Cordell and Romanow argue that community networks have three characteristics that separate them from other forms of computer-based communication. First, they focus on local issues, culture and ownership as well as providing forums for community discussion and problem-solving. Secondly, they strive to reach all groups and individuals in a community, stressing public access and computer skills acquisition, not just for the computer literate but also marginalised groups and non-traditional users of technology. Finally, they emphasise democratic participation and community development. The fundamental issue, argue Cordell and Romanow, is that community networks are developed by the local people for the local people, with an understanding of just what the local needs are.

The Public Electronic Network (PEN), Santa Monica, Southern California, and the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) are well-publicised community network projects. Despite examples of success from the projects (see Beamish 1995), there was also evidence of problems. Docter and Dutton (1998) discuss how PEN experienced serious problems of heckling from people when they disagreed with certain views. In addition, a relatively small group began to dominate online exchanges which often degenerated into online fights. Despite having over 3000 people signed up for PEN and around 500 logging on each month, only a very small number ever contributed any comments to the discussions.

Kavanaugh (1999), Kavanaugh et al. (2000) and Kavanaugh and Patterson (2002) have analysed the impact of BEV on community networking and participation. From a longitudinal analysis of their data, Kavanaugh and Patterson argue that the longer people are users of the Internet, the more likely they are to use the Internet for a variety of social capital building activities. The more involved they are in their local communities, the more likely they are to use the Internet to communicate with members of formal and informal social groups. However, Kavanaugh and Patterson do note that the Blacksburg participants are of a relatively high socio-economic status and as such, are not individuals who are traditionally disenfranchised or otherwise under-represented in civic and community life. The demographic background of the Blacksburg participants suggests that they would probably be more predisposed to be involved in their community and civic activities than those from lower socio-economic groups.

Access and connectivity – social politics of neighbourhood informatisation

The main policy thrust for widening access to new technologies and increasing participation in the information society is primarily through market regulation and competition measures. Public access points, whilst making a valuable and important contribution to challenging the digital divide, are regarded by the UK government only as a 'valuable safety net' (Office of the e-Envoy 2003: 5). It is really through commercial competition through private sector providers of infrastructure and connectivity that online participation is seen to continue to become more affordable to almost everyone. However, evidence does suggest that what is actually happening is not the widespread diffusion of affordable technology but rather business controlling access (Graham

2002; Graham and Marvin 2001) and then using systems to change or solidify the image of individual neighbourhoods (Burrows and Ellison 2004; Burrows et al. 2005).

Graham and Marvin and Graham argue that the dominant factors shaping the adoption of ICTs are serving to underpin and support processes and practises of intensifying what they describe as 'urban splintering'. The primary exploitation of ICTs has been overwhelmingly by the social, economic, cultural and geographically located groups and organisations that are already best connected, highly skilled and most able to organise and configure the shift online to their own advantage. Conversely, people without Internet access face extra costs and barriers because they tend to lack the skills, knowledge, equipment, infrastructure access, capital, money, electricity and telephone access necessary to enter, access and fully exploit online services.

The uneven growth of the Internet and other ICT-mediated systems represents a subtle, often invisible, but immensely powerful process of dualisation within and between cities and towns (Lentz and Oden 2001). As such, it is directly involved in the restructuring of those cities that drive their development. 'Global' cities are emerging as dominant places of global Internet production. A new type of economic enclave, 'gentrifying cyber districts' (Graham, 2002: 6) is emerging, leading to the influx of new media businesses which have changed some inner cities, pushing up rents and so effectively evicting low-income groups. Such 'premium networked spaces' offer an increasing range of goods and services through their advanced connections with global economies of exchange. Burrows and Ellison (2004) provide an account of how such advantaged spaces are mapped through geographical information systems (GIS).

ICTs allow socio-economically affluent urban groups selectively to overcome barriers and constraints of local geography by extending and intensifying their access to distant spaces. In addition, Graham (2002) identifies the growth of the 'electronic economic power' which he argues raises many questions about geo-political relationships, accountability, democracy, global citizenship, the ownership and control of digitised information and the means of cultural expression, and the relationship between the global and local cultures that surround global urbanisation.

In an effort to conceptualise neighbourhood informatisation processes, Burrows and Ellison (2004) and Burrows et al (2005) examined the impact of Internet-based neighbourhood information systems (IBNIS) (for an example of an IBNIS system see Longley, 2006). The research found that IBNIS, available to anyone with Internet access, provide

detailed information on a number of topics, including income and life style choices, on neighbourhoods and as specific as postcodes. This level of publicly available information can, argue the authors, lead to the further segmentation of places. They suggest that technologies like IBNIS are themselves beginning to divide and sort populations in a manner that enhances the socio-structural position of certain groups while disadvantaging others. In theory, IBNIS could produce increasingly separated spaces where neighbourhoods – as defined by software programmes – will come to be more homogenous within themselves and more diverse between themselves. What could exacerbate this segmentation is the ability for individuals to add information to these systems or challenge their descriptions of their neighbourhoods. As evidence has demonstrated, the less advantaged are least likely to engage with the technologies and take advantage of their interactive potential. Thus these systems are more likely to be used by the middle-class first when looking for somewhere to live and secondly, to challenge any perceived misrepresentations.

Conclusion

As economic, social and political life becomes increasingly organised around digital information and ICTs, the ability to use them effectively and creatively becomes a precondition for full social participation (Murdock 2006). The evidence discussed in this chapter suggests that the benefits derived from ICTs favour those already economically and socially advantaged. The policy response in the UK to improve opportunities for deprived areas to engage with the new opportunities provided by ICTs has been to create or support the development of community technology centres. Such centres, whilst providing access to the Internet and training, do not provide individuals with the communication skills necessary to take full advantage of the interactive and empowering capabilities of ICTs.

The danger is that we are left with a situation whereby those middle-class, well-educated individuals utilise ICTs to facilitate and enhance their lives by expanding their networks and allow them to, for example, work from home, search for 'desirable' places to live, find 'good' schools for their children, lobby politicians and so on. Digitisation and classification via ICTs potentially mean that those lacking in the social and technical skills valued in the digital economy remain or become trapped in their local 'communities'. As noted by Mitchell (1999: 77):

> [W]hen it all shakes out, the guiding real estate principle turns out to be this: telecommunications networking can add great value to localities where relatively well-off people would like to live. It can remove constraints that prevented them from doing so in the past. But it doesn't help people who find themselves trapped in marginalized, underserviced areas and are too poor to move.

CI has therefore proved to be Janus-faced in that despite initial policy and academic enthusiasm it has largely failed to deliver the full potential of the information age to less advantaged localities. As a consequence whether sociability and civic engagement in such areas is seen to constitute a 'community' seems likely to be determined by factors other than the population's connection to the Internet.

12
Working with the Community: Research and Action

Gayle Letherby[1], Geraldine Brady and Geraldine Brown

Introduction

In 1990 Anthony Giddens argued:

> The practical impact of social sciences is both profound and inescapable. Modern societies together with the organisations that compose and straddle them, are like learning machines, imbibing information in order to regularise their mastery of themselves . . . only society reflexively capable of modifying their institutions in the face of accelerated social change will be able to confront the future with any confidence. Sociology is the prime medium of such reflexivity (Giddens 1990: 21).

As three sociologists we are encouraged by Giddens' optimism that sociology can make a difference to both our understanding of and life with society. Committed as we are to a praxis-orientated sociology, that is a sociology concerned to contribute to positive change in people's lives, we are disappointed by David Silverman's (1999: 273) view that:

> The idea that social research might influence public policy provides an inspiration for many young social scientists. In most English-speaking countries the sad truth is that things have never worked in this way.

In this chapter we draw on our experiences of working for the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) at Coventry University on a series of research

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[1] Author for correspondence: School of Law and Social Science, University of Plymouth, Drake Circus, Plymouth, PL4 8AA.

and development projects concerned with the support aspects of the UK Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, to reflect further on the contribution that sociologists can make. We begin with a brief consideration of background issues – to our working conditions and to the issue of teenage pregnancy and young parenthood – and then consider in some detail our experience of working with the community in this area. We end by concluding that our work presents a challenge to the view that academic research has little meaning for the lives of 'real' people.

Background and context

Working for the Centre for Social Justice, Coventry University

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) was formally approved as a research centre within Coventry University in 1998. Having been a member of CSJ from the beginning Gayle Letherby became Deputy Director in 2001, a position she continued in until she left the university in 2005; Geraldine Brady worked for short periods on projects in 2001 and 2002 before joining CSJ as a research assistant in 2003 and Geraldine Brown joined as a research assistant also in 2003. In 2006 CSJ became part of SURGE: the Applied Centre for Sustainable Regeneration, Coventry University. The CSJ was always a small research centre in university terms with, at the most, only seven paid workers (including the director – Paul Bywaters – but not the Deputy Director – Gayle Letherby, whose 'paid' job was as a member of the subject group of Social Work and Sociology), some of whom were on fractional and temporary contracts. However, this core group was supported by a variety of colleagues from social work, sociology, criminology, social policy and health, and between 1998 and 2006 CSJ secured over a million pounds in research monies, worked on over 60 research projects and developed strong external recognition and a positive 'brand' image though the quality and nature of its work. Broadly speaking, the research of the CSJ asked three different types of questions: what is the problem? what works? and how best can changes be made? A key aspect of our philosophy is that involvement with the research community does not end at the presentation of the findings. Thus, our approach involves working with funders and respondents rather than undertaking research on or about individuals and groups. Thus, the CSJ's orientation towards producing change, and on action as well as understanding, resulted in our becoming increasingly involved in the application and implementation of findings in our projects – in the area of teenage pregnancy and young parenthood specifically and

more generally – although this was already our understanding of what research was primarily for. Increasingly we developed a growing understanding of the importance of involving service providers and service users in research processes (for further detail see Letherby and Bywaters 2006).

Teenage pregnancy and young parenthood

The National Teenage Pregnancy Strategy is set out in the Social Exclusion Unit report on Teenage Pregnancy and involves a joint Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills Public Service Agreement. Arguably, although Lisa Arai (2003) highlights the difficulties in comparing statistics on teenage pregnancy with other European countries, Britain has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Western Europe, with a rate double that of Germany, triple that of France and six times that of the Netherlands (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). According to the Social Exclusion Unit report, each year 90,000 teenagers become pregnant and, of these, 7700 are under 16 and 2200 are under 14. The two national targets identified in the strategy are to:

- Halve the under 18 conception rate in England by 2010 (with an interim reduction target of 15% by 2003 included in the NHS Plan, which is also a Manifesto commitment); and
- Increase the participation of teenage mothers in education, training or work to 60% by 2010 to reduce the risk of long-term social exclusion.

Many writers suggest that motherhood is something that all women are expected to do:

> . . . women live their lives against a background of personal and cultural assumptions that all women are or want to be mothers and that for women motherhood is proof of adulthood and a natural consequences of marriage or a permanent relationship with a man (Letherby 1994: 525).

But only in the so-called 'right' social, economic and sexual circumstances (DiLapi 1989; Letherby 1994). With this in mind it is clear that an individual who becomes pregnant and a mother in their teenage years have not chosen the 'right' time or circumstances. Although as Anne Phoenix suggests, '[t]he negative focus is produced by people who

are not, themselves, "young mothers" but rather outsiders. There is generally a disjunction between "outsider" and "insider" perspectives' (1991: 86).

As Julie Kent (2000) notes the legal and social concept of the 'child' which has developed in modern society has become divorced from sexuality and this means that it is particularly difficult to acknowledge the emotional and physical capacity of teenagers for sexual activity. The young pregnant woman/mother has a problematic social identity in that her bump is itself a stigma and sets her aside as 'other' – as 'inappropriate' – according to dominant expectations. In addition it is possible to be negatively sanctioned for 'sensible' choices:

> ...contraception forces a woman to define herself as a person who is sexually active. Planning specifically suggests not only that a woman has been sexually active once, but that she intends to be so again. A woman who plans is actively anticipating intercourse; in the terminology of the women interviewed, she is "looking to have sex" ...(Luker 1975 cited by Petchesky 1985: 218).

Thus, young women's experience of pregnancy and motherhood takes place in a 'damned if you do and a damned if you don't' context. Ironically a teenage girl seeking a termination may be seen as acting responsibly whereas this is often seen as a selfish and heartless option in an older married woman. Young mothers are not only stereotyped as a burden on the state (see for example Laws 1996; Phoenix 1991) but despite evidence to the contrary (Phoenix 1991; Ussher 2000) teenage mothers are stereotyped as bad mothers and their children severely disadvantaged. Arguably though, it is not the age of the woman that is the primary issue but the fact that younger pregnant girls/women are more likely to give birth outside marriage.

Young fatherhood does not 'mark' young men out in the same way as motherhood does young women as the double standard of sexuality condemns promiscuity in girls and young women but accepts and even applauds it in boys and young men (Allen 2003). The TPS does mention fatherhood:

> The first step is to put the needs of boys and young men firmly on the agenda of the local teenage pregnancy/sexual health partnership (Teenage Pregnancy Unit 2000: 7).

Despite this to date there is only a small amount of research in the UK focusing on male experience. Ultimately, the invisibility of young fathers in both social policy and social research reinforces the image of young mothers as single or lone mothers. When the fathers of teenage girls' babies are mentioned they are often portrayed as feckless, irresponsible and selfish; absent fathers who are unsupportive of mothers and their children (e.g. Marsiglio 1995).

Working with the community

First thoughts . . .

Since 2001 we – Letherby, Brady and Brown – as a group, as sub-groups and sometimes with others have been commissioned by a number of Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Boards (TPPB) to undertake a series of research and development projects exploring teenage pregnancy and young parenthood. We bid for our first project in response to a tender asking for researchers to explore the housing needs of young mothers in Coventry. We were encouraged by the initiative of Coventry TPPB to attempt to access the 'insider' perspective and were hopeful that our findings would influence policy.

Methods and methodology

In each of the research projects we have used/are using qualitative methods to collect data from pregnant teenagers and young mothers and fathers, formal supporters (those who work with pregnant teenagers and young parents in a professional capacity) and informal supporters (family and friends). Single, dyad and focus group interviews (with young people deciding whether they wish to be interviewed alone or with others) have enabled us to explore issues in-depth. We agree with others that one of the best ways to find out about people's feelings and experiences is to let them tell you about it themselves (Stanley and Wise 1993) and that one-to-one interviewing and small focus group work allow researchers to explore issues in greater depth than would be possible with larger groups (Gilbert 1993). Interviews are tape-recorded, with the permission of the respondent(s), and tapes are fully transcribed; analysis being 'grounded' in the experience of respondents.

In all projects respondents are fully informed of the purpose and aims of the project and made aware that their participation is voluntary, both verbally and by way of a 'Participant Information Sheet'. Respondents are free to withdraw at any time and are assured that they do not have to answer any questions that they would rather not. It is possible to

argue that our research may bring forward individuals who have little opportunity to talk about their experience. Involvement may 'bring up' issues for respondents which result in emotional distress. Care is taken at all times to be sensitive to the feelings and emotions of respondents, but at the same time it is important to note that emotional issues are themselves an important aspect of the data (see Letherby 2003 for further detail). A steering group is established for each project and at all times the research is guided by the ethical guidelines of the British Sociological Association (www.britsoc.org.uk).

The projects

Thus far we have undertaken the following research and development projects:

Research

Supported Semi-Independent Housing for Under 18 Lone Parents: Needs Assessment (Letherby et al. 2001)

Pregnancy and Post-Natal Experience of Young Women who Become Pregnant under the Age of 20 years (Letherby et al. 2002)

Housing Needs of Young Parents in Warwickshire (Letherby et al. 2003)

Experience and Support Needs of 'Young' Fathers in Warwickshire (Letherby et al. 2004)*

An Evaluation of Specialist Services for Pregnant Teenagers and Young Parents (Brown et al. 2005)

Power and Control in the Intimate and Personal Relationships of Pregnant Teenagers and Young Mothers (Brown et al. 2006)

Support Prior to and Following Termination and Miscarriage for Young Women (Brady et al. 2006)

Discourses of Prevention and Support in Relation to Teenage Pregnancy and Young Motherhood (Wilson ongoing PhD research, supervised by Letherby)

Development work

Development of a Multi-Professional Training Pack – Pregnant Teenagers and Young Parents: Health and Well-Being in Pregnancy, During Birth and Post-Natally (Letherby et al. 2003–2006, not published)

Training Young Parents to Become Peer Researchers – Lifelong
    Learning for Young Parents Project (Reported in Reid et al. 2005)
Development of An Entry and Exit Questionnaire/Interview for
    Young Parents who Access any form of Supported Housing
    (Reported in Brady et al. 2005)
Life Story Boards for Young Parents (Brady 2005–2006, not
    published)
Training for Professionals Supporting Young People in Leicester
    (Brady and Brown 2006, not published)

* We write 'young' in single quotation marks to highlight the view that the
fathers of babies born to young mothers are not always young themselves.

Main issues and findings

From the work we have undertaken we would argue that:

- It is necessary to focus on the holistic experience of teenage preg-
  nancy and young parenthood highlighting the positive as well as the
  negative aspects of young parenthood;
- It is imperative to work to raise the positive profile of support within
  the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy;
- We need to listen to 'insider' voices that is young parents them-
  selves (Phoenix 1991), and yet recognise that there is a continuum
  of 'insider'–'outsider' perspectives in that the health professional
  concerned to do their best for young parents but influenced in part
  by negative external discourses is not an 'outsider' in the same way
  as the guy at the local garage who shouts abuse at young pregnant
  women and mothers who walk past his work place.
- The experience of teenage pregnancy and young parenthood is char-
  acterised by multidimensional power relationships;
- It is important to recognise the needs of young families as well as
  those of young mothers and young fathers.

Reflecting on a positive relationship

When research is commissioned locally and the findings reflect local
agendas and priorities there is much more likelihood that researchers
will be involved and included in further policy and practice develop-
ments. We have found this to be the case. For example:

At the end of our 2001 project – Supported Semi-Independent Housing for Under 18 Lone Parents: Needs Assessment – with specific reference to housing, we made the following recommendations:

- Housing support needs to be available for young mothers under 16 who do not have the support of their families or whose families are unable to cope – young women in this age group do not want to go into care.
- Support needs to be ongoing – young mothers need practical support and advice about education and work, benefits and housing (including support and advice about moving on from semi-supported accommodation) and emotional support and advice (particularly when they do not have the support of their families/partners). Women in semi-supported housing may need 'extra' support to counter the stigma they may feel when they are easily identifiable.
- Care needs to be taken when choosing sites for semi-supported housing to minimise the harassment that young mothers have to face.
- Semi-supported housing needs to be just that – practical support including the provision of adequate accommodation and services, some provision of childcare and support to achieve independence. Emotional support is also needed.

One of the reasons for the research being commissioned at the time was the intention to build a new semi-supported housing complex in the city. Coventry TPPB ensured that the architect of this building used our research report as a blueprint. A real concern for the young parents in the existing semi-supported housing in Coventry was that lack of privacy. Because the only doors to individual living space were off a central, communal lounge, young women felt that their comings and goings and those of any visitors they had were open to scrutiny. Following the research the new building still has a communal space but each personal living space has its own front door.

Although the site for the new building was already determined there has subsequently been a considerable effort to build positive relationships with the local community. In addition, following the research a sub-group of the TPPB focusing specifically on housing need was established. Various housing providers sit on this committee in addition to the Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator for report and researchers from the CSJ. The original brief of this committee related to the recommendations above and the agenda has developed in line with new concerns.

At the end of our 2002 project – Pregnancy and Post-Natal Experience of Young Women who Become Pregnant under the Age of 20 years – we concluded the project with several recommendations for policy and future research. These included:

Awareness raising. Both health professionals and young women need help to challenge the dominant negative discourses of teenage pregnancy. Whilst recognising the importance of making young women aware of their possible current and future reproductive choices 'support' needs to be just that and health professionals need to be careful not to appear judgmental by focusing on prevention.

Specialist services. Our data suggests that targeted services both ante and postnatal organised *at appropriate times*, in *accessible*, *non-threatening* locations and focusing on the particular concerns of young women would be accessed. Some young women need one-to-one as well as group support.

As a result of these recommendations, Coventry TPPB:

- Established a Young Parents Forum;
- Commissioned the CSJ at Coventry University to design and deliver a training programme for health and social care professionals which was produced and presented by the research team that worked on the 2002 alongside young mothers who assisted in the production and delivery of the training programme and
- Secured funding for a specialist service aimed at addressing the ante and postnatal needs of pregnant teenagers and young parents (aged 16–24) in Coventry for an initial period of two years.

In addition our work in this area has led to a (developing) media profile for the support agenda with the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in both local and national press. For example:

'The teenage mums fighting prejudice' Catherine Turner, *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (26.05.2003: 27–29)

AN EMPOWERING research project in Coventry has gone a long way to challenge the old myth that teenagers only become pregnant to get council housing. More than 60 young mothers were given a say in the type of pre and post natal support they need

(continued)

research revealed most had gone onto training, employment and higher education (28).

Katie Jonas has always wanted to be a firefighter. And having a baby at 16 has only made her more determined to achieve her dream ambition.

She may have only given birth to daughter Morgan on May 6, but Katie is taking seven GCSEs this summer.

And staff at Acorn Court, the semi-supported housing project in Coventry where she is living, have offered to babysit to help her revise.

Katie said: 'I want to go to college and be a firefighter. I have been a fire cadet for two years'.

The teenager applied to live in the unit because of overcrowding at the grandparent's home . . . .

'There are workers here every day and they give you any help you need. They helped me fill in a form for housing benefit and have been giving me cooking lessons'.

Katie is taking mother hood in her stride.

She said: 'It's lovely. Everyone says Morgan looks like me but I don't think so. I love sitting and cuddling her' (29).

'Baby bias' Chris Arnot *Guardian Society* (16.04.2003: 6)

. . . while attitudes towards marriage and sex may have changed since 1980 teenage mothers still feel looked down on by the rest of society.

Researchers from Coventry University . . . have produced two reports, one on housing and the other on pre- and post-natal experiences, and although there was anxiety not to stereotype young mothers, the reports point out that low self-esteem is rife. Rightly or wrongly, the young mothers feel they are being judged by housing and health professionals as well as by older mothers on ante-natal courses. That, in turn, is dissuading them from accessing services to which they are entitled.

'The bottom line in that this is impacting on their children, and it could be putting their health at risk' says Gayle Letherby . . . .

'We want to challenge the stereotypical views that many of them [health professionals who work with pregnant teenagers and young mothers] admit to having when dealing with this group' says Kirsty Reid, teenage pregnancy support coordinator. 'We also want to involve young parents and perhaps change their views of health professionals'.

Letherby believes that misunderstandings are at the heart of the issue. As the second report says; 'Communication between young women and health professionals is affected by stereotypes on both sides. Some young women, having internalised the dominant negative discourse of teenage pregnancy and motherhood, expect to encounter judgmental attitudes, and some health professionals are suspicious and critical of young pregnant women'. 'It is important that young women don't feel pressurised into relationships they don't want and have access to the right contraception', Letherby says. 'At the same time, it's important that those who become pregnant are not stigmatised. We're not supporting promiscuity. We're telling it like it is'.

The response to these articles by readers of the newspapers, by our respondents and by our research commissioners was overwhelmingly positive, not least because of the holistic representation of young parenthood rather than the usual stereotypical focus on only the negative aspects of the experience.

Five years after our first, three-month long, project on young parenthood, several more projects and more importantly a significant number of policy initiatives have followed. Members of the original research team sit on various TTPB committees to 'represent the "insider" voice' and have been representing Coventry and Warwick TPPB at regional and national meetings and events.

Challenging the strategy

As the above examples demonstrate, extending our involvement beyond traditionally defined research boundaries has enabled us to remain involved in positive policy developments at the local level. In addition to the impact on policy makers and practitioners, these projects are concerned with direct impact on both the respondents who took

part in the studies, on the wider population of young people who were or could become either pregnant or parents and on the communities in which they live. However, we remain frustrated that at present the impact of our challenge to negative representations remains negligible within national policy initiatives and lay discourses. Within the latest UK Government policy initiatives on teenage pregnancy and young parenthood there is a recognition of support needs but nevertheless the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy supports the view that the sexual activity that young men and women engage in is inappropriate and that this sexual 'promiscuity' automatically marks them as 'bad parents'. The, arguably, impossible target for prevention – [to] halve the under 18 conception rate in England by 2010 – has led to some TPPBs over-concentrating on prevention as the neglect of support. Further, the support agendas focus on productivity outside of the home, given the objective to 'increase the participation of teenage mothers in education, training or work to 60% by 2010 to reduce the risk of long term social exclusion' (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) negates the parental experience of young parents. With this in mind, at the end of a project focusing on the experience and support needs of 'young' fathers in Warwickshire (Letherby et al. 2004: 62) we wrote:

> The current emphasis on prevention first and foremost and support in relation to engaging in education and work both stigmatises pregnant teenagers, 'young' parents and 'young' families and ignores the significance of family life. Surely work with pregnant teenagers and with 'young' parents and families is all about support – supporting individuals and couples to make the right choices for them and supporting them to enact those choices.

However, despite the positive response from Warwickshire TPPB to this suggestion, and despite the impact of our work at a local level, and although we have been asked to represent this work at both regional and national events, the national priority remains the reduction of teenage pregnancy.

The most recent statistics on conception seem to suggest that the strategy has had some success:

> The provisional 2004 under 18 conception rate for England is 41.5 per 1000 girls aged 15–17. This rate represents an overall decline of 11.1% since 1998 – the baseline year for the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy – and compares with a decline of 9.8% between 1998 and 2003.

> The provisional under 16 conception rate for England in 2004 is 7.5 per 1000 girls aged 13–15. This is 15.2% lower than the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy's 1998 baseline rate of 8.8 conceptions per 1000 girls aged 13–15 (Office for National Statistics 2006).

However, there is also a notable increase between 1998 and 2004 in the percentage of conceptions which are leading to termination and as our work suggests the decisions that young women make are sometimes influenced by the views and desires of significant professional and familial others, reflecting the lack of power and control that young people in this situation often experience (e.g. Brown et al. 2006; Letherby et al. 2002). A continued uncritical focus on prevention does little to challenge the view that teenage pregnancy is a problem that needs to be solved and despite research (such as ours) which presents a more rounded view, government agendas help to perpetuate an overwhelmingly negative image (Brown et al. forthcoming).

Reflections

In his 2004 Presidential Address to the American Sociological Association, Michael Burawoy argued for 'public sociology' thus:

> The bulk of public sociology is indeed of an organic kind – sociologists working with a labor movement, neighbourhood associations, communities of faith, immigrant rights groups, human rights organizations. Between the organic public sociologist and a public is a dialogue, a process of mutual education. The recognition of public sociology must extend to the organic kind which often remains invisible, private and is often considered to be apart from our professional lives. The project of such public sociologies is to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life (Burawoy 2005: 8–9).

Thus, Burawoy asserts that sociologists should act as 'public intellectuals' by finding new ways to be able to comment about the world and new ways to be heard: for example through online publishing and engaging with the media. He also advocates a continued focus on the moral aspect of the knowledge claims that researchers make arguing for work that is both policy focused and accountable within and outside of the academic community. For us our work with and for (and sometimes by) pregnant teenagers and young parents is rewarding in more than academic terms.

Indeed, at times our continued involvement in 'public intellectualism' has taken us away from traditionally defined and expected academic labour such as the production of books and articles and it is only now several years on from our first project that we are beginning to develop an academic publishing portfolio in this area. Yet, our research and development work in this area stands as a challenge to the view that academic research has little meaning for the lives of 'real' people and provides an example of how academics can work with the community.

13

impet**us**: A Movement Towards Shared Ethical Values and Human Rights

Adam Short

Introduction

The challenges we face as individuals and communities – from conflict over ideology and identity (ethnicity, faith, social status or new arrival) to global warming, the implications of science and the allocation of resources – demand ethical, as well as political, economic and scientific solutions. This chapter discusses the work of the impet**us** youth programme of the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust. Since its official launch at the Young People's Parliament in Birmingham in 2003, impet**us** has been working in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to develop a culture of shared ethical values and human rights across the UK. Drawing on Mark Tappan's theories of 'appropriation' and 'mediated action' the chapter explores the potential of the Human Rights Act to be a new cultural tool with which a new generation might develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to incorporate human rights and ethical values into global, national and local decisions. I offer both an argument for the urgency and importance of children and young people engaging in active human rights education and a reflection on the problematics and possibilities of creating change.

I joined the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust as the impet**us** England Coordinator in August 2005 having recently spent considerable time at university deconstructing New Labour and its attending policies; most studiously following the rise of 'youth' and participation policy. I came to the post having spent eight years working with Changemakers Foundation advocating for young person led action both as a National Youth Advocate and later as a Trustee of the organisation. During that time I worked with the All Party Parliamentary Group

on Youth Affairs and visited projects and organisations in Bangladesh, Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia with the British Council. I had also worked on service learning programmes in Colorado and projects in Poland and Belgium, and presented UK work at the UN World Youth Symposium in Tokyo in 2003. In 2002 I, and a small group, founded Voices for Change, an organisation which creates annual events which bring together young social activists from over 30 countries. It is this experience that alerts me to the possibilities that a human rights framework might bring to children and young people as they construct their social and political identities at a time of rapid change in the UK, and at a pronounced time of global interdependence.

Defining 'human rights'

One of many contested pieces of legislation under New Labour, the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998 came into force in 2000. By incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law, the Act gives statutory force domestically to a range of fundamental human rights such as: life (Article 2), liberty (Article 5), fair trial (Article 6), private and family life (Article 8), religious expression (Article 9), free speech (Article 10), free assembly (Article 11) and freedom from degrading treatment and discrimination (Article 14). For a long time debates about human rights in Britain have been largely focused on issues overseas, for example on the Balkans conflict, China, Rwanda, Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo Bay. Important though these are, the HRA demands we now look to our own ability in the UK to secure the dignity and worth of every individual.

Rabinder Singh QC, member of the national advisory council for **impetus**, speaking at the **impetus** annual UK showcase event at the Museum of London in 2005, described the need for the promotion of the HRA in terms of the famous Chinese expression 'we live in interesting times':

> This is a troubled world and I wish I could pretend otherwise – but things have been bad before, much worse. Those who came before us handed down to us the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights. They did not flinch even in the most dangerous period of the twentieth century, and it must fall to us today to keep those values alive now with even more passion.

Lord Irvine claimed that the HRA 'took central place in our [the Labour Party's] integrated programme of constitutional change', which included amongst other things devolution for Scotland and Wales and reform of the House of Lords. The HRA was conceived to frame the changing relationship between the citizen and the state under New Labour. In the words of Baroness Scotland it was 'a new act for a new citizenship in a new age' (2001). Its passing meant 'UK citizens had, for the first time, rights' instead of 'liberties' (Johnson 2004: 114), the HRA providing, 'a single clear catalogue of their rights and freedoms . . . which are shared by 800 million people across Europe' (Faulkner 2006: 6). Rather than a long and expensive trip to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, human rights were made accessible to all at any level of court in the UK.

The introduction of the HRA centred on four main New Labour concerns: building cohesion in a pluralist society, protecting those rights which underpin the democratic process, improvement in public services and addressing inequality experienced by minority and marginalised groups. Six years on progress on these fronts has been slow. The cohesion discourses and strategies contained within the Denham Report, the Cantle Report and the most importantly the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, or the 'Parekh Report' which preceded the Human Rights Act in 2001 expresses the relationship between human rights and shared values as an important precondition for achieving equality and solidarity. The Parekh Report expresses it thus: 'Human rights principles provide a sound framework for handling differences, and a body of values around which society can unite' (Parekh 2000: 95). Many believed that the passing of the HRA could be the start of such an approach and a progressive development of multicultural policy. Indeed, as Baroness Scotland (2001) explains in her Roscoe Lecture address:

> One of the strongest arguments for incorporating basic values in statute law is the increasingly diverse nature of UK society. Diverse societies cannot take shared values for granted. The core values need to be stated and affirmed so that everybody understands what they are, and so that we can all learn to interpret them in a similar way.

It was recognised as a key summary point in the *Governance of Multicultural Societies: Lessons in Public Policy Convenors' Report* (Singh 2002: 3) that culturally and ethnically diverse societies committed to liberal values in the modern world have to maintain two sets of

institutions: those which are based upon shared values and others which belong to the diverse communal world of the separate groups.

However, following 11 September 2001, the continuing 'war on terror' and significantly the London bombs of 7 July 2005, a rights-based cohesion strategy which aimed to, 'build in every citizen a consciousness of the shared ownership of the fundamental values of society, enforceable as a last resort through the legal process' (BIHR 2006: 6) seems to have given way, in a substantive shift in policy, to a narrow nationalistic political discourse. Rather than the HRA being promoted as a new reference point for a multiethnic, multicultural UK, Government policy now rests on essentialist claims to collective identity; on the 'rediscovery' of 'British' values.

For example, in a revealing roundtable discussion printed in *Prospect* magazine in April 2005, Gordon Brown (Brown 2005: 20), in marked contrast to Baroness Scotland's calls in 2001 for educating the public in core ethical values, marks the new terrain of this debate:

> I think almost every question that we have to deal with about the future of Britain revolves around what we mean by Britishness . . . Unless you have a strong sense of shared purpose, a strong sense of who you are, you will not succeed in the global economy and global society. And I believe that we have not been explicit enough about what we mean by Britishness for far too long.

Simultaneously, as individuals criticise this shift in policy as too economistic, reactionary and divisive, groups monitoring civil rights and liberties, who applauded the Government upon the introduction of the HRA, have spoken out increasingly at growing authoritarianism. They contend that since the introduction of the HRA, such rights as the right to protest and free speech have been constrained, resulting for example in a four day campaign in August 2006 by the Stop the War Coalition to secure the necessary legal permission for it's demonstration to be allowed in Parliament Square. The right to liberty has been limited, for example in the British state's ability to detain its citizens without charge for ever longer periods of time through the regime of control orders introduced under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005.

Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, on discussing this ongoing tension between individual rights and the protection of the wider community, looks to the Counterterror Report of the all-party joint parliamentary committee on human rights (Dismore 2006) and comments, 'it speaks of the often false choice between liberty and

security, of the dangers of counterproductivity in the rush to the statute book and of a human-rights framework that contains careful balances between values of protection, freedom, equal treatment and justice' (Chakrabarti 2006).

Arguably, progress in improving public services and addressing inequalities has been hindered by the lack of guidance and training within government departments and wider public sector agencies from the outset of the HRA. Outside the judiciary, on whose work the HRA impacted in the first instance, work by the Institute for Public Policy Research (Butler 2005: 3) to promote FRED (Fairness, Respect, Equality and Dignity) in public sector reform has failed to capture the imagination of local authorities and services. Media coverage which has much maligned the HRA has undermined or missed much of the positive work being carried out under the provisions of the HRA. Organisations such as Carers UK in their report, *Whose rights are they anyway? Carers and the Human Rights Act* (Watson 2006: 3), and Help the Aged (2005: 4) have both successfully used the HRA framework to identify policy changes which would improve the lives of the individuals they represent.

In contrast, New Zealand has developed a consistent language emanating from its Bill of Rights in 1990 setting the tone for the cohesion debate in public discourse and providing leadership to the public, private and community sectors (HRC 2006). Meanwhile in the UK, ever weakening political leadership has left the HRA floundering. As Raymond Plant, a member of the UK parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights notes, 6 years on, 'the full implications of [the HRA] have barely been felt' (Plant 2005: 201).

Developing a culture of human rights by engaging young people in human rights learning

The British Institute of Human Rights warns that, 'the government must be careful about claiming that a human rights culture has taken hold in Britain when the evidence suggests that many ordinary people have yet to wake up to the fact that they have rights at all' (BIHR 2006: 6). Nevertheless, despite declining political will at the top, many of those in the UK who helped secure the HRA have continued to work within NGOs and the public sector to develop work on cohesion, public services, equalities and protecting democratic rights. Central to the approach of **impetus** is the idea of developing a culture of human rights. Rather than a legalistic understanding of human rights which refers solely to the legal framework constructed through the interpretation and application

of the articles of human rights instruments and anti-discrimination legislation including the jurisprudence of domestic and international courts, a cultural understanding of human rights is one which fore-grounds the underlying shared values – such as mutual respect, equality, fairness of treatment, honesty and integrity, personal freedom and indi-vidual responsibility, compassion – which **i**mpe**tus** promotes, as a way of transforming society, because it provides:

> an ethical language we can all sign up to, a ... language which doesn't belong to any particular group or creed but to all of us. One that is based on principles of common humanity (Jack Straw 1999).

The potential cultural significance of the HRA is that in the UK it provides a framework for debating contemporary issues 'which emphas-ises tolerance, privacy and autonomy on the one hand and concern for the rights of others and the needs of the wider community on the other' (Klug 2000: 54).

The biggest challenge for developing a culture of human rights stand-ards is, however, bridging the gap between the stated ideals and practices on the ground. Director-General of Amnesty International, Irene Khan, speaking in May 2005 expressed her opinion that, '[h]uman rights are less an initiative of governments and more an endeavour by people .... We should be looking at the way in which human rights have "gone local" ' (Khan 2005). This shift in focus to individual and civil society actions to promote, implement and protect human rights recognises the ethical responsibilities we owe to all at a time of increasing global interdependence, to counter what Ishay identifies as the 'bureaucratiz-ation of the institutionalised human rights regime'. Enduring change, she notes, 'will require the coordination of human rights campaigns with democratic agencies at the level of national and local governance' (Ishay 2005: 354) whether in Beijing or Gaza or Glasgow.

The genesis of **i**mpe**tus** lay in a consultation convened by the Insti-tute for Global Ethics UK Trust (IGE-UK) in December 2000, entitled *The Human Rights Act: Threat or Promise*? The question 'How can we build on the very creative work that young people produced to mark the introduction of the Human Rights Act?' prompted the idea of a youth awards programme exploring and promoting the HRA and the values underpinning it. With funding from the Department for Constitutional Affairs, Department for Education and Skills, Welsh Assembly Govern-ment and the Gordon Cook Foundation, **i**mpe**tus** was first piloted in 2002 with the aim of being a leading programme, working with children

and young people from as young as nursery age to 25, to develop a culture of human rights and shared ethical values across the UK. Since it was founded in 1990 by journalist, Rushworth Kidder (Kidder 2005), the work of the Institute for Global Ethics has sought to encourage the exploration of shared values and ethical decision-making. impet**us** argues that it is important that children and young people have a formative opportunity to explore human rights and ethical values in order to recognise the important role these can play in their own lives, and in society as a whole, and to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to put them into practice.

Since its inception impet**us** has worked with young people, teachers, youth workers and community-based organisations to create active human rights learning. The annual impet**us** UK Showcase, held in October to mark the anniversary of the introduction of the HRA, provides a national platform for exemplary projects chosen by each country. In the 2006/07 cycle the criteria by which projects are to be evaluated are:

- *Exploration* of human rights and shared ethical values,
- *Innovative* approaches to applying human rights to an issue of concern to you,
- *Collective* working on your project with others,
- *Sharing* your project more widely with local and/or global communities and
- *Reflection* on your experience and the impact of your project.

Some of the issues children and young people have tackled in their impet**us** projects since the awards programme was launched include arms-trading, domestic violence, the spread of unionism in developing countries, bullying, homelessness, the use and exploitation of child soldiers, violent crime, cultural identity, fair-trade and sustainable development. The issues projects have addressed reflect the social, political and economic reality facing children and young people at the beginning of the 21st century. In contrast to the dominant narrative of children and young people as disconnected and apathetic, such projects demonstrate a critical social and political awareness, and a growing ability to express and address concerns through the idea of global social justice.

In 2004 impet**us** was short-listed for the prestigious Human Rights Award by Liberty, Justice and the Law Society. The judges' citation commends the project 'for innovative and crucial work bringing human rights to young people across the UK, educating and inspiring

them to promote values of dignity, equality and fairness' and 'for imaginative work uniting young people from diverse backgrounds, and making a significant contribution to developing a culture of respect for human rights'.

Nevertheless, for most children and young people, human rights are still a new or distant idea although potential connection to issues and involvements in their lives abound. For example, a large number of young individuals will come to know the public world through their participation in the Make Poverty History campaign and G8 lobbying, fair-trade initiatives, equalities movements, environmental movements, anti-war demonstrations and many, many more. Research on the Iraq protests for instance identifies this as one of the largest mobilisations of children and young people in recent UK social history (Cunningham and Lavalette 2004: 258). This is mobilisation largely by children and young people themselves; forming organisations such as School Students against the War and using now commonplace technologies such as blogging, chatrooms and texting to co-ordinate and organise. Indeed when in 2003 I joined marches in York, London and Lisbon against the invasion of Iraq and again recently to call for an immediate cessation of violence in Lebanon, it was 11- and 14-year olds leading hundreds of protesters with chants such as, 'Bush, Blair, CIA how many kids have you killed today?' and, to the music of the Blood Hound Gang, 'Who let the bombs out, Bush, Bush, Bush and Blair!'.

In short, there is a growing sense amongst some teachers, NGO practitioners and policy makers that the lives young people lead are not the lives that formal education prepares them for. A number of education movements have emerged to influence curriculum development to better equip, as they argue, children and young people for their futures. These include improved sexual health education, social enterprise, understanding science in society, education for global citizenship, sustainable development and like **impetus**, human rights education. On rights, **impetus** argues that the HRA and human rights more broadly can offer children and young people a meaningful framework in which to understand their daily experiences and to explore the issues they are talking about on the street; whether that is arms-trading, bullying, globalisation, American or other foreign policy, global warming, violent crime, immigration, censorship in the media or the growth of nuclear ownership.

Building on curiosity about a local issue, concerns personal to them or news of relevance to their family and friends is recognised by **impetus** as a meaningful place to start a project. For example, a group at Royal

Docklands School, London, received an **impetus** Award in 2005 for their work on exploring feelings, issues and understandings of arms-trading among local people when an Arms Fair took place at the Excel exhibition centre in East London which borders the school's perimeter fence. They produced a powerful short-film called, *Where is the love*? This project demonstrates how human rights learning can start local and specific, and it also helps to highlight the growing awareness among children and young people that what happens to citizens in one part of the world can often have a direct and significant impact upon the lives of citizens elsewhere.

As the UN Decade of Human Rights Education (1995–2004) advocated, in our 'interesting' times, providing children and young people with the opportunity to explore and understand the human right's story, is of critical importance. Ishay writes that '[o]ne may think of the history of human rights as a journey guided by lampposts across ruins left behind by ravaging and insatiable storms'. Quoting Benjamin Barber, she continues, 'it is a history that is simultaneously both a marker of barbarism' as much as it is of 'hope and of lessons learnt' (Ishay 2005: 4).

Facilitating children and young people to discover the many human rights treaties and declarations which have been drafted over the last 60 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) provides an opportunity to access the significant corpus of moral vision contained within. Being a distillation of ancient teachings and philosophies, major world religions, enlightenment thought and secular voices, these documents have tried over many years, 'to address the whole of mankind with a single voice' (Cassese 1999: 150). For example, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, the Refugee Convention 1951, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment 1984 and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965). These texts bring an awareness of history, struggle and diversity. They offer visions for the future which disrupt current power relations and authority by asserting the value of equality for all. Understanding that the HRA is part of that human rights story, direct in line from the European Convention of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is crucial for building human rights culture in the UK.

As Mark Tappan (Tappan 2006: 4) has shown in his work on 'mediated action' and 'appropriation' at Colby College, a socio-cultural approach

to the study of moral development aims to understand the relationship between the individual and the social, cultural, historical and institutional contexts in which the individuals live. Mediated action for Tappan has two central elements, an 'agent' and specific 'cultural tools' (primarily linguistic or semiotic tools such as books, videos, peers and elders). 'Appropriation', is the means by which the agent develops the skill and know-how of a particular tool (Mastery) and the ability of applying it in their lives (Ownership).

The **i**mpet**us** criteria provide a framework for an active experience very similar to 'appropriation', whereby children and young people develop mastery and ownership of the HRA and the values underpinning it. Tappan identifies this process of appropriation as a 'critical psychology', which views moral development and moral education as a form of political practice. Starting local, exploring human rights stories, applying it in their context and sharing the work, the Wednesday evening music club at Mayfield Special School, Birmingham, had heard about a class-based project which was exploring equal rights and opportunities through the life and work of Martin Luther King. Inspired by the work which had resulted in the formation of a school council, they wanted through their music club to develop some form of communication which was not verbal or written which would allow them to access the Martin Luther King speech and represent what they meant by equal rights and opportunities. Over the course of six weeks they put the Martin Luther King speech to music, added their own key words and phrases and choreographed a group to perform with the music. The final piece named the *Luther King Rap: breaking down walls and barriers* was performed in many assemblies and to great affect at the 2005 UK showcase event.

Some problematics and potentials

Impulsion, thrust, drive, momentum, movement .... **i**mpet**us** by its definition is something that provides energy or motivation to accomplish or to undertake something. This can be difficult however without a national context favourable to your cause, and without the funding or infrastructure of a large organisation. It can be slow and difficult work to counter negative media representation, and build understanding of the work you are doing beyond those already inclined to support it.

Unilateral military campaigns, growing inequalities of wealth, creeping nationalism and the induced notion of the 'threat from within' has publicly subordinated the moral vision of human rights in the last five years. In a detailed account of the UK's law and policy relating to

Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that, 'everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries, freedom from persecution', Mauve Sherlock, the Chief Executive of the Refugee Council concludes that the legal rights later enshrined in the Refugee Convention have been 'eroded through a process of legal and political attrition'. Sherlock argues that for those committed to the right of asylum the answer lies in a radical affirmation of the ethical basis for the legal rights of the Refugee Convention; 'It means taking on the challenge of considering our ethical responsibilities to each other in a "globalised" world'. In practical terms, Sherlock suggests this means articulating the so-called asylum 'debate' in the context of the West's role in creating the crises from which refugees flee, looking holistically at the connection between poverty, famine, social and political instability and being prepared to talk about those who fall outside of the convention definition, such as those fleeing conflicts or internally displaced people (Sherlock 2005: 6–8).

There are new connections waiting to be made between the self-satisfying rhetoric of values which has long given substance to parliamentary speeches and politicians, and the ability of citizens to hold governments to account for how well they have incorporated these values into global, national and local decisions. Currently the genuine concerns and frustrations of many people, including those of a wide and diverse range of children and young people are atomised within fragmented funding regimes or repressed through disinterested media reporting. The near-not-reported demonstration on the 5 August 2006 in central London of over 80,000 people calling for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon is a case in point.

Can we imagine for example an election defeat in the future for a government who has failed to fulfil satisfactorily its moral and political obligations set out in domestic and international human rights instruments?

There will be a renewed opportunity for leadership in the development of a culture of human rights and shared ethical values when the Commission for Equality and Human Rights commences its work in England and Wales in October 2007. Established by the Equality Act 2006, the commission is heralded as 'an independent influential champion whose purpose is to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people and protect human rights'. Its role is to ' bring together the expertise and resources to promote equality and tackle discrimination in relation to gender, gender reassignment,

disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age and human rights from October 2007, and will include Race by April 2009 (CEHR 2006).

While this may give some cause for hope, as I note above, the compelling arguments proffered prior to the introduction of the HRA did not remain long the 'official' line. Indeed recently it has been Ministers and opposition politicians who have helped make the HRA appear to only benefit 'terrorists and asylum seekers'. Conservative Party leader David Cameron has argued that the HRA should be replaced with a US-style Bill of Rights because the HRA 'has made it harder to protect our security and it's done little to protect some of our liberties' (Cameron 2006: 12). When Ministers have spoken in support of the HRA, they have sought to temper 'rights' by enjoining these with 'responsibilities'. As Johnson (2004: 117) argues, 'the potential impact of the HRA has been diluted … by the government's insistence that they are about building a culture of rights and responsibilities …they have taken an approach which stresses citizens' responsibilities and seeks to individualize rights within an essentially legal discourse'.

It appears for the moment however that confidence has been placed once more in the HRA following a review of its implementation carried out by the Department for Constitutional Affairs, prompted by the media attention of high profile legal cases (BIHR 2006: 5) and the announcement of the Conservatives' plans by David Cameron. The Lord Chancellor acknowledges in the review's report that the HRA 'has been widely misunderstood', and that there have been 'deficiencies in training and guidance'. He stresses that 'the government will ensure that the generations of today and the future understand the continuing importance to our democracy' of the ECHR (from which the HRA derives) (Faulkner 2006: 42).

The introduction of human rights education is not only new for children and young people, it has a new language and a potentially new way of seeing that can be a barrier to participation for any of those individuals who do not have a pre-existing understanding of human rights and values education. Some teachers find it difficult to broach the 'loaded' subject, or to facilitate children and young people talking about and tackling controversial issues or do just not make the connection, where there could be, between their work and human rights issues. Projects billed as human rights, or citizenship education projects more broadly, can be filled with projects such as healthy eating and exercise posters, anti-smoking campaigns, awareness raising about teenage pregnancies and do not litter campaigns. While these projects may be interesting, unless they are contextualised, they are limited and potentially limiting.

Part of the challenge is finding creative ways of removing the barriers to teachers participating in human rights education. Over the last three years **i**mpet**us** has worked with many teachers who have been looking to bring specific dialogue about values and human rights to their existing work. Some have established class projects or long-term whole school programmes which have helped to deliver participative citizenship education. Others have used human rights ideas as a means to build links between local and global communities. For example Conway Primary School in Birmingham during 2005/06 developed a cultural heritage project creating links between their students and a school in Lahore, Pakistan, to explore cultural identity and values. Youth and participation workers have also used the flexible structure of **i**mpet**us** in creating opportunities for children and young people to address their concerns.

The classroom – symbolic of the transfer of knowledge, culture and values from one generation to the next – has never been an apolitical space. Surely, with the aim of preparing children and young people for their futures, we should be creating more opportunities for children and young people to bring to the classroom, their experience, concerns and issues? Those children and young people, who have been on demonstrations, have campaigned or feel frustrated with an issue, need an educator who can help them to reflect on and contextualise their experiences and facilitate wider analogies and understandings.

As power seems ever more closely held around those who perpetuate division and create mistrust in the institutions best placed to address them, we at **i**mpet**us**, like many others, are working to make sure that there are people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills to claim and protect their rights, and learn to engage in the struggle for human rights for all peoples. If we want to develop a culture of human rights and ethical values, we need to develop a pedagogy of human rights which is participatory, and both preserves the 'purity' of rights, while acknowledging the ethical responsibilities we owe at a time of increasing global interdependence.

Part III
Building Healthy Communities

14
Building Healthy Communities

Laura Potts

A healthy community: what would that be like? It would reflect the various dimensions of health: social, societal, mental, physical, spiritual and emotional. We can imagine supportive neighborhoods, sound and attractive buildings, public spaces to hang out and meet, and for children to play, worthwhile fairly paid work and jobs, minimal traffic but good access to excellent public transport links, lively and friendly communities and networks, green spaces, trees and gardens, no crime, no violence, community schools and learning environments, free leisure and cultural facilities, clean streets, clean air, clean water ... and so on. Such a picture has elements of all the dimensions of health; the vision is of an economic, social and environmentally sustainable community (see Peat chapter 10), of less combative and unequal relations between people, of a dynamic and caring place for people to live meaningful lives. Or as Barr and Hashagen (2000) more succinctly frame it: 'sustainability, liveability and equitability' (cited in Ledwith 2005: 84). This nirvana closely resembles the 'vision for York' that the city's residents produced in a consultative process, *Without Walls: towards a vision for York'* (http://www.yorkwow.org.uk/) that informs the Local Strategic Partnership planning process. We seem to know what it would be like – this was the easy part of the research that the consultants for the York exercise undertook; what is much less clear is how the different elements are to be balanced. How might this healthy community be achieved, and such a transformation realized? A very preliminary starting point is the recognition that 'health is not a commodity that can be bought or sold in packages ... it is deeply rooted in the socioeconomic, gender and racial context in which the individual lives' (Orme and Wright 1996: 61). And secondly, as Adams asserts, a recognition that improving health and reducing inequalities demands authorities 'work in a dynamic

way which recognizes that to promote health will require focusing on economic, social and environmental policy' (Adams 1996: 41). Such perspectives are clearly evident in the contributions included in this section. They demonstrate the kind of eco-social model of epidemiology proposed by Krieger (1994), which rests on a questioning of the established and long-accepted epistemological assumptions, that, for instance,

> do{es} not differentiate between determinants of disease in individuals and in populations [and] fails to distinguish between ... 'the causes of cases' vs 'the causes of incidence' ... The former emphasizes individual susceptibility and interventions aimed at 'high risk' individuals, whereas the latter highlights population exposures and the need to shift the distribution of disease in the entire population ... to a healthier state (ibid: 892).

My own biography plays a role in these processes and considerations. A first degree in English and Related Literature and Philosophy provided a foundation for concerns with the use of narrative, moral and ethical thinking and practice, and the history of ideas. My professional work was originally in health education, oriented toward public health and patients' perspectives, and in the women's health movement. Subsequently, I developed and taught women's studies, within an inter-disciplinary faculty, and social science and health studies. More recently, I have taught on an undergraduate community studies programme, bringing a return to the relationship between the local, the political and the academic. An identity that is both academic (interested in the theoretical, in making sense and understanding everyday life and phenomena through the application of the learning of others), and activist (working for social and political change, through a variety of means), establishes a dual purpose, and sometimes conflicting priorities. And it can make both communities uncomfortable: the 'impartiality' and 'objectivity' of the research process is still a quiet, if highly contested, value, so that academics may be unsettled by such clear positioning of the researcher. Activists are impatient with the niceties of research, its even-handedness, and tardy responsiveness to the urgency of the issues at hand.

   The means to healthy communities may be activist, professional or theoretically informed, but they are inevitably realized through public health measures – defined as 'the science and art of the prevention of disease, the promotion of health and the prolongation of life through

the organized efforts of society' (Middelton 2003: 83). This definition was first given in 1927, taken up by the World Health Organization (WHO) and also used in the Acheson report (DoH 1998). Despite also having a long pedigree, at 20 years old now, the Ottawa Charter and the World Health Organization's *Health For All 2000* (WHO 1985) are still the preeminent example of a strategic approach to improving health and reducing inequalities, with its emphasis on five inter-related strands: building healthy public policy, creating supportive environments, strengthening community action, developing personal skills and re-orienting health services. It is, however, also crucial to recognize that global processes affect health (Guest 2005), and the realities of globalization threaten public health (Feacham 2002), so that in relation to health status, 'community' can be envisaged as a very broad entity, expressing the inter-connectedness of a vast range of people and places. Or, in the words of Michael Wilson, 'There is no health for me without my brother. There is no health for Britain without Bangladesh' (1976: 117).

Labonte (1998) has argued that social connectedness to community is an essential condition of being able to experience health and well-being, alongside both a physical capability which is expressed as vitality and energy, and a mental capability in terms of meaning and purpose in life. While a range of different aspects of such healthy communities are discussed in the following chapters, such as – to utilize Hashagen's (2003: 291–292) categorization, community skills, knowledge and confidence, an equalities and justice agenda, and community organization and networks of care and support – the common concern is with his fourth category: community involvement. Arguably, a key element of such a strong and health-promoting community is one in which its members are engaged and participating, with opportunities to effect changes, in consultation with each other; at the least, there have to be the means for such a role to be legitimate and realizable. This does not equate just to consultation by those with power and authority of those with less; it should involve processes and material conditions that make such engagement meaningful, equitable and productive.

Taylor (2003) identifies four approaches to public involvement: the 'consumerist approach in which people are asked for their views on specific issues or services by those responsible for those services'; the representatives approach, 'a quasi-democratic approach of appointing public representatives to sit on ... different structures within health organisations'; the interest group approach, which 'develop their own agendas which they can then attempt to promote'; and the network approach, which accesses 'the informal networks and activities

within communities to find out the ways people understand and live their lives and find ways to help them articulate their perspectives' (2003: 140–141). In this context, a hierarchy of involvement is a useful tool of measurement; Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation describes a scale from manipulation to citizen control, and has been much used as a basis for other classificatory systems. Nonetheless, a biomedical model of professional dominance and prime authority still tends to persist in public health policy and practice; as Moon et al. (2000) assert,

> Lay epidemiology remains marginalised information scarcely recognized beyond sociology as legitimate knowledge. Despite most health professionals recognizing that lay people have ideas about the causes of ill health, these ideas tend to be viewed as interesting, but irrational.

These chapters illustrate and discuss some of the ways in which practitioners have worked to legitimate lay knowledge in relation to health.

The policy rhetoric of building community has its origins in a particular time, the late 1970s and early 1980s, and a particular context, that of liberal democracies, informed too by an emergent politics of identity, as Taylor (2003) and Milewa et al. (2002) show in relation to the history of community participation for health. (That history-on-the-page mirrors my own lived-history of political and pedagogical engagement: through community education and the praxis of the women's health movement, local and national work in a community health council and the Public Health Association, Local Agenda 21 and sustainable development work, national environmental campaigns and community-based research.) The very idea of 'community' has been revived, or hijacked, by New Labor, in the context, for instance, of the Neighborhood Renewal Strategy and community capacity building, SureStart and Health Action Zones, with a focus on social capital; these are marked by an enthusiasm for 'engaging communities', or involving them, in local politics and decision-making. As Ledwith claims, 'the Third Way located community and civil society as the interface between people and the state . . . For the first time, we find the language of partnership with community' (2005: 16). On the ground, in York at least, this rhetoric has been broadly manifest – notwithstanding some local changes in delivery practice – in the instigation of Neighborhood Forums and ward-based meetings, supplemented by quarterly newsletters which invite residents to propose and then to vote on local 'improvements' (dog dirt bins, youth facilities, street lighting, play equipment and so on) and in large-scale

consultation exercises. Arguably, this practice is more about pleasing consumers, and voters, than about genuine community development, partnership or empowerment of citizens. For meanwhile, the major decisions, about levels of service, planning developments and policy, are made through the established bureaucracies of local authority politics. While NGOs and new social movement groups have long campaigned for the inclusion of their views, and for the epistemological revolution this entails, all too often the involvement of 'lay' people has been promoted from the top down, and fails to challenge existing power struggles in any substantive way. For example, in the case of the GM Nation debate in 2003, the process of rolling out consultation across communities of interest failed to engage participants in anything more than a public relations exercise (see Irwin 2003). As Cooke and Kothari (2001) suggest, participation can be a tyranny for the 'lay' people taking part in participatory projects or initiatives.

The impetus to lay participation comes from another direction too. The changing relationship between experts and the public, whose origins tend to be ascribed to the BSE crisis, the argument about the MMR vaccination and foot and mouth disease (all public health issues), rests on shifts in the placement of trust and credibility (Irwin 2001) in response to institutional and governmental denial. As Mayer explains,

> the discredited role of experts and scientists in policymaking has greatly stimulated the intellectual debate in policy analysis and led to proposals for possible alternatives. The effects of these changed social and political relations are noticed in many policy fields, but most particularly in relation to the governance of risk and scientific enquiry, and to health risks especially. Certainly there has been a participatory turn in policy analysis . . . based on a reappraisal of the concept of participation as a means to develop a new kind of "knowledge", to save and possibly strengthen the relation between "truth and policymaking" (1997: 4).

The House of Lords Select Committee Report urged a similar approach:

> We have argued above that public confidence in science and policy based on science has been eroded in recent years. In consequence, there is a new humility on the part of science in the face of public attitudes, and a new assertiveness on the part of the public. Today's public expects not merely to know what

is going on, but to be consulted; science is beginning to see the wisdom of this... (2000: 5.1)

Coote and Franklin suggest that relations between government and citizens can be compared to a personal relationship breakdown, and that 'respectful dialogue' is similarly required to rebuild political relationships (1999: 186). This, they suggest, demands 'multiple engagement of diverse forms of knowledge and experience' and the inclusion of the voices of all relevant stakeholders (ibid: 187).

There are, however, cogent criticisms of the participatory turn. Rayner questions whether 'consultative and participatory processes [are]... a true path to increased democracy or just another layer of technocracy?' and suggests that the 'discourse of participation is essentially a managerial discourse, perhaps, even more narrowly, a crisis management discourse masquerading as a theory of democracy. It... presents citizens with a largely predetermined range of remedial or damage-mitigating options from which to select. It is consensus seeking with respect to both knowledge and values and, as such, it is depoliticising' (2003: 169). Perrons and Skye make a similar argument, questioning the reality of change on the ground, as it is experienced: 'in practice, recognition, participation and empowerment are largely discursive, and yet have displaced questions of power differences and structural economic inequalities that often lie at the heart of various forms of disadvantage from the agenda' (2003: 265). Many local activists and politicians are, however, reluctant to dismiss the whole notion of empowerment through participation, and of a revitalized deliberative democracy, even if it has failed, on some counts, to fulfill all it promised. The chapters here certainly suggest how public health can be improved by such processes. It may, therefore, be useful to adopt Rayner's idea of a 'discourse of mobilisation' (2003: 169), which offers a different approach, and while his terms of reference are the relations between science and society, a similarly robust application of participatory engagement can be provided by the mobilization of communities that is inherent in radical community development practices.

'The organized efforts of society' (Middelton 2003: 83) can be mobilized from the ground up through community development for health; within thinking about public health, community development has long been espoused as a key means to instigate processes by which people will be empowered to take responsibility for their own health (Dalziel 2003). In recent practice, the term has been somewhat debased: community development has come rather to be interpreted as an activity promoted

by professionals, particularly by those working in 'the community', such as health visitors and social workers, to their less privileged users. This has been further consolidated by the political context of New Labor; as Ledwith shows,

> In the UK, within a decade the language of partnership, participation and sustainability has become the order of the day, blurring the role of the state in relation to civil society in a blanket of of politically acceptable rhetoric imported from the radical agenda of community work (2005: 25).

Community development is, rather, a radical means to social change by and for the people, with core values of social justice, participation, equality, learning and co-operation. The Standing Conference for Community Development defines it thus:

> community development is about building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives (Gilchrist 2003: 151).

More than that, the empowerment espoused by community development can only be political; it necessitates conflict and change, within a context of social justice. The status quo is to be disrupted; hegemonic knowledge and practices disputed; and a realignment of power established. It is in this context that work to create healthier communities needs to be situated, and against this standard that the chapters here need to be understood. In Ledwith's formulation:

> community development is committed to social justice through a process of critical education that begins in personal empowerment, and follows through to collective action for a more just, equal and sustainable world (2005: 61);

which is to say, a healthier world.

The final part of this *Introduction* will consider each of the four chapters in this part on *Building Healthy Communities*. Together, these contributions expand on the notion of how community is understood in relation to health, and use practical case studies to provoke a more grounded basis for those working in this field and those studying it. Focusing on

contemporary concerns about health and the environment in the UK, they all suggest ways of enriching deliberative democracy that challenge often 'rather traditional notions of stable, not to say static, conceptions of the public, community, state' (Rayner 2003: 166). And, in this respect, they contribute to a new cognitive praxis of citizenship, in which it is perceived ethnographically, though practices, rather than as political science. Often what is required, in the work to construct healthy communities, as a starting point at least, is what Middelton calls 'a community diagnosis' (Middelton 2003: 86). The chapters in this part illustrate some of the ways in which this can be undertaken, and the methods that can usefully be adopted. A range of tools are described and appraised, which contribute to a diagnosis of community health problems, in the broadest sense of 'health', and suggest how they may best be addressed. The four authors present markedly different methods and tools, but share a perspective that is committed to public participation and to working in ways that make sense to the communities involved. And at the heart of each of the chapters is the translation of what might, within a bio-medical model, be regarded as individual health problems for which individuals are responsible, into a community concern that engages a shared, public health perspective.

One of those tools is the use of personal narrative in accounting for health and disease, and in the process of empowerment that is a necessary feature of agency and community action. Ledwith (2005, chapter 3) has illustrated how such processes of story-telling function within a radical framework for a praxis of change (and, potentially, in a community development context, to a critical pedagogy). Some of these elements are manifest in the chapters here. Most significant among them is the way in which the telling of 'little stories', in Griffiths's term, 'link voice to narrative, making that vital connection between the deeply personal and the profoundly political' (ibid: 62), which as a collective process has transformative potential. Cinderby's and Potts's work is based on stories told by local people of their experiences of their environments and the impact on their health. While Phillips's work is more traditional methodologically, in its use of qualitative methods of data collection such as interviews and focus groups, the excerpts and quotations he includes reveal the reflexive nature of the respondents' accounts of their lives.

Cinderby's work is derived from a range of projects working with communities to identify their concerns about local environmental issues. In several cases, as he shows, this process has led to the inclusion of these lay perspectives in local policy making, suggesting how devising

appropriate tools for participation can level the field between those who are often positioned oppositionally. The Participatory Geographical Information Systems (PGIS), he discusses, tend, however, to be initiated by the policy makers and rely on the facilitation of technical expertise by the PGIS practitioners. What is important – the substantive aim of the process – is the greater legitimacy afforded to the local and particular knowledge. With careful and sensitive facilitation this can be emphasized to overshadow the techniques, particularly since the participants are generally far more knowledgeable about their local environment than the practitioners.

Phillips's chapter shows how such policies, at a local level in rural Scottish communities, can be transformed into a more meaningful agenda for social change and health gain, and how 'lay' understandings of health in relation to those communities may be understood as social capital when making health policy. Community capacity building is understood as an important element of health promotion, which crucially emphasizes participation, and, in the words of one of the stakeholders in this research, 'thinking about health and inequality together and taking some kind of action'. The relationship between personal and collective health is drawn clearly in Phillips's chapter, with the balance between them shifting and being redefined by the participants. This theme is also evident in Cinderby's work, where the mapping of local concerns establishes graphically the interdependency of the two elements.

Potts's chapter considers how the breast cancer environment movement has developed as a community of expertise, in wholly different terms from the established experts on the aetiology of the disease. The chapter reflects on the relative positioning of the environmental breast cancer movement, in relation to local understanding of hazards that may be associated with the disease and on the work to have such understanding recognized and acted upon. This is part of a bigger picture, whereby groups of people have demanded their voice be heard in places hitherto closed to them – practically or ideologically. As Nowotny states, 'reliable [scientific] knowledge . . . is no longer self-sufficient or self-referential . . . it is being challenged by a larger community that insists its voice should be heard and that some of its claims are as valid, on democratic grounds, as those of more circumscribed scientific communities' (2003: 155). Potts argues that this challenge was prefigured in the radical politics of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly of second wave feminism, and the gradual insistence on greater autonomy and authority in relation to the state. This was not just individualistic, as an analysis of

the women's health movement shows: groups sought to establish a community of identity, and to base claims to the legitimacy of their understanding in that subjectivity and embodied experience.

Turton's chapter examines a model of participatory working to promote health, and to cross conceptual boundaries between public health practice, primary health and social care, and organizational development. This model has been extensively tested in a variety of settings over the last decade, so the insights provided here are grounded in robust praxis. Her commentary illustrates the factors that promote and inhibit a community approach to public health care delivery, and suggests what has been learned about making participation across community a reality, fostering better involvement of practitioners and the public. She identifies the need for a 'shared language' that is implicit in the work discussed in the other three chapters too; without the resources, and ideological commitment, to finding this common ground, there is little scope for equity and really collaborative working.

15
How Communities Can Use Geographical Information Systems

Steve Cinderby

Introduction

The origins of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) can be traced back to the late 1960s. Since their inception the technology has grown in both complexity (with increased and cheaper computing power) and popularity (partly linked to the growth in the availability of digital datasets). This growth in usage can also be related to the application of GIS in assessing environmental concerns.

As the range of environmental concerns has grown so GIS technology has proliferated. For example, GIS (linked to environmental models) has been used to identify the location and severity of a wide range of issues of concern to local communities, including noise affected streets, areas with polluted water, soil and air, and zones at risk from flooding. Alongside these environmental issues more specific information on, or associated with, specific communities or localities has also been collected, stored and analysed. Examples include census returns, the incidents and nature of crimes, the type and time of road traffic accidents and average travel times to facilities including Post Offices or schools. This increasing use of GIS to develop 'official' maps has guided policy makers' understanding of issues and determined the locations affected by specific policies – be they flood protection schemes, speed control zones or CCTV cameras.

Can local communities utilize this same technology to capture, model and visualize their understandings of environmental and social concerns that impact on their own neighbourhoods? Participatory GIS (PGIS) are a suite of techniques and approaches intended to address this perceived imbalance in community inclusion in the development and use of spatial information through GIS.

Definition of a GIS

A GIS can be defined as 'a computer system for capturing, storing, checking, integrating, manipulating, analysing and displaying data related to positions on the Earth's surface' (Maguire et al. 1991). Examples of the type of spatial data that are typically stored in environmental GIS can be seen in Figure 15.1.

Whilst the simpler definitions of a GIS often sound benign and value-neutral, it has increasingly been recognized that the design of the system itself, the data included in the assessment (which is seen as capturing the issue being addressed) and the type of analysis performed, relate to the personnel and institution in which the GIS is housed. GIS have become powerful tools for analysing the world around us and have generally been considered a success in this role by practitioners (ibid); however, as Martin comments, the spatial nature of the tool and its representation of the 'real world' forces us to consider whose 'reality' are we considering (Martin 1991). For example, the same area of land may be considered 'waste ground' by local residents, a 'brown field site for redevelopment' by a planner, an 'urban wildlife reserve' by a conservation group or a 'recreation area' by local teenagers. All these realities relate to the same physical space, but what gets included in the
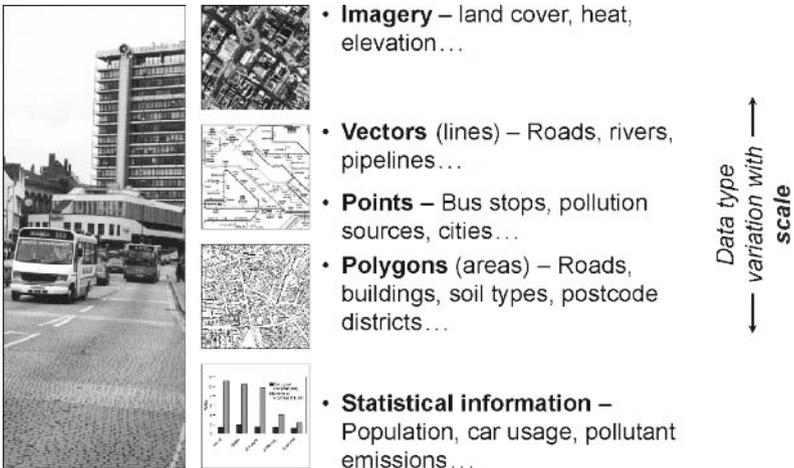
Figure 15.1   Examples of the types of environmental data that can be stored in a GIS.

spatial database influences how the area is officially designated, what policies are then relevant to it and hence its future development.

UK environmental data

The definition of what constitutes environmental data is understandably broad and often vague. A European Community directive on the issue includes any information (in a wide variety of formats) on the state of water, air, soil, fauna and flora and activities adversely affecting these or measures designed to protect them (Hallo 1997). This leaves the obvious question – what is not environmental data? In the UK context, traditionally environmental data is the result of scientific understanding and analysis of the issue under investigation. For example, the Environment Agency assesses river pollution by looking at nutrients, chemistry and biology at a large number of sites on regular sampling cycle.

What are PGIS?

A variety of terms exist in the literature and amongst practitioners for the GIS-based approaches that have developed with the overall aim of supporting public participation in a variety of contexts. In the US the common nomenclature for such approaches is Public Participation GIS (PPGIS), first identified at the International Conference on Empowerment, Marginalization and Public Participation GIS in Santa Barbara, California, during October 1998. During the same time period, the concept of Participatory GIS (PGIS) was emerging from out of participatory approaches to planning and spatial information and communication management (Rambaldi and Weiner 2004). In addition to these two widely adopted titles, alternative nomenclature for activities with similar goals or ideals include community-integrated GIS, GIS for Participation (GIS-P), Mobile GIS and Web PGIS. Each of these represents a slightly different ethos or emphasis on particular parts of the over-riding goals of PGIS. For example, GIS-P is aimed at capturing local stakeholder knowledge and understanding of particular issues of concern in a spatial framework to aid communication with community groups and between communities and outside experts. For the purpose of simplicity, in the remainder of this chapter all flavours of community-focused public participation utilizing GIS technology will be referred to as PGIS. The commonalities of the various PGIS techniques include the overall goal of empowering communities within decision-making processes; either

within decisions being taken by the community, or more commonly, decisions being taken by outside agencies that will affect the community concerned.

PGIS represents a flexible suite of tools with different approaches relevant to particular contexts and issues. Some applications of PGIS embed GIS technology within local communities allowing them access to, and the ability to comment on, official spatial datasets for their local environments. Such approaches can result in local communities developing their own environmental models, often with different weightings applied to specific factors than those used by official agencies (Bosworth et al. 2002; Parker and Pascual 2002). The mapping process and GIS analysis are used as interactive tools to stimulate discussion, group learning, information exchange and problem solving. The visual nature of maps (or air photographs and 3D models) has been promoted as a useful tool to stimulate discussions on a more equal footing between members of communities, as opposed to conventional focus groups where often the most vocal or eloquent people can dominate. The process of participants drawing their local understanding of an issue on a base map allows (if appropriately facilitated) all information to have equal weight. The mapping process (all participants can see what is being included) means that groups can discuss and edit information being included on their community map. The physical limitations of a map also means that contradictory information on the same location can be clearly identified resulting in discussion and the forming of consensus on the 'correct' information to be included, or at least the clarification of the physical location, extent and nature of disagreement between the participants' perceptions and knowledge. PGIS often relies on the interaction between local communities and GIS experts. However, good PGIS practice places control of the process and the information generated into the ownership of the community and participants involved.

Why should communities be engaged in environmental policy development?

There is a wide range of complementary reasons that support the engagement of communities in the process and delivery of environmental decision-making and policy implementation. Local communities have direct experiential knowledge of the environment surrounding them. Such experiential understanding can complement expert-led knowledge, and in some cases plug gaps in official understanding (Irwin and Wynne 1999) leading to more comprehensive and acceptable policy outcomes.

The inclusion of local community knowledge of environmental issues in the policy process can result in a clearer understanding (for all involved) of how problems are perceived, prioritized and framed by the various participants (including the experts and policy makers) (Darier et al. 2006; Forrester 1999; Ravetz 1999). At its best, such community-grounded policy making results in improved access to information (both official and community knowledge) and shared understanding between the various participants leading to improved relations between these groups (Roberts 2000; Wild and Marshall 1999). Ultimately, this should result in better policies and improved implementation and acceptance of policies.

Case studies: How have communities used PGIS to improve environmental decision-making in the UK?

To illustrate how PGIS approaches can be used to facilitate the inclusion of community environmental knowledge in the UK decision-making process, three case studies will be described and analysed in relation to several key characteristics of PGIS. All the case studies presented were generated through the interaction of PGIS researchers and different local community groups. There was no attempt in any of the case studies to embed the GIS technology itself in the communities. Instead the PGIS experts acted as intermediaries between the community and the GIS software and between the PGIS-derived information and the official experts or decision-makers.

Case study 1: Air quality

During the late 1990s UK national government legislation (linked to EU directives) (DETR 2000) led to local authorities having to consider urban air quality with reference to specific pollutants and 'safe'[1] thresholds related to human health. The dispersed and pervasive nature of air pollution meant that GIS was an essential tool in the assessment of this issue. GIS was used to store information on known sources of local pollution (factory sites, incinerators, large boilers and so on). These officially recognized sources guided the identification of locations where the actual levels of pollutants were measured (using techniques including long-term passive sampling and real time measurements). As part of this process, councils were required to consult with local communities on the issue of air quality and the boundary of the action plan extent. This case study refers to one UK city where PGIS was used to encourage greater

community involvement in the identification and therefore acceptance of the action plan area.

Case study 2: Noise pollution

The next major local environmental issue on which national and local government are extensively using GIS-based computer modelling is noise pollution. Maps are being developed nationally as the first stage in identifying management areas for noise under the new EU Directive on Environmental Noise (European Union 2004). Computer mapping and modelling of noise levels are ongoing (Noise Mapping, England) and policies are likely to be driven by their findings. This case study illustrates how PGIS could offer a complementary approach to developing, or at least prioritizing, noise abatement zones by highlighting local understanding and concerns on this issue.

Case study 3: Environment and health

Pollution in the environment is increasingly being linked to human health concerns, both by health professionals and by health campaigners. Local communities often have detailed knowledge of their environment (Irwin and Wynne 1996) sometimes on issues or practices that are unknown to outside experts. This case study examines whether such information can be utilized by health professionals to assess potential linkages between environment and health concerns, or alternatively to allay communities' fears on these issues.

Problem identification and capturing community knowledge

Participatory techniques were originally developed as ways of enhancing local peoples' abilities to share and analyse their knowledge of local lifestyles and conditions, (thereby better enabling local communities to plan and interact with outside agencies). Empowering people to act was considered part of this process. Truly participatory studies were not necessarily intended to assist outsiders in learning about local conditions but instead were designed to facilitate local people to conduct their own analysis and develop their own agendas (Chambers 1994). More recently it has become clear that interactions between different levels of decision-making, from the local communities upwards to local council officers and government agencies, help to ensure that plans and decisions are sustainable at the local level.

In a truly participatory exercise, local communities would have control of the agenda based on what they considered important in

their community. In the UK context, however, 'outside' policy and decision-making processes often drive local community participation. For example, land redevelopment (for housing or transport infrastructure) impacts directly on communities neighbouring the construction site but the process is instigated, and often controlled, by outside actors and decision-makers such as property developers and local councils.

Framing the issue

Local communities' understanding and perceptions of issues often overlap but differ from the scientific or official delimitation of a problem. In relation to noise problems, the official UK mapping uses GIS computer models to predict volumes at 4 m above the ground. The EU threshold for nuisance noise is set at 65 decibels. In contrast local communities asked to identify noise pollution concentrate not just on the volume of noise but also on its context when identifying problem areas. For example, noise from a new industrial site impinging on an existing residential neighbourhood was seen as a problem by residents due to the location rather than the level of noise.

Community mapping

After communities have framed the issue, the challenge of PGIS is to capture this knowledge in a spatial format. The use of a geographically accurate base map is imperative to ease the translation of the information into the digital GIS database. The UK has a wealth of maps and spatial information to facilitate the PGIS process. These include the national mapping agency, Ordnance Survey (OS), datasets at a variety of scales (from detailed city plans to 1:50K Land Ranger series), historic maps, air-photographs and street mapping. Rural land-use issues would typically be best addressed using large-scale (therefore covering only a small area) colour air-photographs, allowing participants to identify relevant landscape features including hedgerows, paths and crop types. In contrast, for most urban issues, detailed city plans identifying particular buildings, roads, footpaths and property boundaries have proved appropriate (Cinderby and Forrester 2005).

Participants are invited to draw their understanding of the issue under discussion on the maps, moderated by a PGIS facilitator. The visual nature of the mapping typically means that community members themselves control what gets drawn on their map. For example, if one person

adds information that others disagree with there is often heated debate before the information is edited to represent the group's shared viewpoint. This group debate and consensus generation is one of the advantages of PGIS over conventional public participation approaches such as discussion groups, where contradictory statements may be made but not challenged. Mapping does not allow for unchallenged contradictions.

During the three case studies referred to above, PGIS participants ranged from teenagers to pensioners with all levels of educational background. Despite these differences almost all the participants successfully managed to orientate themselves on the maps, often assisted by locating key landmarks, such as their home or local shops. Other participants often facilitated this orientation, thereby helping to build trust between community members.

Where participants have struggled with the mapping phase of PGIS it can generally be attributed to one of three factors: Firstly, the issue does not have a strong spatial component or is not related to their experiential understanding. This problem will be addressed later. Secondly, the use of inappropriate base data, either in content or scale; for example, participants struggled to identify specific industrial sites of concern when they were generically marked as 'works' or 'industrial estates' on the base map. Thirdly, an inability to map the issue can reflect a lack of experiential knowledge.

PGIS – so what can it do?

Once participants' knowledge and perceptions of particular issues have been captured through community mapping they are translated into a digital database using either manual digitizing, on-screen digitizing or scanning. Whatever processes are applied to the community-derived data, it is essential that copies of the information be passed back to the original participants. This is important so that the community continues to 'own' their knowledge and also to ensure that the meaning of information has not been inadvertently changed or misunderstood by the PGIS facilitators.

Storage

The most fundamental function of a database is storage. Translating paper maps into a digital format means that they can be stored securely (assuming adequate back-up procedures are in place) and information revisited if communities wish to reappraise their information. In addition a key advantage of utilizing a GIS is that the spatial data produced
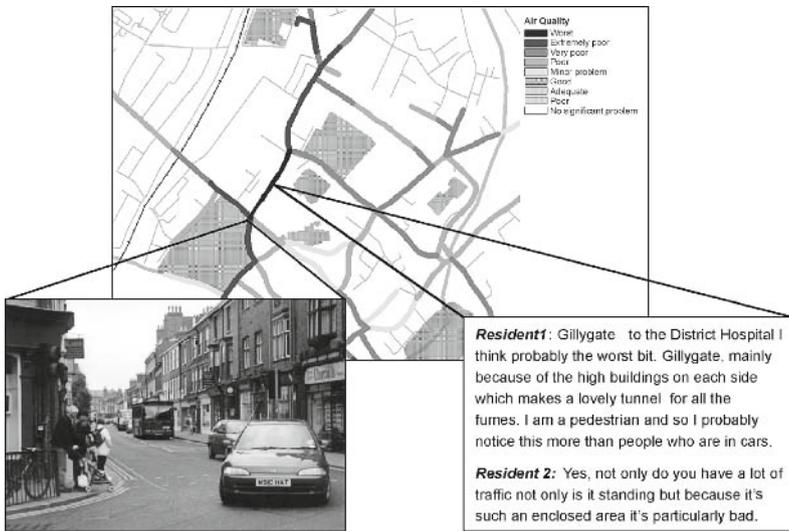
Figure 15.2 An example of the types of supplementary data that can be associated and spatially referenced with participatory maps in a GIS to support the community-derived information.

through the community mapping can be enhanced with supplementary information. For example, specific comments about locations or information mapped by the community can be attached to the digital map and associated with photographs, sound files, web-links or statistical data that supports the participants understanding of the issue (see Figure 15.2).

Visualization

A GIS is obviously more than a storage device and crucially has the ability to visually represent and transform information. For example, local residents identified a major road as a noise pollution source and also indicated the extent of the 'problem' noise with another sketched line. GIS made it possible to use a simple buffering process to derive a map that visually conveyed the community's perception of the problem i.e. high volume at the source diminishing with distance (seen in Figure 15.3).

The use of visualization and cartographic techniques with PGIS are particularly important when attempting to convey community understanding of an issue to experts and decision-makers. Maps have a particular authority (Monmonier 1991; Dorling and Fairbairn 1997; Wood

Community Map   **GIS-P Map**
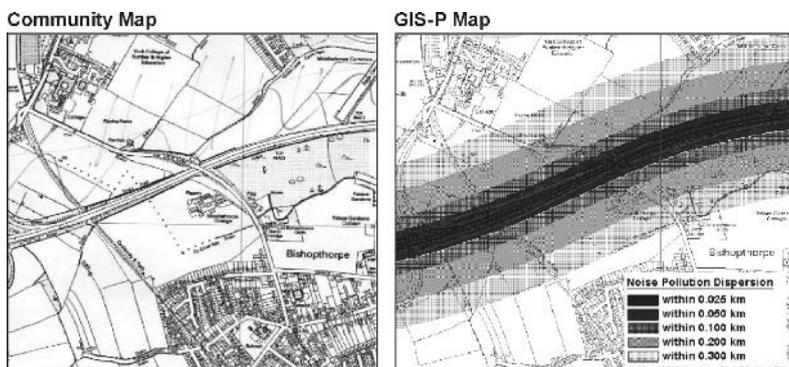
Figure 15.3   Information obtained through participatory mapping can be transformed through GIS visualization techniques. Here information on the extent and dispersal of noise pollution drawn on the community map has been more clearly represented to communicate local knowledge to other stakeholders via the GIS-P map.

1992), and translating community knowledge into a cartographic form often means that it is easier to interpret and perhaps taken more seriously than conventional participation outputs such as meeting reports.

Comparison

One of the simplest functions of a GIS is the overlay of different spatial layers. Different communities' perceptions of the same physical space can be overlaid and compared. This serves a number of purposes. First, to increase the geographic extent of the community mapping. In the air quality work (Case study 1), residents from different parliamentary wards produced individual maps. By mosaicing these together in the GIS, the extent of the community information on pollution issues across the city could be achieved. For those areas with overlapping information, the classes of pollution problem (from worst air quality to good air quality) assigned by the different neighbouring communities were compared. If there was agreement the maps were simply combined; to resolve the classification of areas where communities disagreed, the participants were brought back together. The outcome of the comparison process was a refined and extended map with consensus between the neighbouring communities over the classification along the boundary areas.

A second purpose is the inclusion different communities' understandings of issues based on their experiential knowledge of an area. For

example, in case study three, rural and urban residents mapped environmental problems they felt might impact on human health by residents. Urban residents (Case study 3) had detailed information of the industrial pollution sources for their town based on knowledge from working in particular factories, or from everyday experience of seeing scum on the local river. They felt, however, that the rural areas surrounding the town represented a clean, healthy environment that they accessed for recreation. In contrast, the rural residents complained of the pollution related to agricultural processes (pesticide and fertilizer spraying) and pollution from busy roads across the area.

The use of PGIS also facilitates the comparison of local community maps of environmental issues and the 'official' or 'expert' viewpoint. In relation to air quality (Case study 1), local community understanding of the extent of the issue could be compared to the computer model-generated maps for specific pollutants. Community perceptions of the problem focused on transport emissions (based on their understanding of where cars queued at traffic lights, or where they could smell and see exhaust fumes in canyon streets), so the PGIS maps were compared to modelled nitrogen dioxide levels (a pollutant caused by combustion). The excellent level of agreement between the two datasets was highlighted through comparing spatially where community maps indicated pollution was high and the measured level of NO_2.

In another example from Case study 1 of the use of spatial overlay, local community knowledge of issues related to a proposed transport plan could be compared to the official dataset. This comparison highlighted specific technical issues in the plans related to access for particular user groups (for example, local business delivery access) and the social implications of the plan (such as areas for bus stops that were perceived as dangerous due to poor lighting, etc.).

Enhancing communication to improve environmental decision-making

The examples above illustrate how the PGIS functionality can enhance communication both within communities and between communities and official experts or policy makers. The visual nature of maps and the functionality of the GIS can enhance the understanding of all the participants in the process.

In the case of air quality, the use of PGIS resulted in a number of positive outcomes (Cinderby and Forrester 2005). The PGIS maps indicated areas of the city where communities felt pollution was worse than the computer modelling. This information was used by the

experts to identify locations for further actual measurements to ensure that the model predictions were reliable. Information on the flow (or stagnation) of traffic at specific times could have been used directly in setting the parameters of the model (although this was not done in the particular case study due to the timing of the participation process). The community PGIS information visualized into an appropriate carto-graphic style was also used in a wider consultation process alongside information from the experts on the potential extent of the area desig-nated for air quality improvements. This wider consultation led to an endorsement of the PGIS map from the city's residents and businesses and the adoption of a larger pollution management area.

The understanding of noise issues can similarly be enhanced through the communication of PGIS derived information at a number of levels. Specific information on the location and description of a noise problem can help experts identify particular problems. For example, a text description of nuisance noise attached to a specific location on a flyover bridge allowed noise researchers to identify a potential problem associ-ated with a gap in a roadside safety barrier.

More generally, local residents tend to identify noise problems in rela-tion to the context of noise rather than purely related to its volume. For example, areas of a city were identified in a PGIS process as having problems because the traffic noise impinged on recreational park areas. The local community felt that noise levels were as high in other areas of the city, but did not feel that they constituted a problem in other places. Such information could be useful to policy makers when priorit-izing noise-abatement schemes for local areas. The output of computer models may indicate whole stretches of road as having excess noise. PGIS information could be used to target initial abatement measures (and prioritize funding) at locations where the local community feels the level of noise is a problem.

Alternatively, the information contained in the PGIS dataset may differ fundamentally from the official or expert knowledge of a particular issue. In these cases the maps can be used to guide discussions between the different stakeholders (experts and communities) to improve the shared understanding. This can either lead to a revision of the expert viewpoint or the education of the local community as to why their perceptions of a problem do not match the scientific knowledge. For example, in the assessment of environmental links to health issues a local community indicated concerns about pollution in a local stream. The health professionals highlighted that the stream was not used as a source for local drinking water and the type of pollution could not

become airborne. This meant that there was no scientifically identifiable process for the transmission of the pollution to the community. This information was communicated back to residents to help allay their concerns and improve their understanding of the issue.

Limitations of PGIS

As with all participatory processes, but perhaps more so due to the technical nature of the activity, PGIS activities require an investment of time both by the facilitators and the community they engage with. This time has to be factored in by both sides if the approach is to be effective. In addition there has to be trust between and within the participants and facilitators. This can be established and maintained by ensuring that any promises entered into are met (for example, making sure communities receive copies of their maps). Where trust is lacking it is unlikely that people will be confident enough to communicate their real understanding of an issue to the group. Merely discussing particular issues can raise expectations that something will be done about them, particularly if participants identify specific problems or solutions on a map. Facilitators need to carefully moderate these expectations from the beginning of the participatory process to avoid disappointing the local community when they cannot in themselves deliver any changes.

A further issue regarding PGIS is whose knowledge gets included on the map. PGIS activities work most effectively in relatively small groups where everyone can physically reach the map to add their information and also to ensure that there can be debate around what is being included on the map. The key issue then is – whose reality is being mapped? Can such a small group really represent a community's understanding of an issue? On issues of the common good, such as identifying poor air quality (Case study 1), the experience indicates that the broad overview of the issue is shared between community members. Specific people will have particular local knowledge or want a particular viewpoint included, such as a mother who felt that the layout of specific road crossings led to her child being too close to car exhaust fumes for safety. On contentious issues, identifying the different viewpoints, or at least acknowledging that the PGIS dataset only represents a limited sample, is vital for effective communication.

A particular limitation of PGIS is that the process is only effective for issues upon which people's experiential knowledge is relevant. On the issue of urban air quality (Case study 1), local knowledge mirrored the official data as the local authority recognized sources pollution, mainly

from transport, were the same as those on which participants based their mapping. If the chemistry of the problem had meant that the source of the pollution and its impacts were not related, it is unlikely local community knowledge would have correlated. This in itself is not necessarily a failing if it helps experts identify why communities do not understand their explanation of the issue and can initiate, improved communication on the issue. In the case of environment and health (Case study 3), whilst the health professionals found the community information on sources of current and historical pollution interesting, it was not considered detailed or robust enough to act upon.

Conclusions

The case studies reveal how PGIS offer real opportunities for local communities to engage in the policy and decision-making processes around environmental issues. The drawback of this method of enquiry is that it requires access to GIS expertise and spatial data that typically involves collaboration between the community and outside facilitators. Perhaps obviously, only spatially referenced information can be captured within the GIS; most environmental issues do, however, have a geographic reality. A more salient difficulty can be that people's experiential knowledge typically extends over a relatively small area, making PGIS generally unsuitable for communicating local concerns on global or national environmental issues such as climate change or national land-use strategies. These types of issues can, however, be grounded at the local level to investigate how they would affect communities, by, for example, considering the impacts of increased flooding related to climate change on local community land-use patterns. The spatial nature of PGIS makes it an ideal tool for investigating how community knowledge can interact with the implementation of local environmental policies, such as traffic management to reduce urban pollution, although it is not suited to assessing stakeholder understanding and opinions of broad strategies. Care has to be taken in ensuring that the participants in the development of PGIS reflect the concerns of the wider community and do not represent the viewpoint of a particular interest group, and results that do reflect a particular community viewpoint, for example, the cycling lobby, need to be labelled as such.

The paramount advantages of PGIS is that it can successfully incorporate local environmental concerns on a more equal footing with that of official, often scientific, data. The functionality of the GIS allows local community information to be represented in a way that

makes it more intelligible by policy makers and comparable with the types of environmental information often generated by expert assessments. The storage of information within a GIS means that data can be revisited to assess local communities' perceptions of environmental change through time. This can be useful for monitoring the impacts of environmental policies. The spatial nature of the approach can result in building greater consensus on environmental issues by allowing people to focus explicitly on the location of disagreements. Even if consensus cannot be reached, the focus on the mapped information rather than the reiteration of particular arguments or viewpoints can at least help to clarify the spatial extent of the disagreement. This fostering of improved communication between different groups, whilst more expensive than some other forms of stakeholder engagement, can result in genuinely 'bottom-up' policy development and implementation, making PGIS a successful and effective tool for local communities to address environmental issues.

Whilst there is debate about the decline of 'community' in modern British society, people do still exist in specific physical geographic localities – places. As such during their everyday activities they develop similar knowledge and experience of their local environment – a communal understanding of place. PGIS represent new and novel approaches for investigating this community experience of place in a way that has not been possible before.

Note

1. The term 'safe' is highlighted here as increasingly health professional investigating air quality do not feel that any level of exposure can be identified as causing no negative impacts (WHO 2005). Therefore whilst the thresholds used in the UK will reduce the impacts of air pollution on human health, they cannot be considered truly safe.

16
Community Capacity Building, Community Development and Health: A Case Study of 'Health Issues in the Community'

Richard Phillips

The overall aim of this chapter is to introduce the concept of community capacity building (CCB) and to illustrate how a recent research project explored CCB, community development and health by interviewing participants involved in *Health Issues in the Community* (HIIC) courses in Scotland. This chapter is divided into three sections: first, the HIIC course and case study are described. Second, the concepts of community and CCB are considered and linked to illustrative findings from the case study. The final section examines CCB and collective and personal health and presents data indicating how participants' health may have been influenced through completing a HIIC course.

HIIC course and case study

The *Health Issues in the Community* (HIIC) course is a training resource informed by a community development approach to health promotion. The main objective of HIIC, a Scottish-wide programme, is to help people explore the political, educational, social and community development processes involved in addressing health issues (Health Education Board for Scotland 2002b). The course is targeted at people with an interest in community health initiatives, for example voluntary sector project workers, primary care staff, community health workers and volunteers (CHEX 2006).

A HIIC course is based on a learning pack, which is divided into two main parts. Part one examines ideas such as 'health', 'poverty', 'inequality', 'power' and 'participation'. In addition, course students prepare and give presentations to an invited audience about a specific health-related issue that concerns them. Part two includes units on 'working together' and 'how to take action around a health issue'.

Students are also asked to write an essay in which they identify a health issue that is relevant to their community; explain why this issue affects people's health; and explore how the principles of community development can be applied to address this issue.

Health promotion has been defined as 'the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health' (WHO 1985: 1). Bunton and MacDonald (1992) argued that health promotion adopts a range of political strategies, from the conservative to the radical. In a conservative sense, health promotion directs individuals to assume responsibility for their own health and so reduce the financial costs to health services. However, a more progressive interpretation of health promotion would seek to influence the relationships between the health care provider and the individual by replacing institutionalised medical forms of care with an emphasis on public policy and multisectoral action (Bunton and MacDonald 1992). Radical health promotion aims to foster significant social change through community development by encouraging collective action to challenge existing institutions (Grace 1991; Minkler 1989).

As stated, HIIC is informed by a community development approach to health promotion. This approach involves engaging local people in processes where they collectively identify both the concerns that they wish to address and the possible solutions (see for example Jones 1999; Labonte 1998). Another aspect of this approach is a commitment to working with groups that are often marginalised and who suffer the negative consequences of inequality and discrimination (Association of Community Workers as cited in Health Education Board for Scotland 2002a: 101). The importance of this type of health promotion was demonstrated by its inclusion in key health promotion documents. For example, the *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* (WHO 1985) stated that communities should control the processes involved in improving health.

However, in later years, less-explicit references to a community development approach were made and other phrases were used when referring to health promotion work with communities. For example, the *Jakarta Declaration on Leading Health Promotion into the 21st Century* stated how communities might increase their *capacity* for health promotion through 'practical education, leadership training, and access to resources' (WHO 1997: 5). In a more recent article it was suggested that the concepts of community capacity and cohesion had been replaced by social capital and that community participation and community development are now dubbed social inclusion (Labonte 2004). It is doubtful

whether these new terminologies are used with the same meaning as their earlier counterparts and I suspect that their evolution signifies an ideological shift underpinning these ideas.

The HIIC case study (Phillips 2006) involved conducting 35 semi-structured qualitative individual interviews with HIIC stakeholders (who had a management/developmental role), HIIC tutors (who facilitated the course) and HIIC students. Participants were drawn from 11 separate HIIC courses in varying geographical regions in Scotland, including an Island community, and from both urban and rural areas.

Concepts of community

Definitions of community contain references to different elements, such as geographical, relational and interest (Taylor 2003). For example, a geographical interpretation of community defines community as a collective of people from a particular place (Eng and Parker 1994).

Data from the HIIC case study showed that participants understood community in terms of geographical location:

Researcher: *We've the mentioned the word community a lot, could you say what you think that means?*
Tutor 1: *Well the obvious one is geographic, people who live in a particular area, well to me they belong to a community.*
Tutor 11: *You've got community the place.*
Student 10: *It could be the locale, the community you live in, as in the area that you live in.*

However, Glen (1993) argued that ascribing community status to a group of people based on shared locality may not be appropriate. Confusing place and community is common: community may not be present in every place and can be nationalistic, reactionary and ignore other forms of community that are not based around place, such as travellers or diasporas (Brent 2004). The following participant (a retired health service professional) identified a non-place form of community:

Researcher: *Which aspect of community do you relate to?*
Student 12: *Basically my community would be the community of health service workers, social services, that would be my community.*

According to Smith (2001) community can also be defined as an 'interest'; for example, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, occupation

or ethnic origin can join interest community members together. Some research participants identified the interest component to community:

Tutor 7: *It's a collection of people who have some common bond, sometimes it's geographical or interest.*
Tutor 3: *Community can be like a kind of group of interests.*

In addition, definitions of community can refer to relational elements; Brint (2001: 8) viewed communities as 'aggregates of people who share common activities and / or beliefs and who are bound together *principally* by relations of affect, loyalty, common values, and / or personal concern' (*emphasis in original*). This form of community was noted by other participants:

Tutor 11: *You've also got communities of interest where there is people who have a similar, share a similar identity that group together.*
Researcher: *Could you say what community means to you?*
Student 19: *I suppose the area that you live in and the people that you interact with everyday.*

Other respondents spoke about a feeling of attachment:

Student 18: *Community means, kind of belonging a lot of the time, have a sense of belonging to a group of people.*
Tutor 6: *There has to be a sense of belonging, I would say from my personal view a community is something that you feel that you belong to.*
Tutor 13: *[Community means] at least being able to find a niche where there are others within your area that you can mix with and feel at ease with.*

A recent theoretical debate about community argued that 'contemporary community may be understood as a communication community based on new kinds of belonging' (Delanty 2003: 187). Delanty goes on to suggest that mass communications have provided the means for people to negotiate a sense of belonging based around a variety of different forms of community. This was emphasised by the following comment:

Tutor 10: *Community has to have some communication in there and some sort of framework of concern, whether it's health, social, whatever, but some sort of network of communication.*

Data from the case study suggested that ideas of community are negotiated and considered with reference to different features of daily life and social relationships, physical location or emotional attachment. In some instances, participants combined these features when articulating their understandings of community. However, participants employed in a community development/health promotion capacity gave similar accounts of community. It appeared that these participants drew from their own professional practice, previous education or training experiences when defining the concept of community, rather than giving more personalised narratives.

Community capacity building: dimensions, understanding and relationship to community development

CCB has become a concept used in relation to health promotion (Hawe et al. 1998) and has been defined as a 'generic increase in community groups' abilities to define, asses, analyze and act on health (or any other concerns) of importance to their members' (Labonte and Laverack 2001b: 114). Labonte and Laverack (2001a,b), building on Laverack's (1999) earlier research on community empowerment, identified nine domains or dimensions of community capacity that might enhance or promote health: *participation*, *leadership*, *organisational structures*, *problem assessment*, *resource mobilisation*, *'asking why?'*, *links with others*, *role of outside agents* and *program management*.

For the purposes of the HIIC case study, a model of CCB was constructed using four dimensions: *participation*, *resource mobilisation*, *links with others and role of outside agents*. According to Labonte and Laverack, *participation* is the basis of CCB and promotes health in a number of ways. First, increasing social networks and support improves self-social esteem and decreases isolation. Second, increased participation in local political/decision-making structures may improve the general quality of life within a community through better forms of governance. The authors argued that *resource mobilisation* and health are linked in several ways. For example, external resources may decrease poverty and generate local employment, and using internal resources may promote the self/social-esteem of community members. Health promotion programmes can also be seen as a form of wealth distribution, as the programme represents a service or resource which community members are not charged for.

Links with others refers to social networks and it is suggested that health expectancy is positively associated with relatively large and

dense social networks (Kawachi 2001). Labonte and Laverack proposed that the *role of outside agents* is an important connection between a community and external resources, for example, *outside agents* can provide monetary, material and intellectual resources to establish and support health promotion programmes.

In the case study, the concept of CCB was explored differently with stakeholders and tutors. Prior knowledge about the stakeholders meant that it could be assumed that they had an appreciation of CCB. Hence, stakeholders were asked to describe their understandings of CCB in relation to HIIC and community development. However, after conducting a pilot interview with a former HIIC tutor, it was established that tutors may not be familiar with the term CCB and a method to introduce the concept was developed. Tutors were presented with a paper-based exercise illustrating the four dimensions and were asked to comment on each dimension and to provide illustrative examples of how they related to HIIC.

A noted feature in the CCB literature was that there was a different emphasis given to whether CCB involved individuals engaging in CCB processes (see for example Schuftan 1996) or if CCB was a collective activity, as noted above in Labonte and Laverack's (2001b) definition. Smith et al. (2001: 33) also stated that CCB is 'the degree to which a community can develop, implement and sustain actions for strengthening community health'. This dual emphasis was reflected in data from the HIIC study. For example, the collective nature of CCB:

> Stakeholder 2: *The building capacity part relates to that community developing particular ways of thinking about health and inequality together and taking some kind of action, so that there's greater capacity to work together.*

However, stakeholder One's conceptualisation of CCB was based at an individual level:

> Researcher: *Could you explain in the context of HIIC how you think CCB is defined or understood?*
>
> Stakeholder 1: *I think for me there is stuff about building individual's capacity to act on life circumstances, to act on issues within their own communities.*

The individualistic aspect of CCB was also highlighted by the following tutors' responses where it was suggested that providing the means for people to engage in their community was an important feature of CCB:

> Tutor 6: *It's [CCB] about building skills. It's about being able to build on [your own experiences] to actually make any changes and to sustain it in your community.*
>
> Tutor 3: *CCB is about ensuring people have the skills to have that involvement [in the community].*
>
> Tutor 4: *My understanding of CCB is about giving people skills, the skills within the community.*

Considering the empowerment literature is a useful way to understand both individual and community level CCB. Rissel (1994: 41) stated that individual empowerment can be defined as 'a feeling of greater control over their own lives which individuals experience following active membership in groups and organisations, and which may occur without participation in collective political action'. However, community empowerment encompasses not just a heightened psychological empowerment among its members but also 'a political action component in which members have actively participated, and the achievement of some redistribution of resources or decision making favourable to the community or group in question'(Rissel 1994: 41).

Therefore, the individualistic emphasis of CCB is similar to individual empowerment and collective CCB can be seen as a group activity that aims to influence either how resources are shared or those decision-making processes that may impinge on that particular community. Evidence from the case study suggests that some HIIC groups were able to change aspects of their local community. For example, it was reported that students from a course in a Highland, rural location took action to improve the quality of the food served in a local school through raising awareness of the existing provision and by sourcing organic ingredients grown in the school grounds.

Other participants expressed unfavourable opinions about CCB:

> Tutor 12: *I don't like the phrase community capacity building because I think it's jargon, it's a bit condescending.*
>
> Tutor 7: *To me it means jargon from the Scottish Executive and it means that, this is my cynical side coming out, it means that we add this into most of our funding applications because it's what people want to hear.*

Tutor 11: *It is a bit of jargon, I don't think it's that dissimilar to community development, I'm not quite sure of the difference.*

Raymond Williams (1988) suggested that the term jargon has a dual meaning; first, as a signifier of professional or specialised language and second, an altogether less complementary connotation as being a common 'way to describe, unfavourably or contemptuously, the vocabulary of certain unfamiliar branches of knowledge or intellectual positions' (Williams 1988: 174). Williams goes on to argue that professional or specialised language does not usually attract the term jargon if it remains 'sufficiently specialized'; rather, a problem arises when the term in question enters into 'more general talk and writing'. However, Williams also argued that new terms can be seen as challenging existing conventions or signifying new and different understandings.

Data from the HIIC case study suggest that CCB was not wholly accepted and in some cases was dismissed as a meaningless concept. Thus, some tutors did not feel comfortable using the term CCB to describe their work and it was perceived by some as an externally prescribed construct. In these cases, tutors were referring to professional experiences other than facilitating HIIC, for example, applying to funding bodies, or implementing policy directives from the Scottish Executive.

However, other tutors accepted the concept of CCB and engaged with the idea more enthusiastically during their interview. For example, one suggested that CCB was a helpful concept to describe her professional practice:

Tutor 1: *But I do think [CCB] does say a wee bit about what we want to go on in this. I guess people take from it and that is to strengthen again the ability of local people to do something that improves their area, raises an issue in their area, draws funds into the area . . . and trains people to do something that improves their life and the life of the community.*

Other tutors articulated the view that CCB was similar to community development:

Researcher: *So you see community development and community capacity building as the same thing?*

Tutor 6: *I would yes, from my perspective.*

Tutor 7: *It is the current jargon phrase for community development and it doesn't really mean much more than that.*

As noted above, there are contrasting opinions as to whether CCB and community development are similar or have different meanings. Their similarity can be confirmed by comparing how they are defined in the literature. However, community development is underpinned by an ethos that is explicitly concerned with issues of inequality, discrimination and power relations. It remains to be seen, if such a value base is ascribed to CCB or whether it will be seen as just an outcome of community development.

Community capacity building: collective and personal health

As well as exploring participants' conceptualisation of CCB, the HIIC case study examined whether students had engaged in CCB after they had completed a HIIC training programme. For example, Student 1 described her role in a local residents' group that had campaigned and obtained funds to secure gates to an area of land at the back of their properties. This land had been used for illegal refuse disposal and was a site for selling illicit substances and other low-level incivilities:

> Student 1: *We've a back-lane that runs up our house, up everyone's house and the lane at the back of the houses caused problems for years because . . . if there's a shop been robbed or if there's drugs being sold or people coming out of the pubs at night, that would all happen in our lane . . . there would be fly tipping, it was just an absolute dump. So after being on that [HIIC], I knew that if we got people together, then this street, we could collectively do something about it. [So we] set up a group, got in contact with our local councillors, local MSP {Member of the Scottish Parliament} and got ourselves organised, got funding . . . and now we've got gates on our lane after two years. Even filling in a funding application is something I wouldn't of thought of doing for myself before, but definitely being on that course and working in this environment that's affected my life and life of people living around us, sort of vulnerable groups, elderly, children.*

Student 1's narrative was the only account that could be easily applied to the model of CCB in the case study. For example, forming a group with other residents (*participation* and *links with others*), contacting the local council and MSP (*role of outside agents*) and obtaining funding (*resource mobilisation*) to secure an area of land near their properties. Student 1's completion of HIIC influenced her to take collective action to improve

aspects of the local environment with her neighbours on a voluntary basis, which she argued had improved her neighbours' well-being.

The above example illustrates CCB affecting health at a collective environmental level. However, other participants discussed how aspects of their own personal health had been influenced by participating in a HIIC course. In the context of emotional health, students described how completing HIIC had a positive impact on their confidence or self-esteem. Student 15, who had begun a career in licensee management, identified that she felt more confident and was reconsidering her career:

> Researcher: *I was wondering if you feel if you've changed in anyway after going on the course?*
> Student 15: *As I say, it's encouraged me to, it gave me a boost, to go on to learn again . . . and I would like to do something . . . maybe health based or I quite fancy community education work.*
> Student 1: *I value more what I've got to say myself now and I'll speak out more. I wouldn't put up with things that I might have put up with before.*

The following quotes indicate how some participants felt that their sense of self-efficacy had increased:

> Student 8: *I think that when I first started the course I was quite depressed and felt like shit, don't want to be here and all that crap and I think what I found interesting was that as the course developed . . . rather than being told 'this is shite' [referring to local area], it's like 'well, I know it is and I can do something about it'.*

Similarly, Student 5 also referred to a positive outcome after completing a HIIC course:

> Student 5: *I think up until I had been on the health issues course, I kind of lived in a bit of a fog. I was fed up and I wasn't depressed as such, but I lived at home with two kids, I had no money, I struggled all the time and although when I started the HIIC course, I still never had any money, I was actually starting to feel alive again and I was starting to feel that there is something out there, I thought, 'yeah, I can see a way forward'.*

Student 6 articulated in depth how her increased self-efficacy had changed her personal and physical circumstances. First, in the context of a previous relationship:

> Student 6: *I actually met somebody that I was with for seven months before I met my current partner. I was kind of lonely in my own house and it was a friend that I'd knew ... we kind of got together and he moved in with me and then he started treating me badly and it was through doing the course that I realised how to deal with him, so it helped. I think if I'd never done that course and I didn't have the confidence in knowing what I knew, I'd probably stayed with him and continued letting him hit me and treat me bad. Whereas the course gave me the strength, I knew [what] I could do to stop it, I knew I wasn't alone.*

Secondly, in adapting to and accepting her role as a mother:

> Student 6: *Then when I had my daughter I kind of let myself go and didn't care what I looked like. I mean, I was prescribed anti-depressants and I wasn't coping with having a daughter so young and the course gave me the confidence to realise that it doesn't have to be like that, you can make things different in your life.*

Thirdly, by securing financial resources:

> Student 6: *During this course ... I found out that I was entitled to a lot more help in raising my daughter ... When I got my house, I took out a top floor [flat] and the best way to describe it was a dump and I took it thinking, 'I'm a single mother, they're not going to give a single lassie a good house', and then it wasn't until after the course that I started fighting and I thought, 'I'm entitled to something better.' The course basically gave me confidence to fight for what I'd a right to, I never thought I had the rights before.*

However, another participant's narrative suggested that an increase in self-confidence from completing HIIC, while beneficial to emotional and mental well-being, could also be problematic and lead to confrontation with other people. Student 5 spoke about conflicts she had experienced with a health professional and with other members of a local community organisation (a group that Student 5 had been involved with before starting HIIC):

Student 5: *And she [health visitor] seemed to think that because I did the health issues in the community training, that I had become quite bolshie. I was just asking for what we were entitled to and she didn't like that, because before I had been an insecure mother, who had a two-year old who was a nightmare and because she was my health visitor and the roles really turned.*

Knowledge about health was another aspect which had been influenced after completing HIIC. For example, Student 6 referred to adopting a different diet after HIIC:

Student 6: *I was a terrible eater until I started that course and because it was to do with health issues in the community at lunch times you were only given a healthy choice meals and since I've had a lot better diet, because it encouraged me to try things.*

Student 11 reported how completing one of the course assignments had increased her knowledge about nutrition:

Researcher: *Do you think you learnt anything new?*
Student 11: *Yeah, yes.*
Researcher: *What type of thing?*
Student 11: *Well the way I looked, you know, into the healthy eating...I found out quite a bit, different things...like diets and what-not.*

In another example, a student expressed how the course experience had begun to influence her health-beliefs about smoking and diet:

Researcher: *Do you think it changed your attitude about health?*
Student 7: *Now, everything's bad for you, everything you like to do is bad for you...But when you start to actually get an education on it and see that folk are not just saying it for the sake of saying it, there are reasons and you start to make the links, I'm now actually consciously trying to make changes to what I eat, to the smoking. I'm still smoking, [but] my mind-set [is] changing, I'm believing that's the difference, I'm believing that things are bad for you.*

Data from the case study indicated how completing a HIIC course impacted on different dimensions of health, although this process had both negative and positive consequences.

Conclusions

The concept of community appeared to be a relevant issue for the participants in the HIIC case study. Different interpretations of community were articulated including geographical and interest-based. In addition, non-place forms of community were recognised. Community was also identified as something 'felt', as a sense of attachment or belonging. These findings reflect existing theoretical thinking about community. However, this study suggested that participants also drew from professional roles or previous educational and training experiences and presented similar accounts of community.

The concept of CCB was considered using a dimensions-based model. Most of the students interviewed did not indicate involvement with CCB activities at a collective level as a result of completing HIIC, although the individual-level empowerment reported might represent a foundation on which collective empowerment could be actualised.

However, CCB remains a problematic idea. The relationship between the different dimensions of CCB remains unexplored and there has been little critical consideration given to the usage of the term CCB in policy documents and health promotion programmes. Forms of CCB may also occur informally, rather than evolving through schemes such as HIIC, and so may not correspond to an existing theoretical model. CCB might be another phrase for community development, but it is questionable if it shares the same ethos.

Acknowledgements

17
A Community of Expertise: Positioning the UK Environmental Breast Cancer Movement

Laura Potts

My research over the last six years has identified the challenge posed by the environmental breast cancer movement to the dominant epidemiological paradigm of breast cancer (Potts 2001, 2004a). This perspective is both ideological, resting in analysis of the political economy of cancer, and pragmatic in its insistence on the salience of a public health approach to the disease. Importantly, it has also taken a radical epistemological approach, demanding the inclusion of the embodied expertise of women with breast cancer in relation to an understanding of disease aetiology (Potts 2004a). This chapter will examine these elements in the context of the emergence of a community of expertise, variously constructed, that constitutes an alternative discourse to the dominant paradigms of the disease. Significantly, the challenge of this perspective, and its ideological, pragmatic and epistemological elements, arise within the shifts of the relations of science in society. As Nowotny states, 'reliable [scientific] knowledge . . . is no longer self-sufficient or self-referential . . . it is being challenged by a larger community that insists its voice should be heard and that some of its claims are as valid, on democratic grounds, as those of more circumscribed scientific communities' (2003: 155).

. . . To translate the silence surrounding breast cancer into language and action against this scourge (Lorde 1980: 61).

As Love claims, 'Once you are diagnosed with breast cancer . . . you become a member of a new "club" ' (2000: viii). Breast cancer is a disease that has drawn women into community, and this, in turn, has contributed significantly to the revolution in the social positioning of cancer in 'western' societies. Cancer, and breast cancer, are visible and talked

about in a way unimaginable 40 years ago, when it was a word to be whispered, a diagnosis to be kept to oneself. In part this may be explained by the fact that breast cancer is more common than ever it was: in the UK, the lifetime risk for women is now one in nine, and most people know someone who has, or has had, the disease. But the greatest impact on this change has been the women's health movement of the 1970s and 1980s; the feminist roots of the movement insisted that shame and ignorance about our bodies were symptoms of patriarchal oppression, and, alongside this analysis, initiated self-help and support groups where women could meet with others sharing similar problems – including breast cancer. The history of the crucial *Our Bodies Ourselves* book, from the first edition in the US in 1973, up to the revised UK edition in 1989, marks these developments (Phillips and Rakusen 1989: 7–14), and demonstrates how the tide of awareness shifted, and how the movement grew: 10 women were involved in the first Boston Collective; 15 years later, the contributors are too numerous to count.

The language of this feminist discourse is revealing: the emphasis throughout is on the first person plural (witness the title). As one of the authors of the chapter on 'Choice and Control in Breast Disease' in *Our Bodies Ourselves*, written during 1986 and 1987, I recall our tortuous deliberations about this stylistic device, aware that while on the one hand it asserted connection among women, sisterhood and inclusion, on the other hand it obscured important differences. Of course, similar arguments were being had in other feminist contexts (see, for example, McDowell and Pringle 1994, Part II; Weedon, 1999) marking the emergence of a plurality of feminisms and ultimately a post-modern fragmentation. But we were bound by editorial convention in the end, and the opening paragraph reads accordingly: 'Breast problems and breast diseases, particularly breast cancer, are a cause of great anxiety for many women. Many of us fear the possibility of losing a breast, and we may also have very mixed feeling about our breasts' (Trans-Pennine Breast Cancer Group 1989: 535).

Nonetheless, a real community of women with breast cancer did emerge during those two decades, grounded in several material developments. Just two of these will be examined here, for what they reveal of the development of a community of expertise to rival, or complement, the dominant epidemiological discourse: the published stories told by women with breast cancer and the growth of the breast cancer movement. Certainly there are other important contexts in which such a community could be considered: the extensive psycho-social research literature which draws on women's accounts of 'coping' with

the disease (for example, Spiegel 1997); the proliferation of the breast cancer charities and their relationships with women with the disease and the wider public (Batt 1994: 213–238; Gibbon 2006); the role of support groups in providing information and mutual care and fostering important relations among their participants (Brenner 2000); and breast cancer as it has been represented in popular media accounts, of personal heroism and miracle cures (Fosket et al. 2000; Saywell et al. 2000).

Silence into language: personal narratives of breast cancer

As several commentators have shown (Potts 2000b; Rosenbaum and Roos 2000), a literature of personal narrative of breast cancer emerged during the 1970s and 1980s, which began the process Lorde writes about: 'the transformation of silence into language' (Lorde 1980: 61). These narratives recognise connectivity and assert a collective identity among women with breast cancer, often being explicitly written for other women, as a gift (Potts 2000b: 102). Thus 'women's experience of breast cancer is both personal and private, and collective and connective . . . this is no essentialised nor universalized merging of experience; it is generated initially by the association with other women, face to face or through their words' (ibid: 103). Shared experience and the sharing of knowledge created a common epistemological base for the community of writes and readers that was built incrementally. In establishing a new discourse out of the silence and stigma that had surrounded breast cancer, it was crucial to become known, through the establishment of shared identity and the associated strength of community. As Rowbotham states, 'in order to create an alternative, an oppressed group must . . . project its own image onto history . . . it has to be visible to itself . . . The first step is to connect' (1973: 27–28). The published accounts of breast cancer often refer to each other, establishing these connections with what has been written before; Batt says that 'I longed to hear the stories of other women' (1994: xiii) and read Kushner (1975), one of the earliest writers in this genre, like 'listening to a big sister who's been there' (Batt 1994: 22). The narratives address the reader directly, and prospectively, offering to be a map or a guide, to empower others going through the same experience.

The writers share what they have learned about breast cancer, its possible causes and the various treatments endured, and thus frame it as 'a shared epidemic' (Butler and Rosenblum 1994: Introduction), 'not unique experiences, but ones shared by thousands of American women' (Lorde 1980: 10), 'a story that has become far too common'

(Love 1994: 167). This connectivity is an important foundation, setting lived experience against medicalised texts of norms, protocols, averages and statistics. The purpose of these narratives is, however, often more explicitly political too. Spence writes of 'deciding to become the subject of our own histories rather than the object of somebody else's (1995: 129), a claim very much in tune with the explicitly feminist goals of *Our Bodies*, *Ourselves*, restated in the 1989 editions, which emphasise the provision to women readers of 'tools . . . to take greater charge of their own health care and their lives', to 'fight wherever possible for improvements and changes', 'to create a more just society' and 'to encourage women to get together' (Phillips and Rakusen 1989: 13). Certain knowledge are privileged and legitimated – the dominant, medical standpoint – and while these personal narratives suggest a counter expertise, they remain subjugated knowledge without status outside their own community of readers. Personal narrative has a very important role in the development of a social movement to challenge the status quo about breast cancer: 'many "lay" women researching the links between the environment and breast cancer and working for primary prevention, were politicised by their personal experience of the disease, by an urgent need to know why they had it, and by a growing concern about the potential hazards in their own local communities. As the photographic artist Matuschka asserts: "I lost a breast and the world gained an activist" ' (Rosenberg 1997).

The work of Batt (1994) marks an important shift of emphasis and development in the illness narrative genre. Her book's very title, *Patient No More: the politics of breast cancer*, suggests both a change in role for the narrator and an emphatic shift of focus away from the predominantly personal. This was the time at which breast cancer advocacy groups were being formed, and developing a political – economy model of breast cancer (see, for example, Zones 2000), which relates cancer to the material relations of society. In *Patient No More*, Batt uses her enquiries into her own breast cancer to illuminate wider issues, of the vested interests at play in the detection and treatment of breast cancer and the need for women with breast cancer to 'develop and advance a coherent perspective of our own. Our voice must be a counterweight to the medical point of view that dominates discussions of the disease' (Batt 1994: xiii). She recalls her testimony to the House of Commons sub-committee on breast cancer in Ottawa, Canada, in 1991; what is needed, she claims, is 'a community of women breast cancer survivors who would have a strong voice and who would speak to whatever issues they felt needed to be addressed' (ibid: 330). An

activist herself, she summarises the paradigmatic shift required: 'from strictly biomedical analyses and treatments to a model that embraces the woman's psychosocial and physical environment, that values prevention rather than treatment' (ibid: 400).

Another writer similarly starts from her own story of cancer (bladder cancer, in this case) to illuminate a broader perspective. Steingraber is an ecologist and a poet; her book *Living Downstream, an ecologist looks at cancer and the environment* (1997), examines the ways in which our relationship to the poisoned earth, air and water around us contribute to the current cancer epidemic. In tracing the ecological history of her home, she offers a model for communities that might want to investigate how their own local pollution sources may be hazardous to health. Most importantly, the model that Batt and Steingraber exemplify poses a radical challenge to public health policy making. If the world we live in is to blame for much of breast cancer, then what use are the continuing official deprecations of women's lifestyle and reproductive habits as causing their disease? A different understanding, and a different focus are required.

Silence into action: the breast cancer/environment movement

The dominant paradigm to explain breast cancer rests on an ideological premise that makes individuals responsible for their health. This, of course, is wholly at odds with much of the public health tradition that looks to locate causes of ill health in situations and locations – so, for example, in poverty and its effects, or in occupational or residential settings exposed to particular hazards. Such a perspective is aptly summarised thus: 'In short, health, illness and death and the way we treat these things, are not just biological phenomena but social phenomena tied into the way we live' (Waddell and Petersen 1994: xii), and urges a focus on 'upstream' interventions to protect health and prevent disease (Watterson 2003: 21). The aetiology of breast cancer is officially presented as resting on women's reproductive practices – delaying a first full term pregnancy, fewer pregnancies, not breast feeding, using synthetic hormones to control fertility and mitigate menopausal symptoms; on changing biology – early menarche and late menopause; and on damaging lifestyle behaviours – obesity, high fat diet, excessive alcohol intake, lack of physical exercise. Since the discovery of BRCA1 and BRCA2, a genetic discourse of causation has also predominated in the public mind, and in publications (Brown et al.

2001), despite the fact that the inherited mutation only accounts for between 6 and 8% of all diagnosed breast cancers (Love 2000). Against this, a number of scientists (Brody and Rudel 2003; Darbre 2006; Davis et al. 1998; Evans 2006; Sasco 2001) have proposed an alternative hypothesis, linking breast cancer to chemicals common in the lived environment that have the ability to metabolise as oestrogen in the body, and so provoke the disease. This hypothesis is fiercely contested, with its advocates often marginalised within scientific communities, and rendered inaudible in policy contexts (ESRC 2006); the new silence about breast cancer.

It has very largely been the breast cancer movement that has advocated this environmental risk perspective, emphasising collective, rather than individual, causes of the disease and a commitment to political change that will help prevent it in the future. As the Women's Environmental Network claimed of their UK project, *Putting Breast Cancer on the Map*, the work 'is not only for themselves [ie. women with breast cancer] but for their families, communities and future generations' (Women's Environmental Network 1999). The movement

> embraces concerns about pesticides, cosmetics, toxic waste, health care without harm, socio-economic differences, the precautionary principle, political structures and processes, lobbying, direct action, radiation, human biochemistry and personal testimonies, *inter alia*. By contrast, the mainstream breast cancer charities and support networks in both the USA and the UK have tended to focus on further research into the holy grail of 'the cure', and on the equally worthy task of direct support to women with the disease … Pre-eminently, the movement has an ethical-ecological perspective, concerned with societal and economic change, and an ideological proximity to the environmental movement, rather than health social movements. Its key focus is on influencing policies to support health protection, to regulate the chemical industry so that human health is a priority, and to realign research agendas towards the effective prevention, not just cure, of breast cancer (Potts 2004b: 555–556).

In action, the breast cancer/environment movement can be illustrated through the Toxic Tour, organised by the 'Toxic Links Coalition – United for Health and Environmental Justice' (Klawiter 2000: 83). 'The theme of the Tour is "Make the Link" and the Tour is choreographed so that each stop along the way [through downtown corporate San Francisco] represents a link in the chain of the cancer industry … the Toxic Tour

maps the political economy and geography of the cancer industry – the hidden maze of linkages and networks connecting the bodies of state agencies, politicians, charities and profit-driven corporations to the unhealthy bodies of people involuntarily exposed to toxins and living in contaminated communities' (ibid: 83–86). In the UK, similar actions have been instigated: in 1998, a protest at the Pesticides Safety Directorate (the UK regulatory body for pesticides), where women revealed their (fake plastic) breasts to urge a ban on Lindane, an organochlorine widely used at the time and implicated, as is the whole group of similar chemicals, in breast cancer by mimicking the action of oestrogen in the body (see Photo 1). Then for International Women's Day 1999, a small demonstration marched between the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (as it then was) and Downing Street (the home of the Prime Minister), demanding Stop Breast Cancer Before It Starts (see Photo 2). These street actions were consolidated by a meeting of breast cancer experts in the House of Commons in November 2000, at which clear statements of intent were made (Women's Environmental Network 2000); a presentation to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Breast Cancer on primary prevention in November 2002; a proposal for a national strategy on primary prevention presented at the UK Public Health Association Annual Forum in 2004; and the publication in 2005 of 'Breast Cancer: an environmental

Photo 1   Photo by Anna Baker, used by permission.

Photo 2   Photo by Liz Sutton, used by permission.

disease' (UK Working Group 2005). Yet the UK movement has made little progress in terms of public visibility or policy change.

The reframing of breast cancer as an environmental disease is not, then, by any means ubiquitous. While Klawiter (2000, 2004) shows how this social movement has changed the experience of breast cancer in the Bay Area of California (around San Francisco), so that a 'new regime' has emerged, this is a fairly unique situation. It has been informed by a dynamic culture that generated 'new social spaces, solidarities and subjectivities' (Klawiter 2004: 863), and the 'emergence of new collective identities' (ibid: 853) in the 18 years that she discusses. While some of these changes pertain more commonly – better patient access to information and support, the moves to dethrone surgeons and the more dominant role for specialist nurses, the greater visibility of women with breast cancer (not just celebrities coming out), and, crucially, better treatments – the environmental links to breast cancer have been effectively highlighted and acted upon only in isolated geopolitical settings and in the Bay Area most notably. To a significant extent, this draws on the activist history of the area, as Epstein (1996) has similarly shown in relation to HIV–AIDS. It is also evidence of a politically sophisticated community, with significantly adequate social capital to be competent to mobilise effectively and make ideological sense of the political terrain.

The activities and campaigns of the breast cancer movement more generally, from which the breast cancer/environment movement originated, is documented by Brenner (Kasper and Ferguson 2000); the autodidacticism of those involved is clearly identified as a major factor in the acquisition of the political capital necessary to make a difference, just as it was in the AIDS movement of the 1980s (Epstein 1996). This bifurcated approach characterizes many 'embodied health movements' (Brown et al. 2004): 'activists . . . move between these discursive positions, learning scientific method and analysis while also asserting a personal/embodied/ethical standpoint' (Potts 2001). The National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC) was formed in 1991 from a wide range of advocacy organisations, and instigated 'Project LEAD (Leadership, Education and Advocacy Development) in which scientists train women in the biology and genetics of breast cancer' (Brenner 2000: 339). Nothing so radical has ever been instigated to disrupt medical hegemony in the UK. The questions Brenner poses in relation to the burgeoning growth of the US breast cancer movement can be answered affirmatively: 'Could professionalism and grass-roots feminism unite in the battle against breast cancer? Could doctors and scientists function in coalition with lay people whose knowledge of and concerns about breast cancer derived from the deeply personal? Could small, underfunded organizations work with larger, more established entities without being swallowed up in the process?' (ibid: 335). In relation to the UK movement, there is little evidence of this being the case. A recent research project ('Divided we Stand: bridging differential understanding of environmental risk', Economic and Social Research Council *Science in Society*, project number RES-151-25-0024) suggested one way of explaining this significant difference in the movement's position and status. In particular, there is a marked and entrenched reluctance to step into 'common ground' (Higgins 2004). The research revealed levels of mutual suspicion (Cinderby and Potts 2007) and unbridgeable ideological differences (ESRC 2006) among the communities of interest who participated, which included social movement activists, women with breast cancer, scientists working on environmental risk of disease, other cancer research scientists, epidemiologists, oncologists and regional and national policy makers. The impact of this is that policy making for primary prevention remains aloof from 'dissident' scientific perspectives, and from community concerns about local environmental hazards that might be implicated in breast cancer causation.

Communities of risk and citizen expertise

The breast cancer/environment movement is grounded both in narratives of personal exploration of causes, and in educated 'lay' challenges to 'professional' expertise about aetiology. 'Having supported each other through their diagnoses and treatments, women were now supporting each other by demanding that political and scientific attention be directed toward the causes of breast cancer in their communities' (Brenner 2000: 332). A theme of environmental concern, which emphasizes collective responses to local problems, runs through the heart of the movement, and several innovative community-based research projects have addressed these concerns. The Bay Area and Long Island in New York State suffer significantly raised breast cancer incidence rates, which have provoked residents to lobby for investigation into the possible causes. In the UK, a study using community mapping and GIS-P (Potts 2005a) to investigate women's historical knowledge of environmental hazards that might be related to breast cancer was undertaken in a South Yorkshire town with an unusually stable demographic profile.

As Fishman states, 'The politics of the production of risk knowledge has meant that activists and those considered (or who consider themselves) "at risk" from the environment have wrested the production of this knowledge from the privileged purview of "scientists" and have placed it into a social and political arena' (Fishman 2000: 184). The breast cancer/environment movement is underpinned by research based in geopolitical communities, by what Brown (1992) has termed 'popular epidemiology'. In epistemological terms, this is akin to the feminist determination to empower women with the tools to analyse their own lives, using their own eyes, and starting from what matters in their terms, thus disrupting the hegemonic masculinist viewpoint. This emphasis on 'situated knowledge' also brings into question the context of all knowledge, forms of evidence and sense-making, destabilizing the primacy of professional expertise (Potts 2004a). Community-based health surveys, which involve local people and are embedded in understanding of the lived experience of their everyday lives, are an inherent part of popular epidemiology, which

> thus challenges the decontextualised individualism of traditional epidemiology by focusing attention on the connections between specific localities – workplaces and communities – where the health of people is endangered. It does this by combining traditional

> sociodemographic and historical research with community studies
> that pinpoint health effects of community-based industrial and envir-
> onmental hazards . . . Popular epidemiology, practiced in this way, is
> also a strategy for political empowerment (Fischer 2000: 156–157).

As Brody et al. claim, 'breast cancer activists were among the first and
most powerful health-affected groups to make environmental research
and prevention a priority' (2005: 7). But there is also a considerable
history of popular, or lay, epidemiology in practice (Brown 1992; Irwin
1995; Popay and Williams 1996; Wynne 1996) that rests in what Fischer
(2000) terms 'local knowledge'. He contrasts this with 'formal scientific
knowledge' that is 'organised and carried forward in written texts' (ibid:
195); 'whereas science seeks to theoretically separate its knowledge from
the culture in which it is produced, local knowledge remains inher-
ently associated with, and interpreted within, the specific culture in
which it is produced' (ibid). Irwin writes of 'a contextualised approach'
and 'a citizen-oriented perspective' (2001: 96), emphasizing the two key
components of this way of working – what, in keeping with our book's
title, we could summarise as 'people and places'.

   There is, however, I believe another dimension to such approaches,
which informs a broader political purpose. Insofar as the breast cancer
movement has established some – albeit diverse (Fishman 2000; Kasper
2000) – collective identity and shared subjectivity, the context in which
knowledge about environmental risks is constructed is not just local and
specific. Social movements are characterised by shared beliefs, vision
and solidarity (della Porta and Diani 1999), and this ideological and
material collectivity is a common context on which to base popular
epidemiological enquiry. This was explicit in the Women's Environ-
mental Network's UK project, *Putting Breast Cancer on the Map* (Women's
Environmental Network 1999), which asked women to make maps of
hazards in their local communities, based on a notion of women as
particularly vulnerable, but also having particular and privileged know-
ledge of their bodies and their environments.

   There is a very real sense in which the knowledge about hazards and
exposures has been shared within the movement, and the process of
claim-making developed iteratively in relation to enquiries conducted
in other localities and driven by breast cancer activists. The social
movement networks operate to facilitate such communication and
the sharing of processes and hypotheses. The World Conferences
on Breast Cancer in Canada (Kingston 1997, Ottawa 1999, Victoria
2002, Halifax 2005; see http://www.wcbcf.ca/archives.php) formalised

this process on many levels, whether through the main agenda (in Kingston and Ottawa), or through the marginalised sub-grouping formed to challenge the dominant ideological positioning of the conference (in Halifax) (Potts 2005b; http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/International_BC_Action/). Research I have been involved with makes this collective praxis explicit (Potts 2004b): the links with US activists have helped shape and inform the projects, through direct contact and shared information. In many respects, this is the habitual scientific process of learning, refining research and building on previous work. The movement provides a framework for consideration of some key elements in popular epidemiological enquiry: the usefulness of community mapping and the use of GIS-P as a tool; the problems of how to assess women's exposure to environmental hazards over time; and the difficulties in obtaining access to official risk data. A trajectory of development in activist involvement is clearly apparent in the USA, where the breast cancer/environment movement has successfully initiated an increasingly well-defined role in community participation in research (McCormick et al. 2004; Brody et al. 2005): the Long Island study in 1993, Marin County research, the Cape Cod study from 1994 and the recent NIEHS centres operating in several locations (Brody et al. 2005). Such alliances remain but the dream of the movement in the UK. The difference is to some extent explained by the different cultural and political settings, and the different relationship between academic institutions and local communities, but most significantly, it rests in a reluctance on the part of the UK movement to establish common ground with the dominant, mainstream life worlds of research, policy making and epidemiology – to expand the boundaries of the community. Such a lack of trust is mutual: policy makers, clinicians and epidemiologists were reluctant to be associated with the 'lunatic fringe' of those making environmental risk claims – be they activists, scientists or academic researchers (Cinderby and Potts 2007). It seems to be very hard to establish any 'convergence of public and scientific priorities' (Brody et al. 2005: 5) in the UK context.

Nonetheless, perhaps the most significant feature of such research, and its consequent knowledge claims, is the contribution to the project for what Brugge and Hynes (2005) call 'science with the people'. The US experience demonstrates the potential for this transformation, and for the central role that activists play in that process through their embodied and acquired expertise. As Irwin claims, 'the citizen-based approach has potentially radical implications for environmental policy' (2001: 95) and for 'a radical repositioning of epidemiology, and a "new social contract

for science" (Gibbons 1999) that engages citizens in deliberative policy making' (Potts 2004a: 552). Ultimately that may be the most important dimension, for if citizens (people) are genuinely engaged in decisions about their local communities (places), then health is much more likely to be protected and a precautionary approach to possible harms adopted. Such an approach would contribute to broadly healthier communities, not just to the primary prevention of breast cancer.

18
Towards Understanding Community: Developing Participatory Working

Pat Turton

Background

This chapter suggests ways of making the rhetoric of community participation a reality in practice. It uses a hypothetical example drawn from practical experience in the fields of health and social care, and identifies the components and tools required to carry such work out in practice. It also touches on some of the theoretical concepts and values which underpin and validate such an approach, and makes some tentative comments regarding the implications for current policy. In so doing, it crosses the conceptual boundaries between public health, primary care and organisational development.

The chapter draws upon many years of personal experience of facilitating collaborative projects in a range of settings – from projects within the virtual communities of those who share a particular situation or condition (such as asthma or cancer), to service development within social or geographical communities – for example those which are physically isolated or particularly deprived. Throughout this work, I became increasingly aware of how my professional roles provided me with access to arenas where others without this formal role might not go [for example, colleagues within primary care trusts, or general practitioners (GP) practices], while a commitment to inclusiveness and a certain set of personal skills and experience enabled me to take advantage of this situation, and make links across organisations and communities.

Establishing definitions

The need to establish working definitions of specific terms has been a constant theme. For example, it has been important in every case to develop clarity about what actually defines the 'community', whether the

communities in question have been actual, geographical communities of areas of high health need, or the 'virtual' communities such as those embodied by people with cancer or diabetes, or the amorphous 'older people'. While the term 'community' itself is contested (Winsome, St John 1998), in practice it has been essential, both as part of the initial work and throughout the projects, to create or enhance a sense of community within each project, by means of quite formal and explicit structures: steering groups, advisory groups, lines of communication, roles and responsibilities and so on. This process has been essential to give the projects shape, and to create safe forums where debates and discussions can take place. This helps to develop trust and transparency, which are discussed later as key elements for success.

'Primary care' and 'public health' are also concepts which we used in the project described in more detail below. These have no absolutely agreed definition, and therefore we had to establish agreed definitions with each group at every stage throughout the project. The difficulties of developing projects without a 'shared language' and the need for this to be addressed has been noted by Bate (1990) and the understanding of shared history and narrative is central to the development work of Paulo Freire (Freire and Macedo 1998) whose philosophy lies behind so much of this work.

Sometimes it is helpful to be able to blur boundaries a bit, and a lack of absolute definition can work to advantage, but it is essential to generate a shared understanding regarding what is being worked on at any given point. This needs to be done afresh for each new project, as participants need to check out their own and each other's assumptions regarding the current field of interest. It can be done by means of meetings, discussions, circulating papers for discussion (bearing in mind the need to make these accessible for all participants) and constant checking out and clarifying of assumptions. It does not, in fact, need to be time-consuming, as feelings of trust and understanding develop through joint working and promote collaboration, as noted by Means et al. (1997), but this *process* is important as part of creating and maintaining the vision of the project in question. Eventually, as the project matures, visual cues, logos and colour schemes contribute to this sense of 'belonging' to a community or project.

A public health approach to primary care – examples from research

Underpinning the chapter is the findings of a research project (Taylor et al. 1998) funded by the PHA (Public Health Alliance), which identified

and developed a conceptual model of participatory working within primary care and community settings, based on a series of community case studies. The purpose of the project was to explore how health issues might be addressed within primary and community care, moving away from a strictly medical model focusing on individual patients, such as that exemplified by general practice (Department of Health 2003), towards a broader model, thus translating those issues from a purely individual responsibility, to a community-wide approach. The project highlighted that those involved in developing primary and community care needed to understand the potential power of this transition and the usefulness of the model in helping people to address real health issues. The project identified those factors which either facilitated or inhibited collaborative working, and by providing this diagnostic facility, practitioners could predict issues and problems, and therefore, to some extent at least, manage or control their projects. Such conceptual frameworks, or models, enable people to move on from the idea that individuals alone are vested with the power to change and implement things. It enables people, be they lay or voluntary-sector participants or health care professionals, to proactively create a more facilitative environment.

Figure 18.1 shows the model as it first appeared, with the defining components of equity, collaboration and participation. Figure 18.2, which follows, identifies those factors which inhibit the effective functioning of the model, and Figure 18.3 demonstrates those factors which
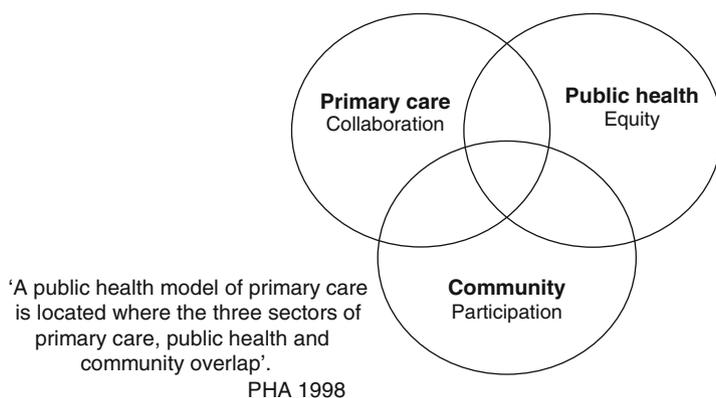
Figure 18.1   The public health model of primary care.
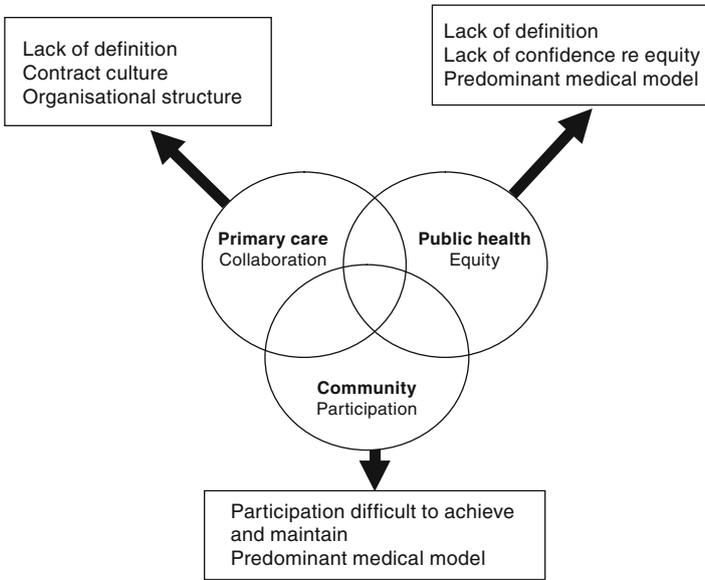
Figure 18.2 Factors acting against the model.
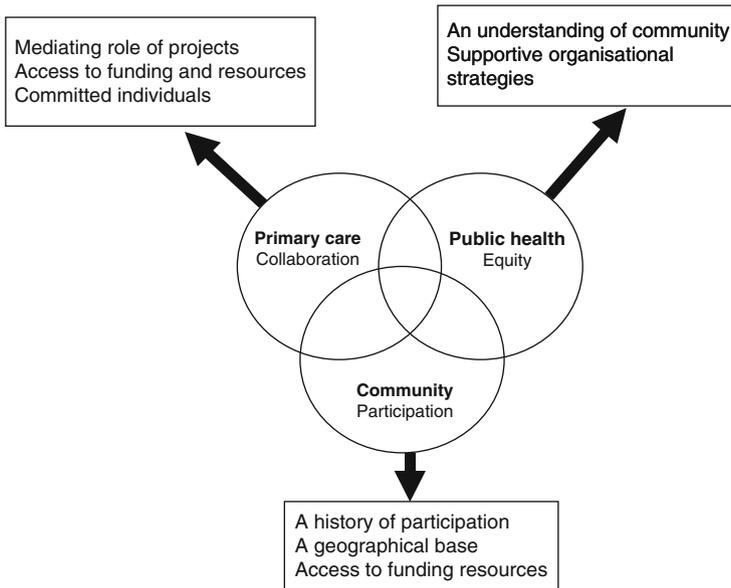
Figure 18.3 Factors promoting the model.

facilitate progress. By taking time to address these issues as they occur for specific projects, participants can identify ways in which apparent barriers can be reduced or eliminated and collaborative work successfully promoted.

Working with communities and health

To see how this might work in practice, I will examine a single case study in depth, exploring in turn each of the three 'circles' of the figures. The hypothetical case study, based on a real example has been selected because it is an area of ill health which is current and ongoing, and because potential solutions lie outside a purely medical, disease management approach. Asthma management has been chosen as it is both extremely prevalent and frequently inadequately managed with strategies being almost entirely focused on disease management for the individuals concerned. The model could equally well be used with regard to project implementation in any other health and social care issue, working along the continuum from the individual to society. The point is that at every stage the issues of equity, collaboration and participation have been addressed through the three elements of primary care, public health and community participation.

A case study example

James is a 10-year-old boy who has been treated for asthma over a number of years. His asthma is not well controlled, and he does not routinely attend asthma clinics at the GP surgery. However, he has much time off his local primary school, and finds sporting activities difficult. His parents both smoke, and he is the eldest of three children, the youngest of whom is two. This younger child has recurrent chest infections. The family live in a deprived area which is somewhat isolated. The estate is served by the branch surgery of a local GP practice which has its main surgery some three miles away. This is where the asthma clinic held and it is an infrequent bus ride away for the family.

A medical model approach

The management of James's asthma is centred on improving the control of his asthma by persuading his mother to take him to the asthma

clinic where there is a practice nurse trained in asthma management. His mother takes James once, but then misses several appointments, although James is given an emergency appointment for his asthma on a number of occasions, for which the doctor prescribes several inhalers. The community health practitioner/health visitor (who does not have specialist training in asthma), spends time with the family trying to persuade James's mother to stop smoking and encouraging her to take James to the asthma clinic. Meanwhile, James's little brother is admitted to hospital as an emergency for his chest infections several times during the winter – staff at the hospital also try and persuade his parents to stop smoking. James does less and less exercise at school, as he says it makes him wheezy and he is not allowed to have his inhaler with him as it is against the school rules. He is falling behind with his school work, as he has had time off school.

At the end of a year

- James has been prescribed three different inhalers, which he does not manage well, so he only uses them intermittently, and he does not use the preventative one at all.
- He has had five emergency appointments, has missed five weeks of school and is doing little sport.
- His little brother has been in hospital twice, and has also been prescribed asthma medication (two more inhalers).
- His parents are still smoking.

This 'medical model' solution demonstrates adequate crisis management and effective acute care, but is not addressing any of the wider underlying health issues. The family are isolated in their ill health, the health and educational professionals are frustrated, and the process is intensely expensive, with multiple hospital admissions, emergency appointments, unused and ineffective medications. It also fails to address any wider health issues such as smoking cessation, or the general population need for increased exercise. Potentially it reduces the life chances of James (and his siblings) as their education and hence future employability are already being affected. It therefore significantly increases inequality in terms of health status, although not in terms of health expenditure, so evaluation of this approach purely in terms of access to health care and the amount of money spent on this approach would identify neither the problem nor the potential solutions.

An alternative public health scenario

The health visitor notes that a number of children in her 'patch' are suffering from asthma and arranges with public health and GP colleagues to undertake an audit of her area, including the estate where James lives. This elicits the information that the estate has a particularly high prevalence of asthma and of smoking (approximately 33% of adults smoke). GP and local hospital records identify that over the past year there have been a high number of hospital admissions and emergency care for that area, especially for respiratory conditions and asthma. This approach confirms to the health visitor that this is a wider public health issue, as well as being an individual problem for James and his family. Using her wider public health role, she arranges to see the school head and suggests that the school could play a leading role in helping to reduce the burden of respiratory illness in the area. She suggests that she meet the staff and school governors to facilitate a discussion as to how this might be done. It is agreed that the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and School Governors will invite her to their next meeting to explore these issues with the staff and parents. At the meeting, she presents the situation to the parents, including the local health statistics, and the potential problems for the children. A number of activities then ensue, amongst which are:

- The health visitor undertakes a course in asthma management, so that she can provide an asthma assessment clinic in the school with links to the local GP asthma clinic.
- She arranges for the school staff to have a session on asthma management, and facilitates the development of a protocol whereby children can have access to their inhalers, especially before undertaking exercise.
- One of the teachers uses the exercise of managing peak flow as a basis for a simple maths exercise for his class, and another gets children to design 'Stop Smoking' posters.
- The PTA run a stop-smoking group for parents, starting on National No Smoking Day.

At the end of a year

- The health visitor has attended training on the management of asthma.

- A weekly asthma clinic at the school has been established, where the health visitor can do an initial assessment, prescribe according to a protocol and check inhaler technique.
- The school has discussed and adopted a smoking policy, and has run a stop-smoking group for the parents (particularly those with asthmatic children).
- The housing department has been asked to carry out a survey of moulds in local houses, as this is considered to be affecting the children's asthma.
- The PE staff have had a training session from the practice asthma nurse and the health visitor, and have developed a protocol regarding the management of asthma and exercise.
- Fizzy drinks with asthma-inducing colourings and preservatives have been banished from the school menu and are discouraged in lunch boxes.
- Exercise participation has risen.
- A further audit has shown that emergency treatments have fallen, as have hospital admissions.
- Smoking rates have fallen to 23% and are still dropping.

There is a real sense that the whole community has been involved in tackling this health issue, moving it from being an individual problem for families to a shared public health problem for which there are complementary community and individual solutions which can be implemented in parallel. In addition, several other health issues, such as participation in exercise, diet and smoking, have been addressed, and the school and PTA are considering a 'Healthy Eating' policy.

Barriers to a public health approach

A further consideration of the case study in terms of the three elements of primary care, public health and community participation can be made, with reference again to Figures 18.1–18.3. In relation to primary care, the factors *promoting* a public health approach to primary care included the mediating role of projects, access to funding and resources and committed individuals. Factors *inhibiting* the approach were the organisational structure of primary care, a lack of definition of what primary care was, and the 'contract culture'. Primary care is delivered by GPs, assisted by members of the primary health care team. Some of these are employed by the GP and work within practices, and some

are employed by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and linked to practices. Services are located largely within individual GP surgeries. These may be local to where people live, or may be some distance. In some cases there are branch surgeries, which may not provide access to a wide range of facilities. The implications of this for local communities are that they may have to travel perhaps quite long distances to get to specialist clinics, and the health care professionals are not themselves seen as part of the community. There is likely to be little or no opportunity for discussion about the development of appropriate and helpful services, such as the community might need. In addition, GPs are independent contractors and provide what is specified under the GP contract (Department of Health 2003), but do not necessarily provide services to the community as a whole and generally not outside the surgery. GP-employed nurses often do not have strong links with other health care professionals outside the surgery. In any given community, there may be several practices, and they usually do not collaborate in the provision of care. Individual practices would generally not provide a service such as a school asthma service, as it would be seen as encroaching on the territory of other GP practices, having an impact on the income of other practices. Hence to develop a wider approach, it is essential to have someone, either a community worker or health care professional with a specific development role, to enable these conceptual, physical and organisational boundaries to be crossed.

Crossing boundaries – networking and facilitative management

This leads us the key role of the community health practitioner, or community worker under other circumstances. Community health practitioners (previously known as health visitors) have their background as public health nurses (Craig and Lindsay 2000), and in recent years their role has been much in dispute, and the public health element not clearly understood by those responsible for commissioning services. Originally health visitors were employed by the local authorities on public health issues, rather than medical issues, but their broader public health role has been gradually eroded. They are generally employed by the PCTs and this freedom from direct employment by the GPs potentially gives them a wider brief to work as 'boundary spanners' (Williams 2002) across a variety of institutions and organisations, although the realisation of this potential may be constrained by job descriptions, perceived roles and financial limitations (Stern and Green 2005). In the case study above,

the medical model has the community health practitioner remaining within her usual role as supporter of families with young children; in the alternative management strategy, a wider interpretation of her role as public health nurse enables her to work with the school and with primary care to address the broader issues of asthma management.

Facilitative management

Facilitative management can provide the roles and structures which permit post-holders to move across traditional boundaries and promote a networking approach (Gilchrist 2003). For the community nurse practitioner/health visitor to be able to work in this way it is necessary for her to have not only a role and job description which encompasses this wider way of working, but also a flexible management and organisational structure on the part of the employing authority. Bensberg (2004) notes the importance of role in legitimating the activities of the post-holder, and Means et al. (1997) also note that facilitative management is an essential pre-requisite to encouraging initiatives such as we have described.

Adopting a 'project management' approach to particular health issues, such as asthma also encourages creative solutions to intractable problems by providing a clear remit and objectives to the responsible practitioner, especially when the practitioner is given a degree of autonomy to find such solutions. It also permits more useful and effective evaluation through the setting of achievable goals and targets for each project. Identifying specific projects in this way can also facilitate access to additional funding, even in times of financial stringency, especially if the project can be aligned with current policy initiatives, whether local or national. This can help to provide the funding and resources highlighted as facilitating factors in the promotion of the public health model. It also allows for more effective evaluation to be developed, with the caveat that it is important to identify realistic and achievable goals for the project, as discussed below.

Facilitative management and supportive organisational strategies were also noted to promote a public health approach to primary and community care. Mainstream organisational structures are usually geographically remote from smaller communities (or conceptually remote from communities such as user groups or similar organisations). They also generally have fixed organisational boundaries, and can be quite rigid in approach. Access to these organisations is essential for local communities or user groups in order for them to gain access to resources

or to influence decisions. To assist these processes, facilitative management can design and support posts with a clear remit to work across boundaries and network with other agencies and with communities. This can be done through intelligent commissioning with a project management focus. Without these identified posts (which require a particular kind of supportive management), individuals are unable to work across boundaries, even when so inclined, as they risk upsetting the status quo within the organisation and hence being perceived as risky individuals to employ.

Community participation

The facilitating factors underpinning community participation were identified in the project as a history of collaboration, the existence of a geographical base and access to funding and resources; inhibiting factors were identified as the difficulties in achieving and maintaining participation and an overshadowing of collaboration and participation by the dominant medical model. In the example discussed here, there are in fact several 'communities'. There is the 'virtual' community of 'people with asthma', as well as the geographical community of the estate, within which resides the smaller community of the school. Our research demonstrated that promoting collaboration in such complex arenas requires committed individuals with a remit to work in this way, as well as an understanding of the process and issues involved. If the desired outcomes are to be achieved, it will be necessary for the community practitioner to creatively draw together and inspire representatives from each participating community in order to create and implement a solution to the issues being addressed. For this process to work effectively, it does require a genuine commitment to participation, otherwise people can feel used and are less likely to become involved in further initiatives. On the other hand, once successful collaboration has been achieved and celebrated with one project, participants can feel empowered to take on further and greater goals.

One element of this, noted by Burns et al. (2004a) is the importance of an actual physical centre, which can become the focus of activity, providing a 'safe' territory for a range of collaborative activities. Having somewhere to go which is neutral territory, but which is designated as belonging to a project, enhances self-esteem, and provides a power base from which a project team can work. In the case study used here, the issue of the geographical base did not appear as such a significant component in that particular context. However, it could be

said that the estate was the geographical focus, and that the activities were focused around the school, which provided a physical base for the activities.

Equity and public health

The final circle in the model explores the role of public health in the promotion of a community approach to public health and primary care. The research project showed that Public Health departments had a role in promoting equity in health, through being able to provide the evidence for interventions which would reduce inequalities in health, improving health care provision and the effective evaluation of projects and the identification of health benefits arising from particular strategies. The provision of epidemiological data and supportive research to underpin action are essential components of effective health care development and provision. In the case study here, Public Health workers can provide evidence-based information about the prevalence of asthma and levels of smoking in a deprived community, and also about potentially appropriate management strategies. This essential information promotes the development of suitable interventions which, in collaboration with the communities and health care professionals involved, can be further tailored to the needs of the communities in question.

Summary of facilitative factors

The importance of the facilitative factors are illustrated in this extract from the research project (Taylor et al 1998: 73).

- Committed individuals play an important role in ensuring the success of new or innovative projects, but they need to be developed and sustained by a supportive framework.
- The mediating role of projects was found to be important in helping lay people and other professionals to bridge the gap between themselves and primary health care teams.
- Where a community group was involved, a geographical base provided neutral territory – a focus for local groups which assisted them both with working with local people and professionals.

(continued)

- Access to, or control over, an element of funding and resources were important components of success for innovative initiatives. Resources were not only monetary but also included access to personal or professional skills.
- A shared understanding of community helped in getting professionals to work together collaboratively.
- A history of collaboration over a number of years increased participation. Funding for single short projects did not achieve this.
- Supportive organisational strategies, such as jointly funded posts or established corporate structures could contribute significantly to success.

Our research found that the three overlapping elements which promote a public health-oriented/community development approach operate not only at the microlevel (which is what has been largely discussed here), but also at the 'meso'-level – here represented by the PCT and commissioning level. The various elements of the model work together at the 'micro-' and 'meso'-levels, suggesting that PCTs for example, can contribute to the success of projects by supportive management strategies and the provision of resources. These resources are not always financial, but may also be professional skills and information – for example in the provision of relevant health statistics, and assistance with evaluation strategies.

The role of evaluation

A final element regarding the use of the model concerns the issue of evaluation. Comprehensive and meaningful evaluation is an essential component of primary care and community development. However, evaluation which is considered useful from the perspective of commissioners or others who fund projects is that which uses robust quantitative methodologies, preferably the 'gold standard', randomised control trial. This is a top–down process which renders participants powerless. Adopting the model advocated here, with the three elements of equity, collaboration and participation, demands that all parties contribute to the development of an overarching evaluation

strategy, such as a Health Impact Assessment (Dowie 2003), using a number of strands, which can both allow commissioners and funders to identify and establish realistic and measurable outcomes, whilst at the same time including the more qualitative appraisal which is valued by participants. The key to success is collaboration and participation, as it will be important that agreement is reached regarding the collection of the necessary data in order to establish progress.

Conclusions

The detailed discussion of the case study has allowed the exploration of the contributory components which lead to success or failure. In this way, using a structured framework validated by previous research, it has been possible to suggest ways in which ideas can be incorporated from a range of disciplines, including organisational behaviour, public health and primary care, and community development. This knowledge can empower both lay people and health care professionals to intervene successfully in the area of health improvement. And while individual health concerns might to some extent be addressed by an individualised, medical approach, it is only through true involvement with the wider community that real and sustainable changes in health, as opposed to illness management, can be made.

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