

Conceptualising Communities

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Communities & Culture Network+

Network+ is a 3 year project (2012-15) that funds and does research. Funded by the Digital Economy strand of the EPSRC, it sits alongside 3 other Network+'s: New Economic Models (NEMODE) , Sustainable Society, IT as Utility.

Network+ Team:

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COMMUNITY AS....

a 'warmly persuasive word' used 'to describe an existing set of relationships... that... unlike all other terms of social organizations never seems to be used unfavourably' (Williams, 1976: 76).

community as a "good thing' that needs to be revived and restored' (Gilchrist 2011: 1-2)

A 'ploy to cover over a neoliberal-inspired fundamental withdrawal of state provision' (North 2011:817),

'political manoeuvre' making the 'scale, speed and manner of deficit reduction politically possible (Coote 2011:82).



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COMMUNITY AS...

- mundane and everyday interactions that sustain relationships (Robertson et al. 2008)
- Common interests or bonds (Taylor et al. 2000); a shared identity (Bauman 2001, Weeks 2000)
- locality or proximity (Frankenberg 1966, Lyon 2007)
- A shared social capital (Coleman 1990, Putnam 1993)



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Communities and digital:

- transformative potential of technology for communities and cultures
 - Fantasy of technology
- Visibility and invisibility
 - Technologies and populations



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Communities and social enterprise

- The community centre as microcosm for the localism bills
- ‘Community facing social enterprise’



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Woodhouse community centre



Migration of Oblong from community, to saviour, to social enterprise

Conflation of community and social enterprise through aims of 'empowerment'

'Community' as a term is 'put to work' (Garrett 2009:3),



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Community and the Individual

- Longstanding tension, reconfigured?
- community as *unproductive* in capitalist neoliberal terms, *located* in global and digital terms, and *unnecessary* or simply *outdated* in neoliberal enterprise terms



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So..

- Community needs to be more than an empty signifier, a 'neo-liberal slogan' or a 'co-opted concept' (Bunyan, 2011:121)
- Not enough to approach 'community' as an ethical or methodological issue
- How we put the term 'to work' (Garrett 2009:3) is a political, economic and cultural task.



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