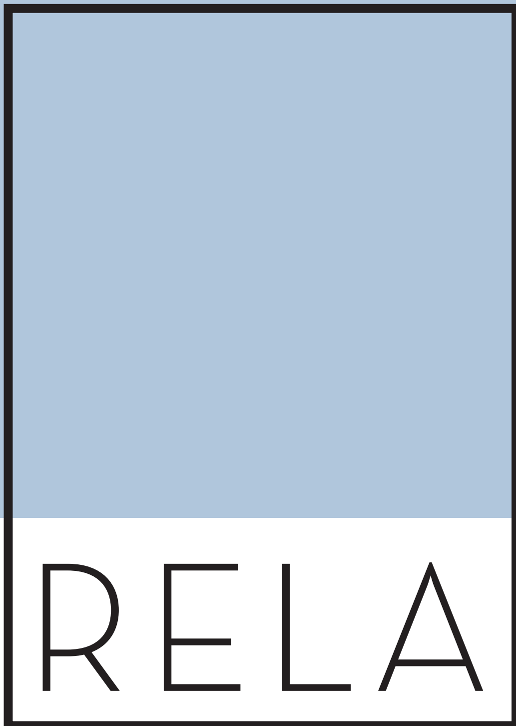
This issue:
Adult education and the community



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Editorial: Adult education and the community

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In the past decade, the issue of *community* has become an important social and even political theme. Researchers and politicians share a concern about an observed loss of social cohesion. In the field of social sciences, the American political scientist, Robert Putnam achieved worldwide fame with his book 'Bowling Alone. The collapse and revival of American community' (2000), which convinced many readers that our sense of community is being eroded. Putnam argues that over the past few decades, associational life in the US has steadily lost ground. He argues that people no longer are committed to matters beyond their private interests, that they spend lonely hours in front of the television, and that they are largely self-absorbed. Traditional membership of various associations, such as sports clubs, parent committees, service clubs, and youth organizations, used to ensure that people felt involved in the local community and, by extension, in society at large. The steady decline in civic engagement causes the social fabric to unravel and trust in society to decline, thus Putnam claims. Such trust can only develop when people are connected, when they maintain regular contacts, and collaborate with each other. This does not only involve ties with like-minded people (bonding), but also the collaboration with people and associations outside one's circle of confidants (bridging). The trust emerging from these processes of bonding and bridging represents a society's 'social capital' (Field, 2003), 'the glue that holds society together' (Putnam, 2000).

Many authors dealing with the issue of *social capital* are rather pessimistic about present-day social developments and call for a renewal of the social fabric, often by looking back to (alleged) forms of association in the past. This position is shared by many European scholars who also consider processes of individualisation as one of the main causes of what they consider the breakdown of the social fabric. More recently this analysis is being complemented by a critical analysis of the challenges posed by multicultural society. The last decades have shown an increasing ethnic-cultural mix in European societies that often were considered to be fairly homogeneous. In this context, policymakers are said to have shown little concern, thereby ignoring that large groups of newcomers hardly develop ties with 'the country of arrival', do not understand its language or culture and sometimes even take a hostile attitude towards the host country and its cultural traditions. 'The non-committal answer given by multiculturalism is that there is no 'we' anymore; instead, society consists of a collection of subcultures. It is hard to see what remains of the notion of citizenship. Without a sense of 'we' nothing is

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possible, without critical involvement, society disintegrates' (Scheffer, 2007, p. 405, translation DW).

The discourse on the restoration of the community is today fairly popular and dominant among policy makers. France has installed a minister dealing with issues of French identity. British politicians of the larger political parties explore the way Britishness can again play a role in dealing with diversity. The German chancellor declares multicultural society a failure. British and French leaders confirm this statement. Populist politicians are increasingly influential in many European countries. They reflect a major concern in a cohesive society that produces the social capital necessary to forge 'a community *with* an identity'. It tells 'a story of lost paradise and promised redemption' (Arneil, 2006, p. 201). In opposition to this position, some scholars argue that it is not possible today, and it never has been possible in the past, to overcome differences in society and to forge a common 'we'. There are inevitably all kinds of differences, oppositions and antagonisms which cannot, will not, and even should not be overcome (Mouffe, 2005). Difference and plurality is the basis of our present day society and the backbone of our democracy. Taking into account this inevitable difference, the idea of 'a community without a community' (Amin, 2005) or of 'a community of those who have nothing in common' (Lingis, 1994) may be much more relevant than a community that in vain tries to (re-)establish strong identification and bonding.

> Beneath the rational community, its common discourse of which each lucid mind is but the representative and its enterprises in which the efforts and passions of each are absorbed and depersonalized, is another community, the community that demands that the one who has his own communal identity, who produces his own nature, expose himself to the one with whom he has nothing in common, the stranger. This other community is not simply absorbed into the rational community; it recurs, it troubles the rational community, as its double or its shadow. This other community forms not in a work, but in the interruption of work and enterprises. It is not realized in having or in producing something in common but in exposing oneself to the one with whom one has nothing in common (Lingis, 1994, p. 10).

With regard to this view on community, education is not about facilitating the process of producing a joint identity or a common we, as suggested by various protagonists of social cohesion and social capital theorists. Nor is it aimed at including people in homogeneous communities. Often, such attempts are counterproductive and end up with exclusion rather than inclusion (Arneil, 2006). On the contrary, in this view education could be conceived as creating conditions in which people's identities are interrupted by the presence of others who articulate other opinions, or different expressions of what life and living together is about. A *pedagogy of interruption* is a pedagogy that *violates* the sovereignty of the subject by asking the simple but fundamental question: what do you think about this, where do you stand on this, or, how will you respond? (Biesta, 2006, p. 150) In line with this view adult and community education is a matter of creating public or worldly spaces where the issues that torment us can be debated, *without* the certainty that what we are saying is the ultimate right answer, but *with* the certainty that we are thus preserving the difference and keeping democracy alive.

We are aware of the fact that research in adult and continuing education that deals with issues of community building often relates to the dominant orientation of restoring social cohesion through the increase of social capital. Yet, other approaches favour a position where the experience of interruption of the common (sense) has a central educative meaning. We have invited contributors to develop a stance vis-à-vis these two

divergent orientations regarding adult education and community building. We can classify the responses that we received from contributors to this thematic issue more or less along these two perspectives on the relationship between adult education and community building. The contributions can neatly be divided into two sets of three papers. The first three papers presented in this volume concentrate directly or indirectly on different aspects of social cohesion, focusing on gamers' associations in Swedish society, cross-border identity building in Spain and Portugal and the educative dimension of motor clubs in Australia. The reader will probably also notice that these papers present a rather sociological perspective on education and learning practices. The other three papers focus on education as a form of interruption of familiar perspectives of participants in participatory practices. They include a paper on international learning communities in Poland, one presenting diverse views on citizenship, community and participation and, finally, a paper on a health education experiment in Northern Ireland. It is clear that all papers in this issue mainly deal with contexts of non-formal and sometimes informal education and learning. Apart from the Australian paper on community building and motor sports, all contributions in this special issue refer to practices developed in Europe, covering perspectives from the North to the South of the continent. Let us now go a bit deeper into the specific contribution of each selected paper to the reflection on 'adult education and the community' as presented in this introduction.

The paper on 'Learning democracy in Swedish gamers' associations' by Tobias Harding presents the development of SVEROK, an association uniting some 100.000 gamers, organised in local communities throughout the country and represented democratically on the national level. The central argument in Harding's contribution is that members of the association that take leadership responsibilities also learn a lot from participating in structures and practices of representative democracy. Learning from organized teaching (*episteme*) appears to play a very limited role in SVEROK. Learning among those active in the organization is dominated by learning via experience, and can thus be characterized as either *phronēsis* or *technê.* The experiential knowledge gained by activity in SVEROK is likely to strengthen their ability to act in a representative democracy, and also as organizational entrepreneurs in other contexts. This contribution confirms that, in spite of the often alarming messages about the disintegration of civil society, associative life is enriched by new organizations combining applications of new technologies with fairly traditional forms of democratic representation.

The paper 'Learning contexts of 'the Others': Identity building processes in southern Europe', by Estrella Gualda et al, is about the construction of identities in a cross-border region divided by the river Guadiana at the frontier between Spain and Portugal. The paper, based on interviews with local inhabitants and educationalists shows that on both sides of the border, the tendency to construct local identities is still very much alive, in spite of the dynamics of Europeanisation and globalisation. These identities are mainly constructed through narratives about one's own community in contrast with 'the other' community, living across the river. Often, these constructions are informed by stereotypes that have a long-standing history. The fieldwork also uncovered the common idea that the border represented by the river Guadiana is real and separates two different countries that are two historically dissimilar empires that treasure different languages and, despite being neighbours, live largely back-to-back. It is quite obvious that well intentioned educational practices aimed at stimulating openness towards 'the other' have to take into account the perseverance of narratives constructing the imagined communities of the different nation states in Europe, a

tendency which seems to be strengthened again by the recent insecurities of the financial crisis.

The paper 'Not just petrol heads: Men's learning in the community through participation in motor sports', by Barry Golding analyses the commitment of members of these communities in terms of learning processes. It obviously is situated in the theoretical tradition of 'situated learning' and 'communities of practice' developed by Lave and Wenger (1991), and in line with social capital theories mentioned above. The paper reminds us of the reality that a wide variety of the learning of adults takes place in practices that do not have 'education' as their primary objective. The participation as such supports the members to acquire competences needed to participate in the club, to achieve good results in the competition, to keep their vehicle in good shape. Furthermore, participation in these motor sports organisations enabled men from diverse backgrounds, who shared a similar social and cultural interest in machines, to exercise agency and become active producers of that culture rather than its passive consumers. In actively constructing this motor-cyclist culture, homogeneity rather than diversity within the community is a central perspective. As such these communities definitely depend on and contribute to the development of social capital, since they both require and enhance trust, shared norms and reciprocity.

As mentioned before, the next three papers focus more on the disjunctive processes that often occur in participatory educational practices. The first paper in this series is written by Hana Cervinkova and deals with 'International learning communities for global and local citizenship'. It describes and analyzes an action research project in Wroclaw (Poland), whereby American, Ukrainian and Polish students participate in what is called 'an urban laboratory'. The participants of the programme that lasts a month get acquainted with the geography, the history, the culture and the economy of the city and are invited to develop a tour for tourists in line with a particular topic they have selected and studied in dialogue with others. The research, which is presented as a participatory action research project using ethnographic methods, describes the laboratory as an interruption for most of the students' conventional understanding of European cities, cultures and histories. It also reveals to them how the local is connected to the global and vice versa. As a result, the author emphasizes the continued relevance of critical community and action-inspired pedagogy, strongly grounded in local work and aimed at helping people learn and act in an increasingly disempowering world, regardless of their culture of origin or that of their current or future residence.

The next paper by Joke Vandenabeele et al, named 'Diverse views on citizenship, community and participation: Exploring the role of adult education and practice' is conceptual in the first place. With the help of three photographs (re)presenting 'bodies in action', the authors explore how differentially we can conceive of and perceive activities of participatory citizenship. Three different types of citizens are presented and analyzed: the participating citizen, the relational citizen and the indefinite citizen. The first one is the most 'classical' one that is often presented as the ideal 'active citizen' both by policy makers and community organisations. This citizen is well qualified to operate in the rational community mentioned above and learns to acquire the competences needed through participatory actions (see also the Swedish example of the Gamers' Associations). The second one, the relational citizen, can be situated more in the context of the 'community of those who have nothing in common'. The relational citizen gives a singularized response to experiences of 'otherness' that tend to interrupt the taken-for-granted answers that membership in the rational community makes available. The 'indefinite citizen' is the resident of the city, the anonymous inhabitant whom we don't know, and yet, whom we create a community with through everyday

ephemeral encounters. While interrupting the traditional concept of the 'active or participating' citizen, the authors make a plea for what they describe as a methodology of discomfort. It is a methodology that is attentive to the irreducible 'otherness' of many of the spaces and sites of citizenship practices that are outside the walls of formal educational institutions.

The last paper, 'Paradoxes unbounded. Practising community making', is written by Tess Maginess. It reports on a concrete experience of action research in Northern Ireland, where a researcher/educator invited a group of local men to engage in a process of video-production, problematising the health conditions within their community. The researcher experiments with an alternative approach since adult men often are reluctant to discuss private matters in educational encounters. The video-production seems to be a valuable research alternative and leads the author to reflect on the two approaches to community that we introduced earlier in this introductory paper. She refers to them as 'the community of similitude' and 'the community of difference' and suggests a third way (a third life) and a community-in-practice as a metaphor that negotiates both ideals. The author argues for a concept of community that is unafraid of un-making and remaking itself. This concept, she says, accepts the need for similitude and shared values not as a recidivist retreat to a pastoral idyll, but as a forward looking, sceptical and creative process which is capable of operating with contradictions, otherness and diversity. Its common, community aim is that of tackling inequality within itself, rather than being concerned with protecting itself. The six contributions which are a response to our invitation to reflect on 'adult education and the community' together present a rich variety of educational practices, of research methodologies and observations, of different paradigms of looking at citizenship, community and participation. We hope this diversity will inspire the reader and invite him or her to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the role and positioning of adult education in present day society.

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Learning democracy in a Swedish gamers' association: Representative democracy as experiential knowledge in a liquid civil society

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Abstract

To explore the role of civil society organizations in learning democracy this article combines the concept of democracy as 'phronēsis' with neo-institutional theory, as well as with Hannah Pitkin's concepts of representation. It presents a case study (based on qualitative research) of how democracy is learned in SVEROK, a Swedish youth organization focusing on activities such as computer and role-playing games, activities often associated with informal organization. In SVEROK they are organized in an organization sharing many features with established Swedish organizations, including hierarchic formal representative democracy. The norm in SVEROK is a pragmatic organizational knowledge focusing on substantive and formal representation. Organized education plays only a limited role. Learning is typically informal and experience-based. An organization similar to earlier national organizations is created by self-organized and self-governing associations in government-supported cooperation. The case study supports Theda Skocpol's argument that organizational structure is vital to democratic learning.

Keywords: phronesis; Sweden; civil society; democracy; learning

Introduction

In both scholarly and political discourses about democracy and civil society, the organizations of civil society have often been described as a school for democracy and active citizenship. Almost as often, they have also been described as a vital ingredient in a democratic society which is now threatened by increasing individualism and commercial media taking over from more community-inducing interests and leisure activities, such as sports and choir singing, especially among young people (e.g. Putnam, 2000; Pitkin, 2004; Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2007). These

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ideas can both be questioned and developed. The research of Theda Skocpol (2003) emphasizes the importance of organizational types in determining the influence of civil society on democracy (in contrast to Putnam's focus on social capital). 'Democracy' can mean many things, and the question of what kind of democracy – if any – is learned in civil society has many answers. If the type of organization is important, then much of the previous research on the connection between civil society and democracy can also be questioned from the fact that both the U.S. and organizations in the social sector have been overrepresented in it so far, and research on civil society is now increasingly revealing differences in the structure of civil society in different countries and between different sectors of society (Kendall, 2010; Zimmer & Evers, 2010).

This article presents a case study of Sweden's largest youth organization SVEROK (Sverok, Sveriges Roll- och Konfliktspelsförbund, the Swedish Role Playing and Conflict Gaming Federation), an organization with around 100,000 members[1] that focuses on activities such as computer games and role-playing games. As such, it contains an empirical case relevant to understand how democracy is learned in contemporary youth organizations, in a context that has not been previously researched. In approaching this material, I will use the Aristotelian concepts of knowledge as *phronēsis, epistêmê* and *technê* (Aristotle, 1996; Gustavsson, 2000, 2004) combined with neo-institutional analysis (cf. Skocpol, 2003; March & Olsen, 1989; Czarniawska, 2006; Czarniawska & Sevón, 2001), a combination that I hope will enrich both fields. To further discuss the relationship between civil society organizations (CSOs) and macro-level democracy, I will highlight the contrast between the approaches of Putnam and Skocpol. To identify which kind of democracy those active in SVEROK learn, I will use the concepts of *formal*, *symbolic* and *substantive* representation adapted for this purpose from the work of Hannah Pitkin (1972, 2004).

The purpose of this article is to describe the democracy that is learned by those active in SVEROK, focusing on the type of knowledge this constitutes, the views of democracy and representation it includes; and the implications of this case study to the further understanding of the relationship between CSOs and democracy with regards to learning democratic citizenship.

Civil society and democracy in theory

The concept of *phronēsis* as used here has its roots in Aristotle's description of the practical knowledge of politics learned by political activity in the *polis.* It includes not only skills, but also values, and carries the implication that these are not separable in this type of knowledge. *Phronēsis* in the political context of the *polis* can be explained as the knowledge necessary for the *praxis* of making and executing political decisions and judgments. It can be contrasted to theoretical knowledge, *epistêmê,* as more practical, but also to *technê,* the practical, not value-laden, experiential knowledge of artisans (Aristotle, 1996; Gustavsson, 2000, 2004). In line with this, I will, in this article view organizations as based on the often taken-for-granted behavioral and cognitive norms accepted by those active in them and in their immediate organizational surroundings (March & Olssen, 1989). Being active in an organization is thus seen as a learning process that includes learning not only theoretical knowledge (*epistêmê*) but also practical knowledge (*phronēsis*), including both competence and values. This learning includes both experience (*phronēsis*) and formal training (*epistêmê*). The emphasis may vary between organizations (cf. March & Olssen, 1989; Gustavsson, 2000, 2004, 2009).

It has been a common assumption at least since Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* was published in 1835, that a civil society and independent associations are important features in a democracy. According to Tocqueville, one of the chief benefits of such associations was that citizens active in them got the experience of common self-rule, and thus both, a knowledge of it, and a taste for it (Taylor, 1995; Tocqueville, 2003). One interpretation of this is given by the philosopher Charles Taylor: 'if they are to be real loci of self-government [associations] have to be nongigantic and numerous' (Taylor, 1995, pp. 222-223), so that a large proportion of the population may gain the benefit of participating in this self-rule. A similar conclusion (although less focused on learning) can be drawn from Putnam's concept of *social capital* built from meaningful interpersonal contact. From Putnam's perspective, the relevance of civil society to democracy is based on who we interact with. The function of associations in this context is that they introduce people of different backgrounds and thereby connect different parts of the population. This creates an emphasis on micro-level activities such as, for example, bowling clubs (Putnam, 2000). According to Putnam, the high levels of activity in civil society in Sweden make this country an example of a strong democracy with a high level of social capital (Putnam, 2002).

This perspective can be contrasted to the perspective presented by Skocpol (2003), whose approach to Tocqueville is quite different. She focuses on experience rather than on personal contact. She argues that the large federate associations which had begun to dominate American civil society at the time of Tocqueville not only taught democracy in general, but did so by enabling those active in them to learn a specific form of nationwide representative democracy. The various levels of a federate organization provided a mirror image of the local communities, counties, states and federal structures of the American state. It also gave active members an experience of representing their local association on higher levels of the organizations' federal structure, thus gaining direct experience important for understanding and participating in political activities. Here the emphasis is on institutional and organizational structure, on representative democracy and on experiencing the values and practices of an organization. If associations are, as Taylor says 'nongigantic and numerous', then the experience would be gained by many more. This would be an experience of self-government, and possibly of direct democracy, not the experience of representative government and policy-making in a large organization.

To describe how choices of representatives are legitimized in the representative democracy of SVEROK, I will use the concepts *formal, symbolic* and *substantive representation,* concepts adapted from Pitkin (1972, 2004; Guo & Musso, 2007). A benefit of this approach is that it describes democracy and representation in generalized terms rather than focusing on the particulars of SVEROK as a community of practice. *Formal representation* builds on a system of rules. If the relevant rules are followed, representation is legitimate. Such rules may or may not include provisions for accountability in relation either to rules and to the constituency that has elected the representative. *Symbolic representation* can be exemplified by proportional representation of various groups of people. If a group is made present in this way the group in which it has been made present gains legitimacy from the point of view of symbolic representation. While this can include a sense of responsibility, this form of representation includes no accountability (cf. Bellier & Wilson, 2000). *Substantive representation*, finally, refers to the ability of the representative to represent his or her constituency, taking into account both the personal ability of the representative and the extent to which the context in which he or she is representing it enables him or her to do this well. However, as Pitkin (2004) has pointed out, representative democracy is not

the only kind of democracy, and concepts of representation can thus also be contrasted to direct democracy.

According to Skocpol (2003) civil society is now changing in ways that can be described in Pitkin's terms as a change in emphasis from formal to (in the best cases) symbolic representation of citizens – now no longer members – by CSO representatives. Nationwide federate CSOs are being replaced by a civil society composed of a network of small, often professional, associations. While the representatives of the old associations were elected representatives produced by a membership-based hierarchical internal democracy on which they depended as a base of power and legitimacy, the new civil society is represented by CSO employees that move from organization to organization and depend primarily on public and private financiers. The experience of participating in the government of national organizations governed by representative democracy is now increasingly replaced by professionals and activists acting as symbolic representatives. This professionalization of civil society also implies an increased emphasis on formal training or education, either within or outside of CSOs (Svedberg, Essen & Jegermalm, 2010), thus favoring *epistêmê* rather than *phronēsis* (cf. Gustavsson, 2000, 2004).

Putnam (2000) gave us an image of a future where people do not associate, but instead stay passive in front of their TV and computer screens, which would threaten the legitimacy of nation-state democracy in the eyes of a constituency unable to connect to it and thus not expecting it to be able to represent their interests (substantive and symbolic representation). Skocpol, instead, focuses on the lack of interest groups able to provide substantive representation and in which citizens could learn to act as representatives. Other researchers point to the current development of an informally organized civil society where new social movements and leisure activities organize as networks rather than in established hierarchical modes of organization (Castells, 1996), and where cultural activities – in a broad sense of the word – develop in networks of fans and bloggers into a new participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006). These trends have also been observed in Sweden (Nordvall, 2008; National Youth Board, 2011). From Putnam's perspective, this ought to appear hopeful for the legitimacy of representative democracy. From Skocpol's view, such modes of organization may point towards direct democracy, but they also support her picture of a representative democracy in CSOs threatened by increasing individualism.

From both perspectives, Sweden and SVEROK is a relevant case for examination. Putnam (2002) sees Sweden as a positive example due to its high level of CSO-membership and government support of communal leisure activities, and considers mediatization as a threat to civil society. There have indeed been changes in the organizational structure of Swedish civil society. Historically, civil society in Sweden has been dominated by large federate organizations known as *folkrörelser* or popular movement organizations (PMOs). Such organizations are characterized by an open membership, a high number of members, an internal democracy based on these features, and a federal structure covering the Swedish territory with several levels including local clubs, regional districts and a national level, and are thus similar to the federate associations described by Skocpol. The Swedish Labor movement can be seen as an ideal-typical case of a popular mass movement in this sense. The temperance movement and the non-conformist churches are also commonly referred to as classical examples of such popular movements. After the democratization of Swedish politics, they have been closely connected to – and supported by – the state in arrangements often described as corporative. As in many other countries, youth organizations have played an important role in learning democracy in civil society. In spite of the term 'popular movement

organizations', associations organized in this way also include many which are not engaged primarily in changing society, but rather focusing on leisure activities (Amnå, 2007; Harding, 2011; Hvenmark, 2008; Wijkström & Lundström, 2002; Rothstein & Trägårdh, 2007; Trägårdh, 2007), much as leisure activities, such as for example sports and amateur culture, constitute a significant part of civil society in many other European countries (Zimmer & Ewers, 2010). Some of these organizations now face decreasing membership numbers, again in parallel to Skocpol. However, the tendency to volunteer for non-profit work in CSOs has not decreased significantly in the last two decades (Svedberg et al, 2010).

Methods

In order to capture both the experiences of individual elected representatives, and the context of discussions and decision making processes in SVEROK, this article is based on a qualitative interpretation of several kinds of sources, including written sources, notes from participant observations, a questionnaire, and qualitative interviews (notes and recordings), of which the last mentioned are the most important part of the material (cf. Czarniawska, 2007). Written sources include information material from SVEROK (such as its journal over the years 1990-2010[2]), as well as proceedings of meetings and material from its Internet forum (SVEROK, 2010a).

Semi-structured qualitative interviews have been made with fourteen persons who are, or have been, elected representatives on different levels in the organization, one of whom was at the time employed by it, and two of whom also have experience of cooperating with it as representatives of other organizations. One additional interview was made with an employee of a study association of which SVEROK is a member. Participant observations (Czarniawska, 2007) have been made at the annual congresses of SVEROK in 2009 and 2010, at that of SVEROK Stockholm in 2010 and at a weekend get-together for representatives of the SVEROK districts in the spring of 2009. During the 2009 national congress, a questionnaire was answered by those present.[3] The interviews and observations have been central to the study in the sense that other sources such as statutes, published material and web-material have been interpreted in the light of the explanations given in interviews and in the context of the observations. At the same time, they have also been used as context to the interpretation of these sources. This method can be described as ethno-hermeneutic (Bjurström, 2004). Each source is used to better understand earlier findings. Quotations used in this article are chosen as illustrations of thoughts and norms that are more commonly occurring in the empirical material. These quotes have been translated into English by the author. During this process, quotes from interviews and field notes have been adjusted to written language.

Representative democracy in SVEROK and representation as a learning experience

Like most Swedish youth organizations, SVEROK follows the established model of the PMOs, i.e. it has a hierarchical representative democracy with local associations, districts and a national organization based on open membership. Computer and web-based games are among the activities that in Sweden are most often presented as

alternatives to those organized by CSOs (e.g. Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2007; National Youth Board, 2011). Most of the activities organized in SVEROK are often associated with the organizational forms of what has been described as a *network society* (Castells, 1996), or *liquid society* (Bauman, 2000). In SVEROK these activities are organized in an association sharing several distinctive features with the old Swedish popular movements and their youth organizations. This apparent paradox suggests that neither the young people of today, nor these new leisure activities, are as incompatible with established forms of organization as is often expected.

My most significant participant observation took place in November 20-22, 2009. SVEROK's annual national congress (*Riksmötet*) was gathering in a borrowed auditorium. About 150 people were gathered in the room: the 101 elected representatives, as well as reserves, functionaries and guests. Most of those present appeared to be under 30 years old, many under 20 (only 15 of the elected representatives were above 30), and a majority of them male (29 of the elected representatives women), but the percentage of females among the representatives was still much higher than among the organization's members in general (8.5 %). One of the first things to happen at the gathering was all 150 persons present lining up towards the rostrum to present themselves with name, member association (if applicable), and favourite game, so that everyone would already be done with their initial address (field notes, information from SVEROK[4]).

The 101 representatives had all been elected in a national election that finished 50 days earlier. All member associations have the right to vote, but have different numbers of votes, ranging from one to eight, depending of their number of individual members. All individual members have the right to nominate candidates (SVEROK, 2009). This stands in some contrast to most Swedish PMOs, in which each district appoints a number of representatives (depending on its number of individual members) to the national congress (Hvenmark, 2008). The system used in SVEROK is highly formalized and considered legitimate by the elected representatives primarily with reference to the fact that formal rules have been followed (interviews). In interviews with elected representatives this system was explained to me as a combination of legitimacy based on individual members and on member-associations. The fact that representatives, due to the practice of secret elections, do not know who has voted for them, creates an openness for interpretation in their view of the constituency they represent, an openness not promoted by the system used in most Swedish CSOs.

While SVEROK may appear similar in organizational structure to the ideal-typical PMO (cf. Hvenmark, 2008; Wijkström & Lundström, 2002), there are significant differences in the organizational structure. While the districts and the national level correspond to geographical areas, the local associations do not necessarily do so. A local association may be a small group of young people who meet up on a regular basis to play a role-playing game, a group organizing a major event (such as a live-action game or a computer-gamer gathering), or even a group of thousands of people regularly contributing to an Internet community. Rather than the established form with one association per geographical area, SVEROK consist of a large and ever-changing number of associations often organized when needed for specific activities, but also including some that are long-lived and function in a more traditional manner. While not necessarily long-lived, all of these groups are at least formally speaking democratically organized (interviews, statistics from SVEROK). This is possible thanks to the fact that SVEROK has greatly simplified the founding and managing of a non-profit association as a process. Template statutes are available on the Internet (SVEROK, 2009, 2010a), ready-made to be completed with club name and location, as are instructions for

administrative routines, how to hold board and member meetings and what positions of trust to elect. Using Aristotelian terminology, this kind of learning can be described as *epistêmê,* theoretical learning transmitted by generalizing, in this case legal, manuals. The neo-institutional literature speaks of packaged concepts, i.e. practices translated into objectified theoretical concepts intended to be translated once more – unpacked – into practices in a different context (Harding, 2011; Røvik, 2008). Since SVEROK associations are founded much more frequently than associations in most PMOs, such manuals come into play far more often. This is a minimum democracy and knowledge of democracy required by SVEROK (2009).

At the annual congress of 2009, as many as 27 of the 101 elected representatives were present for the first time (questionnaire), and many had only very limited experience of representative democracy. Others were much more experienced, and a few had been present at most of the organization's congresses since its founding in 1988. Now they were all gathered as the highest decision-making body of the largest youth organization in Sweden. A majority of the delegates answered in a questionnaire that they were there to 'influence [the organization] at large'; however 'to see friends' was also a common response. The introductions were followed by a weekend of debates, both in plenum and in smaller groups, and concerning everything from office locations to internal elections, often interrupted by lengthy discussions on procedural issues and constantly shadowed by a parallel debate via the participants' computers on the organization's chat forum (field notes, questionnaire, interviews). Descriptions of the formal proceedings are provided over the Internet before the congress and preliminary discussions take place on the organization's website (SVEROK, 2010a).

A central value when procedures were discussed by the congress was that everyone has to have equal opportunity to make their voice heard (interviews, field notes, SVEROK, 2010a). In one interview this even came up as a definition of democracy: 'that everyone gets to say their part' (interview: former board member). While this view may be extreme as a definition, it appears to be commonly viewed as a central value in any democracy that should at least be a part of a definition. Together with a meeting culture that promotes compromise and open discussions, this can be seen as an ingredient of a deliberative democracy (cf. Habermas, 1996) which appears to be taken for granted as a central value in SVEROK, a value which presupposes the fact that delegates are free to negotiate. It can, as we shall see, be connected to modes of organization on all levels. It is one of the few requirements made on local clubs that they should be open to everyone who wishes to join, and does not actively counteract the purpose of the association (e.g. disrupting activities may lead to loss of membership). In theory, everyone can thus join and everyone has a right to speak and be heard. These are fundamental values that appear as taken-for-granted norms in this organization (which is not to say that practices always live up to this ideal).

Since organizational experience varies strongly among the delegates, informal learning, where the less experienced ask the more experienced for advice, plays an important role in learning both skills and values, as does learning by imitation. Formal procedures are also explained to the delegates both in plenum and in text distributed to them. Judging from observations and interviews, the congress as well as other meetings of representatives (including the merely social) forms learning experiences as well as contexts of decision-making.

In terms of decision-making, the congress may be even more important than in more traditional organizations, insofar as very little appears to be decided in advance. Delegates have remarkably free hands both in relation to the constituencies that they represent and in relation to the proposals presented to them; 'Almost all motions are

changed' (interview: vice chairman). In this sense, the congress is more like a parliament without parties than the meetings of representatives of various districts that usually govern a PMO.

Exceptions exist however. In 2009 at least one member association with several representatives held these accountable to the decisions of a pre-meeting with their own members (field notes, phone interview: delegate). The open interpretation of constituencies is thus used to create a representation based on accountability made possible by the fact that the proceedings are open to observation.

However, the dominant priority is that of formal and substantive representation; correctly elected representatives taking responsibility for representing the interests of a perceived constituency within a formally regulated framework. In many cases this included traces of symbolic representation, where elected representatives perceived themselves to represent those active in the same hobbies, 'guessing' that these were the ones who voted for them (field notes, interview: national-congress representative). The importance of such identification may be more understandable if we look at the organization at the member-association level.

SVEROK at the association level: Associational democracy among networking entrepreneurs

Judging from observations and interviews, written guidelines for associations are not the main vehicle for learning how to organize member-associations, at least not for those members who represent them at the national level (and are expected to be those with the most experience). More important is the experience of founding and managing an association, often at a very young age. According to one member of the national board (interview), a large part of the SVEROK members, like her, have the experience of 'founding an association', and most of them will see it 'disappear when the original members move or cease to be active'. Even if the formal association is old, most activities are organized by relatively inexperienced members. Most members are very young, and activities are organized without specifically appointed older leaders. Often teenagers end up not only organizing major events, but also managing the legal body behind them. The largest such event so far is likely to be the annual computer gathering Dreamhack, with around 10,000 participants, which had started as an association within the confines of SVEROK, but which has now left the organization (interview: vice chairman; Dreamhack, 2010).

The experience of self-organization is, judging from the material, a major part of SVEROK's self-image. It is vastly different from that of active members in many other organizations. Formal or theoretical education plays only a minor role when SVEROK members learn organizational skills. This is something that in my interviews have been explained by the unavailability of education relevant for democracy and organization in this context. As we have seen, learning among active members of SVEROK instead takes place by practical experience, sometimes following guidelines, or – especially on higher levels and in the more established associations – learning by asking for the advice of more experienced members, or informally discussing democracy with these.

When I ask interviewees what they have learned about democracy, the answer is often an issue of very practical organizational skill, such as for example 'you learn how to lead projects […] how to lead a board [and how to] make everyone satisfied' (interview: vice chairman) – i.e. organizational leadership skills. These skills (*technê*)

are also connected to values. For example, leading a meeting in a way that makes everyone satisfied includes the ability to enable everyone to feel that not only have their voice been heard, but they are also a part of the team. This mastering of this skill in this context is thus closely connected to valuing inclusive discussions. Another norm expressed in the same interview is that administrative work and leadership roles, associated with boards and elected representatives, should not be distant from the activities and those who participate or volunteer in them: 'the associations are a natural part of the activities, [not something] up there'. With this in mind, it is hardly surprising that representatives at the congress identify alternatively with their own associations or with the hobby, or 'branch of the hobby', that they are active in, apparently without conflict.

During a semi-formal discussion on visions for the future, one member of a district board explained the driving motive for her own volunteer work as 'a kind of feeling that it is actually possible to do something, to support all this fantastic energy' (field notes), i.e. the activity and creativity of others in their common hobby. The keyword in a vision for SVEROK ought, according to her, to be 'possibility' – in the sense of the possibility for everyone, including fifteen-year-olds – to create their own associations and activities. This view appears to be common it the organization. It is, however, noticeable how it almost immediately turns pragmatic. Possibility means enabling and supporting with resources. Most of the SVEROK budget goes to supporting local associations with money taken out of the government grants for the organization (SVEROK, 2010b, pp. 14-16). This, too, is a very strong norm: that the government grants are for the members' activities organized on the association level, not for the national organization as such. Equally strong is the norm that both work and decisions should be made by members and volunteers. This is another common norm for PMOs, but while many other organizations are, as mentioned above, increasingly professionalized, SVEROK has comparatively few employees, less than 15 in the entire organization (SVEROK, 2010a).

Conversely, the motivations for volunteer work are very similar – if not identical – to those in other organizations. Johan von Essen (2008) has identified (by qualitative interviews) three main characteristics in what volunteers in three Swedish CSOs considered voluntary (Swe: *ideellt*) work: it is not made for monetary payment, not forced, and results in meaningful positive consequences for someone else. The volunteers interviewed by von Essen appear to define voluntary work in contrast to professional work, which they considered to be done for the sake of monetary payment. Voluntary work is done, if not for its own sake, then for the sake of others and for less tangible motives, such as a sense of accomplishment, a feeling that will, according to von Essen's respondents, only appear if the motive is not tangible pay and the work voluntary (which is not to say that that professional work cannot be enjoyed or lead to a sense of accomplishment, but rather that they did not consider this to be its primary purpose). According to recent studies, 60 % of Swedish volunteers start volunteering in order to do something for the organization, and 57 % to do something for other people (Svedberg et al, 2010).

Volunteering primarily to do something for the organization appears to be an unlikely reason in the case in SVEROK, an organization which is constantly discussing the problem of making their members aware of its existence as a national organization. While identification with member associations may be stronger, my interviews suggest that these, too, are considered mere instruments to organize and provide resources, and that it is the hobby activities themselves that are considered the purpose of the voluntary work put into them. However, this is not unique to SVEROK; 55 % of the CSO

volunteers in a recent national study (Svedberg et al, 2010) claimed to have started doing volunteer work in order to participate in a leisure activity. In SVEROK it is the norm to claim that 'it is fun' as the main reason for often extensive volunteer work. Enabling others to have the same opportunity also makes an appearance as a motive, especially among those who are most active. The contrast between on the one hand voluntary activities and work, and on the other hand school, other formal education and payed work, also appears to be relevant in SVEROK.

When voluntary work becomes more administrative than hobby-related, the norm in SVEROK appears to be to claim that organizational work itself is a fun activity, often with some sense of self-irony, conscious of how odd this may seem to those who don't share the experience. These activists approach the Aristotelian view of politics as an intrinsically valuable activity (Aristotle, 1996; Arendt, 1998) more closely than those in the established PMOs. In SVEROK, the ability to do or accomplish something, or to help others doing that – 'to realize dreams' (field notes) – appears to be the major experience that drives on to further volunteer work at regional and national levels, or in other organizations. A former SVEROK representative, who has since moved on to other organizations, described this during a lecture on how to become more democratically active, as 'a feeling of flow, or of being swept away': 'When I was thirteen years old I just wanted to start a club for computer gaming […] when we were three, four, hundred people I couldn't sit and play computer games, because then I was the chairman, a person with responsibility' (interview: national-congress representative).

Organizational learning as *phronēsis*

SVEROK appears to be a hybrid between a new (part of) civil society and the older concept of PMOs. The new networked civil society may appear liquid (cf. Bauman, 2000) and in a constant state of flux. SVEROK appears to be able to provide strong experiences of self-rule similar to those described by Taylor (1995) and Tocqueville (2003), as well as the experiential learning of representative democracy that Skocpol (2003) described in the large federal associations of the USA. As a national association, SVEROK appears to be the result of a model for government grants which has supported the creation of organizational levels in which representative democracy can be experienced. These in turn support the more liquid associations that appear and disappear in the hobby communities which SVEROK organizes (Harding, 2011). This combination is likely a result of the meeting between the specific features of Swedish civil society (and state support for civil society) and current global developments in technology (e.g. computer games) and leisure activities. It shows that the current trends in civil society do not necessarily lead to a destruction of the foundation for all CSOs, but may also lead to the creation of new ones, especially in a national context favorable to this.

The experiential knowledge of organizational processes gained in SVEROK is not merely one of an idealized democracy, but rather one of being able to realize ideas by practical action, one based in the experience of gathering funds for events and organizing them: a combination of idealism and pragmatism focusing on moving forward and making something happen. As implied by the Greek term *phronēsis*, this practical knowledge also includes values: not only is it normatively appropriate to act and make things happen (activity as its own reward), it is also assumed that official channels (such as municipal authorities responsible for youth projects) work well

enough to be influenced, but not well enough to not need to be influenced. This implies the presence of some of the trust in society that Putnam (2000) thought was dying out. This combination of pragmatism and passion, however, may not be new to SVEROK or to late-modern civil society. A similar view was formulated by Max Weber in his classical description of the logic of politics, formulated in Weimar-era Germany:

> We can say that three qualities, above all, are of a decisive importance for a politician: passion, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of proportion. …For the heart of the problem is how to forge a unity between hot passion and a cool sense of proportion in the same person (Weber, 2004, p. 77).

The passion is certainly there among those active in SVEROK. While outsiders might consider the passion for a hobby such as gaming to be out of proportion, the proportion that Weber considered necessary for politics is often there, namely the pragmatic sense necessary for winning limited victories by negotiation and compromise with a sense of responsibility as the central value, rather than accomplishing nothing by sticking to principle. This is also part of a practical value-laden knowledge (*phronēsis*) of politics that can be learned by experience, but which is also rather far from the theoretical knowledge (*epistêmê*) of democracy that may be more easily learned in school, but which 'you do not connect to what you do in everyday life' (interview: vice chairman). If this is so, the trick to learn democracy is to make it a part of everyday life.

The experience of flow and activity described above does not automatically translate into a given conclusion concerning the usefulness of the established democratic form, or even of the form currently used in SVEROK. Most of the opinions that I have encountered fall somewhere in the middle between two ideal-typical ends of a spectrum. One is the rejection of the association as a form of organization in favor of more informal modes of organizing; a 'democracy' espousing the norm that everyone (involved) should have their say but recognizing a right of those who volunteer to decide what they will do, a somewhat anarchistic view that is described by writers with a background in games organizing as espousing the values of network society and participatory culture (Haggren, Larsson, Nordwall & Widing, 2008; cf. Jenkins, 2006). From this perspective, formal democracy as prescribed by the established norms for associations appears restrictive to the creativity that the central norm is to support: it is 'not reasonable to have an association…associations are about creating continuity, associations are about administration, live-action role-playing games are about letting loose, about expending, losing your time and your resources [to create a common experience]' (interview: event organizer). At the other end of the spectrum are those who have accepted the idea of formal organization as the way to create democracy, thus accepting the formal practices of representative democracy rather than of project organizing as intrinsically connected to the positive value of democracy. This end of the spectrum can be exemplified by the project VoteIT in which the national level of SVEROK supported the development of programming to enable large Internet-based member associations to more easily hold formally correct meetings on the Internet (interviews, SVEROK, 2010a).

Conclusion

Contrary to what one might expect from a relatively newly organized CSO dealing with relatively new leisure activities, including computer games, SVEROK is a federate organization based on hierarchical representative democracy, an organization much like

those that Skocpol described as declining, and similar to the older Swedish PMOs. However, a closer look shows an organization that has emerged as an interface between the government's support-systems and an emerging network-based civil society created by medialization and globalization. As such, SVEROK represents an adaption of the state-supported structure of the popular movement youth-organization to a new context in which the member-associations provide a legal and organizational framework for activities emerging in a network. This may also explain why the expected trend from volunteer to professional organization is not noticeable in SVEROK, an organization with around 100,000 members, most of whom are likely to be active members, and less than 15 employees. The differences between new and old types of organization appear more diffuse than expected in official discourse.

Learning from organized teaching appears to play a very limited role in SVEROK. Rather than by *epistêmê,* learning among those active in the organization is dominated by learning via experience, and can thus be characterized as either *phronēsis* or *technê.* Judging from my interviews and observations, the knowledge of acting as a representative in a democracy that is learned by them largely consists of practices learned by experience simultaneously with their normative implications (*phronēsis*).

What views on democratic representation is it then that those active in SVEROK learn? Representation in SVEROK is primarily legitimized as formal representation, which can be seen as a minimum requirement to achieve legitimacy in contexts such as the national congress, but also extend to a preoccupation with rules that characterized the procedures. Symbolic representation also plays a part, especially in how representatives view their responsibility. The role of accountability is, on the other hand, relatively limited, especially with regard to the representatives to the congress who are formally accountable to no one and free to define their own sense of responsibility to their constituency. Substantive representation in the sense of representation of interests appears to be a dominant view of the responsibility of the representative, especially with regard to board members. In relation to Swedish CSOs in general, it appears that SVEROK has a higher emphasis on formal representation, while the emphasis on representation of interests is much more in line with the tradition of the popular movements.

Like in all forms of *phronēsis*, practical democratic knowledge mixes values and skills. As can be expected when dealing with experiential knowledge, everyone active in SVEROK do not appear to support this representative democracy, some instead arguing more anarchic network-oriented views on organization. However, in the context of the national congress, support for the ruling representative democracy was consensual. Those who have held different views among those I have interviewed, were referring to their experience as event organizers or founders of associations on the local level instead, having only brief impressions of the more formal representative democracy of the national level and more formally organized member-associations, thus having gained only some of the necessary skills (*technê*) for this and *epistêmê* – including both practices and norms – in a somewhat different context. Both groups share the view of the experience of being active as an intrinsically positive value, an idea that appears to be consensual in the entire organization.

What then is the relationship between this CSO and democracy with regards to learning democratic citizenship? It appears that those active in SVEROK gain *phronēsis* of how to act as representatives in a representative democracy, including a specific view of what that representation entails, a view that is similar to that provided by more typical PMOs, if somewhat more individualistic than these. The democratic knowledge learned by participants appears to be one of pragmatic knowledge of politics and

organization reminiscent of the perspective that Weber described among politicians acting in the context of a representative democracy, gained in a way similar to how Aristotle expected political knowledge to be learned by experience of political activity in the *polis*. Whether the *phronēsis* gained in more typical PMOs is similar to this is something that requires further research to answer.

The experiential knowledge gained by activity in SVEROK is likely to strengthen their ability to act in a representative democracy, and also as organizational entrepreneurs in other contexts. Enabling a larger portion of the citizenry to gain such knowledge is, according to both Skocpol and Tocqueville, a central democratic function of civil society. However, it should be noted that this *phronēsis* would not have been the same in an organizational context of pure network character as in this context influenced by a neo-corporatist state to adopt a form closer the more traditional federate type.

Notes

[1] In 2020 SVEROK claimed 120,000 members (SVEROK, 2010a). In the records of The National Youth Board 86,847 youth members (7-25 years old) were registered for 2009. In terms of such youth members, SVEROK was the largest youth organization to receive grants from The National Youth Board (information from the National Youth Board). SVEROK's organizational model makes membership in several member associations possible, especially if they engage in different activities.
[2] Published under the following titles *Signaler från Sverok* (1989-1994), *Saga* (1996-1997), *Sverox* (1997-2006) and *Signaler från Sverok* (from 2006).
[3] The questionnaire was handed out to the delegates by SVEROK functionaries. It included both evaluation questions made by SVEROK's national office and questions added on my request. 78 delegates answered the questionnaire. The answers were collected and processed by functionaries and are available in SVEROK's archive. Questions used as a references in this article are (translated) 'How old are you?', 'Are you [a] a guy, [b] a [girl?]' (multiple choice question) and 'Why have you chosen to come to the national congress?'
[4] According to information from SVEROK's central office 8.5 % of all SVEROK members are women, including 7.8 of the youth members (7-25 years old) reported to the National Youth Board (e-mail from SVEROK central office on November 26, 2010). Information regarding the elected representatives is based on information given to SVEROK's national office at registration.

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Learning contexts of *the others*: Identity building processes in southern Europe

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Abstract

The frontier between the south of Spain and Portugal is established by the river Guadiana. Lying next to the sea, the cities of Ayamonte (Spain) and Vila Real de Santo António (Portugal) face each other on opposite banks of the river. The research that feeds into this paper is focused on these two cities. We study specifically how identity is built in this cross-border area. To do this, in a first phase of this study we organized eight focus group interviews. In the second phase of this research we conducted biographical interviews to deepen some of the analytic categories we were dealing with.

These results lead us to state that the territory, and the views that people hold on this territory, are still very important in identity building. This includes both culture and identity as strategic elements in the construction of both development and educational processes. Additionally, one has to ask where people learn the elements that determine these processes. The images of ourselves and the images of the other – that make up stereotypes of both the Spanish and the Portuguese – are built in what kind of contexts and through what types of educational processes? We will try to answer these questions

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and, finally, provide some idea of the importance of adult education in these processes of identity building, and of the attempt to construct more fluid relationships between the southern Portuguese and Spanish.

Keywords: adult education; cross-border cooperation; identities; life stories; local development

Identity, sense of belonging and cross-border territories

The frontier between the south of Spain and Portugal is established by the river Guadiana. Lying next to the sea, the cities of Ayamonte, Spain, and Vila Real de Santo António (VRSA), Portugal, occupy opposite banks of the river. The research supporting this paper focuses on these two municipalities. We want to study specifically how identity is built in this cross-border area.

When examining neighbouring areas along a frontier, questions arise concerning the elements that give an identity and a sense of belonging to the citizens of each area and whether this identity and sense of belonging are shared among the citizens. An additional question immediately follows regarding the roots of identity, that is, to the extent that these roots relate to history, politics, culture, geography and social networks, among other areas. In this sense, interventions such as those involving the Interreg or other measures articulated at the Spain-Portugal border (Epson, 2007; The Parliament Magazine, 2007) could have an impact on identity construction and could be key factors in the formation of identities, similar to social networks (Morén, 2005) or family socialisation (Umana-Taylor, Bhanot & Shin, 2006). Moreover, identities and identifications are rooted in many factors (e.g. family, friends, neighbours, workmates) that are present in everyday life and that contribute to the dialogue between a person and his/her environment, which is nurtured both by a person's sense of self and by how others see him/her (Ricucci, 2005; Rodríguez, 2006; Newby & Dowling, 2007).

Several factors may affect how identities are constructed at the Spain-Portugal border. The construction of identities and identifications is a subjective process in which context plays an important role (Gaudet & Clément, 2005; Tsai, 2006). In this regard, sustaining programs during a time of cross-border cooperation demands attention. Identities and identifications are mutable and vary over time, so it is possible to design programs to be applied in the border area that affect the construction and reconstruction of identity, to the extent that these programs could provide facilities, amenities, and opportunities for people of different areas to interact with each other and therefore influence the identification process. At the same time, one person may feel a sense of belonging and identify in more than one way. This feeling of belonging to 'imagined communities' or 'political communities' (Anderson, 2006; Schnapper, 1994) can be fostered by institutions such as the European Union's Erasmus Programmes (which admittedly could also be the result of cross-border cooperation in our area). Additionally, in a global context, the sources that affect the construction of identity could extend beyond specific local areas, and individuals could be influenced by multiple contexts. It is therefore important to assess whether local or global parameters are more important for the construction of identity in the border region separately from observing the influence of region, border, and other elements that influence the construction of identity.

Moreover, many researchers have studied the link between identity and sense of belonging and have stressed its complexity (Garland & Chakraborti, 2006; Murtuja, 2006; Tsolidis & Pollard, 2009; Lam & Smith, 2009). Researchers have analysed the relationship between identity, belonging, cosmopolitism (Bhimji, 2008) and even citizenship (Moreno, 2008). Some works, such as Bhimji (2008), emphasise that we live in a global era in which it is more common to have a flexible and porous understanding of the nation-state, which in turn has faded in significance. In the computer age, people can both build memberships rooted in the state and giving meaning to reconfiguring memberships in the local context where they live.

A part of the recent literature, particularly in the field of migrations, highlights the complexity of the study of social and cultural identities (Esser, 2009; Jackson, 2009; Ueno, 2009), particularly their multifaceted nature and the notion that identities are not static but fluidly changing in the context of specific situations. For example, the identities of the children of immigrants are evidence that they do not necessarily adopt one identity over another but instead continually adapt and readapt themselves, sometimes out of necessity (Bodenhausen, 2010; Cara, 2010; Jackson, 2009; Brettell & Nibbs, 2009; Vermeij, van Duijn & Baerveldt, 2009). This observation may be useful as a working hypothesis regarding the identity construction that operates on both sides of the border. Thus, it may be possible to find multiple identities or hybrid identities in citizens in the Ayamonte-VRSA border area, and these identities maybe creative and innovative in the realm of the construction of identities. The adaptability of identities has been observed in individuals that, though not residing in a physical border region, were socialised in a symbolic border that separated their immigrant parents from the native population (origin vs. destination country). Similarly, these second-generation immigrants, residing on the edge of the southern border separating Spain and Portugal can be understood, in terms of the reconstruction of identities, as existing between two sociocultural worlds and they may create individual meanings and multiple or hybrid identities (Brettell & Nibbs, 2009; Cara, 2010; Tsolidis & Pollard, 2009; Vermeij, van Duijn & Baerveldt, 2009).

Markers of identity and belonging are related to nationality, citizenship, national spaces and, above all, language (Butcher, 2008; Cara, 2010), religion, and even participation in and membership of social networks (Lubbers, Molina & McCarty, 2007). The construction of identity and a sense of belonging are often connected to ideas and cultural experiences that are shared with others. Regarding language, Butcher (2008) argues that this connection creates a tension between cultural continuity and cultural change in different societies, and it can be used to create connections between belonging and identity, drawing boundaries between people. This connection, therefore, may be important to the processes of integrating and constructing a Euro-region. Language is thus construed as a key element in forming identity, differentiating one's self from others, setting boundaries between us and them, and reinforcing similarities between the inhabitants of two areas (Cara, 2010).

Having raised these issues, our paper analyses the role that these factors play in the sense of belonging to the border area encompassing south-western Spain and Portugal.

Objectives

In the preceding section, we described the complexity involved in the study of identities and identifications. One reason for this complexity is that identities and identifications change over the course of a person's life. We are interested in knowing if people living

in Ayamonte, Spain, and Vila Real de Santo António, Portugal, express 'local, regional, cross-border (Andalucía and Algarve) or European identities and identifications'.

Specifically, we want to study how identities are built in these two border municipalities, which have maintained contact for centuries, initially through the River Guadiana and more recently through the International Guadiana Bridge, which was built in 1991. Sassenberg and Matschke (2010) and Bodenhausen (2010) argue that exchange and social relations appear to mediate the construction of identity. Does this mediation effect also happen in the border area, or are people maintaining local identities? To what extent are identities important for the construction of a Euro-region?

Moreover, we are also interested in answering other questions: What kind of information is important for constructing identity in populations living in a cross-border area? How do people learn about others? These important questions must be viewed in the contemporary context of the growth and renewal of the European Union and, as we present in this text, how these new experiences produce new understandings. The diagram below shows some of the analytical issues in our research:

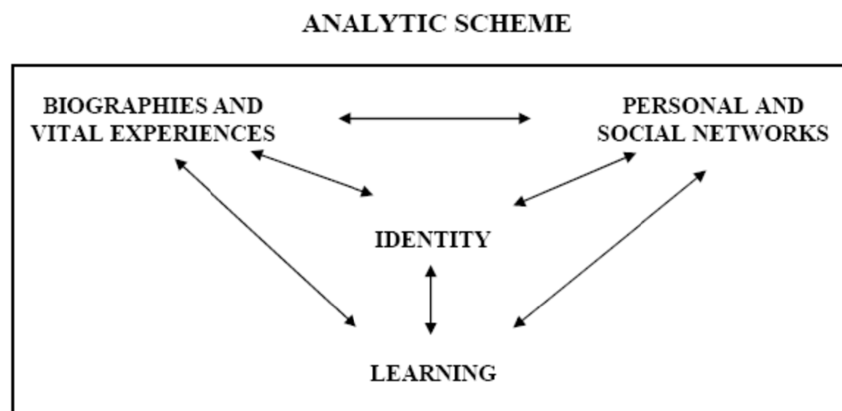

Figure 1. Analytic scheme. Source: Authors.

Methodology and research techniques

This research was designed using a multi-method approach (Brewer & Hunter, 1989) and a triangulation of methods, techniques and results (Bryman, 1995; Pourtois & Desmet, 1992). The investigation utilised quantitative and qualitative techniques to obtain primary data and to respond to the previously described research questions (i.e., identity, sense of belonging, and learning). In this section, we explain in some detail our methodological design and fieldwork procedures. To create a comparative analysis, the same methodological design was applied to both sides of the border, and the Portuguese and Spanish researchers simultaneously used differing methods in each country.

Focus groups

The focus groups were designed with the idea that the group dynamics represent more for research than individual contributions and can be designed with different levels of structure (Morgan, 2001). We ran four focus groups in VRSA and four focus groups in Ayamonte. The groups were composed of young adults from 13 to 24 years old, adults from 25 to 64 years old, and elderly inhabitants aged 65 years and older, as well as one group composed of experts in cross-border cooperation. These experts had accurate

knowledge of, and experiences in, cross-border cooperation issues from personal or professional experiences such as belonging to nongovernmental organisations that conduct cross-border projects, formal and informal cooperation with these organizations, or personal experiences in both areas. In these groups, the purpose was to elicit direct and spontaneous discourse about the border area, the biography of each participant, and border relations and identity. All participants were residents of the municipality being studied.

The selection processes for all participants were the 'snowball' technique and direct contact with different institutions (e.g., local governments, associations). The 'experts' focus group was the last selected. To recruit experts, we utilised our knowledge of cross-border projects in the area and secondary sources, as well as others factors. Additionally, in every focus group, each participant was asked to fill in a small, semi-structured questionnaire asking if he or she knew somebody who could fulfil the criteria of the 'experts' group. This questionnaire facilitated the later recruitment of some participants for the 'experts' focus groups on each side of the border and the recruitment for participants to contribute life stories in the second phase of the project. In this questionnaire, they also provided personal information about their socio-demographic profile and other issues such as education and work to complement what was reported in the group discussion. For the supervision of each group, the research members collected the contact data of each participant, and once the date and place was fixed, the participants were assembled for the meeting. Each group comprised between 5 and 10 participants for each municipality.

For the handling of the groups, an open outline was used in both countries that included questions regarding the initial presentation of each participant, his or her biography and experiences with the other country, and so forth. The discussion began with the question: 'If you had to introduce Ayamonte/VRSA to a person who comes from outside and has no information about this place, what would you say?' Next, while showing a satellite map of the area, the same question was posed but concerning the cross-border area: 'If you had to introduce this area to a person who is neither Spanish nor Portuguese, and who has no information about this place, what would you say?'

To conclude the session, we explicitly asked every participant, even if the topic was previously discussed in the session: 'To conclude, what do you identify with? What is your identity? To where do you feel you belong?'

Finally, all of the groups were conducted from May to October, 2009, and their sessions were recorded and transcribed to facilitate the content analysis carried out with the help of scientific qualitative software, specifically *Atlas.ti*.

Life stories

After the focus groups and the first analysis, a second phase was carried out focusing on biographical semi structured interviews of 'experts'. In fact, we performed ten biographical interviews in each country of citizens living in Ayamonte and VRSA with either proven work experience in cross-border activities or more informal expertise in the same area. Our aims here were mainly twofold. First, we wanted to know if, in these particular cases with a lot of history in cross-border experiences, the cross-border personal interchanges affected the construction of identities and sense of belonging to the cross-border area. Second, knowing the personal networks of the interviewees, we checked what countries people mentioned in every personal network. For this analysis, we used an open outline at the same time as a specific quantitative module in the questionnaire for social network analysis.

We interviewed people from old and new economic activities, including professional fields such as fishing, sailing, minor trade, public administration, and services, men and women, and different age groups. These people had different academic backgrounds and levels of education and were residents of the municipalities, both local natives and nonlocal natives that had lived in the area a long time. While some had formal or institutionalised cross-border experiences through participation in border projects, others had informal experiences or simply personal or family reasons for border contact. Once each informant was contacted, a fixed date and place was set between the researcher and respondent. The majority of the interviews were conducted at the workplace of each respondent (e.g. in offices, on ships), except those respondents who were pensioners in the old people's home or were interviewed at home on a free day from work. Throughout the following text, when we quote their opinions and experiences, we always give fictitious names or sociodemographic data to preserve their anonymity. This pattern was also followed in the focus group.

Other techniques

Along with the previous interviews and focus groups, we also benefitted from several guided and non-guided visits to both municipalities that followed the pattern of a participatory observation. The authors of this article have known these municipalities for several years and maintain continuous contact with the local citizens. We also used secondary statistical data and took advantage of a previous investigation carried out in 2007-2008 (Gualda, Lucio-Villegas, Fragoso, Figueira, Gualda, Barrera, Almeida, Ramalho & Maya, 2008), taken here as secondary source, wherein we studied social development in 18 administrative areas of the southern cross-border zone between Portugal and Spain.

Results

In the following sections, we discuss the processes of the construction of the identities of the people residing in VRSA and Ayamonte. Ultimately, we connect identity construction with the reciprocal understandings each individual gains of the other.

Identities in the border: Prevalence of local identities

In the theoretical dispute between what people clearly express as identity or identification and what they express in a more diffuse way about the feeling of belonging or sharing something with neighbours, what is emphasised is that the populations of both countries are manifesting mainly local identities. Local identity is usually directed towards the country of birth and residence, including the local identities of returned emigrants. Moreover, the few cases that identified with Europe or with the cross-border area seemed to have special family, educational or professional profiles.

In the case of Ayamonte, only six of the more than twenty people participating in the four focus groups expressed feelings of belonging simultaneously to Ayamonte and to other places (typically also in Spain). Only one woman of these six people identified with both Ayamonte and Portugal at the same time. This Hispanic-Portuguese 'dual identity' was understandable because she was born in Alentejo but married a Spanish man and lived most of her life in Ayamonte, where she migrated to work at the age of sixteen. Curiously, this woman identified dually—'locally' to Ayamonte, Spain, and 'regionally' to Alentejo, Portugal. In her words: 'I feel myself from here, but I also feel

good being in Portugal. And in Portugal I feel myself from the Alentejo region' (Ayamonte, woman, elders focus group, 2009).

Another woman also described her very complex identity as European, deriving from her experiences and family roots:

> My grandparents are Portuguese, I have Portuguese blood, my surname is Portuguese, I was born in Spain, I spent half of my life in Germany, my children were born in Germany,… with those backgrounds, I am from Europe, aren't I? (Ayamonte, woman, elders focus group, 2009).

We must also consider the three young people who, having lived in other provinces, claimed to have a sense of shared or dual identity between two locations in Spain, albeit with individual nuances and differences between them due to their different social lives:

> For example, I do not feel myself as from Ayamonte, because I came here at the age of six... if I had to decide anything, I would prefer to stay in Cordoba, but in winter, and I prefer Ayamonte in summer (Ayamonte, youths' focus group, woman, 2009).

And

> I like Ayamonte, I can go out and stay until the time I want to in the street, it is very different from Barcelona, where I had to be at home at 9:00 p.m., there it is impossible to go out (Ayamonte, woman, youths' focus group, 2009).

As for VRSA, though we predominantly found local identities based on place of birth and residence, we also found a greater diversity of declared identities. In seventeen cases, we found identities based in VRSA or other localities (e.g., Vila Nova de Cacela, Lisbon). In the rest, we found a prevalence (thirteen people) of a regional identity based in the Algarve or the Alentejo, a notable contrast to the predominant local identities found in Ayamonte. Nonetheless, all of the regional identities but three cases that participated in the experts' focus group were dual identities, many of them sharing their regional identity with their sense of belonging to a locality. We also found other dual identities in three cases, namely, one identification with two Portuguese municipalities, one with the place of birth and at the same time with Europe, and the last with the Portuguese Nation. Finally, only one person identified exclusively as Portuguese.

Biographical interviews conducted in 2010 with people specifically selected for their expertise in cross-border cooperation issues confirmed this local dominance. In the interviews, most people exhibited a local identity, and only two people showed an international identity. In cases of national identity, people identified with their country of origin and were open to working and living anywhere in that country, while in cases of international identity, people had no such feeling of belonging to one country or locality, but instead were open to working or living in any part of the world.

Local identities... but compatible with a sense of interdependence for economy and tourism

Very frequently people that have always lived in Vila Real do Santo António do not have senses of border identity. At the same time, they admit that the vicinity of Ayamonte has a significant role in their lives, and they also use to say that Ayamonte is a town of influence for them in terms of trade, gastronomy, and other respects. One woman said that it does not make sense to introduce Vila Real do Santo António to someone without introducing him or her to Ayamonte. Even they use to introduce the area to newcomers by crossing the Guadiana River by boat with them. The Guadiana is

also vital to the construction of identity in this region because of the Portuguese ports' important economic relationship with Spain (Brògueira Dias & Fernandes Alves, 2010). As for the people interviewed in Ayamonte, most of them expressed a local identity, but two of them also admitted that the border area was an identifier for them in the same sense that other people described in Vila Real. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between a clear identification with a particular place (normally, the country of birth), and what people recognize as a referent for their personal identification (the other country). This happens because in the place where they develop their daily lives, they are aware of how both places influence their lives. We also found that two persons identified themselves as Spanish (national identity). These cases contrast with the unique person that declared an *international identity*: 'For me, there is no border; I am from those places and cultures that fulfill me' (Ayamonte, woman, 49 years old, interview, 2010). Last, the only person who declared a kind of *cross-border identity* was a Portuguese man who lives in VRSA and works in VRSA and Ayamonte: 'I feel that I am from the two places. I identify more with the people of this area than with people from Lisbon, for sure. I feel I am of this area, as a whole [from the cross-border zone]' (VRSA, man, 43 years old, interview, 2010).

There are also those who are fully aware of the influence that the border has on their lives. This influence is observed in border trade and tourism. For example, another interviewee said that, for Ayamonte, the border is a resource that encourages these economic activities. Similarly, other respondents claimed that the border is an identifiable element of both Ayamonte and VRSA:

> It's an attraction for locals and for those from abroad who come to see Ayamonte, but also VRSA. We sell the border as an extra incentive, as an added value, the River, the border... we live it as something positive, and this is how we tell it to others (Ayamonte, woman, 47 years old, interview, 2010).

Furthermore, though it is not explicitly stated in their responses, the awareness of the interdependence between the two municipalities in some areas becomes clear when the respondents spoke about the influence of trade and tourism as major sectors of the economy of these cross-border municipalities. For example, people from VRSA commented that VRSA's trade is focused on Spanish customers, and when people from Ayamonte refer to the orientation of their trade towards the Portuguese. 'In Ayamonte we sell more petrol than in other places in Spain. We sell to all the Algarve, VRSA, Monte Gordo... they come here to fill up, and it appeared even on the Television' (Ayamonte, man, 31 years old, interview, 2010). This interdependence is regarded both positively and negatively and therefore can become competitive, as one of the women interviewed commented:

> The better the two regions are developed; the better for Ayamonte… before Ayamonte had a good trade, but Portugal is improving their commerce. Then the Portuguese are not coming here… and what helps here is that trade does not become so strong there (Ayamonte, woman, 41 years old, interview, 2010).

Nevertheless, all of these discourses convey one basic idea, that it is difficult to understand Ayamonte without VRSA, and vice versa.

Neighbours but not brothers: We are different

One element that appears in the discourses of respondents on both sides of the border is the idea that, though commercial interdependence and tourism are good, there is a

reticence to go further. Some of the respondents argued that 'they consider themselves as neighbours, but not as brothers'. This type of nuanced outlook is found in Portuguese and Spanish people: 'Some Spanish people say that the Portuguese want to be a Spanish region, but they are the minority, anyway we are not going to allow this to happen' (Ayamonte, man, 37 years old, interview, 2010), and

> I think it is good to have cooperation on certain issues, but to oblige Portuguese and Spanish to be equal, that is outrageous. We cannot lose our bearings and get confused... then, identity is very important, everybody has their identity, and we cooperate in certain respects, but only this, more than this is mixing, and if we mix, we are lost. You have a sister, but you are not equal to her (Ayamonte, woman, 41 years old, interview, 2010).

This neighbourly relationship is associated with a neutral perception of the other. None of the respondents in Ayamonte consider their neighbour as having better or worse qualities; they are merely different. However, Spain and Portugal also share cultural traits and some common ideas of Iberia:

> Spanish and Portuguese have a common sense of Iberia, but creating now a feeling of the border... it makes things even more complicated. That [common] feeling would appear from smooth relations, but these things [the real scenario] arise from close relationships over time... (Ayamonte, man, 46 years old, interview, 2010).

Conversely, as was declared by a Portuguese woman:

> They are not [Spanish from Ayamonte] our brothers! They only are our neighbours! That's all! I think that attitudes and behaviours are the same; like us, they are cautious because they are stigmatised due to the thefts, because Spanish people from the working class came here, especially at the annual Festival, and they always tried to take something that didn't belong to them, and we did the same thing there. This is why when we enter a shop all eyes are opened, keeping their eyes on us, and they see things done by Portuguese that they don't see for the Spanish: Watch out! Careful! There, there's a Portuguese! And we do the same thing in Portugal! (VRSA, woman, 56 years old, interview, 2010).

These last quotes remind us of the importance of the past in the construction of the present and the future in this cross-border area and the existence of a reciprocal suspicion that sometimes appears when maintaining relationships.

Moreover, when asked about the feelings that Portuguese interviewees have when they go to Ayamonte, they claimed they felt good because they are well received. However, they still report that they feel like they are in a foreign country despite their proximity to home, because they see cultural differences between the two countries. The Spaniards responded similarly, mostly declaring they felt comfortable when they are in Portugal, and more so with the Algarve than with other northern areas of Portugal: 'I feel welcomed, but not at home', 'I miss Spain, but it would not be difficult for me to live in Portugal. But I feel I'm from Spain' (Ayamonte, woman, 47 years old, interview, 2010). Others made similar statements, except one respondent who identified both with Spain and Portugal and whose daily life takes place between the two countries. Finally, women who are not native to Ayamonte but have resided there for over 10 years believe that people from Ayamonte try to maintain a certain distance from, or reticence to interact with, their neighbours. These women's great interest towards Portugal contrasts with those respondents who were born in Ayamonte and expressed a clearly local identity.

Local identities, coherent to the predominance of local social networks

The open interviews included a structured module for analysing the social networks of our respondents that was applied during the biographical interviews of people with expertise in cross-border issues (formal and informal cooperation). We asked each of them to name up to 25 people with whom they regularly maintain relationships. They also indicated the place of origin and other personal traits of every cited person. The results are very detailed in this regard and should lead to the consideration and incorporation of new research questions. Despite being experts in cross-border issues, respondents mentioned few people from the other country when describing their personal networks. This observation can help to understand some arguments made by the interviewees. For instance, this was the case when some of them argued for the utility of cooperating on commercial and tourist issues but did not advocate being brothers. Do these attitudes differentiate between familiar and institutionalised relationships? This question could be studied in future research. Furthermore, is the creation of personal ties an integral part, in social terms, of the construction of a Euroregion, more important than institutional cooperation? Is it possible to construct a border identity without developing these relationships?

Discussion and conclusions

This research has identified aspects of an internal fragmentation in the process of construction identity in the cross-border area of Ayamonte-VRSA, whereby specific areas within each municipality are constructing different types of identity with strong local components. Age and personal experiences in particular are key indicators of identity. Crossing the border during the dictatorship (in Portugal until 1974, in Spain until 1975) was not the same experience as it is now, because the border can now be crossed by car. Moreover, the institutionalised context of numerous exchanges (e.g., sports; painting) that are taking place at the border today is a potentially important step in the construction of a Euroregion. In this sense, the young are growing up in the political context of Europe's construction and the development of cross-border institutional initiatives between Portugal and Spain, while in contrast, the elderly matured before the entry of Spain and Portugal in the European Community.

Throughout the cross-border area, there is a prevailing trend towards the construction of local identities, though there are also a significant number of experiences that construct dual identities at varying levels (i.e., 'local-local', 'local-regional' or 'local-national'). This pattern occurs on both sides of the border. Paradoxically, along with the extensive experience as neighbours, we also found the strong influence of stereotypes and images of the other in the process of identity construction.

The fieldwork uncovered one common idea: the border represented by the River Guadiana is real and separates two different countries that are two historically dissimilar empires that treasure different languages and, despite being neighbours, live largely back to back.

This common sense idea, now translated into research, shows that relationships between these people are ingrained in their respective cultures and that their degree of openness to each other in social networks is either non-existent or insignificant beyond trade or cultural influence. We would like to point out two or three synthetic ideas as the basis for reflections and future research:

- The number of projects that exist for cross-border cooperation between institutions, associations, schools or less formal groups of citizens is encouraging and represents a potential transforming factor that has not yet materialised in practice.
- The focus in this area is the need to move from the institutional side to the personal side. In other words, the aim is that people can establish relationships that enhance cooperation (*bottom-up*), leading to a sustainable future where the promise of social, economic and cultural change can be a reality.
- To achieve this purpose, it is important to look closely at factors affecting social networks. Formal and informal education, with its potential to change the various stereotypes that are an obstacle to cooperation, plays a fundamental role. Participating in the field of languages and promoting common knowledge on both sides of the border that extends beyond the superficiality of gastronomy, tourism or business is fundamental.

These results indicate that territory and the people's view of territory is still important in identity construction. Both culture and identity are strategic elements in building both developmental and educational processes. Additionally, one must ask where people have learned the determining elements in this process. What types of contexts and what types of educational processes help to create the images of us and the images of the other that create both Spanish and Portuguese stereotypes? Adult education in the process of identity construction is a key element in attempting the construction of more fluid relationships between the southern Portuguese and Spanish. A difference exists between 'us' and 'them,' and people establish their own identities from this difference. It is a natural difference, the regular order of things, and individuals assume it naturally. Ultimately, the other is always with us, perhaps in an unconscious way, whether we love them or hate them.

How can we learn about the context of the 'others'? The first way is by acknowledging that we are talking about the context and not about the others themselves. In doing so, we are working under the umbrella of the diverse meanings of culture and human understandings. As Hill points out, 'It flows from my living in a 'contact zone' [...] with Native Americans – a social space where cultures met and wrestle with each other' (Hill, 2010, p. 185). Hill is referring to his knowledge of the Native Americans through his own experience, contact and life in a specific social and cultural environment that is different from his own place of residence. From this point of view, he considers that we can learn the context of the others in three ways: first, learning through observation and doing (as we used to say, 'wherever you go, do what you see'); second, learning through experiences; and third, learning through enjoyment. For instance, we learn the context of the other when we hear their storytelling. In our case, one way of knowing the context of the 'others' has been sharing stories about the River Guadiana about smugglers, border guards, boats in the night, as well as stories of common experiences like cooperation for survival in the Franco period: 'we were the only village in the whole of Spain that did not experience hunger during the Civil War, through the smuggling we used to provide ourselves with food from Portugal… a long story of cooperation as neighbours' (Ayamonte, man, 70 years old, interview, 2009). These types of stories are fundamental to recovering the historical importance of the river in the past as something shared between the 'others' and us.

Almost a century ago, John Dewey (1938) drew on the importance of educating through experience. This kind of informal education allows people to know the 'others' and the 'others' context. Experience is shared and increases with the help of the

relationships maintained through our social networks, as our research stresses. The processes of Adult Education and Learning, far from the restrictive practices of Lifelong Learning, encourage people to transform social, cultural and productive experiences by participating in education, and by learning from other people's research and struggles (Gelpi, 1989). Fundamentally, learning about the context of the 'others' is a process of discovering and learning about ourselves and our own history, which is always contextual.

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Not just petrol heads: Men's learning in the community through participation in motor sports

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Abstract

This paper examines the learning experienced through participation by men in two quite different two motor sports organisations in Western Australia. It relies on interview data from volunteers about what they do and what they learn as a consequence of their participation in staging complex but safe, competitive, public events. The paper provides evidence of a deep well of learning and wide range of skills produced as a consequence of participation. This learning would rarely be recognised as education or training, illustrating the need for caution when concluding that adult education is not taking place and learning outcomes are not being achieved other than through courses where teaching occurs, or in contexts that are regarded as literary. What men skills men learnt, though significant as outcomes, were not the object of the motor sport activity, supporting Biesta's (2006) view that the amassing of knowledge and skills can be achieved in other valuable ways aside from through education.

Keywords: motor sports; men's learning; community; men's sheds

Introduction

This paper identifies adult learning in the community in an unlikely site far from Europe: two community motor sports organisations in regional and remote Western Australia. It identifies and articulates the particular, critical and arguably general importance to men of learning through hands-on practice in voluntary communities of association. The learning is required for and generated through volunteer involvement in motor sports organisations in order for the organisations to safely and equitably participate in motor racing events and to conduct events for the public, in regional and remote locations with very limited adult and community education options. The learning experienced by adult male volunteers in making their sport safe in two illustrative community-based motor sports organisations in shown to be extensive and

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diverse. The findings about learning from research in this most unlikely, grassroots, community sports context highlight the importance of not restricting discourses about adult learning to educational contexts, or to organisational contexts with which researchers are more likely to culturally and socially familiar. Importantly, the opportunities for men to learn elsewhere and develop (or indeed 'interrupt': Wildemeersch & Kurantowitz, 2010, p. 2) their identities through education in these Australian regional and remote settings are extremely limited.

This study, while located in a Western Australian context on the other side of the globe from Europe, presents what Stephens (2009, cover notes) describes as 'a strong case for qualitative research that is grounded in contextual realities'. The study also provides fresh and independent theoretical insights into forms of adult learning less well recognized in the non-metropolitan world, beyond the conventional reach of what Connell (2007, p. 44) characterises as 'Northern theory', with its tendency towards 'the claims of universality; reading from the centre; gestures of exclusion; and grand erasure'. Rather than making of forcing explicit and empirical comparisons, the author anticipates that European and other readers will identify their own connections (or disconnections) with what is presented. There are important epistemological presuppositions here. The first is that the international settings and discourses are sufficiently similar to allow for comparison of education and learning across diverse contexts (Stephens, 2009). Second, that the fundamental principles have been satisfied that underpin comparative research in order to generalise about this macro-social global phenomenon of learning (Schriewer, 1999), education sectors, confederacies and systems aside.

Rationale for researching adults in community settings

Aside from extensive recent studies of learning through work, research into lifelong learning that takes place in less formal education contexts, including in community organisation settings, tends to occur in places and institutions, particularly in Europe and North America, that are more culturally familiar to researchers with extensive and formal learning and education backgrounds. A recent example is the examination by Innocent (2009) of museums, libraries and archives as part of the Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning in the UK (Schuller & Watson, 2009). In studies of adult learning beyond work, researchers tend to be more familiar with community owned and managed dedicated learning organisations such as U3A (university of the third age) and ACE (adult and community education) where learning, formal literacies, and particularly education, are named as the object of the activity, where many of the participants are already relatively educated and committed lifelong learners, and where 'enrolment' in 'courses' simplifies the research subjects and sampling methods. In such formal and 'tidy' education settings, typically supported by government program funding, there is also more funding for research and evaluation of learning and a tacit expectation that this is where most adult learning occurs.

Schuller and Watson (2009, p. 23) suggest that while lifelong learning beyond formal education is 'inherently untidy', there is evidence that 'getting involved in very informal settings can help people with little record of success'. They conclude that while 'it may seem obvious that learning produces beneficial results' (p. 23), the way it does this is not well understood. UK-based research cited in McGivney's (1999) study of informal learning in the community suggest that around one half of the adult population are involved in local voluntary organisations, and that many adults had left

school early and not subsequently engaged in any form of organized education. Even in Australia, one half of the current Australian workforce has no completed post-school qualification.

This paper seeks to improve the understanding, alluded to by Schuller and Watson (2009), by taking up de Carteret's (2008, p. 504) suggestion that it 'is timely to explore informal learning in community settings other than those understood as having an educational dimension'. It also breaks relatively new ground by focusing on a group that is not often to the subject of separate inquiry in Europe: men, despite recent evidence from a number of nations that men and some boys are less likely to participate in formal learning beyond work (Golding, 2010). The paper investigates what Field (2009) identified, in summarising learning-related research into community men's sheds in Australia (Golding, 2009), as:

> … activities that would not normally be defined as learning, in that they are not part of any formal learning structures, but they provide valued opportunities for the men involved to make transitions from their working lives, and the activities that [engage] them there, to a new range of activities which are in many ways familiar to them, but provide new learning opportunities as well. (Field 2009, p. 226)

In particular, this paper looks at learning by men through two community-based motor sports organisations in the Australian state of Western Australia, in which learning might not otherwise be recognized or researched, let alone be valued as beneficial.

Literature review

Sport is intuitively recognized across many nations as having the capacity to enhance social, cultural, political and economic relations at a number of levels from local to international (Tonts, 2005). Sport and sporting clubs, particularly team sports, have received more academic attention since Putnam's (2000) research, oriented around investigations of social capital, included an exploration of a perceived tendency in the US for less adults to participate in traditional sporting clubs, parallel with the emergence of new sports with high levels of participation and civic engagement.

Sport is recognized as a distinctive feature of the social fabric of many Australian geographical communities (Cashman, 2002), contributing to local identity, sense of community and sense of egalitarianism. Most research into sport elsewhere has focused on questions associated with infrastructure provision, facilities management, physical activity and health promotion (Tonts, 2005). While the role of sport, particularly Australian rules football-based team sports, has recently been examined in Western Australia as a vehicle for the creation and expression of social capital (Tonts, 2005; Atherley, 2006), its role in adult learning, particularly through motor sports, has seldom previously received serious attention. Indeed men who have a passionate and active interest as spectators or participants in sports that involve combinations of wheels, machines and speed, including motor sports, are typically perceived as being relatively poorly educated, and sometimes described derogatorily in Australia as 'hoons' or 'petrol heads': thus the paper title.

An exception to this research lacuna is briefly mentioned in McGivney (2004, p. 110), who suggested that 'the effectiveness of attracting younger men into learning via their main interests such as sports, music and motorised vehicles is well understood'. However none of the seven UK examples used by McGivney to support this contention (pp. 100-112) involved motorized vehicles. A wide range of Australian community-

owned and -managed organisations oriented around motorised machines is widely known to very attractive to, actively participated in and patronised, mainly by men in most towns and cities across Australia. They include organisations specializing in preservation, display, participation or competition involving a wide variety of vehicles. These vehicles can involve racing of off-road cars, trucks or motorbikes, as in the current study, or on-road. Motor sports organisations comprise a subset of other organisations dedicated to restoration, maintenance and operation of stationary engines, agricultural, railway and mining machinery.

Two voluntary community-owned and -managed organisations in the Australian state of Western Australia that organize motor sports events are subject to analysis in this paper. They have been selected to illustrate the learning role that they play within their discrete geographical communities for men who participate, aside from the learning role known to be played by better-known Australian men's team sports, particularly Australian Rules football and rugby. One selected organisation, the *Albany Speedway* conducts regular circuit racing events for a range of modified cars at its open, dirt track and stadium on the outskirts of the city of Albany in the regional southwest of Australia. The other selected organisation is an annual, cross-country race called the *Gascoyne Dash* involving specialized, off-road motorbikes and cars that race through arid and remote country, including the sandy bed of the Gascoyne River in the westernmost region of Australia, near the remote city of Carnarvon.

Method

Interview data from men involved in two motor sports organisations were selected from a wider study of men's learning and wellbeing undertaken in six sites in Western Australia by Golding, Brown, Foley and Harvey (2009). The wider study involved men involved in 38 Western Australian community-based, voluntary organisations in six urban, regional, rural and remote sites, including a total of seven sporting organisations, along with adult and community education, fire and emergency services, religious and Indigenous, age-related and men's special interest organisations. The two selected sporting organisations are the *Albany Speedway* in Albany (ARIA+[1]; population 40,000) and the *Gascoyne Dash* in Carnarvon (ARIA+ 8.10; population 9,000). Both voluntary organisations organize motorized sporting events that like many community sporting organisations across the world, actively involve members and volunteers and put on events that are open to the public as participants, competitors and spectators.

This paper utilizes learning-related narratives from fully transcribed, audio-recorded, small group interviews conducted in these two organisations in 2009 with adult male participants. Some learning-related survey data specific to sporting organisation participants (n=29), drawn from a separate survey to the wider sample of all adult male community organisation participants (n=219), are also briefly considered. Both the survey and interviews focused on men's experiences of learning, particularly on the learning experienced as a consequence of their voluntary participation in the organisations.

The narrative data below have deliberately and unashamedly been presented close to verbatim from participants. The purpose is to separately and accurately communicate the contexts in which the two quite different motor sports events are organised, aside from the important learning that participants report. In a somewhat similar way, Burke and Jackson (2007) explain that they wrote sections of their book on lifelong learning in narrative style to tell the stories of the participants, in order:

> … to challenge the conventions of academic writing and to illustrate the fluidity of the different positionings within lifelong learning and the contested nature of their trajectories and perspectives. (Burke & Jackson, 2007, p. 54)

While I (the researcher/interviewer) played an important part in shaping the interview and the questions, as well as deciding which part of the narrative to include (or omit), I have deliberately tried not to intercede other than where necessary in either extensive narrative. The risk of using narrative in this way is what Reay (1998, p. 15) calls the academy's traditional intolerance 'for lived experiences which it dismisses as anecdotal or stories; it is an affront to scholarly sensibilities'. Most of the researcher narrative, aside from this introductory section, follows separately in the discussion and conclusion.

Results

The Albany speedway

The Weekender in Albany (October 30, 2008, p. 77) reported that 'Albany Speedway season blasts off' with plenty of new cars and faces at its Atwell Park speedway. It has not always been that organized, as a Speedway's Life Member recalled.

> The club was formed back in the late [19]60s by a group of blokes who got together and started racing at an old rubbish dump and then progressed to … the Ocean Beach sand and then they got more organised at the end of 60s and organised the Speedway where it is today. From just a gravel track carved out into the side of the hill it has developed into a first class venue. The track, the pits area, the main clubrooms and canteen are all new facilities. The track has lighting, so we run at night now and that draws more competitors and more spectators. We normally have between ten and twelve meetings a year and between two and three weeks apart. This year we had a National title, [a] modified productions [event], … that's at Easter, and we also run various features during the year … sedans, productions, juniors …

For the uninitiated (as the interviewer/researcher was), there is some necessary but brief technical detail. The modified production cars are:

> … well-modified suspension wise and motor wise. …They are set anti-clockwise so the suspension is set up to go around left corners only … The engine can't be bored or 'stroked': most of the components have had to be of saloon-car type component state of manufacture.

By contrast, stock cars:

> … go both directions and the car has to be very well balanced, so you can't set it for a direction, which makes it a bit more challenging. … As you come onto the track you go left or right, anti clockwise or clockwise. The pits marshal flips a coin as they are ready to leave. They have no idea [which way they will race], until they get out the gate.

Also for the uninitiated, none of this comes cheap to potential competitors. For the cheapest (100cc) division, ' … to get a good condition, basic one you would be looking at about A$5,000. Sprint cars would cost around A$10,000. Super saloon you would be looking around A$100,000.'

In order for a speedway race meeting to be safely started and equitably run, a huge amount of learning has taken place by very skilled and highly responsible volunteers.

Most of it is learned by doing and by progressively taking on and earning responsibility, though some of it is vocational and accredited. On a typical race day, scrutineers go around before every race meeting to check all of the cars are up to formal specifications. The stewards (including a deputy) maintain control of the competitors. In one steward's words, they:

> … keep the blokes in line and help run the meeting. They actually start and stop the race and wave the chequered flag at the end, or - if a car crashes - they control it. … [A Service Club is paid] to do the gate. We have bar personnel who run the bar and people who run the canteen.

All of these bar and canteen staff need to gain nationally accredited safe service of alcohol or food handling certificates. Apart from a timekeeper:

> Upstairs you have got two commentators and scorers and time keepers. … On the infield you have fire crew … [and] St Johns Ambulance. We have a tow truck crew. A 'push ute' or two [for starting open-wheel sprinters]. They all have to be there for it to operate, because if one section fails and it falls over, then the event doesn't happen.

For some drivers, the learning benefits are significant but mostly mechanical, such as learning '…car loads, setting up suspension, … how you get more reliability and more power out of [the cars]'. For some older, experienced drivers such as the following 52 year old, it is about fathers who are mechanics mentoring sons and informally passing on mechanical skills.

> I have been a mechanic for 35 years. Since becoming involved in the Speedway and through the cars I have learnt a lot about suspensions, how they handle, what happens when you get a job, being a scrutineer and some of the things people do to cheat, which is not one of the good parts. By participating in the club I am supporting my [nineteen year old] son for racing. That's why I am involved in the club, so it's supporting him … I have a lot of other friends there too. … I have got [an automotive] workshop and [my son's] also doing an apprenticeship so there is a relationship that way. It certainly makes it easier to race and … we can do all the repairs on the mechanical side.

His son confirmed that 'I get a bonus with a race and I enjoy working on cars. I am an apprentice mechanic and the Speedway has helped me into that area.'

A volunteer who helped out in the bar explained what he had learned other than through the job itself.

> I have done a bar manager's course … and that's something that I would never have done if I hadn't been involved in the Speedway. Just in helping out you learn what different people are like, how to handle some people and that's quite entertaining sometimes, how to get involved in groups.

A driver and helper explained that he had learned to mix more widely, socially and through work, as well as to tolerate a wider range of people.

> You tolerate all natures of people who come together for the one sport. You learn to work with people of all different natures of work and attitudes of all sorts, and that helps you because you are mixing … You don't always get a chance to meet with that many different people in one location … I find that is good, the social part of it, just to learn to work with other people … and to get jobs done … and all the different ways you can go about it, all the different angles with the people you have to work with. That's a big thing, it's quite good, because working for myself you are stuck with your customers that you are working with all the time.

A speedway steward without the money required to race explained the multiple wellbeing benefits and enjoyment of being in a responsible position trackside, with cars racing 'straight underneath' him. He also explained clearly how he was motivated and learned to be a volunteer trackside steward.

> I have always enjoyed car racing probably more so than football …You get interested with the cars, you look at cars racing, you see what is happening, you understand what happens to the car when they are doing different things … I have never been able to afford to race so I have never had that opportunity … so you go there and you watch. I have been coming to the Albany Speedway [for eleven years]. I used to park my chair up in front of the canteen there and I sat down and watched. And you have these people in the tower there at the start line and they were doing their job - and after a while you start learning things and you're seeing things. And there were things that weren't quite right … decisions weren't getting made properly.… In the end there was one bloke standing in the tower by himself. Now if anyone can see that it *really* needs two people to do that job and they only had one person - so silly me put my hand up … So now I have been placed on the edge of the track.

Quizzed further about how he learned to make the quick and responsible judgements, the steward elaborated.

> You have to anticipate … I thought I used to be pretty good at that when I was in trackside. You could anticipate when accidents were going to happen, you can see it happening … When you become a steward then all of a sudden you have to look at *everything* and you have to know everything straight away - which puts a lot of pressure on you. When you have to make a decision and a judgement on something that happens in a split second and you have to come up with that information. … You have to learn what is your job and you have to be on the ball 100 per cent of the time … Sitting there as a spectator is easy. People make mistakes and you wonder why do they make [them], but [when] you are actually responsible, that's it! … Once the responsibility goes on your shoulders, it's a different kettle of fish.

A Speedway Club Life member recollected on what he had learned.

> [I've] learned not to be upset by what people say or by people's criticism. … You learn the technical side of things and the unpredictability of the sport … People say its boring and it goes around in a loop and that's all they do. But every time, just about every race, the track is different.

For the Albany public, the benefits are about evening entertainment for all ages, including some accidents, described colloquially in Australia as 'prangs'.

> … [I]t's the only night-time motor sport in Albany and it's beneficial and it gives [people] somewhere to go, a social outing. We could get 600 to 800 people [on a quiet night] and up to 3,000 to 4,000 people [on other nights], depending [on] what's on. If it includes the sprint cars, we have had 4,500 people. … It ranges from young kids up to granddads.

The Gascoyne Dash

The *Gascoyne Dash* is an annual, off-road race over a weekend through a remote area east of Carnarvon in Western Australia, over one thousand kilometres north of Albany. In 2009 it involved 25 off-road car drivers and 128 off-road motorbike riders from across Western Australia and interstate. The annual event takes a significant amount of complex management and coordination over the previous twelve months by a volunteer

committee and event manager. The event has its own highly professional website that in 2009 experienced 60,000 hits in the six months leading up to the event. 'The Dash' as some participants call it, requires significant input in terms of time and expertise from a large number of local volunteers, businesses and other voluntary community organisations.

The learning involved is significant for the organisation of the Gascoyne Dash's volunteer core group, comprising four to five men, a committee of ten and approximately 150 other men and women directly involved. It involves liaison with competitors, landholders and sponsors as well as what the event manager called:

> ... all the crap that you do post an event. It has developed into a twelve months a year job. … I suspect it's something different. It's not like being involved with the end of town soccer. You're getting a view of a country and a group of people both involved in the event and parts of the event … the land holders, sponsors, businesses involved, there's an excellent cross-section.

The event's impressive web site (Gascoyne Dash, 2010) that now includes a facility for competitors to enter on-line, is increasingly important to the event's success. However the event typically takes a lot of learning, work, proficiencies, training and assessment 'behind the scenes'.

> One of the huge things in terms of people is physically managing all the data that is provided by the competitors. … You want to have all the particulars …and that typically all comes on the forms with the data entry. … This year we have moved to a fully on-line process which is virtually a back room where they load up the details. … It is significant for the club's ability to have a more efficient website and that will be one of those proficiencies. It will reduce the load on volunteers too, because there is an enormous amount of data entry and paperwork leading up to the event that there is always a problem. … This year (2009) we were completely overloaded [and] we ran short of volunteers. The website will be absolutely imperative in the long term to get that up and running for events like this.

The key organizers, when asked about what they learn, initially and playfully acknowledged that: 'It's bloody hot in that river bed!' The Committee Chair more seriously proceeded to explain how much learning was involved by the diverse range and number of volunteers, some of which involved risk management training issues for and with volunteers.

> On the organising side of things, with your own committee, you have to work with them. … You have people coming from different backgrounds, so in a short period of time you have to work them out. … I used to do it in footy in the old days. You can't treat one player like you treat another player, so you have to be reactive in a way…. You have to try and evaluate … on the run what's going on and make decisions. Everyone is a volunteer, so it's quite difficult to apply real business principles. … We have some outcomes which are not negotiable, there's certain safety aspects. [Sometimes we] sit down and performance manage a person who has done a less than satisfactory job.

The event's race director concluded.

> I guess we have learnt to get better at organising [volunteers] and to provide more infrastructure for them in order to get the job done. And we have identified that we need more volunteers to get the job done. … Probably the biggest problem is trying to drag those extra volunteers in.

The risk management strategy is very specific, elaborate and involves much formal learning, recording of competencies and testing as well as a check of competencies in a 'mock run'. The race director stressed that:

> There is that specific training [for volunteers] and they have to go through an accreditation process and a test. … They physically go out on the spot and they have got all the gear there and there is a 25 question test in terms of safety expectations. … They are signed off on and the information is retained for insurance purposes, so that if they had an accident and had been told that they weren't allowed to wear thongs [for example], … that is all in the documentation. Above that, you have got different levels of officials. We operate under the auspices of Motor Cycling Australia, and they have their accreditation instruction for their officials. … [Several of the organisers] have done the hands-on modules. … [O]utside of going to a State or National event, we are probably as high up the accreditation tree … as possible. … Similarly, most of their modules and training is on line so you can go in and get all the relevant material and answer the questions and you're done. You have a logbook so they keep track of what you have done so that [training] experiences are recorded.

The post-event evaluation process is similarly rigorous and actively involves volunteers.

> When the event is finished in terms of improvement we get feedback in a number of areas … from our people through a debrief. … Like everything, everybody and his dog want to give their two bob's [=coin's] worth. We have a series of debriefs to find out from the people on the ground, the coalface. …. I guess that is part of the volunteer process that is pretty important, to get that feedback. No matter how well it works, it is obviously important for them to attend meetings and stand up and contribute.

The main organising committee have strong links through their diverse professions to the local business community and most of them got involved initially as event participants. However their reasons for giving much of their time and effort to this major community event are partly out of a sense of community obligation and part about making the most out of the social adversity in this remote location. As the club chairman said, 'Given the town is a little bit remote, I think you have to get involved in the community activities, otherwise you go stir crazy.'

The event and organisation started organically as a one-off fundraiser, for both fun and purpose, as the race director explained.

> In 1995 we had a major flood here and there was a lot of … property damage. … Plantations [along the usually dry Gascoyne river] were washed out and there were all sorts of disaster about the place. … [So we] organised a 'wet run' down-river and we raised money for flood relief. … But then the [Gascoyne] river didn't run for about five years and by then we were getting a bit frustrated. Then in 2000 we had a major flood … so we got another group together and did a major powerboat run from Gascoyne Junction to [Carnarvon] … another fundraiser. That time we actually donated to the hospital here which bought an emergency trailer for them. We wanted to do something and have some fun but also have some purpose in it.

As it transformed from a one-off, grassroots fun event to a semi-regular public event and fundraiser, it required new skills and lateral thinking, as the race director detailed.

> One of the problems with events like this is that you need insurance. The first [event] we [conducted] under the service clubs under their insurance. We … all knew each other and were able to pull the strings to do it. The second one we did under the auspices of the Variety Club so we used their insurance and pulled the second one off. Of course you have got major issues, insurance and litigation these days. … As it's grown it has

> snowballed and dragged in more people and everybody who has come along has wanted to become involved in it.

The wellbeing outcomes, apart from the unique motor sports ‘buzz’, and the money raised, now extends to a wide range of Carnarvon community organisations and their members involved as volunteers and participants. The race director explained that the volunteers …

> … get a big buzz out of being involved in something, particularly the ones around the event time … My old man [=father] for instance went out and laid the stop/go sign on a desolate little road track in the middle of nowhere. He got out there with my cousin and they just stayed there for five or six hours and he was stoked [=very satisfied]. He had great fun. … There are several other pensioners who have nothing to do with the event all year who have gone and got accreditation as road crossing attendants. … It gives them a feeling of worth and purpose and they feel important. … It gives them something to aim for and strive for and they’re proud of it.

While the Gascoyne Dash committee and all but a handful of the 150 competitors were men, the committee acknowledged that a number of female partners, ‘particularly those with time on their hands’, are ‘maybe begrudgingly’ interested. Effectively, women played a key role in the event but it is not ‘always roses’ domestically about the extent of the commitment required for men involved and the impact on their partners or children. As one man said:

> It puts a lot of pressure on family relations, probably because we over commit. We decide that The Dash needs to happen, and regardless of whatever else is going on around, it is going to happen – and we get on with the job, unfortunately as blokes do, that does become a pain in the arse in relationships and wives and everything else and they do get cranky with it. We have had to ‘pull out of the red’ a few times.

One of the organizers noted that these sorts of events…

> …seem to be men dominated, and particularly in the sports sector. The culture is that women are quite happy to take a backward role. There are dozens of women behind it. …They are obviously cooler under pressure than males tend to be … They probably understand the social run of events and the men want to know the trucks [=machines].

Discussion

The remote town of Carnarvon and the regional city of Albany have no venue and very few programs inclusive of learning by men other than those that are formal and vocational. While TAFE [Technical and Further Education] campuses are found in both sites and in most rural cities and a small number of towns across Australia, these vocationally-oriented facilities have been deliberately drained of any critical, political or intellectual tradition that they had when their antecedent organisations began as community-based, grassroots, worker education organisations over a century ago. In Australia, as in Europe, there has been a tendency for the national and most state governments to only fund education for adults which is vocational, as part of a wider, neo-liberal skills agenda and move toward the market of user pays, aside from that which is seen to be ‘pre-vocational’. University education is not accessible in Carnarvon other than in via distance mode, and is restricted to a small number of university

extension programs and services in Albany. It one defines adult education as that which is formal, professional or semi-professional, men are effectively missing from education and training beyond work in Australia, particularly beyond the major cities.

The current study has identified deep pools of learning in an unlikely and rarely examined community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), motor sports, in both localities. Conventional academic definitions of education would classify almost all adult men in Carnarvon and Albany as non-participants in education. Data from men involved in these two sporting organisations, along with the data from men involved in the 36 other community-based organisations in four other sites in the Western Australian research (Golding et al., 2009), confirm similarly deep and wide pools of lifelong learning, adult education aside, much of which, for older men (Golding et al., 2009), is post-vocational. Separate research has identified similarly rich learning contexts for men through their active, hands on participation in fire and emergency services organisations (Hayes, Golding & Harvey, 2004) and in community-based men's sheds (Golding et al., 2007).

The survey data collected from men involved in the seven sporting organisations in the wider, Western Australian study (n=29) that included the two motor sports organisation participants, highlighted how different attitudes towards learning were for sporting organisation participants compared to the broader population of men involved as participants in community organisations. The group of men participating in sporting organisations were significantly more likely ($p<0.05$) than men in other community organisation types to be former tradesmen (seven out of ten were) and a high proportion (around one half) had completed trade apprenticeships. Men who participated in sporting organisations participated more frequently than men in other community groups (54% participated several times a week) and their association was typically over extended periods. More than half had been involved in the same Western Australian sporting organisation for between five and nineteen years. Along with fire and emergency service volunteers, men involved in sport were least likely of all men in community groups to agree that they knew 'enough about the local adult education organisation to use it'. Consistent with this finding, research by Learning Centre Link (LCL, 2004) in Western Australia found that adult learning centres had primarily been developed as a response to women's needs and were widely perceived as 'a women's thing' (p. 8).

The extensive narratives from both motor sports organisations above illustrate the difficulties of making judgements about learning by men who are superficially 'missing' from adult education and training 'courses' as they are conventionally defined. These men are not necessarily missing from learning. While the narratives from both the motor sport organisations provide evidence of a rich tapestry of learning through motor sports organisations for volunteers and participants, they are unable to throw light on the learning experienced by the women involved or by the spectators. Nevertheless they richly illustrate the ways in which both community motor sports organisations have the capacity to involve and include men with high levels of engagement over many years. Most of this learning is either necessary for participation or achieved as a consequence of learning through participation. All of the learning is directly or indirectly associated with the process of ensuring that public motor sports events organised for and by volunteers are safe for spectators and participants. The most effective learning for motor sports organisation participants is associated with community contexts which provide opportunities for men to become volunteers and co-participants in hands on, shared group activities and events. Both motor sports organizations depend highly on social capital (trust, reciprocity, shared norms,

networks: Putnam, 2000). While both organisations provide a wide range of opportunities, albeit in different combinations and with differing emphases, for men to learn, develop and practice a wide range of valuable communication skills and practical skills, it is important to stress that learning is an outcome rather than the object of the activity. In this sense this paper is supportive of Biesta's (2006) view that the amassing of knowledge and skills is not the prime aim of education. Biesta also holds that while certain skills and relevant knowledge are important, what matters more in the case of these and other community organisations is the opportunity created for interaction between different members of the community.

In order to systematically analyse the nature and extent of the skills created through this community interaction, the narrative data in the paragraphs above are filtered through the six, inter-related aspects of communication contained within the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF, 2008, summarised in Table 1, and *italicised* in the paragraphs below the table). The ACSF is perceived as a valuable as a tool of analysis in this instance, since it anticipates that 'not all adult learners are familiar with the instruction or socio-cultural context of texts and tasks. Some may have little experience of learning' (ACSF, 2008, p. 7). This skills framework also anticipates, as do these narratives, that adult learners 'can derive valuable contextual support for core skills development from their immediate learning, working and social environment' (p. 7).

Table 1. Aspects of communication in the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)

ACSF Aspects of Communication	**For …**	**Related to …**
Personal	expressing identity	personal identity or goals
Cooperative	interacting in groups	functioning of groups
Procedural	performing tasks	carrying out tasks
Technical	using tools & machinery	tools, machines, technology
Systems	interacting in organisations	interaction in organisations
Public	interacting with community	social & community context

Source: Adapted from ACSF, (2008), p. 9

In the case of *personal communication* (expressing identity), there is evidence of significant opportunities for men in these motor sports organisation to develop, express, model and share positive and responsible identities as men. Importantly, this is achieved without naming or foregrounding the personal learning or its benefits. The learning is most effective for the men involved in both organisations if they are able to participate as equal, co-participants in a group activity rather than, in institutional learning environments, as students, customers or clients. Both motor sports organizations also provided opportunities for men to engage in *cooperative communication* (interacting in groups). These opportunities were found from the wider Western Australian research (Golding et al., 2009) to be richest in relatively small community organizations where a high proportion of volunteers worked in teams or groups and had opportunities to engage in and take on increasingly responsible roles within the organisations. Ironically, these opportunities were more likely to be missing in more highly professionalised and formal adult and community organisations.

Both motor sports organizations also provided opportunities for learning and practising *procedural communication* (performing tasks) and *technical communication* (using tools and technologies). Both these aspects of communication presuppose a

practical context in which the tasks are undertaken. These opportunities are available in these motor sports settings, by virtue of the fact that men are able to work productively for the common and community good in groups. Opportunities are also available in both community organisations for men of all ages to maintain and take on ongoing, responsible roles within the organizations. There are therefore ample opportunities for men to practice *systems communication* (interacting within organizations) with increasingly higher levels of responsibility.

Finally but importantly, both motor sports organizations actively interface with the wider community within and beyond these discrete regional and remote geographical communities, providing rich and diverse opportunities for men to practice *public communication* (interacting with the wider community). It is important to note in passing that some men who do not use the internet or other contemporary information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as mobile phones were found in the Golding et al. (2009) research to be 'passed over' when the responsible organisational roles associated with both systems communication and public communication were allocated in community organisations. This was because of their perceived inability to rapidly share information now routinely distributed in most (but not all) community organisations via email, internet and mobile phone. The Gascoyne Dash is of particular interest here by virtue of its use and increasing dependence of modern management and business techniques and its dependence on the internet to engage and involve much of the remote Carnarvon community. As one of the organizers claimed:

> The Gascoyne Dash [has] the largest portion per population of volunteers involved in any one event anywhere in the country. … I don't think I have seen as much support from any other community for an event – it's brilliant.

'The Dash' and its organisation is reflective of a trend, observed by the author in other community organisations in Australia, including the recreational mountain biking community where mainly younger people are involved, to eschew traditional, face to face and formal methods of meeting and running events which include formal meeting procedures and minute taking. The trend, as in the organisation of the Gascoyne Dash, is toward a small core of very active, professional people using new information and communication devices, to keep a larger body of less connected supporters 'in the loop' through text, blogs, internet and mobile phones.

It is important to observe that the Gascoyne Dash event has, in some senses, by organising itself in this new way, inadvertently overstretched itself. The core committee realised in 2009 that the event was now too successful for the size of the committee organising it and for the pool of committed volunteers available. The organizers acknowledged …

> … the enormous amount of work that a small community has pulled off to have what we have now – from what we started with, to the huge amount of infrastructure and assets that we now have. The idea was to build the event to a self-sustainable point. … Unfortunately the event is building quicker than what we can build to save itself. … These kind of things tend to have a win and then all the volunteers fall off and the event falls over. We didn't want that to happen and we think it is a lot bigger and better than that, so we drove it to sustainability. … Unfortunately, I think it has actually caught up with us and actually over-burst: its popularity has actually overtaken our ability to keep up. You get trapped. We need more people. We are locked in because we have committed ourselves to it and we have got people falling off the side. It does make it difficult with something like this and I don't know what the answer is.

Conclusion

There is copious qualitative evidence from the narratives collected from volunteer participants within these two motor sports organisations that extensive and rich learning was taking place for community organisation members and participants. This learning was taking place as a consequence of voluntary participation or as a condition of participation. Importantly, in both sites learning through adult and community education was either unavailable, inaccessible to or inappropriate for men. In order to regularly, safely and equitably conduct sporting events for the benefit of participants and spectators, much of the learning required was technical, formal and accredited. While in some cases this learning enhanced some men's paid work roles, it was not otherwise vocational or work-related. In effect, men involved in these motor sports had to learn in order to safely participate and contribute to a safe public event. Much of that learning was through participating and doing. The narratives from both organisations illustrate the way that adult roles and identities as learners in these organisations, while diverse and different, tend to be tightly associated with their personal experiences and social and community relations within the organisations. In broader terms, participation in these motor sports organisations enabled men from diverse backgrounds, who shared a similar social and cultural interest in machines to exercise agency and become active producers of that culture rather than rather than passive consumers' (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006, p. 98). As in Light's (2006) study of situated learning in Australian surf clubs, membership of these motor sports clubs:

> … involves highly significant and meaningful learning and identity formation, where learning is co-constructed with other members as a process of negotiating meaning and knowledge. (Light, 2006, p. 155)

As de Carteret (2008, p. 515) put it in her analysis of learning in Australia through dances and markets, much of the learning through these and other sporting organisations also '… happens either incidentally or specifically as a result of involvement in activities'. This learning is situated and mediated in particular sites where 'learners are involved in "communities of practice" that embody a set of values, behaviour and skills to be acquired by members' (Schugurensky, 2006, p. 168). Far from being written off derogatorily as 'petrol heads', there is strong evidence here in Australia of a solid commitment through motor sports, and by extrapolation through many other community owned and managed voluntary organisations, to their place and organisation communities in general, and to learning in particular. Just as 'difference and plurality is the basis of our present day society and the backbone of democracy' (Wildemeersch & Kurantowitz, p. 2), so too is plurality and difference in what constitutes learning for adults in diverse contexts within and beyond Europe.

Note

[1] ARIA+ is the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia. Higher values are indicative of increasing remoteness, ranging between very accessible (ARIA+ = 0.00) in most Australian capital cities, to most remote (ARIA+ approaching 16).

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International learning communities for global and local citizenship

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Abstract

In this paper, I describe our ongoing international project in engaged educational ethnography and participatory action research with young adults and consider its relevance for a discussion on the community-building role of adult education in a globalized context. I use the example of our case study to suggest that adult educators can generate viable communities by creating learning spaces that nurture critical consciousness, a sense of agency, participation and social solidarity among internationally and culturally diverse young adult learners. Furthermore, I argue that participation in international learning communities formed through this educational process can potentially help young adults become locally and globally engaged citizens. International learning communities for global citizenship thus present a proposition for conceptualizing the vital role of adult community education in supporting democratic global and local citizenship in a world defined in terms of cross-cultural and long-distance encounters in the formation of culture.

Keywords: international learning communities; globalization; citizenship; participatory action research (PAR)

Introduction

In this paper, I take a position on the central theme of this special issue of RELA, whose editors invite discussion around two divergent orientations regarding adult education and community building (Wildemeersch & Kurantowicz, 2010). On the one hand adult education is seen by many as an instrument of community building, perceived as the process of strengthening shared identity and the restoring of social cohesion through the increase of social capital (Field, 2003; Putnam, 2000). In their analyses of contemporary societies, the proponents of this approach focus on what they perceive is a disintegration of the traditional social fabric caused by the decline of associational life accompanied

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by the increased individualization and multiculturalism of present-day societies. Based on these popular theories, today's policy makers call for the restoration of the vision of a community based on shared interests and cultural harmony. On the other hand there are those who argue against this view of the rational cohesive community and propose that we should view present-day communities in terms of plurality and difference (Amin, 2005; Lingis, 1994). Proponents of this approach promote the concept of adult education as the deliberate process of creating public spaces, where issues can be debated from different positions. Hence, pedagogy for community building is not about the strengthening of the homogeneity of opinion and shared interest among people. Instead, it consists of creating public spaces where individual identities can be interrupted by the presence and opinion of various 'others' and where divergent issues can be democratically debated. One could say that a community consists of the ongoing practice of democracy and the role of adult and community education is to support this practice through the creation of learning spaces and opportunities.

I want to argue for the relevance of this latter concept of community education, which supports the articulation of difference in the process of democratic learning rather than the search for and enforcement of the commonality of attitudes and identities. I will support my position through reflection on an ongoing international project in engaged educational ethnography and participatory action research with young adults, which we have been conducting for the last three years in the Polish city of Wrocław.

Based on this work, I will argue that adult educators can help generate viable communities by creating learning spaces for internationally and culturally diverse learners with the goal of helping them become engaged local and global citizens. Such learning spaces are formed through an educational process that supports critical consciousness, sense of agency, participation and social solidarity across national and cultural boundaries. International learning communities, I want to propose, are a viable response of adult and community education to the current conditions of a globalizing world, permeated as it is by what Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2004) calls 'frictions' - moments and spaces of contemporary global connections, where universal aspirations get enacted in the 'sticky materiality of practical encounters' (Tsing, 2004, p. 1). Firstly, I will explain the main theoretical and methodological concepts underpinning our work and secondly, I will describe the pedagogical project in engaged educational ethnography and participatory action research. In the conclusion, I will return to the reflection on the relevance of our work and its conceptualization and to the discussion on adult and community education's role in contemporary community building.

Key concepts and methodology

This work is located at the intersection of several theoretical and methodological traditions. In my concept of the international learning community, I draw primarily on the legacy of the learning community movement that began in the 1980s at institutions of higher education in the United States and has since expanded to include a wide variety of educational strategies. Following a useful definition of Smith, MacGregor, Matthews and Gabelnick (2004), learning communities are an educational approach that clusters two or more courses around an interdisciplinary theme or problem that is studied by a common group of students. 'Learning communities', they argue, 'represent an intentional restructuring of students' time, credit, and learning experiences to build community, enhance learning and foster connections among students, faculty and disciplines. At their best, learning communities practise pedagogies of active

engagement and reflection ... [and often] integrate academic work with out-of-class experience' (p. 20). In expanding the term to its international dimension, I am inspired on the one hand by the tradition of undergraduate international education in the United States, especially the work of the anthropologist Ellen Skilton-Sylvester and her colleagues at Arcadia University who have been working successfully to open undergraduate educational requirements to include experiences in local, international and cross-cultural contexts (Skilton-Sylvester, 2010; Shultz, Skilton-Sylvester & Shultz, 2007). In addition, I draw on the critical and action-oriented work of those educational anthropologists who insist on the need to change our notions of citizenship education to reflect intercultural and international diversity and thus work towards more just and open notions of citizenship and belonging in the global context (Abu El-Haj, 2007, 2009; Levinson, 2005). Based on these interdisciplinary inspirations, I define international learning communities as a pedagogy of building learning spaces that foster a shared learning experience by culturally and internationally diverse groups of learners in the course of an interdisciplinary educational process that seeks to cultivate social solidarity, critical consciousness, sense of agency and participation toward engaged local and global citizenship. In our methodology, we are inspired by the long interdisciplinary tradition of participatory action research and the American school of engaged educational ethnography. Characterized by a diversity of schools and practices that Reason and Bradbury call 'family of approaches' (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p. xxii), we define participatory action research (PAR) as an approach that advances the potential of social research to support cultural and social change and people's emancipation through knowledge by bringing together social theory and practice, by blurring the boundaries between subjects and objects, by supporting participative methods of learning and social inquiry and by promoting social engagement and participation as integral elements of research and educational practice. As a fundamentally post-positivist approach, PAR presents a 'radical *epistemological challenge* to the traditions of social science, most critically on the topic of where knowledge resides' (Fine, 2008, p. 15).

Our work is also strongly grounded in the tradition of engaged educational ethnography (Cammarota, 2008; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Spindler, 1999, 2002; Trueba, 1993; Willis, 1977, 1981). We are particularly inspired by the work of those engaged educational anthropologists who have combined in their approach the anthropological method with PAR to motivate practical community-based emancipatory action (Abu El-Haj, 2007, 2009; Cammarota, 2008; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Guajardo, Guajardo & Casaperalta, 2008; Lipman, 2005; Trueba, 1993). In their work and in ours, the goal of the anthropological method and research is not the accumulation of ethnographic data by an academic anthropologist/ethnographer in order to produce an interpretation of the observed cultural reality. Instead, the anthropological method is understood as an engaged empirical field-based practice strongly grounded in critical observation, reflection and production, which is shared by a group of expert and non-expert researchers who use the knowledge gained in the process to act upon socio-cultural reality. The anthropological method is, therefore, a learning process which brings the researcher and the researched together in an empirical encounter that has a transformative and possible emancipatory potential.

The data for this article come from my work as an ethnographer, organizer, teacher and participant action-researcher during three sessions of an annual month-long international undergraduate summer program. During the three sessions (2008, 2009, 2010), I have closely worked with 43 American, Polish and Ukrainian students with

whom I have spent more than 250 hours in both formal and informal learning environments. I use both mine and my colleague's analysis of the primary material we have collected - both written (reflection papers, working session results, emails and on-line communication before and after the course), verbal (observations and recording of students' interactions) and non-verbal (ethnographic observations, recording and reflection on key moments in the ethnographic and action process). As is common in action-research projects, my role as a researcher has been blurred with that of the students' teacher and mentor on the one hand, and co-participant and practitioner on the other hand. Consequently, in this paper, I draw on my observations and analysis of the action-research process in which I was participating together with my colleague and my students.

Creating spaces of learning in the spaces of memory

The students…

Our project, which we have organized and participated in for three years now, is an international summer seminar for advanced undergraduate students mostly from the United States and Central Europe.[1] The program was born out of a co-operative agreement between an institute which I founded at the private college where I work – The University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław-and a public university, The College of Brockport that is part of the SUNY system in the state of New York. Every July, a small group of 10-20 American and international students come together in Wrocław for one month to take part in an intensive learning program for which they receive up to 6 credits at their home institutions. Students usually are at junior or senior levels (even though it is not unusual for us to have freshmen and exceptionally also graduate participants) and they frequently come from one of the SUNY honors programs. Many of the students have never been abroad before, an overwhelming majority had no knowledge of Poland before coming on the program and they usually have no foreign language skills. They are accompanied by a faculty member from Brockport who does not take an active teaching role. Students live together in a college dormitory, but must be self-reliant in terms of food, moving around the city by public transportation and in all daily extra-curricular activities or needs. Wrocław is a lively historic city of over 650,000 inhabitants and a learning center with 23 academic institutions and 135,000 students during the school year. That means, there is a lively entertainment environment and there are usually several international festivals or events that coincide with the summer course. Outside of the classroom time, students, who usually come from smaller urban or rural communities in the US, take an active part in the life of this large European urban hub.

The city…

A key feature of the city which is the setting for our program and which we have come to call an *urban laboratory* is tied to its unusual heritage. Apart from its multicultural traditions in its 1,000-year history, the city has been governed and settled by different nations, e.g. Polish, Czech, Austrian and German. Wrocław in the post-war years underwent a total population change. Due to the post-war settlements in Yalta and Potsdam, German Breslau became overnight Polish Wrocław as a result of the redrafting of the European map and the marking of the infamous Oder-Neisse line. This geo-political act has produced enormous human suffering that involved the mass

displacement and ethnic cleansing of peoples of different nations and ethnic origins. As the largest city in the territories acquired by Poland through the Westward shifting of its borders, Wrocław has become a particularly highly charged setting, a center of official propaganda whose goal was to erase the German past and replace it through a program of Polonization (Davies & Moorhouse, 2002; Siebel-Achenbach, 1994; Stern, 2006; Thum, 2003a, 2003b).

The outcomes of WWII are perceivable in Wrocław to the present day. Modern Wrocław is trying to figure out its own narrative, breaking the moulds of the Communist period's view of its history, including an awkward openness to its German past. In a somewhat ironic twist (not uncommon in Central Europe), the politically driven containment of the communist period has been replaced by a market-driven discourse of containment that builds on the literalism of multiculturalism (Thum, 2005). In this new discourse of containment, today's almost exclusively Polish Wroclaw is being portrayed as a multi-cultural metropolis of the Polish borderlands. The language of multicultural Wroclaw has acquired a life of its own, pervading official guidebooks, promotional materials and public and popular discourse.[2] Beyond literalisms, however, we find an overwhelmingly homogenous Catholic, white Polish community which is only now slightly becoming to any extent multicultural through 'expats' moving to the city on mostly temporary assignments as a part of foreign investment schemes.

The pedagogical program

It is in this context that our program takes place. Against the various finite discourses of multicultural city and simplified interpretations of its German and Polish legacies, we run a project that builds on an understanding of Wroclaw as a changing organism constantly created and re-created through urban practices, in which we as educators should take an active part (Certeau, 1984; Cervinkova, 2006; Hayden, 1999). Striving against a simplified discourse of multiculturalism, we work within this urban space, digging through the layers of the past and its various interpretations, to lead students to an informed and complex understanding of cultural and historic processes at play in the making of the city.

In the course of the seminar, we pass, together with our students, through several stages of learning, which all build on the development of emancipatory and critical faculties through the nurturing of ethnographic competencies with their emphasis on seeing and text production. Each year, we tailor a unique calendar of classes and working sessions focused on a selected area of the city - known as the research area - and built around a series of meetings with a triad of stakeholders tied to this urban space. In this syllabus-building phase, an important part of our work as teachers is the preparatory work with our stakeholders - academics and experts, local authorities and active residents who are all tied to the research area. The goal is to define the focus and potential of their work and knowledge for our ethnographic learning sessions. In some ways we are involved in the initiation of a dialogue with individuals who become the future lecturers for our students, a dialogue which involves a great deal of cultural translating, which we continue to carry on throughout the course of the seminar. In the following section, I will describe our pedagogical program which is grounded in engaged educational ethnography and participatory action research:

1. The actual seminar begins with a strong initial 'into-the-deep-end' session, which takes place in a highly symbolic and monumental urban site - the UNESCO listed Modernist masterpiece, Centennial Hall. Students, who have no previous knowledge of the significance or meaning of this overwhelming space, are asked to make individual

observations, which they later 'download' collectively in the classroom setting. Then we, as teachers, through lectures with a strong visual element, place Centennial Hall within the larger context of the history and current debates over the meaning of the material culture of Wroclaw's spaces. The experiential site visit together with the subsequent visually strong presentations and intertwined with historic knowledge produce an effect that educational anthropologists have come to call cultural therapy (Spindler, 1999, 2002; Trueba, 1993; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). Spindler argued that through ethnographic observation, one could penetrate the unconscious assumptions of culture (illusions) that falsify the cultural reality behind them. Educational ethnographers can use critical insight to help students uncover layers of false perceptions in order to arrive at their true expectations for themselves. The effect of our cultural therapy is two-fold:

1. On the one hand, students realize that the apparently Polish urban spaces are morphed material remains of, broadly speaking, German culture. In connection with the historical knowledge about post-war settlements and population transfers, (lecture material and assigned academic texts) this realization inevitably produces a shock effect not dissimilar to the dialectic 'flash' described so eloquently by Walter Benjamin (1968). As I have argued elsewhere, it is such moments of intellectual reflection evoked by the material remains of the past that produce strong learning effects (Cervinkova, 2006).
2. The students are made aware of the power of observation and the need to see. By seeing we mean the critical ability to penetrate illusions consisting of omissions and erasures of histories. Seeing is thus tied to memory, and the act of bringing to consciousness elements of the forgotten past.

2. The next phase of our work is the launching of the cultural production process (Willis, 1981; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Cammarota, 2008). At this stage, students are informed that they are going to receive an official tour of their research area, which will be the focus of their action and cultural production work, i.e. the creation of a self-guided tour for future tourists. They are then guided through the pre-selected research area by a representative of the official national tourist organization that monopolizes the Polish tourist guide market. Similarly to the first cultural therapy session in Centennial Hall, we do not prepare students for the experience. Likewise, the tour guide is completely unaware that our students are not just regular tourists.

Having taught the course for over three years, we are able to observe a pattern of behavior among our students, who begin the tour passionately taking notes trying desperately to keep up with the flood of historic dates, facts and disjointed information delivered in poor English, only to later become bored, disinterested drifters who are no longer able to process the applicability of the information to their assignment of creating their own tourist program. The subsequent working session consists of group work creating a collective SWOT analysis defining the strengths and weaknesses of the tour as well as the opportunities and threats of the research area. We observe students suddenly emboldened or empowered by their ability to critically analyze their tourist experience and the realization of the existence of an information gap that they suddenly realize they can fill through their own ethnographic research and cultural products. This observation is consistent with the experienced effects of cultural production defined by Willis (1977, 1981) and other theorists who claim that 'through the production of cultural forms...subjectivities form and agency develops' (Levinson & Holland, 1996, p. 14).

3. During the next two and a half weeks, the heart of the research seminar, students launch their own dialogues through meetings with representatives of our triad of

stakeholders. At this stage, my colleague and I become active learners vis-à-vis the stakeholders who are the sources of information about the research area, but we are also very active in helping to translate these sessions for the students - both linguistically (from Polish into English) and also culturally (discussing with students what they have learned, helping them identify key issues). Our focus on forging a learning process through dialogic exchange rather than one of directional inquiry comes from our effort to build our strategy on a dialogic cooperative approach, which deconstructs the borderlines between subjects and objects of research in the construction of knowledge (Freire, 1993; Fals-Borda, 2001; Reason & Bradbury, 2006).

4. Approximately half way through the seminar, we begin to work with the students in a concentrated working session focused on the production of the final cultural product. An essential conceptual element of this work is our highly intentional insistence on the layered collective nature of students work. Both American and Polish students come into the classroom with strong individualistic competitive tendencies. This became clear to us in the first year of our seminar when we divided our participants into two independent groups researching two different areas of the city. The members of the groups soon developed a strong rivalry, which we felt was detrimental to the democratic pedagogical process we were trying to forge, the outcome of which among other things is a strengthened potential for social solidarity and a learning community. Therefore, since then we make sure to pay attention to the development of healthy group dynamics which strengthens students' collaborative skills without compromising their individual creativity and drive to achieve excellence.

In this atmosphere of collective production, students decide on a path, which is the backbone of their self-guided tours and they negotiate the main theme reflected in the title of the tour as well as the meaning and importance of individual stops on the way. They divide themselves into smaller working groups in which they write segments of the tour and they also take pictures and prepare illustrations. Every stage of the production process is guided by us as teachers and mentors, but the content is collectively negotiated and decided upon by the students. The product of our collective effort is a branded local product called *Wroclaw self-guided tours: international students' projects in Wroclaw*, which is distributed as promotional material by public sector institutions, but is also sold at break-even prices at the local tourist information offices. We have created a website where the project is presented and guides can be accessed for online reading in animation formats or for free-of-charge downloads of the PDF versions - www.wroclawonyourown.pl. So far, we have four areas of the city covered in this unique way, and each year we add a new guide to the collection.

5. A key element providing closure to our pedagogical process are student presentations delivered in the city hall and open to the public and the media. These formal stagings are followed by student-led tours through their research area. This highly performative element of the seminar provides a further opportunity for students to present their different skills and become engaged and emotionally involved which significantly increases the chances for learning (Cammarota, 2008; Higgins, 2001; Pedelty, 2001). Because of the presentations' collective and public nature, the students' performances further foster their collaborative and mutual support skills and at the same time, strengthen their social and intellectual development. Perhaps most importantly, however, through this final act of performance, students transform the once foreign reality into their own world (the city - once foreign and strange, becomes 'theirs' through knowledge they have processed in the course of action ethnographic work). Through the collective processing of knowledge and its expression through performance, they become empowered intercultural agents in a fieldwork context. The

work that they leave behind has the potential to transform the tourist experience for future visitors to this Central European city. Because of its public visibility and exposure, their work can also challenge accepted versions of local identity narratives.

International communities of learning

Students, after the completion of the seminar, claim to have been changed by the experience. Tied to this 'home-away-from-home' albeit temporary and due to the intensive experience and knowledge acquired, they learn from the local urban space in which they are submerged to see differently. They also learn from each other. Importantly, as one can infer from the comments they make during their stay and in their reflection papers written later, students (turned anthropologists) become involved in acts of cultural critique (Marcus & Fischer, 1986), moving dialogically between their home and the foreign culture, extending the life of what they have learned while in the learning community to so that it has an impact in time and space.

Anna, one of the American students, for example, used the language of affection to express the core of her learning experience: '[O]ver the course of my recent one-month stay in Wrocław, Poland, I fell in love. I have never had this feeling toward Rochester – the city I grew up in.' In an effort to find the reasons for this surprising realization, she identifies two causes - first-hand contact with material history and knowledge learned:

> One reason for this is the notion of material history. ... It is the touchable aspects of the past that help people remember and connect with history. Although material history is only the stepping stone to understanding, one must also gather at least some kind of knowledge of the surroundings and be able to interpret what they see around them. During my stay in Wrocław I attended many lectures about Wrocław's past. Starting with the creation of the city, I learned about how often the power of the city changed hands between nations. By studying the historical creation of the city, one begins to understand why the city is laid out as it is, refuting the understanding that it is not only a chaos of buildings but that it actually follows a precise, creative pattern.

And in the conclusion, she returns to the theme of emotions and love, which she eloquently connects to learning and seeing:

> I have lived in Rochester my entire life and yet I do not feel 'tied' to this city as deeply as I felt after spending a month in Wrocław, Poland. By having this experience, not only did I learn a lot about the city of Wrocław, but I also learned a lot about myself. Since returning home, I have been about to have a better understanding and deeper respect of my heritage, of which (sic) I am of Polish descent, and the struggles that my ancestors went through. This experience has opened my eyes to a world I was living in but not actually seeing. (Anna[3], American student, August 2010)

Anna's emphasis on seeing evoked through emotions and learning is an important reflection on our method in which we emphasize the importance of ethnographic vision as a powerful, highly localized, and radically partial perspective, and a source of knowledge that can, in turn, serve as a means of empowerment (Harding,1987; Harraway, 1998; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Such understanding of knowledge makes it the subject of learning for all parties involved in the research experience, which involves cycles of reflection, critique and joint action toward social change. This cycle is of course common in the tradition of participatory action research (Fals-Borda, 2001; McTaggart, 1997). By learning to see the material world around them through

knowledge and transformative action, students can acquire essential critical faculties that extend the effects of the learning community, formed in Wroclaw, to their life back home - turning them, as we may only hope, into more engaged local and global citizens.

During the course of their learning experience, students also learn from each other and their learning community. This aspect has been brought up by John who became known for his long Proustian explorations of the city, usually in the company of other students that he had invited:

> Nearly every night I would explore the city, with or without company. ... Why do I think it is necessary to explore? I argue that it is important not only to explore and seek the unknown in any given environment, but to bring those who are close to you with you.

Later in the paper, drawing on the work of Walter Benjamin (Arendt, 1968), he provides an explanation of the connection between the community-building character of his wanderings and individual and collective memory:

> While having great times and experiencing lots is important, it is equally important to remember what you have seen. Benjamin states in his book *Illuminations* that 'an experienced event is finite - at any rate, confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite, because it is only a key to everything that happened before it and after it.' It is for this reason that I thought it was important to share my explorations with other people. While a camera can capture most things visually, but sharing the explorations, I was able to possess my own personal memories and also listen to and share in the group's collective memory. This allowed me to remember more things from each trip. Additionally, there are many things that a camera cannot capture such as sounds, feelings and emotions. For these things, other people are needed. ... One benefit of the program in Poland was that everyone, even those who normally wouldn't be adventurers, was forced to explore the environment around them. This meant that everyone in the group had similarities which bonded us together.

In his reflection, John brings out the interplay between collective memory and the community-grounded character of learning. Remembering through collective memory strengthens our learners' capacity to extend the local character of their learning community to its international and global dimension. In addition, of course, the work that these mostly American students leave behind impacts on future visitors' reading of the Central European city and influences local narratives of history long after the students have returned home or travelled to other places in the world. As such, the international learning community - a democratic space of learning produced through a pedagogical process, is our response as educators to the challenges of community and adult education in the globalizing world.

Conclusions

Recent anthropological and educational research points to the inadequacy of traditional citizenship education to respond to the challenges faced by people and communities in the context of the geopolitical complexities and conflicts under the processes of globalization. In her recent ethnographic work with Arab-American youth, for example, anthropologist Thea Abu El-Haj shows the multiple levels of exclusion experienced by Arab-Americans following the September 11 attacks on the World-Trade Centre (and the ensuing War on Terror) and the failure of the school-based citizenship education to nurture a sense of belonging and inclusion in this community of American citizens. She

points to the need to develop new forms of critical citizenship education and civic participation that challenges 'universal, abstract notions of citizenship that focus on legal status, and instead foreground the different ways that people are positioned in relation to the resources necessary for full participation in the social, political, and economic spheres' (Abu El-Haj, 2007, p. 310).

The tradition of critical global and international education actively seeks to respond to these global challenges by creating opportunities for students to experience and critically reflect on global realities by exploring local contexts (Skilton-Sylvester, 2010; Shultz, Skilton-Sylvester & Shultz, 2007). Our pedagogical project presented in this paper - international learning communities - is an example of such educational practice. Because of its methodological framing based on participatory action research and engaged educational ethnography, it nurtures not only critical but also activist and engaged faculties among young adult learners. As such, international learning communities - a pedagogy of building learning spaces that foster shared learning experiences by culturally and internationally diverse groups of learners - helps to cultivate social solidarity, critical consciousness, a sense of agency and participation toward engaged local and global citizenship.

Theorists of globalization point out the intersectional (Appadurai, 1996) or even frictional (Tsing, 2004) character of current cultural processes in the world. Under globalization, we can hardly continue pretending that cultures are neatly packaged products of isolated processes. Cultures, identities and communities are continuously produced in spaces and moments of cross-cultural and long-distance encounters - be they flowing or frictional: 'Cultures are continually co-produced in the interactions I call 'friction': the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference' (Tsing, 2004, p. 2). To be effective, a legitimate approach to adult and community education should take into account this interactional character of cultural processes. An international learning community is a proposition for conceptualizing the role for community education in a world defined in terms of cross-cultural and long-distance encounters in the formation of culture. It is a proposition that builds on the continued relevance of critical community and action-inspired pedagogy, strongly grounded in local work and aimed at helping people learn and act in an increasingly disempowering world, regardless of their culture of origin or that of their current or future residence.

Notes

[1] The ethnographic section of the present article was in part co-written by my colleague and fellow teacher Juliet Golden and presented at the biennial convention of the European Association of Social Anthropologists held at Maynooth, Ireland (August 24 - 27, 2010).

[2] See, for example, the official English-language web page of the Municipality of Wrocław, called, 'Multicultural Metropolis', at http://www.um.wroc.pl/m6850/.

[3] I have changed the students' names for reasons of anonymity.

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Diverse views on citizenship, community and participation: Exploring the role of adult education research and practice

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Abstract

In this article, we look at three photographs that each (re)present a space of citizenship and community. In examining each photo, we question our assumptions about adult education and community building practices. In each of the three cases, we adopt the same approach. We start by focusing on a particular place where present-day citizenship nowadays takes shape and observing what is to be seen at this location. This observation forces us to view that particular place in sharp focus and to direct our attention to the specific citizenship practice emerging there. This is an exercise in paying attention, which helps us to take notice of the singular way in which citizenship and community play a role in that particular context. In line with this, we also formulate some critical observations regarding a number of mainstream concepts in policy discourse such as social cohesion, active citizenship, lifelong learning, etc. These terms often represent programmes that close off the space in which an original contribution to adult education can be developed rather than opening it up. In analyzing these three images, we do not aim to construct a fully-fledged theoretical framework nor to develop a method. Rather, we wish to open the possibility of seeing things differently and altering our way of thinking.

Keywords: civic education; community; participatory citizen; relational citizen; indefinite citizen

This article addresses citizenship, community building and democracy in a transforming society. It explores conventional and new ways of conceptualizing these concepts and

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their relationship to adult education practices. This exploration seems relevant because the way in which these concepts have so far been framed suffers from a number of limitations. The language we are used to fails to capture the transformations of concepts and practices of citizenship today and, accordingly, of community building and of democratic practices. Citizenship was long associated with some form of stability and with well defined geographical/cultural boundaries. A citizen was defined as someone belonging to a more or less cohesive community, mostly a nation-state, which imposed different kinds of rights and duties on its members. From this perspective, representative democracy was a major principle of citizen participation. Today, these boundaries are blurring and the question of membership of a community is gaining urgency. New practices and concepts relating to social cohesion and civic participation are emerging. Direct democracy is being promoted, while governance is said to be replacing government. The citizen is expected to become an active participant, not only in policy matters, but also in different everyday contexts. In the face of these transformations, adult education is trying to redefine its perspectives. It is engaged in the debate on the membership of communities and on new forms of participation. It is exploring ways to educate and train people in taking up new roles and responsibilities and is experimenting with new forms of community building. Against this background, it is important to question the ways in which we define citizenship, community and democratic participation.

In this paper, we engage in such an exercise. It is not yet entirely clear where we are headed. Yet, we think the exercise in itself is important. In embarking on this venture, we make use of three photographs. In selecting these photos, we were guided by an interpretation of what they represented, i.e. three different discourses on citizenship education. This included a focus on the participation of citizens in policy making (photograph1), on the development of social cohesion (photograph 2) and on the importance of urban togetherness (photograph 3). We hoped that close analysis of these photographs would allow us to present thematically the way in which researchers and practitioners try to make sense of the practices depicted in these photos and set the scene for what we usually say and do in relation to current policy discourses on citizenship. However, when engaging in this exercise we began to realize that our descriptions of the photos were saturated with implicit meanings, which saturation prevented us from exploring new ways of (re)presenting citizenship, community building and democratic participation. We therefore decided to radically change direction and interrogate our classical ways of 'looking' and 'interpreting'.

We decided to leave our preconceived notions behind and to start from a systematic description of what we see on these three photos, thereby halting references to practices and ideas situated outside these three pictures. We chose to view each photograph as 'a space', a social gathering of bodies positioned in different ways. This new way of looking at the pictures was influenced by the phenomenological approach to place developed by the philosopher Edward Casey (1996), who highlights two essential structures that pervade places; 'first, the centrality of the experiencing body to place; second, its ability to draw together bodies and things' (Casey in Pink, 2008, p. 166). In line with this, we consider citizenship as a place-making practice and look at this double process of gathering and embodied engaging within the three photos. We became increasingly convinced of the relevance of this new approach, because in present-day society citizenship manifests itself in a wide range of practices and in diverse places, locally, nationally and supra-nationally (Sassen, 2002, 2003a, 2003b). This persuaded us to pay more attention to citizenship in connection with places, bodies and things, and to how these are positioned in relation to each other.

Clearly, this focus on citizenship as an emplaced and embodied practice requires us to carefully consider the particularity of situation depicted. Likewise, Rose (2008) points to photos made in the context of human geography.

> Some geographers (…) use photos neither as taken-for-granted illustrations, nor as problematic representations. Instead, they work in the tension between these two approaches to photography. They acknowledge that photos are indeed riddled with representation but that they nevertheless still can carry a powerful descriptive charge (Rose, 2008, p. 155).

Such an approach encourages us to look at what there is to see and to pay close attention to the picture. It is an invitation to do what Hansen (2007) describes as 'seeing with the body' as opposed to 'seeing as a mechanism'. In our everyday lives, we tend to look at the world in a mechanical way, i.e. from the perspective of a preconceived theory or policy discourse, thereby only seeing what we expect to see. In contrast, 'seeing with the body' demands conscious attention, as we try not to pin down the moment of looking and to make sense of things beyond our narrow frame of reference. 'Seeing with the body' means relating oneself as a researcher to what is to be seen and challenging one's own thoughts and one's own way of living (Masschelein, 2008). It points to the experience of seeing the familiar in unfamiliar ways.

Looking at the three photos from this perspective proved an uncomfortable experience, as it disrupted or suspended our taken-for-granted understandings (Masschelein, 2006; Thompson, 2010). Recently, Burdick and Sandlin (2010) argued in favour of what they describe as a 'methodology of discomfort', i.e. a methodology that is attentive to the irreducible 'otherness' of many of the spaces and sites of citizenship practices taking place outside the walls of formal educational institutions. By focusing on citizenship as an emplaced practice, we also try to invert our thinking about the community that may appear in the three spaces. While many authors may emphasize different aspects of the changing way in which we inhabit the world together, many analyses seem to lead to the conclusion that community life is currently disintegrating. Authors such as Putnam (2000) or Etzioni (2000) depart from a particular concept of community that, according to them, is being lost. In opposition to that concept, they emphasize the revival of community in terms of strong social bonds between people and bridges between communities. Indeed community seems to be something that we can know, that we can build and that can be mobilized to undertake collective projects. By focusing on citizenship as a placemaking practice, and starting from close analysis of the three photos , we want to subvert this 'appealing imagery of community' (Brint, 2001, p. 1). We challenge this imagery by looking at concrete things and situations from a particular perspective. This approach is inspired by, amongst others, the French philosopher Nancy (1983, 1996, 2001), who rethinks our being-together-with-others in terms of concrete observable things. In discussing Nancy's work, Devisch calls this 'a witnessing of the world "as such": that is to say, the world here and now in which we are living in common' (Devisch, 2002, p. 385). Such an attentive attitude can challenge our conventional thinking and encourage us to search for the proper words with which to sketch the outlines of another way of thinking about citizenship and community education.

First photograph: 'the participating citizen'

Figure 1. Cultuurraad Geraardsbergen [Untitled Photograph] From *Wissels: Handboek sociaal-cultureel werken met volwassenen* (p. 486), by F. Cockx, H. De Blende, G. Gehre, G. Van den Eeckhaut and G. Verschelden (Eds.), 2011, Brussels: SoCiuS. Permission to use the picture from Cultuurraad Geraardsbergen.

The people in the first picture are members of a cultural council in a Flemish town in Belgium. This photograph visualizes a first important practice of citizenship. It refers to those practices and places in which citizens can participate in and contribute to local – or possibly regional or Flemish – policy-making on diverse issues. This photo refers to a long tradition of conceptualizing citizenship in terms of rights and duties. In this tradition, each citizen must be treated as equal and is therefore entitled to equal fundamental rights. A prominent advocate of this view was Marshall, demonstrated how citizen rights expanded between the 18th and the 20th century. In the 18th century, civil rights offered citizens a minimum of protection, by ensuring the right to a fair trial, for instance. Similarly, the right to property and the right to privacy enabled citizens to build their own lives. In addition to civil rights, adults also gained political rights in the 19th century, entitling them, for instance, to participate in political decision-making by voting in elections, or to establish or join a political party. In the 20th century, finally, social rights, such as the right to education and health care were introduced to support citizens in developing their own lives. This movement towards establishing universal rights is based on the conviction that the nation state is powerful enough to uphold these promises of citizenship in all spheres of society. In addition to rights, citizenship, as conceived in this tradition, also involves duties. Citizens are expected to be involved in the community. This ranges from abiding by the law over paying taxes or participating in elections to engagement in society and participation in government. This photograph of the cultural council refers to an important recent development in citizens' political rights and duties. In diverse fields, such as urban planning, mobility, culture, or the environment, the government acknowledges that it is not the sole actor in ensuring good governance and that citizens are important partners. Various concepts are used to describe this change: participatory decision-making, interactive policy-making, co-production of government, participatory budgeting etc. Despite the difference in terminology, the same movement is involved: citizens are expected and even obliged to be involved, to participate, and to be informed on both local and global issues relating to

environment and society. This first image of citizenship therefore focuses on citizens' contributions to various policy-making forums. Traditionally, adult education has played a central role and considerable efforts have been done to support citizens in 'voicing a well-informed opinion', 'being/ remaining involved', 'undertaking critical reflection and action' etc. The main assumption underlying adult education initiatives is the need to encourage the development of a vibrant and broad-based civil society in which citizens can attribute personal significance to their environment and take action accordingly. Adult educators support people in their efforts to articulate social issues and encourage them to explore the means, meanings and values with which they can address these issues as citizens. Within the context of these practices, civic education is not a separate educational practice that prescribes a top-down curriculum but is a process in which individual learning is inextricably linked to group or community practices in groups.

As researchers, we have tried to understand the educational dynamics underlying these practices as a process of social learning (Wildemeersch, Jansen, Vandenabeele & Jans, 1998; Wals, 2007). This is a type of civic education that is driven by the desires and the abilities of the people involved while engaging with the social issues that affect them. In this learning process, social problems are articulated and interpreted, and projects for a 'better' society are conceived and tested. Increasingly, however, we were influenced by governmentality theorists who, drawing on the insights of Foucault, have shown that many of these participatory practices are part of a range of new technologies of persuasion, normalisation, and inclusion (Rose, 1996; Dean, 1999; Quaghebeur, 2006). According to these theorists, the 'hidden agenda' of such participatory practices is that they actually teach the participants to define themselves as self-directed agents in an 'active society'. Adult education practitioners frequently adopt this specific, dominant activation discourse, which assumes that people should first learn certain participatory skills before they are entitled to speak and act as citizens. In this view, acquiring particular concepts, insights and skills is a prerequisite for participation in democratic practices. Drawing on Lingis (1994), we can describe this particular way of knowing and acting as taking part in a 'rational community'. Within a rational community, the established principles and practices proper to a particular community are regarded as the ultimate standard. These principles and practices, ratified by experts, guide changes and serve as a standard for (political) decisions about the organization of society. The call for participation therefore usually entails that citizens adopt this 'rational' discourse. In other words, citizens must first adapt before they are allowed to participate (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). Adult education practitioners induce participants to conform to this activation discourse, which assumes that the 'competences' of a good citizen can be deduced from the principles of the rational community. In our western context, this discourse is strongly rooted in Enlightenment ideas. The main problem of such a discourse is that it establishes a norm of what it means to be a human being/citizen and that, without much discussion, it excludes many people from ever meeting this norm (Biesta, 2006). This discourse of the rational community – in which … the experts of the rational community is therefore incompatible with the discourse of democracy, have the final say.

If we look at the photograph and at the way things and people are depicted we become aware of particular rules governing the appearance of the people pictured. We see seven men and four women sitting in front of a painting with an ornate, gilded frame. The people in the picture are posing for the photographer. The canvas framing the painting as well as the people standing next to each other symbolizes what Rancière (2007/1992) calls a particular sensibility that ensures the self-evidence of the cultural

council as a policy institution. We are seeing a social arrangement where images and bodies appear in a particular juxtaposition and circulation. The seven men and four women in this photograph are all aware of being photographed and are looking directly at the camera. They are entitled to do so as members of a formally organized participatory council of citizens living in the same village or city. But the normative space within this photo also shows something of what Rancière (2007/1992) calls the dissonant blur of the everyday. Some persons in the photo keep their hands at their sides or folded elegantly on their knees; others stand with their hands in their pockets. Only one man is wearing a suit; the others are only wearing sweaters or shirts. These small details in the appearance of citizens generate a paradoxical space where a citizen can present herself as someone who is a member of the rational community while *not* sharing the particular features of that community. In this sense, she is a stranger characterized by an 'improper appearance'. And, in line with Rancière (2007/1992), we suggest that it is actually this 'improper appearance' that constitutes democratic citizenship per se (Panagia, 2009). Members of a cultural council do not need to gain equal status by proving their competence to experts and politicians. The council's democratic legitimacy does not derive from its members' ability to act in accordance with the principles and norms of the rational community. council Rather, it is based on the act of raising one's voice. And it is exactly this act that confirms the central democratic assumption that 'all intelligence is equal'. Or, as argued by Simons and Masschelein (2010), democracy is rooted in the entitlement of those who are unqualified or incompetent with regard to the particular social arrangements at stake. Democratic equality begins with an act of impropriety.

It is this basic assumption of equality that should encourage citizens to take themselves and others seriously. For years, we were involved as researchers in various experiments related to the debate on bio-technology. Focus groups and citizen-juries provided a forum for reasoned discussion of choices relating to technology. Participants compared the dominant view on technology to a high-speed train speeding out of control with failing brakes. A different image of technology emerged from these experiments, i.e. one of a normally functioning train with different passengers on board, with regular stops and changeovers. In this system, it is possible to close or to build railway lines and to carry out maintenance work on rail track beds. Within such a space, scientific knowledge is no longer the only source of legitimacy. Scientists contribute to a debate in which cognitive and value-driven arguments proposed by other participants are also taken into account. People involved in an issue at a practical level – for instance, farmers growing transgenic crops, consumers familiar with a particular product, parents of a child with a specific hereditary disease – can contribute their experiences. The issue is addressed from various angles and alternative solutions can be proposed. Scientists question their knowledge in the light of the arguments advanced by non-scientists. Representatives of various interest groups can no longer hold such a debate in stark black-and-white terms. The focus of the debate shifts from the exact size of risks and effects to issues such as quality of life, since every participant is encouraged to articulate her underlying views and concerns.

Such experiments open up a space in which citizenship can develop on the basis of the recognition that people engage in action and discussion whenever they feel that the question of values in society is at stake. Such experiments also challenge dominant views of citizenship and democracy: instead of 'learning to prepare for participation', learning 'is' participation (Wildemeersch & Berkers, 1997). Hence, adult education practices have a role to play in the 'disruption' of the rational community and the transformation of the legal principle of equality between citizens into a more

fundamental principle of equality guiding adult education practices. In such cases, adult education practitioners try to maintain an educational dynamic that is driven by the desires and the critical questions of the people involved, while encouraging debates and actions that may enhance the quality of our lives. The starting point is neither certainty nor clear knowledge on how practitioners should help participants develop a specific set of knowledge, skills and attitudes, thus promoting participation and citizenship. The focus is no longer on the conditions that participatory citizens must meet, but on the nature of the spaces and practices in which participation and citizenship can develop. From this perspective, the question of what it means to be a citizen is a radically open question, which can only be addressed by engaging in educational practices rather than by defining the answers before the practice has even started (Biesta, 2006). Increasingly, we are realizing that different rationalities could be inspirational in practice. The essential question is no longer how we can rationally control the social and natural world, but rather how we can also share this world in a responsible and meaningful way. Adult education practitioners therefore encourage citizens to raise questions or take initiatives related to matters that affect them (Biesta, 2006).

The second photograph: 'the relational citizen'

Figure 2. Natuurpunt Zemst [Untitled Photograph] From *Wissels: Handboek sociaal-cultureel werken met volwassenen* (p. 493), by F. Cockx, H. De Blende, G. Gehre, G. Van den Eeckhaut and G. Verschelden (Eds.), 2011, Brussels: SoCiuS. Permission to use the picture from Natuurpunt Zemst.

The second photograph depicts a joint activity. Six individuals can be distinguished, working outside, at the edge of a plot of land. It is not immediately clear what they are doing. One person, wearing a cap, seems to be drilling a hole. Someone else is using a shovel. In the background, somebody seems to be mowing the long grass. Possibly, they are placing a fence, planting trees, or doing maintenance work. The second photograph evokes a view of citizenship often shared by adult educators. In this view, citizenship emerges from 'a community of practice' or from the joint undertaking of activities. In this perspective, the development of strong 'bonds' and 'bridges' with others is very important. A citizen only acquires citizenship status through her loyalty and contributions to such communities of practice. Each citizen is even expected to ensure that this strong sense of community can continue to develop (Tonkens & Kroese, 2008). In this way, people also express shared values and views, related for instance to the

environment and nature as is the case in this photograph. Such shared activities and values also reflect a strong commitment to the world out there. People feel responsible and undertake action. Examples include campaigns for greater road safety, community response to a natural disaster, campaigns to save local heritage, demonstrations protesting against or demanding the closure of a plant, third world solidarity initiatives etc. The spaces highlighted by the second image do not refer to the formal participation structures suggested by the first image but are structured and made meaningful through everyday practices undertaken together with others. This is illustrated in the second image - a meadow close to a wood is turned into a space where people collaborate to safeguard nature. However, in presenting this second image, we do not wish to indulge in nostalgia for a purportedly long-lost sense of community. Such a feeling of nostalgia is often at the basis of policy-makers' attempts to strengthen social cohesion by encouraging regular contacts between citizens. According to communitarian social scientists such as Putnam (2000), this activation of social relations, constitutes an investment into the social capital of a community, by increasing trust, solidarity and openness towards each other. And, according to Putnam (2000), this is 'the glue that holds society together'.

However, this photograph also suggests an alternative reading, which keeps options open and does not immediately impose particular policy objectives. When looking at the picture in a different way, we see six people who are not as close together as in the first photograph. They are literally standing apart and are not looking at the camera or posing. They are drilling or digging holes. Perhaps they are also pruning, weeding, mowing, planting, toiling and sweating. They are next to each other, facing each other, each doing something in their own way. They give or follow instructions, they disagree, negotiate or give in. What we see is a space where spontaneous conversations can arise. These conversations are always unfinished, never achieving closure. When different voices interact, this opens up the possibility of moving and changing. The current discourse on the learning society and lifelong learning, however, acts as an impediment to this (Vandenabeele & Wildemeersch, 2010). This discourse has become so dominant in our society that adult education practitioners tend to derive their identity from it. Just like the discourse on social cohesion, it is a way of speaking and acting which, 'highly efficiently and apparently democratically, closes off the time and space in which the logic underlying this discourse can be questioned' (Masschelein, 2001, p. 129). Within this discourse, there is little or no space for any learning that is not useful, necessary, rewarding, and pleasant within the existing set-up of society. The importance, yet at the same time the difficulty, of preserving the openness of this space of conversation and mutual commitment is well articulated in the study conducted by Pols (2006). Pols investigated the way in which psychiatric nurses and psychiatric patients interact during everyday activities such as the washing of the patient. While this context is not really related to the practice of adult education, the focus of the research, namely the specific interactions engaged in by professionals, is highly similar to the work of adult educators.

Pols' contribution is interesting because she explores daily interactions as sources of 'living or lived citizenship' (Trienekens, 2004) and thus interprets citizenship as a process that is shaped in very ordinary practices such as the washing ritual. Pols distinguishes four registers of citizenship, including 'relational citizenship'. In the first three registers, Pols (2006) argues, nursing staff act and speak from the perspective of the individual and autonomous citizen, which means that the relationship is informed by a specific ideal. In the first register, nursing staff focus on patients' likes and dislikes, interests and preferences in order to support each person's authentic self. While talking

to patients, nurses mainly try to discover their personal needs and preferences as they are convinced that this self-knowledge will empower the patients. If a patient were to decide not to wash, this would be tolerated to a certain extent, but at the same time there is a clear rule stating that nursing staff is allowed to intervene if this is causing a nuisance to others. In the second register nurses focus on the acquisition of skills and competences, as washing is a basic skill that everyone should learn. Being dirty is simply not acceptable, so nursing staff devote considerable effort to instructions and assessment, as they are convinced that they are fostering the patients' independence. The third register focuses on the active citizen or the extent to which patients engage in their own projects, such as travelling, working, creating art etc. Patients who succeed in pursuing a life project are regarded as making a valuable contribution to society, and the act of washing becomes significant within this context.

Pols (2006) observes that some of the nurses use a fourth register that is different from the previous three. There is no ideal to be pursued, except the willingness to engage in conversation and to experience a sense of living together in an everyday activity such as washing. In this register, unlike in the other three, the nurses' approach is also at stake, because the staff-patient relationship is not simply the outcome of a properly applied method. The nurse enters the room, which feels like an undetermined, 'open' space that is not immediately filled with planned actions and ideals. In this indeterminate space, people, things, relationships may have evolved from what they were before. Pols (2006) argues that the focus on washing as such opens up a space in which new actions and conversations are possible. This is what Pols (2006) calls a space in which existing norms and positions can be displaced. In this space, citizenship does not emerge from the intentional actions of autonomous individuals. Rather, it is the result of a mutual commitment which develops spontaneously. In the space that emerges, an opening for a new future is created (Agamben, 1999). What is crucial in these conversations is the shift from 'what' someone is saying to 'who' is saying it. 'What' someone is saying is important in the rational community, whose members share a common discourse. Everyone is expected to speak in accordance with the rules and principles of the rational discourse adopted by the community. Within these spontaneous conversations, in contrast, participants experience that each individual is involved in the world in their own particular way. The wide range of conversations and shared activities within adult education contain opportunities for opening up this space and emphasizing what we call 'relational citizenship'. Their potential is far-reaching. They enable citizens to bring something new into the world, i.e. their own, unique response.

Third photograph: 'the indefinite citizen'

The third photograph is a blurred image of people walking in a street. This image refers to a tradition in photography that visualizes urban life. It reminds one of images from the 1982 film Koyaanisqatsi (life in unbalance) by Godfrey Reggio and Philip Glass, in which cars and people dissolve in a blur of lights and lines. The origins of this tradition can even be traced back to the first photograph in which a (blurred) human figure appears, i.e. an image taken by Louis Daguerre in 1838 entitled *Boulevard du Temple* (Agamben, 2007). We use the third photo to refer to the way cities are depicted as places where we can dream and wonder about alternative worlds. Cities are places where we can invent alternative visions and ways of life. Traditionally, the way in which people live together in cities has been contrasted with the closed and homogeneous communities living in rural areas. In this dichotomy, cities stand for the liberation from oppression and the right to remake the world according to one's own

imagination and desires. For David Harvey (2003, p. 939) ‘the city is the historical site of creative destruction’. Another aspect of this contrast between urban and rural communities is that cities allow us to remain different. The city, then, is the place where we live among strangers. It is a malleable and fleeting collectivity where all can find their place. In this view, citizenship includes everyone present in public places and not just those who are official citizens (i.e. citizens allowed to participate).

Figure 3. The indefinite citizen. Source: Authors.

Ruth Soenen (2006, 2009) investigated everyday interactions in shops and on public transport. She describes these brief, incidental and unpredictable interactions as ephemeral encounters: people making small talk in shops, complaining about bus being late to other passengers waiting at the bus stop, smiling at an inquisitive toddler, scolding someone who jumps the check-in queue. The community emerging here is not a community shaped by daily, recurring relationships (relational citizenship). Rather, the encounters referred to are characterized by the absence of enduring bonds. These ephemeral encounters – typical of urban life may also inform educational practices. This means that adult educators should not only try to build strong ties between people, but should equally encourage educational practices in which ephemeral encounters are valued. One example of a practice that shows this focus on brief encounters is Permanent Breakfast[1], an ongoing art project accidentally developed in 1996, when a group of artists in Vienna decided to carry their breakfast table outside and have breakfast in the street (Derschmidt, Schneider & Hofbauer, 2009). The reactions they received from passers-by made them realize that, by placing a table in a square, a street, or a park, they were modifying this public place. This was an activity that bridged the public-private gap, giving participants the experience of ‘living in a public space’ or ‘a public living space’. The group decided to continue having breakfast in the street and to invite passers-by to join them. Gradually, a sort of pyramid game developed. The group started having breakfast in different public places in Vienna and inviting passers-by to join them. These breakfasts are free and carry no social or political agenda. The only requirement is that everyone who joins the group for breakfast should in turn organize such a public breakfast and invite others. This experiment was highly successful and spread to many countries. What is interesting from our perspective is what happens when people place a table in the public domain, have breakfast and invite others to join them. Their usual functioning in the public domain changes, and this disruption causes surprise, curiosity but also confusion.

A common reaction is that people say they have 'no time', often pointing at their watch as they hurry on. Some people even start walking faster when they notice the copious breakfast on the table. Even elderly people with children or people who return shortly afterwards react in this way. Apparently, this practice affects the way in which we experience time. Having breakfast in the street seems to halt time or at least the way in which we experience time, which many find problematic. Wasting time on something useless in the public sphere disrupts our routines. People feel uncomfortable if they think they are not spending their time usefully. Another common reaction is that people ask what the artists are selling or what organization they represent. When the artists explain that their initiative does not have any commercial purpose, nor contains a political message, people often become suspicious. They seem to assume that everyone has ulterior motives, that there is always a hidden agenda. Being invited to join a group of strangers for breakfast tends to arouse suspicion, because this subverts ordinary relationships between people. On some occasions, the organizers were even chased away: in a number of seemingly public places in Vienna, such as shopping centers, private security staff quickly removed tables, chairs, coffee and breakfast rolls. Apparently, such spaces cannot be freely used, not even for an innocent activity such as breakfast. Derschmidt, Schneider and Hofbauer (2009) refer to private commercial spaces camouflaging as public spaces. Of course, there were also positive reactions. Many passers-by joined the table and engaged in conversations, ranging from small talk to political discussions or questions about the activity itself.

Adult educators often expect such practices to trigger a much deeper process, culminating in a moment when the differences among participants are transcended. However, when returning to our third picture, we started to view togetherness with strangers from a different angle. In the picture, we see the outlines of a number of people, walking on the pavement (?) between our camera and the shop-windows. The blurred image suggests movement. But we cannot see who is actually passing by. Faces cannot be identified. We do not have a clear image. Sassen (2003a, p. 19) describes the effect of globalization and increased mobility on citizenship as the emergence of a 'blurred subject'. The clear distinction between legal citizenship and citizenship practices performed by illegal subjects becomes unstable. According to Sassen, some legal citizens remain at the margins, while certain non-citizens play crucial roles in all kinds of local practices. What remains is 'a range of blurred subjects: the citizen who is authorized yet unrecognized due to discrimination and racialization, and, at the other extreme, the subject who is unauthorized (…) but recognized in some way or another' (Sassen, 2003a, p. 19). This picture also shows people walking separately, side by side. This reminds us of how we are surrounded by others who are strangers, whom we cannot understand and who nevertheless address us in one or other way. The photograph makes us consider the way in which people co-exist in public places today and as such also transcends the opposition between so called urban and rural togetherness.

Hannah Arendt's metaphor of s the public place as a table is inspiring in this respect (Arendt 1958, in Visker, 2008). A table is shared by all invited, yet a distance remains, as everyone has a different place. The table creates a space between people: it relates them to each other but also separates and opposes them. The metaphor of the public space as a table makes us understand the way people today relate to each other and how we can conceive of citizenship, without feeling obliged to transcend difference. In this kind of public space, the community of citizens can then be understood as a community of people who are close to each other yet remain distant at the same time. This kind of citizen is not well-defined. To others, her contours are blurred. She appears

to them in a way characterized by openness or indefiniteness. The citizen we encounter in these circumstances is an 'indefinite' citizen. She is, just like us, a passer-by. Citizens thus encountered can be described as 'foreign', which does not necessarily mean 'originating from a foreign country', but may also be interpreted as unfamiliar, odd and even bizarre (Nancy, 2000/1996, p. 20). Something is foreign if it is outside our familiar frame of reference. The indefinite citizen and the effects of such brief encounters are perhaps most noticeable if the people we encounter are radically different from ourselves: a gipsy begging in the street, stretching out her hand for alms, a lost tourist asking for directions, a careless youngster on a skateboard, almost bumping into us and yelling at us. In all these situations, we experience the presence of another human being in a fleeting encounter.

From this perspective, adult education might mean much more than the promotion of ephemeral encounters. Instead, adult education could be an experiment about what living with others means. Adult education is often aimed at promoting fraternity, at transcending differences and supporting long-term collaboration between highly diverse people and organizations. Yet, the imperative of sharing – inspired by the ideal of promoting a sense of 'us' - may drive people apart as well as bringing them together. In contrast, (adult) education can also be conceived as a space where the foreign, the frictions, the dilemmas and conflicts can be articulated. As such, education aims to provide time and space for the precarious existence of this world and to preserve its indeterminacy. It is a space in which people encounter the world and feel challenged by what is different and strange, by what annoys or even disturbs them without being able to eliminate this. In this respect, the work of the American pedagogue Ellsworth is inspirational. In her article/book, 'Places of Learning. Media, Architecture, Pedagogy' (Ellsworth, 2005), she introduces architects, artists and theatre makers who explain how they invite citizens to engage in a transformation process which challenges securities, questions convictions or generates emotions. Ellsworth is of course not the only one trying to establish connections between education and the experience of space, urban environment, architecture, arts, etc. Practices such as arts manifestations, events in museums, neighbourhood action, community drama productions, the erection of monuments or memorials, all highlight the increasing importance of the urban environment as a particular site of learning. The use of innovative imagery, challenging or inviting spaces or unexpected encounters is characteristic of all these initiatives. In reflecting on this third image, we especially want to pay attention to the literal meaning of e-ducation, that is 'leading into the open' (Masschelein & Simons, 2010). Education in this sense means the exploration of spaces which are anomalous or alienating rather than 'pleasant' or 'nice', and therefore enable us to envision a kind of citizenship which reflects our present-day ways of living together.

Conclusion

In our introduction, we started from the observation that concepts such as citizenship and community are currently hard to delineate. We referred to Sassen (2002, 2003a, 2003b), who mainly argues that present-day citizenship manifests itself in diverse places and in a multitude of practices. In line with this, it seemed relevant to question our taken-for-granted ways of 'looking' at practices of citizenship and community building. Rancière, amongst others, helped us to better understand the act of looking by his analysis of 'spectatorship'. He argues that spectatorship is not a passivity that has to be turned into activity. Spectatorship is our normal state of being. 'We learn and teach,

we act and know as spectators who link what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamed' (Rancière, 2008, p. 17). Producing new knowledge means inventing a new idiomatic form that facilitates translation between empirical stories and philosophical discourses. Within the scope of this article, we aimed to find a translation between three photos on the one hand and three different ways of looking at citizenship as an emplaced and embodied practice on the other hand. And like Rancière (2008) we faced the risk that the outcome would be an unexpected idiom. The result of the exercise described in this paper, may remain 'unreadable' to those who insist on finding the cause of the story, its 'true' meaning or the lessons that can be drawn from it (Rancière, 2008). Nevertheless, we hope that we have developed a story that is readable to those who are willing to undertake their own translation and embark on their own adventure. The exercise have we engaged in 'requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story' (Rancière, 2008, p. 22).

As mentioned above, we questioned ways of looking at citizenship and community building on the basis of three pictures. Each picture presents familiar imageries of citizenship, community and democracy, but also offers an opportunity for reversing these familiar interpretations. With the help of the first image, we focused on practices in which citizens participate so as to co-direct policy-making. In other words, this first image presented 'participating citizen'. We explored the role of adult education with regard to such participatory practices and suggested that equality of citizens should be considered as the basic principle in this context. This perspective reverses the role of adult learning and education. Education in this sense is not about 'learning to participate'. Rather, it primarily seeks to create opportunities for participation because 'learning is participation' (Wildemeersch & Berkers, 1997). In the second image, we focused on a multiplicity of conversations: in these conversations, people are neither pinned down to predefined roles nor guided towards conventional life paths, but they are allowed to explore unexpected directions, In this second image, we presented the 'relational citizen', which reminded us of the possibility for adult education initiatives to open conversations without preset outcomes. Again, this turned a dominant discourse on citizenship upside down. Participants are not dealt with on the basis of a shared essence (e.g. a life project or a need). On the contrary, adult education creates a conversational space where people can give 'a unique response' to the question of 'who they are'. Finally, the third image brought the experience of living in a globalised world strongly to the fore by evoking the experience of the 'indefinite citizen'. In line with this, we tried to clarify how adult education practices can literally take people 'out into the open' (e-ducation) and encourage them to explore anomalous spaces where the imprint that others leave behind cannot be ignored. It subverts the dominant understanding of citizenship and diversity: what is at stake is not the transcendence of difference, but what is different and alien, what annoys and even disturbs us without the illusion that this can be eliminated once and for all.

Within each of these practices, the challenge is to preserve the openness of a space in which people's involvement with each other and with the world can be articulated. This openness could be the condition for what Rancière (2007/1992, p. 63) calls 'the particular configuration of being-together without which thought and action are bereft of the virtue of generosity which distinguishes the political from mere business management'. In the practice of the participatory citizen – while also contributing to the debate and policy concerning social issues – 'preserving openness' means that a space is created in which everyone is equally able to think and speak. Equality means that everyone is involved and entitled to judge and speak. The adult education practice

inspired by the relational citizen 'preserves openness', because it enables conversations that have no utilitarian goal. These are part of a fragile and ongoing conversation in which each person's unique response to the world is valued. In the practice inspired by the indefinite citizen – characterized by encounters with strange and unknown others – 'preserving openness' means enabling people to encounter others in a way that involves being exposed to others who are strangers to us, whom we cannot understand, but who touch our lives nonetheless. We do not intend to establish a hierarchy by considering the first type of citizenship inferior to the second type and the second type less meaningful than the third type. Rather, we argue that these images co-exist. They complement each other and may inspire diverse adult education practices at different times and in different contexts. The relational citizen can manifest herself in contexts where the participatory citizen is active. The indefinite citizen manifests herself whenever we do not make ourselves immune to passers-by (Devisch, Lijster & van Rooden, 2009) and whenever our routines are disrupted by the presence of others or by something unusual.

We have explored the way in which adult education practices may play a role in these three types of citizenship. This analysis remains preliminary. We started by questioning the influence of an approach that expects citizens to insert themselves in existing relationships and in clearly delineated communities. We have challenged this view, arguing that this is only one of the many possible ways of viewing the development of citizenship. We have tried to demonstrate that this is not the only perspective that can provide inspiration to adult education and that citizenship and a sense of community also emerge in other ways. The disruption of this specific rationality – rather than its continuity -, may open up other, unfamiliar perspectives. Society in general, and adult education in particular, seem to have reached a point at which creative approaches to exploring new, unexpected roads are needed. An unorthodox way of looking at things could bestow 'ontological fullness' on other conditions of citizenship and senses of community (Hansen, 2007, p. 50). For this reason, we have emphasized the importance of an attentive attitude and we invite adult educators to, time and again, address the question of the sources and stimuli of citizenship and community at one particular place. Hopefully, the three images of citizenship analyzed above can be inspirational in this regard.

Note

[1] www.permanentbreakfast.org

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Paradoxes unbounded: Practising community making

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Abstract

The first section of this paper is a discussion of the paradoxes contained in definitions of the word 'community' and deliberately foregrounds and makes problematic conflicting meanings before arguing for a third definition and practice of community. This third definition and practice celebrates and even transcends contradictions within an active learning model of education in the community, aimed at tackling inequality and prejudice. The second section offers an autocritical narrative account of an education in the community project that illustrates how such a practice of community making can be achieved within an educational framework in which pupil is teacher and teacher is pupil and in which an imaginative, creative approach is deployed to construct a community making practice. The paper draws on understandings from community development, inclusive and creative education, emancipatory action research, postcolonial and post-structuralist theory.

Keywords: education; community development; other; postcolonial theory; poststructuralism

Problematising 'community'

Despite a huge amount of theorising and a dizzying array of interpretations of what the word 'community' actually means, we do not seem any nearer to developing overarching and sustained *practices* of community. This is perhaps hardly surprising, given that there is, in fact, no common understanding of what the word means. I will argue that the widespread failure to acknowledge the inherently paradoxical nature of the word has led to some very muddled thinking in Europe and America, which would be grand but for the very serious consequences for actual people, especially those who have unfairly been the victims of structural and compound inequality. The first part of this paper will attempt to deconstruct the two meanings of community, and indeed the inherent internal contradictions of each concept, while the second part of the paper will try to offer a working model of community practice, focused on tackling inequality,

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which recognises these contradictions but is able to creatively accommodate them, using both a critical and creative/imaginative approach.

The 'traditional' meaning of the word community would seem to be based upon an ideal of similitude – on shared values and ways of working. More modern definitions would, on the contrary, seem to be based on an ideal of tolerance for difference, 'otherness', diversity (Frug, 1996, p. 1049). This concept of the 'other' was first used by Hegel, but its most famous adumbration is probably in Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientialism* (1979). Said's post-colonial argument was that 'othering' was part of the process by which imperial powers justified their domination. The act of domination was justified by viewing the subjugated people as 'other', and, as such, inferior. The colonised were 'constructed' as different – they are not like us – and weak, thus rationalising the need for them to be governed like children. 'Othering' also involves a projection of any aspects of the dominant culture which it wishes to repress onto the groups which are dominated. I will hope to show how this kind of cultural construction also operates within the realm of how 'community' can be defined. People who face inequality can be labelled as groups who consigned to the margin, considered as 'other' by the dominant culture which has been responsible for that very inequality. When the groups are othered, marginalised, they can, in turn be blamed for their own poverty. Postcolonialism has influenced thinking very deeply and that is why, perhaps, we now have the newer concept of community where 'other' is not seen as negative, where difference is not equated with inferiority or weakness. An ideal community is, therefore, one in which difference, otherness are respected and valorised, where groups are not consigned to the periphery, and where groups are equal.

In contemporary Europe and America and in many other places like Australia, the problem is that two definitions co-exist, but without a great deal of critical reflection about their inherently dialectical nature. That is to say, that there is an opposition between the concept of community as based upon similitude and the concept of community as based upon difference or 'otherness' as a positive value. Critical reflection, however, might result in the imposition of a new hegemony where one definition is abandoned in favour of another, or it might, it will be argued result in a post-structuralist acceptance and even celebration of contradiction and paradox. Peter Barry (2002, p. 61) explains the post-structuralist attitude as entering 'a universe of radical uncertainty'.

The contradictions are not just between two concepts or ideals of community, but within each concept. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that, if unacknowledged, both concepts will be subject to a kind of circular irony. It is a short step from an historical and contemporary ideal of community as locus for shared values – for similitude – to one of nationalism. And it is no accident that immigration has assumed so central an issue for European governments. and that there is a recoil from modern concepts of community as tolerant of 'other' and culturally diverse and revert to traditional concepts of community based on local, regional and national similitude – 'people like us'. The 'other', the different, is perceived increasingly as a threat – 'people not like us'.

The more modern definition of the ideal community is one in which difference, otherness and diversity and individualism are respected. This can lead to an insistence on the rights of every sort of otherness, of a tigerish individualism, or to a distorted and undemocratic privileging of the interests of small, democratically unrepresentative groups not infrequently intolerant of the rights of those against which they have othered themselves.

Traditional community may be a noble ideal. Nationalism may be a noble ideal. But the rejection of nationalism may also be noble, whether that be through ideals of

localism or internationalism. And the rejection of any such constructions in favour of a notion of community as a gathering of people with shared interests or with completely diverse interests – is that not noble also? And, it might be argued that people who do not want to be conscripted into any sort of community are to be admired, even though they too form a kind of community for they have been inspired by others who have chosen that path. And there are those who are named, defined and even branded as 'disadvantaged' communities and thus determined as other, symbolising deprivation, dys-functionality, anarchy and unmannerly disrespect for the hegemonic as a threat to The Community. And there are the millions who feel in the modern world utterly disassociated, alienated, unwelcome, uninformed; diasporic and community-less.

There has been much lamentation in high society about what is perceived as a 'loss' of community. In this kind of discourse, there is often a cloudy invocation of the lost community in terms recalling Tönnies' 'Gemeinschaft' (1887/2001). And, recently there has been much fine talk in the United Kingdom (UK), notably from the British Conservative party, about re-creating a Big Society – a notion implicitly based on a concept of community as traditional and value sharing (Cameron as quoted in BBC, 2010). This is not without its own paradox, given that this nostalgia for the lost community emerges from 'high society'. This is the 'Gesellschaft' or society that Tönnies argued was characterised by more abstract, centralised frameworks, and a much weaker moral obligation towards interdependency; doubtless because of the valorisation of the freedom of the individual to be different, 'other'.

Few in the UK can forget Thatcher's famous decree that there is no such thing as society (Thatcher, 1987). The 'Iron Lady' was enthusiastic about the potential of individuals to remake themselves, free of any traditional concept of community or indeed national or racial identity or gender. Nonetheless, the individualism she espoused and came to symbolise in the UK cannot but be viewed as antithetical to the traditional concepts of community now being adumbrated by the Conservatives (among others). For that individualism, that rejection of community, of society, has been hegemonic over the last thirty years in Europe and America. The contemporary version of the British South Sea Bubble[1] has burst, well and truly with the global recession. And it is clear that the vast majority of people in the West have been vexed and, in a very disturbing way, confronted by what McGrew (2010) calls the 'intermestic' nature of contemporary economies, a strategic management approach which focuses on the connection between domestic and foreign/international policies.

McGrew (2010) notes that the jury would appear still to be out on whether globalisation has increased or decreased inequality. Rampant individualism, reaching its acme in the brash imperialism of global corporatism and masquerading, in certain quarters of the world as the light of democracy, may not be completely welcome outside the West. Meanwhile, in the West comes a yearning for old fashioned community as the consequence of appropriating the notion of otherness and roughly translating it into individualism.

There is nothing new about this state of affairs, nor its vertiginous paradoxes. Nor is the yearning for some form of community new, though it nearly always assumes higher importance in times where the urban centre perceives the world to be in crisis; where the actuality of living in urban society is perceived as adverse in effect (Fukuyama, 1999, p. 2). The same desire for community was conspicuous in the centres of Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and expressed in a variety of ways, most notably in the desire for the other of pastoralism and exoticism (Bongie, 1991). The vision of a golden, prelapsarian, sublime landscape and a contingent community that is

'traditional', based upon shared values and thus harmonic, is fatally undermined by its own elegiac tone.

In the contemporary world, a kind of alterity to the traditional pastoral ideal, is most popularly expressed in the urge for the making of virtual communities. Introna and Brigham (2008) have argued that this yearning for community is based more on a Derridean 'hospitality', an unconditional welcoming of the 'other by the other', than on shared values. Notwithstanding this emphasis, the internet, like all other forms of human interaction, can also be the medium for hostility and immediate gratification based upon the abnegation of the other. Still, we should not cynically deny the imaginative and compassionate potential identified by Introna and Brigham.

It may well be that this desire for community is a response to the 'anomie' of postmodern life. That anomie as a sense of alienation comes in part from the success of individualism and the allowance of otherness. Paradoxically, it may also emerge from a postwar rejection of nationalisms. Where nationalism is identified with past enforced compliance to standard values and racial 'purification'. The globalisation of the business sector as a kind of corporate version of aggressive commonality and standardisation, may also be viewed as a form of nationalism turned imperial.

Thus, in our own time, just as at the end of the nineteenth century, we may be said to be experiencing a crisis of representation, where paradoxes are vaguely sensed but have not been much articulated or addressed beyond certain academics and community activists. As Frug (1996, pp. 1052, 1056) argues, the common response across Europe and America has been to retreat from the crisis into 'purified' communities.

Education for 'community in practice'

This paper suggests that there is a third way, a third life and a community-in-practice as a metaphor that negotiates both ideals. That practice, derived from the combination of a critical, deconstructing approach and an imaginative and creative educational approach, can offer some optimism and hope and a practical basis for 'community making'. This latter term is chosen to foreground the critical importance of a creative, imaginative and lifelong learning process, while recognising the importance of legal and policy superstructures which may reflect and further effect that process at a macro level. Frug's call for fundamental changes in legislation to tackle a sly enclaving and ghettoisation of American city centres is persuasive (Frug, 1996). However, there remains the question of how you actually persuade people into some sort of learning process which alters the colour of their mind and renders the passing of the legislation possible. Since the two giants of community development movement, Freire and Gramsci, were both educators, I would want to declare a fidelity to the vital role of education in any process of community making. And, I would argue, there is still a great deal to be said for their dialogical, self-critical concept of education with groups who may or may not initially define themselves as communities. In that 'hospitable' encounter, as Margaret Ledwith has summarised it, 'the pupil is the teacher and the teacher is the pupil' (2005, p. 119).

Contingently, education is about developing imaginative, workable, ethical communities, which do not suppress differences or cause the proliferation of fragmented and weak communities, but strive to develop values of critical understanding and resilience. Ledwith (2005, p. 95) suggests that what Freire's meant by 'conscientisation' through education, is 'the process of becoming critically aware of the structural forces of power that shape our lives, and leads to action for change'. Freire's position might be said to be post-structuralist in that the poststructuralists would argue that critical

awareness derives from an acknowledgement that conflicting or contradictory interpretations are not just valid but necessary. This implies an educational process in which people suffering from inequality and oppression, come to learn of the social and political contradictions of the world, including their own contradictory truths about themselves, and as a result are able to construct, by their own active resistance, a new social reality (Cavalier, 2002). The role of the educator in such a process is facilitative and autocritical, for the educator needs to deconstruct her/his own certainties and hegemonies. To put this another way, pedagogy needs to be disruptive, deconstructive, radically uncertain. And, contingently, education itself must be democratic, where learners are equal to the educator, learning from each other, respectfully, dialogically.

Derrida, coming from a quite different tradition in critical philosophy, talks of ‘hospitality’. My understanding is that a concept of hospitality denotes openness, a welcoming of what is ‘other’. Hospitality to ‘other’ allows, at the simplest level, openness to the unprivileged, lived experience of the ‘other’, as a first step in addressing inequality. Allman (2001) makes explicit the importance of linkages between educators, community ‘activists’ and the people in sponsoring a dialogical relationship which has the power to affect social change.

Thus, this paper argues for a concept of community that is unafraid of un-making and remaking itself, imaginatively; that accepts the need for similitude, of shared values, not as a recidivist retreat to a pastoral idyll, but through a forward looking, sceptical and creative process which is capable of operating with contradictions, otherness and diversity, but with the common, community aim of tackling inequality, within itself, rather than being concerned with protecting itself.

Practising community making: a case study

The author has been engaged in a range of ‘education in the community’ projects and offers in this article one example to help to illustrate the potential for transcending or at least negotiating the unavoidability of a paradoxical construction of the concept of community. The community projects engaged in are small scale. That may be the very key to the participants and ‘facilitators’ pride in them. The participants and facilitators have wrought upon them with great intensity.

But we must, as educators, also ask ourselves if success in the making of community can ever influence the Centre? Community development, remains after nearly a hundred years, still a marginal item in any government’s budget. Is this because community development, including community education, is seen as a threat to the status quo? Is the hegemony perfectly happy with increasing degrees of inequality? Or is there something fundamentally artificial about the idea that we have to develop community; something that should be innate? The problem is, of course, that the community is contended and problematic.

The account of one of the learning project acknowledges that any work, however co-negotiated, however empowering, must always contend with paradox, including those inherent in meanings of community and within that community as potential contradictions of self-understanding.

What follows draws on the creative potential of a pedagogy of deconstruction, of disruption, in the redefining and recreation of community. I mean by this that a pedagogy of deep questioning where participants interrogate the contradictions inherent in concepts of community, imposed from outside, and go on to interrogate how they, in turn, can mimic that imposition by marginalising people with mental distress. I will try

to demonstrate that this process of deep questioning is the foundation for a creative annunciation in which participants re-make their own community through an imaginative construction, in this case, the making of a film. I will narrate this in the first person, using an autoethnographic approach as I was directly involved and because this may help to create a closer sense of the living reality the practice a small community making initiative. Current autoethnography is poststructuralist and deconstructionist in its outlook, openly acknowledging uncertainties and contradictions. This kind of approach encompasses a meta-reading of the research process itself, rather than just focusing on a set of 'findings'. The researcher/teacher is self-critical, a learner with learners, continually reflective and willing to openly admit instabilities, 'messiness' and even crisis in the evolving relationships between researcher and participants. As models for this kind of approach, I draw on anthropologists such as Peter Metcalf (2002) and researchers in the field of education like Peter Clough (1999), Tina Cook (2009) and John Quicke (2010).

I will also deploy what has been termed 'thick description'. Joseph Ponterotto (2006) offers a very illuminating account of this term:

> 'Thick description' involves accurately describing and interpreting social actions within the appropriate context... [It] captures the thoughts, emotions, and web of social interaction among observed participants... The context for and specifics of, the social action are so well described that the reader experiences a sense of verisimilitude as they read the researcher's account (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 542).

Promoting positive attitudes to mental health among rural men

The Mentalentity Project came about as a result of a call for proposals by a statutory sub agency of the Southern Health and Social Services Trust; the Southern Investing for Health Partnership (SIHP), who were commissioning a project which would promote the positive mental health of men in rural areas. The Southern Trust operates in a largely rural area, most of which would be an hour drive at least, south and west, from Belfast, Northern Ireland. The project was undertaken by a consortium involving a local pan-disability group called Out and About (based in Armagh city), Queen's University School of Education and an independent arts project called the Nerve Centre (based in Derry and Belfast). These three organisations had co-operated on a wide range of creative education in the community projects stretching back over 10 years. We had found that a creative approach, engaging the imagination of participants worked very well with 'hard-to-reach' learners who had found the more orthodox, instrumental, passive learning model in which they were passive subjects absorbing an unquestioned and unquestioning and largely dis-imaginative learning, inimical. I was involved in all three organisations, as teacher within the Open Learning Programme and as a voluntary member of the boards of the other two.

In our own approach to the project, we were keen to challenge a campaign oriented approach which was essentially directive, imposed from the outside centre (if I may risk a paradox), 'top-down' and melodramatic. We understood that this approach had not really worked previously because it was too remote and did not engage the 'target group'. The hidden and masked forms of mental ill health among rural men and their unwillingness to discuss such issues has been well documented (Philo & Burns, 2004).

So, what were our most important research questions? They might be summarised as follows:

1. How do the men define and view their rural 'community'?
2. What role does education have in developing 'community'?
3. What do rural men in this 'community' think about people who had mental health problems?
4. Could we develop a dialogic educational process in which the men could construct a new, more humanised and empowering attitude in which they themselves were active agents of change in their own 'community'?
5. Could a creative rather than campaigning approach, based on the production of a piece of educational 'art work', in this case, a film, be more appealing to the men and their communities as an instrument for changing attitudes?

In drawing up a grand plan for the project, Out and About and myself as 'scribe', believed that we could build on years of previous work in and with the community through many 'micro-projects', and also propel the project beyond the very local. We began in an area which had a very long history of community and rural development work and which already had a number of sub-regional networks. Our idea was that we would draw together an overall steering group, which would include both regional and sub-regional organisations from the statutory, voluntary sector. This encompassed housing and health authorities, mental health charities, rural and community sub-regional networks, police and voluntary organizations like the Farmers' Union.

While the first meeting was relatively well attended, there were conspicuous absences and there did not seem to be much by way of 'volunteering'. At the second local network meeting there were four women and a very large plate of sandwiches and fruit. Three of the women were SIHP staff. The fourth was myself. So, we had to either abandon the project or 'revert' to working at micro level. We thought of this process in terms of the classic action research cycle of action and reflection (Carr & Kemmis, 2002; Hughes, 2008; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). We gathered ourselves and decided, with the help of an SIHP development worker (crucially, because she not only knew the local scene but had an animatory approach), to approach a very small men's group in Crossmaglen, Menaware. Their representative had, in fact, attended the first meeting and asked a lot of tough questions. But he agreed to 'talk to the boys'.

Menaware was a very unusual phenomenon in itself. While there are stacks of groups all over the UK that contain only men, men's community of interest groups are still very much a new feature in the community development landscape. While not entirely uncommon in metropolitan centres in the UK and elsewhere, they are as rare as hens' teeth even in Belfast and Derry, and in rural areas, here, they are almost nonexistent.

Again, I am hesitant about drawing any firm conclusions, but suggest that only this kind of a group was far enough ahead of the hegemony of existing community development itself, to even entertain a project such as ours. Menaware was a very loosely affiliated group with elastic membership, which had been funded by SIHP and others to do a number of projects, including the making of an eco garden in a housing estate in Crossmaglen and various exchange projects. The 'boys' were not metrosexuals. It was a very mixed group, a few of the men were educated to university standard and many left school with few or no qualifications. In that sense, many of them were 'non-traditional' learners.

Whatever else we got wrong, we hoped, at least, that the project would engage non-traditional learners, among others. We had proposed that we work with local groups to devise 'hands on' projects, which were creative in both concept and form and was goal-

centred, that is to say, that the community of learners would be enabled to draw upon themselves as creative and resourceful people rather than as marginalised inferior beings. We had many reasons for this, based on our experience of working with non-traditional learners and on wider research and community development projects focussed on men (Golding, 2008).

It is to the enduring credit of the men that they agreed to give the project a try. This was a university course, a very difficult topic and a form that none of them had any experience in. I would concur with Barry Golding (2010) that the project had to be 'sold to the men' by deconstructing the official language and burying it, 'unaming' it, so that the project was presented as a chance to do something practical, in this case, making a film.

In relation to issues of hegemony and disrupting otherness, I will make one or two observations, as participant-observer. At the beginning, I was welcomed because the unofficial leader or more properly, 'animus' of the Menaware group, brought me in and vouched for me. I was an outsider as an academic, as somebody from a rural town maybe forty miles away and as a woman. I was an insider as a person with a country dialect, somebody who put in a garden every year and as somebody who transgressed or subverted the teacher/pupil hierarchy that they expected. That I also disclosed myself as a carer, close to somebody with severe mental illness may also have helped to build my credibility. In that sense, I was a 'border-crosser' (Ledwith, 2005, p. 129; Maginess, 2010). I was 'operating' literally and metaphorically on various borders. And, of course, I was also very aware that a men's group, in a highly conservative and, in many respects enclaved rural area, was as liminal as I was.

Trust in such a context, is very fragile. When I asked the men about what it was like to live in Crossmaglen, even though I had been enthusiastic about being from a small rural area, and fairly candid about the little local difficulties I had experienced in it; the men, to a man, eulogised Crossmaglen. There were no problems the like of those I had suggested. The defensiveness was understandable. Crossmaglen is infamous, as 'bandit country'. South Armagh is also one of the most beautiful areas of the British Isles and has all sorts of official designations to that effect. The men spoke eloquently of this and also of the great 'community' that exists. In Freirian terms, the men denunciated negative representations of their community and annunciated a counter-version that was much more constructive. By 'denunciation', Freire refers to the naming and analysis of existing structures of oppression, by 'annunciation' he means the creation of new forms of relationships and being in the world as a result of mutual struggle against oppression (McLaren & Leonard, 1993, p. 15). To put this another way, the first layer of 'findings' in the project was the annunciation of a far more positive and attractive reality than the negative representations imposed upon them from outside, whereby Crossmaglen was 'other' – alien, dangerous. Their concept of community at this stage was of a beautiful place where people shared values; community as similitude. But, it could be contended that this was a false annunciation, because the men had replaced one externally imposed version with another, though a sense of solidarity against the centre. It seemed to me that they had adopted an overly ideal pastoral vision of their community, 'mimicking', to use Homi Bhabha's postcolonial vocabulary (Bhabha, 1994), a newer hegemony which had officially nominated South Armagh as a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This pastoral idyll is frequently associated with those writers on community who see community as a place of shared values, a place that is unchanging and rural and beautiful. The contemporary pastoralisation of places like South Armagh brings to mind a perhaps similar vision in the late nineteenth century when people from the urban centre like Yeats and Synge,

taking their cue from the Englishman Matthew Arnold (1867), glorified the wild, natural beauty of marginal rural places.

Freire describes the predicament of the oppressed as an 'oppression hosting conscience', where the worldview of the oppressor becomes 'housed within' the victim's own way of seeing the world (as cited in Cavalier, 2002, p. 257). This notion of 'cultural invasion' is akin to that characterised in the postcolonial thinking of Said and Bhabha – the colonized ends up mimicking the attitudes and values of the colonizer, without irony. In my view, that mimicry is a kind of collusion with the colonizer.

Commentators in the field of ethnographic studies have, in what is termed the 'autobiographical turn', confessed to the many situations they found themselves in where their communities froze them out by delivering a set of ideal echoes of what the researcher already believed, sentimentally, about the community he/she was studying (Metcalf, 2002; Clough, 1999; Maginess, 2007). I knew and they knew that I knew that their initial encomiums about Crossmaglen were collusive. The miracle is that they began to trust me sufficiently to breach that collusive defence, to offer me a glimpse into the 'little local difficulties' that I had earlier acknowledged in my own history. And, I must acknowledge that my own 'ideal echoes' – that mix of pride and criticism, were not, initially 'reflected' by the men of Crossmaglen. They were not ready at the start for the criticism of small rural places that I had marched in with, even if it was mixed with an obviously fierce attachment to and loyalty to my own place. I was, arguably, also guilty of a charge levelled against Frieire by Lewis; relying on an annunciation that was unduly controlled by the teacher (Lewis, 2011).

Like them, I did not want to be characterised only as 'oppressed', even though we all would have fought our own campaigns, stretching back three hundred years, against marginalisation, conquest, oppression, to say nothing of more recent campaigns about gender equality (which not all the men would necessarily have subscribed to). We all colluded, defensively, in rejecting externally imposed classifications of us as 'other' in terms of being marked as deprived and disadvantaged communities in need of intervention – as passive and hapless 'subjects'. While at the same time we were also passionate about challenging those who shaped policy and held power, understanding the systematic marginalisation and structural enclaving of our communities in terms of the distribution of resources like health care services and investment; resources that tend to be centered around Belfast or areas with an historically manipulated demographic likely to be loyal to the ruling majority. That is to say, the Unionist majority operated a number of policies, including 'gerrymandering' of housing to ensure that they would retain a political majority. Nationalists/Catholics from poorer backgrounds were rehoused in enclaved areas, where their vote was literally squeezed, thus artificially ensuring a greater Unionist majority. It is perhaps not entirely co-incidental that the marginal areas designated by the pastoralising centre as Areas of Outstanding Beauty are also those areas least productive agriculturally, and concomitantly the areas inhabited by the minority Catholic community in Northern Ireland. The history of how the better, more productive land tends to be occupied by English adventurers, colonial civilizers, yeomanry and English and Scots 'planters' is beyond the scope of this paper. But a process of colonization has led, as it has led elsewhere, to a nexus of contradiction and uncertainty. In the context of our discussion here this may be paradoxically a very fruitful inheritance.

Over the weeks, the men began to challenge their own narrative, their communal self-representation and mimicry of the hegemonic line. And thus they began to drill deeper into the research questions. The second layer of their 'findings' were, therefore, much more uncertain. The original concept of belonging to a pastoral community with

shared values was disrupted by their own deconstruction. This was not a re-imagining which led to an immediate and thoroughgoing denunciation of the dominating hegemony. The critique was far more hesitant and qualified. And we had many stumbles and cross-purposes along the way. In that sense it truly was a piece of messy research (Cook, 2009).

Deetz and Simpson (2004) identify three different kinds of dialogue; the liberal humanist, aimed at finding common ground or consensus so that a community can comfortably co-exist, the critical hermeneutic emerging out of the thinking of scholars such as Bakhtin, Derrida, Foucault and Levinas. This latter:

> ...emphasizes the role of indeterminacy and 'otherness' in reclaiming conflicts, resisting closure and opening new opportunities for people to be mutually involved in shaping new understandings of the world in which they live and work (Deetz & Simpson, 2004, p. 3).

It might be said, then, that a critical hermeneutic form characterised our processes of film production, through which meanings of community were indeterminately constructed and acted as an opening for the audience. Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) warns of the dangers of harmony based on the rational reductions of privileged middle-class academics. As we went on, the shift described by Ellsworth manifested itself in our group, and in a similar fashion. The men in the group had different views about mental illness and health and I had different views from them myself. I need no convincing that it is impossible to talk fully about the irrationality of a manic episode rationally, even at the first remove of a carer. The trust between the men and myself and the men themselves really started to grow in what Americans call 'down time'; over lunch or during the many filming sessions, nearly all of which I attended, when individual men would start to confide some of their own distress and others share the fear that they had of people they knew who had mental illness. All of our narratives, and indeed the narrative we created in the end with the film, were in Ellsworth's sense, partial and post-modern (1989).

I say, partial, because none of us could claim to reach fully into the lived experience of even one individual's mental distress, even after deconstructing constructions of a rural community and mental illness. This was an approach, postmodern in its refusal of easy or superficial rational agreement imposed by the outside, including academics.

The project took place over a number of months, so research 'findings' emerged very gradually. We began with a fairly structured series of workshops in which the men discussed issues of community, of identity and then attitudes to mental health. We had guest speakers – a service user, a male 'carer' and a health care professional. All of them were men and all were very 'down to earth'. The format was very informal – almost conversational. This learning was thus 'decentered' in a number of ways – it took place in a community setting, the traditional relationship between teacher and student was challenged and disrupted. So the men and the educators were exposed to a very different, 'subversive', kind of education, which encouraged us all to be more open and critical. The talking workshops were complemented by practical hands on, filmmaking workshops, so that there was a relief from the quite challenging business of interrogation. The relief, of course, was short-lived, since the release into a talk-free world brought its own fierce challenges. This was not always creativity 'lite' but another set of serious challenges for people who had not the faintest idea of how to make a film or how to express what they were discovering in their questioning in imaginative terms. How could they begin to shape the emerging new others of themselves, never mind a new 'other' of their 'community'? But they were beginning to

know that it was permissible, even ok, to speak unfettered by judgement or the need to say the thing somebody, some 'community', expected them to say. Sometimes 'revelations' occurred within the workshops – as the men began to move to their own findings. But I would say that most of the findings were 'collected' as we constructed, 'announced' the story we were going to make for the film. The men gradually inhabited that story imaginatively and so were able to translate what they were learning into a form that was also liberating for them because it was a shared story and also allowed them a necessary distance from an overly personal or individual set of findings. Of course, it was a made-up story with no objective claim to being rational or 'real' and in any case only told a small part of many stories. In the end, unlike the Freirian approach as described by Lewis, the men 'dis-identified' with representations of themselves by the outside by making their own image (Lewis, 2011, pp. 40, 42). In other words, they constructed an alterity of their own making; a dramatisation of an imagined community in which they were able to imagine themselves into inhabiting the experience of the previously repudiated 'others' of a person with mental distress and their family. We had moved a long way from our initial discussions about how the men thought about themselves as part of a rural 'community'. As a 'teacher' I did not cajole or coerce this, even though there were parts of the final image that I did not think rang true to my own experience as a carer and my observations of a variety of people undergoing a psychotic episode, and even though I thought that there was a lack of precision at times in how the men chose to represent the different support systems available.

But the film, in its own modest way, does announce and voice an understanding and compassion about the actual experience of mental illness (and the oppression it brings so unfairly upon the individual and their family), that was a long way from the early idealising and nostalgic collusive position where mental distress was edited out as 'other', by an othered community defensively protecting itself against the dominant and reproving centre. And indeed, it was a long way from the denunciatory and deconstructive position which followed and expressed itself in a number of ways, some positive and some less so. Thus, the denunciatory phases were positive in that the men were encouraged and enabled to deconstruct the collusive idealist stance and to 'deconstruct' their own community. The second layer of their 'findings' revealed that, while some aspects of it were brilliant, other aspects were very alienating, for example, the loneliness and exclusion experienced by people who were 'different', who did not necessarily find football all-consuming, or who did not completely or partially subscribe to certain ideological or even tribal hegemonies which operated in that community). That deconstruction of the internal realities of the community gradually deepened so that the men were, after a while, able to talk very honestly about some of their own fears and the 'othering' that some had enacted in relation to people with mental distress.

That concept of community as centering on similitude and shared values and a pastoral version of rural life, was 'disrupted' by the men through that alternative model of community emphasising difference, diversity, otherness and what I might term 'dis-belonging'. There were two aspects of this – the 'group' viewpoint began to fracture and dissolve as some individuals began to articulate their 'findings' about their own position in a community which did not value difference or diversity. Some of the men attested, for example, that they did not want to buy in to certain political viewpoints or the collective passion for football. Some, furthermore, spoke of the 'community' reaction to this as negative and intolerant.

When the discussions deepened further into attitudes about mental health, the 'findings' of the men were quite varying, from an admission of fear to a more compassionate position. After the speakers had brought more new information about the

lived experience of mental distress and the support systems available – including what could be available among people in the community if they chose to participate in support – another layer of findings was available to the men.

As one of the men commented afterwards:

> Even to get the men to talk about the stigma and shame many of them felt about having relations or neighbours who had mental problems took a lot of trust to be built. And then to go on from that to talk about the problems associated with not talking, about denial. Some of the men in the group were unemployed, some had drink or relationship problems. The project brought their own issues home to them. Mental distress was not, somehow, outside them, but in their own community and among us as a group.

Another participant said: 'I was able to express myself better and bond with the other men, much more than I had anticipated'. Another, who had experienced mental distress said: 'I have always someone I can talk to now'. Another man said: 'The project gave me a reason to get up in the morning'. And one participant talked about the way the project enabled the men to decide the way they would learn: 'It allowed you to participate at a level you felt comfortable with as the tasks were agreed and taken on appropriately. Each person brought their own skills and expertise to the table'. Perhaps the most moving comment was from the participant who said: 'It was like finding one rock and then others rolling down the hill until suddenly you found you had a rockery'.

It is clear from the way they wrote the story that they 'revealed to themselves' another layer of findings. For in making their own story, they were able to imaginatively inhabit the lived reality of mental distress. Most strikingly, the men and the educators were in possession of a 'finding' that they themselves had a big part to play in supporting people in their community who had distress. There was a new sense of responsibility, not just a change in attitudes.

In turn, and with the new knowledges they were gaining through the workshops about mental health and illness, as well as about being able to actually make a film, the men freed themselves to become creative, optimistic, and resourceful. Now, it may also well be true that they chose to make a narrative, fictional film, because they did not want to 'appear as themselves', somehow pontificating about mental illness and health. But this distancing impulse was, perhaps ironically or paradoxically, also a kind of 'othering' which was far more meaningful and powerful than either a documentary 'campaign' style film, or a straightforward autobiographical account. The project was, paradoxically, built on a distancing from direct, personal experience. In that sense, it was artificial, inauthentic. But at the same time, the expansion of the narrative to include the contradictory and fragmented voices of the whole group as well as those from beyond the group, enabled us to make a creative product free from narrowness which could resonate in that community and well beyond it, precisely because it dramatized the problematic as a commonly shared situation before moving the 'plot' to possible solutions which actually involved the community. Through collusion, denunciation and annunciation, a third perspective, a potential practice of community, built upon an 'imagined' community, was enacted.

In an early part of this paper I suggested it might be possible to move from the dialectical prison of two contending (and internally contradictory) concepts of community to a third. It seems to me that the men and the educators moved from one definition of community – where community is about shared values and 'people like us', through the other definition of community which emphasises difference and diversity and a respect for 'otherness', to a third position where they realigned and redefined themselves as a community who had created a new sense of shared values,

which was built upon a new knowledge and appreciation of otherness and diversity, and difference. They did not arrive at this position by theorising it but rather by 'imaginatively' engaging with very difficult and challenging issues. So the film became both their story and not their story. They were able to accommodate contradiction, radical uncertainty, to be hospitable to it as a community of learners, but also as a redefined geographical and cultural community. And, speaking of contradiction and paradox, to imagine, the self must be othered. To put it another way, it is not possible to produce creative work unless you can imagine yourself to be other than you are. The creative act involves an openness, a generosity based on a willingness to 'learn' about what is not the self, about what is familiar, to put yourself in the living experience of the 'other'. In other words, imagination is a key part of a liberating educational process , O'Donohue expresses this very beautifully:

> The imagination, in contrast [to the mind], extends a greater hospitality to whatever is awkward, paradoxical or contradictory... the imagination... does not perceive contradictions as the enemy of truth; rather it seems here an interesting intensity (2004, p. 138).

The necessarily collaborative nature of that process meant that we had to work as a group, and as subgroups or 'cells'. As the project began to gain traction, the men developed a very strong loyalty to it, as I did myself, and many of the men tended to come along to each filming session, even though they were not 'acting' in that scene or even directly involved in working cameras or sound. Perhaps, crucially, the sheer amount of time it actually took to make a 30 minute narrative film (far longer than any of us had 'allocated' as a commitment) meant that we were together in groups and in one to one conversations for long periods, waiting perhaps for another film 'take', driving to another location, or congregating in each others' houses to write and record the music and songs. A supporting, if often bantering, comedic and ludic culture was shaped by us. The playfulness which invited transgression of traditional boundaries, crossing of borders, contradiction and irony was a key to 'getting over and beyond' the menaces of collusive idealisation and denunciatory fragmentation was perhaps the most important form of resilience and collective empowerment. The function of the ludic is not always recognised in education, but Conroy has presented a case for the humanising potential of such an approach (1999). We were becoming a community where not everything was 'handled' collectively, but which nonetheless operated collectively towards some common goal – a community which was comically hospitable to the 'otherness' within each individual, and had the maturity, the wit, to accommodate it. As one of the men expressed it:

> The project was a blank canvas. It was a struggle for us to get our heads round how we could ever make an eight minute film... by the time we got motoring with the film, some of the men were getting worried about the lighting in each shot! Not that they did not get slagged [bantered, teased] about that. And that shows how much confidence they had gained.

It was not, I think, entirely co-incidental that the first scene the men put together was the wake scene – a situation characterised by the sorrow afflicting individuals, supported and dignified by a collective encircling hospitality, both practical and ritualistic; a space where sorrow and laughter meet. One of the men afterwards reflected that there were thirty or more people involved in that scene, evidence to him of how the project engaged with the wider community around Crossmaglen.

In pedagogic terms, the relatively sustained nature of the process of putting together the film allowed for a great variety of learning methodologies to be enacted. At the beginning, while the learning environment was informal and participative, conversational, dialogic, it would be fair to say that the 'experts' did initially more of the talking within the sessions. This maybe allowed participants to focus their questions and comments based on what they were hearing. This was mostly 'whole group' work. When we began the filming, the storyboarding was 'kickstarted' by a couple of people, and that made a sort of base for other people to work from. With the actual filming, the learning curve was very steep as the tutor spent a very short time talking and engaged us straight away almost in hands-on learning, like working booms, walking different ranges of shots, seeing what they looked like through the camera. The tutor kept asking the men how do you want to do this? And, at the start, they would say, it's up to you, boss. But, after a while, the men began to get more confidence in taking responsibility and to uncover roles for themselves.

The participants not only drew on the skills they already had, their latent know how and expertise (one of the reasons why they chose to start with the wake scene), but discovered much. And that expansion of knowledge and skill has about it something that is fundamentally educational, but also fundamental to any notion of community making.

Local people became aware of the film, partly because some of those involved brought us back to their own houses to film or to work on the music. We were received with great courtesy and forbearance by the families, whose homes we invaded. And this afforded further opportunities, for small conversations about the project and the difficult topics it was broaching.

We launched the film towards the end of 2009. Many local people came and one man, a musician and the father of one of the actors, said to me, 'it was very educational'. It was clear that he had enjoyed watching the film, even though it was quite tough in places, that he was proud of his son, and of seeing Crossmaglen up there on the screen, in all its beauty, seen from the inside, free of pastoral and cultural stereotypes of soldiers and bandits and featuring characters that were not talked about, that were not like us, but different.

For the men, it is evident from the evaluation that it was, for many of them transformative. That is a very big word. The project has not transformed the world, but it did, according to the men themselves, have a very positive impact on them in a number of ways. Here are some of the things they said.

'I had a chance to try something I never thought I could ever do'. 'I got more confidence'.'I was more willing to talk about mental problems'. 'I know now that there are supports, both in terms of services and from people in our own community'.

> It was not like what we were used to. A lot of the men had left school early and did not have a good experience of education. The fact that it was very informal suited the men; it was more about action and spoken words and music than about traditional methods of education.

> The reason progress was made was that there was a trusting, fear-free forum for the men to talk openly. The people who came among us to talk about their experiences were very open too. They were really great because they let us inside their world.

The fact that the men succeeded in making a film let them know a lot more about themselves and the place they lived, and they discovered that it was ok to open up and it was also ok to take a big risk and have a go at something you have never tried before.

Most striking was that many of the men testified to how the project empowered them, gave them a sense of solidarity, a network, a supporting structure, both in terms of knowing about how to access official support but how to look about, ask for help and how to help other people in the community. And, as the film itself revealed, this structure was fragile, not always equal to the task, mocking and hard-edged, limited, amateurish (including the health care professionals), hesitant, problematic, jagged.

Conclusion

I have tried to suggest how an education in the community project can interrogate, disrupt and deconstruct concepts of community and in the process can offer a third concept or model which does not synthesise the two dominant ‘ideologies’, but accommodates them, in a spirit of radical uncertainty. This makes the foundation for a genuine and deep annunciation which is, I have learned, a crucial form of real community making. The participants, all of us there, as people living in what had been defined by the dominant culture as a marginal place, ‘an otherworld’, had to negotiate our way through a lot of received and unquestioned concepts of ‘community’ to get to a space where we could acknowledge the contradictions in ourselves, as well as in the dominant culture. We had to produce our own new meanings, learn ourselves and also, imaginatively learn that the ‘otherness’ of those marginalised by mental distress had been constructed by us as a dominant culture. The two research journeys were related and perhaps one could not have taken place without the other, we all had to deconstruct our sense of ourselves as rural people, to feel confident and open enough to confront the more difficult issue of how we ourselves had marginalised people with mental distress. That was a real education, and an education for change. In making the film, the men were able to transact complex and contradictory concepts of community. And to go further than a mere intellectual learning. By making a film, the men were able to imagine their way into, inhabit the ‘other’ of the lived experience of mental distress far more fully than all the lectures in the world could have done. And, in making that film, the men bore witness to a new understanding which they were prepared to place before their community, in the hope that that community could also imaginatively engage with and learn and, as a result, act in ways that were more compassionate and supportive to people with mental distress.

I have tried also to demonstrate community making as a process as much as a product. But the product is important too, for it is the fruits – the ‘findings’ and the ‘recommendations’, which emerge from a very deep and layered educational process. That process is based upon a Freirian model of learning as challenging, painful, autocritical, democratic, dialogical, shared, imaginative, creative, resourceful, innovative, liberating, ludic and above all hospitable. That is a very old virtue, still held dear by people in South Armagh, for all the ‘invasions’ from without and within. I have tried to illustrate through my account of this project that the deconstruction and questioning of the two different concepts of community I adumbrated in the first section, was vital to the learning process, because it resulted in the participants liberating themselves from a series of received truths. That, in turn, gave them a place and a space to construct, to create a new concept of community characterised by compassion, honesty and resilience (at least now and then).The making of the film was the medium for this deconstruction and construction, rather than the more usual medium of academic argumentation which is the nadir of an orthodox pedagogy. Could the men have genuinely engaged with an orthodox pedagogy? Would they? Was the creative,

imaginative approach, the making of a film, the only way for them to have tackled the university accredited 'course' or was the making of the film the richest way for anybody to tackle that course?

The model of learning I have tried to describe could be characterised as partial, unstable, uncertain, imperfect and subject to interrogation. And that was maybe because we deployed a critical pedagogy about concepts like 'community'. Questioning, interrogation, disruption were encouraged.

But, as the men recognised, for change to occur in themselves and in their community, that sort of approach was necessary. I do not think any of us would be prepared to make extravagant claims for what we did and how we did it as a paradigm breaker in community making. But, I do believe that the imaginative construction that was the film could not have been built without that deeply critical process. The film itself bears the tracks of it; it is no worthy campaign piece, but a work propelled by a dynamic of questions, doubts, stupidities, wrong turns and finally, a partial and uncertain optimism. That optimism is generated through the imaginative dramatisation of what is essentially a process of learning. If the film has any message, it is that we can learn to make community, if only in a small way.

The last word should go to one of the men: 'Talking to the lads, I know they were very happy with what they achieved and would be keen to do more projects like this'.

Note

[1] The British financial crash occurring in 1720 after the South Sea Company had taken over national debt in return for trade monopoly over the south seas.

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Book review: Community education, learning and development

By Lynn Tett (Third Edition) (Edinburgh, Dunedin Academic Press Ltd., 2010) 126 pp., 17.99 €, ISBN 978-1-906716-10-3 First published 2002 as Community education, lifelong learning and social inclusion

Community education, learning and development by Lynn Tett published in the Dunedin Series 'Policy & Practice in Education' which reflects on contemporary policy, practice and some aspects of Scottish education.

In the seven chapters which follow the Acknowledgments (p. viii) and Introduction (p. ix) Tett paints a picture of shifting territory and introduces the most important current dimensions of community progress. Her study focuses mainly on the Scottish experience in community education and development, but it can be used for comparative studies by making analogies, looking for differences based on Tett's ideas. Tett explains the overall aim of the book is to analyze the conceptual, policy and political ideas underpinning community education as well as the varieties of practice in which community educators are engaged (p. ix).

The author discusses the dilemas: the boundaries that the definition of 'community' can construct when it is seen as only comprising of people living in a particular geographical area; community education, its development which is much influenced by changing educational priorities on a local, national and global level.

The contents are organized in a way which invites us both to look back at the historical tradition and at the same time to examine the present and speculate about the future of community education. The first chapter deals with *Community education: Antecedents and meanings* (p. 1-15) and it is followed by *Community education in Scotland* (p. 16-33). In chapter three (p. 34-50) there is a critical analysis of the conceptualization of *Lifelong learning and community education* and then *Learning, knowledge and development, the key theme of Chapter four (*p. 51-68). The fifth chapter by Ian Fyfe, *Young people in and community engagement* (p. 69-85) turns our attention to active citizenship, the participation of young people in the communities. In the sixth chapter *Community education, risk and education of desire* (p. 86-99) Tett directs the reader's mind into the future. The final chapter *Community education, democracy and equality* (p. 100-107), expresses a strong wish for, as well as a vision of a 'more democratically just society' (p. 107).

I am now going to examine shortly the ideas and the empirical materials used by the authors to support their arguments in the discussion.

In the first chapter *Community education: Antecedents and meanings*, Tett builds a bridge between the past and the present interpretations of community education by introducing two traditions that started at the beginning of nineteenth century. When Tett explores the antecedents of community education in Scotland she mentions the organizations which used to involve both young people and adults in community educational activities; amongst these organisations were the Young Men's Christian

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Association (YMCA) founded in 1844. In London by George Williams, the National Organisation of Girls Clubs, the Boy's Brigade, the Scouts and Guides, the Woodcraft Folk, the Cooperative Youth Movement, the Young Socialists and the Socialist Sunday Schools. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to the exploration of the variety of ways in which 'community' has been understood and interpreted. According to Apple, Tett argues that 'the best way to understand what any set of institutions, policies and practices does is to see it from the standpoint of those who have the least power' (p. 15 after Apple, 2006, p. 229).

In *Community education in Scotland*, Tett argues that both traditions described in the first chapter are still present in policy and practice today (p. ix). She explains the role of the national program Working and Learning to Build Stronger Communities (WALT) that defined new national priorities. The results of the national program of Community Learning and Development (CLD) have been described more detailed.

The revision of different conceptualization of the Lifelong Learning idea is presented in chapter three, where Tett argues that Lifelong Learning becomes a double edged sword. She reveals the ambiguity of some official documents and compares two of them; One is Faure's (1972) text where lifelong learning is seen as an inherent aspect of democratic life as well as important for personal growth. However, thirty years later in EU Commission paper (p. 34 after Van der Pass, 2001, p. 12) 'it is seen, as about the formation of human capital and as an investment in economic development' (ibid). These policies have four main faults: 1) 'education and training are commodities in the market' (p. 44); 2) 'economic success equals eradication of deprivation and exclusion'; 3) 'failure is the fault of the individual' (p. 47); 4) 'access to education is fair' (p. 48). Tett concludes that a number of paradoxes are hidden in the policies of Lifelong Learning, but these paradoxes can create spaces for challenges and alternative actions (p. 50).

Learning, knowledge and development (chapter 4) the reader is presented with two examples from practice – one focuses on family literacy and the second on health education. The aim is to illustrate how people can be excluded from participation in the decision-making processes and how they might take action against these excluding practices (p. 52). The chapter finishes with some ideas about the alternative discourse of learning, knowledge and development. Tett supports Martin's standpoint that 'community educators claim to work with people – not for them' (ibid, after Martin 1987, p. 17).

Chapter five by Ian Fyfe *Young people and community engagement* is about working with young people, who he describes as a 'vehicle for the development of the knowledge' (p. 85). Fyfe underlines the gap between the practical dimension of young people in public and the declarative level, which is visible in policy objectives. In the following part of the chapter the reader will find some data analysis, as the typologies of youth in contemporary Policy, young people 'at risk' or viewed 'as trouble' in the community as well as young people as 'active citizens' together with their 'work and community engagement' (p. 77). The chapter finishes with a description of the workings of the West Lothian Youth Participation Network, whose aim has been engagement through collaboration. Finally Fyfe concludes 'Youth policy is designed in response to a range of conceptions of young people, and as a result has an ambition and responsibility for their reconstruction' (p. 85).

The most interesting part of the fifth chapter is the deconstruction of the often hidden potential of youth, which the author calls a 'stimulating arena' for young people to learn informally and exercise their role as citizens through community participation and engagement and ensure their 'great promise' is realized (ibid).

In chapter six *Community education, risk and the education of desire* (p. 86) the focus shifts from acquired knowledge and engagement into risk capacity, developing citizenship and desires for future education. Community educators can find support for working in partnership, building community capacity and promoting active citizenship in policy areas. Their role is 'making sure that the complexities of the intellectual, emotional, practical, pleasurable and political possibilities of learning are not reduced to the apparent simplicity of targets, standards and skills' (p. 98 after Thompson, 2000).

One of the most important things is working not only with active groups, but building collaboration with subordinated and marginalized people, which Tett analyses in the last chapter of her book (p. 99).

She points out the important transitions passed by the Scottish Parliament since 1999, for 'democratic renewal' which also tries to be compatible with Scottish generalist tradition. Tett introduces some basic 'curriculum' and emphasis long term goals such as increasing individual and collective self-confidence, developing people's critical awareness, helping people to recognize their capacity to learn and to generate new knowledge etc. (p. 104).

One of the final conclusions of the book is a very optimistic claim that 'rather than seeking to minimize risk, community educators should be 'educating desire' through challenging and supporting marginalized people, allowing them to define and solve their problems for themselves' (p. 107).

I must mention Tett's dedication which she addresses to her close relatives but what is the most poignant and moving is her gratitude not only to her parents but to their generation for 'all the sacrifices they made to support' Lyn's generation (p. V). Similarly she addresses the dedication to her own grandchildren and she hopes 'that they will be able to experience a more socially just world' (p. 107).

In my opinion, the dedication perfectly illustrates Lyn's concept of community education, learning and development within the individual and collective life. She describes the development of community as a 'relay race' in which we consciously take from our predecessors and look forward to our descendants having a better understanding of 'both self and society that leads on to a more equitable life for everyone' (p. 107).

The most important value of the book by Tett is her questioning not only of Scottish social and educational practices but the questions she leaves the reader to ponder on long after the last page has been turned.

PS. I want to express my gratitude to Agnes Kerrigan for reviewing this text.

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Aims & Scope

The European journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA) is a refereed academic journal creating a forum for the publication of critical research on adult education and learning. It has a particular focus on issues at stake for adult education and learning in Europe, as these emerge in connection with wider international and transnational dynamics and trends. Such a forum is important at a time when local and regional explorations of issues are often difficult to foreground across language barriers. As academic and policy debate is increasingly carried out in the English language, this masks the richness of research knowledge, responses and trends from diverse traditions and foci. The journal thus attempts to be linguistically 'open access'. Whilst creating a forum for international and transnational debate, contributions are particularly welcome from authors in Europe and other locations where English is not the first language.

RELA invites original, scholarly articles that discuss the education and learning of adults from different academic disciplines, perspectives and traditions. It encourages diversity in theoretical and methodological approach and submissions from non-English speakers. All published contributions in RELA are subjected to a rigorous peer review process based on two moments of selection: an initial editorial screening and a double-blind review by at least two anonymous referees. Clarity and conciseness of thought are crucial requirements for publication.

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