

## **Symposium Title: Ideas of community and implications for theorising networked learning**

### **Overview of symposium**

The aim of the proposed symposium is to look at the different ways that the idea of community is being used inside and outside of the educational literature. The intention is to look at a wider literature than that which is most regularly referred to within the education and learning literature. The proposed papers will attempt to use the ideas within these different literatures to examine and critique both the potential and/or imagined benefits and issues that are assumed or claimed for the idea of community within learning situations, within educational contexts and within networked learning in particular.

During the symposium we will seek to draw on both theoretical as well as practical work that draws on and develops the idea of community. We hope that the symposium will make a contribution to the development of both the theory and practise of networked learning.

### **Contributors**

Chair person

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### **Papers and names of authors**

Paper 1: Ideas of community within education – Vivien Hodgson and Michael Reynolds

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Paper 2: Walk on by: exploring anarchist possibilities for the re-conceptualisation of the virtual community – Linda Perriton and Patrick Reed

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**Paper 3:** Networks and Communities: an Actor-Network Critique of Ideas on Community and Implications for Networked Learning. - Steve Fox

Time required – probably 1 ½ hours

## **CONTRIBUTION TO SYMPOSIUM ON: Ideas of community and implications for theorising networked learning**

TITLE OF PAPER: Ideas of community within education

AUTHORS: Vivien Hodgson and Michael Reynolds

INSTITUTION: Lancaster University

SESSION TYPE: Symposium

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NUMBER OF WORDS: 450

FIVE KEY WORDS: Community, exclusion, inclusion, shifting identities, and learning

PROPOSAL:

Within networked learning social theories of learning that draw on social constructionist ideas of situated learning and community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991 and Brown and Duguid 1991) are arguably the predominate paradigm of teaching and learning. Indeed, Jane Kenway comments that Communities is a key concept in the recently published book Knowledge, Power and Learning (Paechter, C. Edwards, R. Harrison, R and Twining P, 2001)

In this paper we will look at and critique the idea of community and the way it is used in education and for pedagogical purposes both within and without networked learning. We will explore how networked learning offers on the one hand wider possibilities for belonging to multiple and shifting communities of learners yet on the other contributes to the processes of cultural imperialism via the offer of internet based education programmes. That is by western democracies and by the USA in particular (Boshier, 1999 and Kenway, 2001).

We will also examine those notions of community that idealise the idea of participative collaborative learning without apparently acknowledging the processes by which communities define rules of exclusion, set boundaries and impose closure (Usher, R, 2001). We will consider the implications of this for learners that are 'bicultural' (Leicester, M, 2001 and Mitchell, B.L and Feagin, J.R, 1995).

We will conclude by examining the potential implications for the design, implementation and facilitation of networked learning communities including examples of what can happen in practice.

## References

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## **CONTRIBUTION TO SYMPOSIUM ON: Ideas of community and implications for theorising networked learning**

TITLE OF PAPER: Walk on by: exploring anarchist possibilities for the re-conceptualisation of the virtual community.

AUTHORS: Linda Perriton and Patrick Reedy

INSTITUTION: University of York

SESSION TYPE: Symposium

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NUMBER OF WORDS: 420

FIVE KEY WORDS: anarchist organisation, virtual communities, post-structural feminism, identity, group learning

PROPOSAL:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Kropotkin conceived of communities that would transcend geographical and temporal boundaries and yet retain the best features of the traditional peasant community. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have, at last, the technological capability to realise this vision. How then could we unite the idea of anarchist organisation with learning communities who use technology?

In this paper we turn to feminist and anarchist literature (Miller 1970; Ward 1973; Kropotkin 1974; Marshall 1993) in order to reconsider the notions of representation within communities. Post-structuralist feminists have long questioned the unproblematic notion of women's identity within the wider category of 'woman', either because the self is experienced as fragmentary (e.g. Griffiths 1995) or because the category 'woman' is a linguistic construct (Moi 1993; Butler 1997). We add to this the rejection of some anarchist thinkers of the idea that one person can ever 'represent' another (May 1994). In other words individual autonomy is always privileged even within collective endeavours. We wish to explore how these ideas might inform our thinking about group learning processes.

Rather than the uncritical warm glow produced by words such as 'community' (Parker 1998; Reynolds 2000) we argue the need for a carefully considered ethical basis for those involved in group learning, one that can accommodate a wider range of individual differences and a sense of cohesion and belonging not based on exclusivity and 'us' as opposed to 'them' (Rorty 1989).

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## **CONTRIBUTION TO SYMPOSIUM: Ideas of community and implications for theorising networked learning**

TITLE OF PAPER: Networks and Communities: an Actor-Network Critique of Ideas on Community and Implications for Networked Learning.

AUTHOR: Steve Fox

INSTITUTION: Lancaster University

SESSION TYPE: Symposium

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NUMBER OF WORDS: 300

FIVE KEY WORDS: community, actor-network, network, learning,

PROPOSAL:

The paper critiques the notions of community from a community of practice and an actor network perspective. Brown and Duguid (1991) argue that organisations, and by extension societies, are communities of communities of practice, suggesting that sub-communities of practice are reconciled in a greater solidaristic whole. But I suggest instead that we think in terms of networks of communities of practice.

The general notion of community as a space of social solidarity is challenged, drawing on Reynolds (2000), and contrasted with a more general notion of network, which is an intrinsically open-ended rather than bounded structure. Networks are nets-that-work and work is required to maintain nets. Actor network analysis draws attention to the kinds of work through which nets are maintained. Seeing organisations as networks of communities questions the idea of an overarching social whole or entity, and helps us to see communities of practice as nodes in networks and as networks in their own right.

**The paper examines what is similar and different between the concept of network and community of practice. It applies this understanding to networked learning as influenced by community of practice theory, drawing on Fox (2000, 2001).**

### **References**

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