John W. Murphy

Community-Based Interventions

Philosophy and Action

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Preface

In the field of social service delivery, the term community-based is very popular nowadays. Nonetheless, the idea that interventions should have a grassroots orientation is not new. Since the passage of the Community Mental Health Act (1963) in the USA, along with similar proposals and supportive political movements in other parts of the world, services should be decentralized and persons should be evaluated and treated in their respective communities. The basic premise of this change is that social interventions will be attuned to the aims of those who use these programs and, thus, be sustainable in the long-run.

A key assumption of this book, however, is that most of these programs have not, and will not, become community-based. Although these projects may be located in communities, and possibly adopt the appropriate rhetoric, their ties to local persons will be weak. The reason for this failure is straightforward: that is, these interventions are not guided by a philosophical position that is consistent with becoming truly community-based. The policies and practices that are vital to becoming community-based will not be undertaken.

However, once this shift in philosophy is made, practically every facet of service delivery must be rethought. New perspectives on methodology, leadership, and community organizations, for example, must be proposed and adopted. Fundamental to these changes is that community members must be actively involved in and control every aspect of an intervention. Without the integration of these persons into the core of all interventions, these programs should not be considered community-based.

In this book, the reader is provided with some history, philosophy, and examples of community projects, in order to illustrate the various dimensions of a community-based intervention. As part of this reorientation, new language and novel ways of thinking about communities and social planning are introduced. In fact, some of these concepts and descriptives may seem odd at first. The point, however, is to think outside of the usual ways in which social interventions are conceptualized, implemented, and evaluated.

However, this community-based strategy does not represent simply a new philosophy. A political side is also present. Simply put, through community-based initiatives persons should not only obtain more relevant services but gain control of

their lives. In this way, the malaise that currently plagues society, whereby persons feel alienated from their basic institutions, can be reversed. The political thrust of community-based projects, in other words, is to promote the autonomy of communities.

Given the recent improvements in social theory, and the links established between this philosophy and practice, the development of community-based projects on a wide scale is not difficult to imagine. The prospect of communities planning and monitoring their health care, for example, is not fictional any longer. The hope is that this book can contribute in a small way to the realization of this end. Once persons begin to control their communities, they may begin to expand their goals and envision a society where everyone participates in the planning of institutions and is treated with dignity. Hence, community-based projects may be able to promote the alternative, and more humane, world that many protestors around the globe believe is necessary to improve the lives of everyone, but especially those who are poor.

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Introduction

Introduction

As Max Weber (1978) described some time ago, the modern world has become almost thoroughly rationalized. His point is that due to the dominance of science and mathematics, social life has been transformed into a monotonous routine. In this regard, workplaces, schools, and other organizations are standardized, regulated, and thus very predictable. The spread of bureaucracy exemplifies this trend (Weber 1978, pp. 954–1006). While the operation of these institutions is certainly refined, with the production of many goods and services, something seems to be wrong.

Weber (1978) claims that as spontaneity has been subdued and often labeled as disruptive, persons are bored. Except when confronted by spectacles or increasingly sensational news accounts, everyday life seems to offer little excitement. As part of this trend, institutions appear to be operating according to their own logic. In current parlance, organizations are imagined to be autonomous. For this reason, some critics contend that a "credibility gap" plagues modern societies (Mickunas and Murphy 2011).

At least two themes are central to this description. The first is that organizations do not meet the needs of their constituents. Persons want health care, for example, but arcane economic principles are invoked to explain why this desire is not reasonable, and somehow would plunge society into bankruptcy. The result is that increasing numbers of persons are left uninsured, or with minimal coverage.

The second is that a clear, but irrational, message is conveyed to the citizenry. That is, persons must understand that key institutions should be beyond their control. They may have created these organizations, but these entities do not necessarily respond to the aims of their creators; their operation is simply beyond the comprehension of average persons. Accordingly, an intelligent individual learns how to adapt to this situation and, perhaps through nefarious means, tries to manipulate the social system whenever possible. As a result, persons jettison their idealism and imagination, and learn to be pragmatic and seek personal advantages. The result is that social life becomes increasingly hostile and difficult.

In more political terms popularized initially by Karl Marx (1973, pp. 111–112), persons are alienated. On the one hand, they begin to feel powerless and may with-

draw from the life of institutions. As part of this process, they begin to repeat the old saw that their input is unimportant and any effort irrelevant (Seeman 1959). Cynicism thus becomes normative, with those who reject this response labeled as unrealistic and possibly maladjusted.

Nonetheless, this alienation is not simply psychological and an awful illusion. In fact, institutions have become increasingly abstract and their operation difficult to penetrate; in many respects, they resemble a labyrinth. "Catch-22" is the phrase that is used often to characterize this situation (Heller 1999). In point of fact, persons are not very effective, for example, at getting modern corporations or governments to respect the desires of individuals or communities. Who these entities actually serve remains a mystery, in the minds of most citizens. Indeed, most persons believe that their destinies are a product of fate or luck, rather than personal control or initiative (Bandura 1997).

Challenge to Alienation

Of course, this trend has not gone unchallenged. In effect, the desire to become community-based represents a response to correct this situation (Perkins et al. 2004). The basic idea is that this alienation can be reversed and a sense of community can be restored. Central to this redirection is the proposition that persons can control their destiny through participation. Through the exercise of political will and the associated skills, persons can retrieve their institutions and gain control of their lives. In some circles, the term *praxis* is introduced to describe how persons can change themselves and their surroundings, so that their lives improve and alienation abates. Through "collective *praxis*" the destiny of a society can be altered (Sartre 1979, pp. 505–524).

At various places around the world, including the USA, the notion of planning "from below" is gaining some currency. A basic fact to this shift in strategy is that in the past social development originated from "above," or from political elites, technocrats, or other experts (Gray 2002). In many cases, an entire class of detached professionals has emerged to assess the needs of communities and formulate all remedies. As should be noted, this orientation is both a product of and reinforces the alienation of persons from their institutions (Midgley 1981).

In many respects, this approach has been disastrous. Interventions are created that are irrelevant, and sometimes harmful, while communities become dependent and fail to develop their own aptitudes (Midgley 1981). The goal of planning from below, accordingly, is to promote pertinent interventions and the autonomy of communities. The reduction of alienation is thus an important by-product of becoming community-based. A political agenda is clearly a part of this strategy.

The general theme is that the community should be elevated in importance. After all, these groups are thought by most persons to be supportive and the cornerstone of humane societies (Etzioni 2007). The *gemeinschaft* is almost mythical! A new solidarity—sharing life and destiny—is desired that can repair the currently frag-

mented and inhospitable world. In some political circles, the phrase "another world is possible" is employed to convey this sentiment. The resurrection of community, in other words, is imagined to be the antidote to many of today's most pressing social problems. The current focus on civil society is a vital part of this trend.

If persons viewed themselves to be part of a community, for example, discrimination should abate (Dussel 2008). In a real community, after all, persons treat one another with respect and recognize that their fates are united. Additionally, in such a context, health disparities and racial hostilities should disappear, due to the presence of social solidarity. Those who are part of a community would not tolerate the marginalization of other members and the maladies that result from such mistreatment. In many ways, many societies are at a crucial juncture, whereby the growing gap between the rich and poor is tolerated along with the related problems or a real alternative is pursued.

Equally important is the idea that human services are improved when they are integrated into a community (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003). When these projects become part of the biographies of persons, in other words, the resulting interventions meet their needs. Persons respond positively when practitioners pay attention to their personal and collective stories, thereby increasing the relevance of any intervention. In this sense, communities begin to gain control of their health and other institutions. New directions thus appear to be feasible.

New Social Imagery

In many ways, becoming community-based is founded on a new ethic. Simply put, persons are viewed to be tied together inextricably—and thus share a space and destiny—and thus should act in concert (Wiesenfeld 1996). Rather than seeing themselves as fundamentally independent, and thus only reluctantly associated, they should initiate any action from their communal base. In this way, social cohesion is promoted along with relevant and productive interventions.

Among those who debate regularly these social issues, themes such as civil society and popular control have become very important. Basic to these ideas is the notion of citizen power. Behind all the usual abstractions is a simple fact—human, collective action is at the root of every institution. Despite the pervasiveness of alienation, and persons' "misperception" of their dominance, institutions are not basically autonomous but the product of human intelligence and effort (Bourdieu 1980, p. 140).

Calling for the recognition of civil society, accordingly, marks the desire of persons to control their creations and, possibly, give modern society a new orientation (Lerner et al. 2000). In this context, resurrecting communities implies a lot more than simply making social planning more inclusive and reducing methodological or procedural errors, although such improvements are certainly valuable. The point, instead, is to enable persons to shape their respective futures. In addition to resolv-

ing logistical issues, communities may begin to assert themselves more effectively, in order to create a more commodious world.

The operative principle at this juncture is participation. However, this involvement extends beyond simply asking community members periodically for input, or eventually to interpret some research findings. Such consultation does not constitute participation from a community-based perspective. In community-based planning, participation goes to the core of a project. Such projects, as described by Maritza Montero (2002), are truly grounded, since they emanate from collective initiative. They are based on knowledge, for example, that is created and sustained through local action. As a result, these endeavors are not likely to become antagonistic to their creators and thus irrelevant or repressive.

Indeed, as a result of fostering the direct involvement local persons in every phase of a social project, they begin to support and trust one another (Lasker and Weiss 2003). Stated simply, they come together as a community, once they begin to experience the interrelation of events and persons. As studies on service-learning document, for example, participation in community projects has far reaching impact, as students become aware of social problems and the changes that are necessary to correct these issues (Rhoads 1997). A central finding is that such a transformation encourages an increase in social responsibility.

As part of this growth, persons begin to realize that they are important in developing effective social policies. They begin to understand, for example, that they have the skills required to undertake projects of any size, and thus gain the confidence necessary to become self-directed. In fact, there is no better cure for alienation than this sort of participation. Through this involvement in designing and implementing interventions persons become committed to their projects and build relevant and thus solid and lasting institutions.

In this sense, as Stuart Hampshire (1989, p. 59) writes, persons begin to recognize the "false fixity" of institutions. Through participation and reflection, they begin to appreciate that institutional arrangements are not established in stone. In fact, reflection is essential to this exercise of imagination and the related freedom. Additionally, through these processes, persons can bring about new identities and relationships. The social world is thus open for change and a new future (Harvey 2007).

Beyond Empowerment

The issue that often arises at this point is empowerment. Participation, in short, empowers persons to take control of their communities and futures (Maton 2008). Empowerment, in this sense, is thought to be a vital element of community-based planning and the elimination of alienation. Through their involvement in a project, local persons are thought to acquire some control over their affairs and achieve a sense of efficacy (Rappaport 1984). The so-called vital capacity of a community is increased to promote desired programs and outcomes.

However, in many ways, the traditional treatment of this issue is quite paternalistic. Simply put, due to their participation in a project, persons move to a new level of existence. In other words, they are transformed and acquire a trait, namely power, that was absent before community-based planning was initiated. Through various means, this new characteristic is bestowed on the members of a community and internalized. However, this term is vague and often used without much serious reflection.

Those who want to become community-based in their work should be wary of this portrayal. Even though planners may be well-intentioned, the key point is that neither persons nor communities are ever empowered. Although their skills or efforts may have been overlooked or blocked in the past, due to inappropriate policies or practices, persons are never empowered by anyone. Indeed, externalizing abilities or initiatives in this manner only creates dependency, which is antithetical to the philosophy behind community-based interventions. Persons and communities, simply stated, are always the source of inspiration and change! Accordingly, community-based planning is not a missionary activity, whereby an outsider brings enlightenment to unfortunate persons.

What a community-based strategy does, in this sense, is unleash the power that persons were unable to exercise in the past; community-based projects nurture rather than build their skills and desires (Prilleltensky 2005). These desires are considered to be productive, as persons define themselves and their destines, unencumbered by institutions that may be irrelevant or stifling. Empowerment, therefore, represents the ability of communities to articulate their own perspectives and bring these realities to fruition. The basic principle is that communities learn to assess and cure themselves, while in the past they were, at best, merely consulted by politicians and other experts. As Cottrell states (1983), these groups attain a sense of "community competence," whereby they identify and solve their problems through concerted action.

Crucial to these community-based undertakings is the formulation of new definitions, for example, of health, illness, remedy, and cure (Riger 2001). In the past, various typologies were applied to communities to assess their needs or problems, because these schemes were assumed to reflect seasoned judgments on these issues. Now, with the focus on communities, and the way in which they define these issues, any norms should be related closely to how these persons organize their daily lives. How they define their identities and the actions of others, for example, should provide the framework for community evaluations and other projects.

What emerges gradually from this community-based strategy is the insight that communities are not simply places but realities. A community is organized around the values, beliefs, and commitments of a group of persons (Wiesenfeld 1996). A community, accordingly, is not merely an empirical but an existential phenomenon. For example, rather than a spatial location, a community emerges from the confluence of a variety of experiences (McMillan and Chavis 1986). What persons consider to be normal or deviant, for example, is the result of how communities construct their respective realities. Furthermore, access to these different "reference

groups" holds the key to developing an appropriate and effective social intervention (Reynolds 1987, pp. 79–80).

In this regard, becoming community-based does not mean simply that planners acquire a new focus. Rather than the society-at-large, or the so-called social system, the emphasis is something narrower. Likewise, community-based planners do not merely work through communities, as a logical step to increase the ease of implementing a project. Both of these typical scenarios overlook an essential point: communities do not exist sui generis. That is, communities are not neatly circumscribed but rather embody how their members define themselves, their possibilities, and their relationships (Puddifoot 1995). Penetrating this reality is not necessarily captured adequately by suggesting that projects must include communities in order to be relevant or effective. Such a description is too facile and manipulative from the perspective of a community-based philosophy.

Based on the writing of Melvin Pollner (1987), communities are organized around a mode of rationality he refers to as "mundane reasoning." Every community, in other words, is based on a set of recipes for defining and dealing with a range of issues such as health and illness. Becoming community-based, accordingly, requires that these conceptual schemes begin to guide planning activities. How persons seek treatment or respond to interventions, for example, depends on their definitions of sickness and the prospects for cure. In this regard, communities construct and enact their realities.

In this regard, communities are neither settings, targets, nor resources (McLeroy et. al. 2003). These designations are typical. From a community-based perspective, on the other hand, communities are agents; they create their realities and act on these perspectives. Accordingly, this action is the focus of attention. The notion of empowerment may thus have some relevance, if persons gain control over the interventions in their communities. Nonetheless, what is important is true participation, rather than feelings, perceptions, or making the proper adjustments to programs—the traditional indications of empowerment.

A New Philosophy

What is crucial to understand is that this community-based orientation is predicated on an entirely new philosophy. Instead of simply a change in methodology or technique, a new approach to conceptualizing knowledge and social order come into play. In other words, a significant shift is made in viewing social existence, or in this case a community's reality.

Some of the fundamental elements of this philosophy are anti-dualism, holism, respect for "otherness," and "joint action" as the basis of social order. These themes pervade the discussions provided in this book. Central to this philosophy, however, is that knowledge and community order are grounded in participation (McNeely 1999). The result is that knowledge acquisition, activism, and social change are intertwined. As opposed to a disinterested or value-free endeavor, the world is engaged and (re)defined through community-based planning.

Community-based planners, in this regard, appreciate that through engagement, knowledge is both created by community members and conceptualized by those who create and implement interventions. Such involvement or mediation is not an impediment to the discovery of facts or a distraction, but holds the key to encountering a community's reality. There is no pretense, therefore, on the part of community-based planners to be objective in the traditional sense (Murray and Poland 2006). Engagement, in fact, precludes the possibility of taking such a neutral posture.

Activism is thus always a crucial part of community-based planning, since any stance taken by planners is always interested. Due to the challenge to neutrality posed by participation, there is no "God's eye view" on the social world. The key question is what constitutes a relevant position. How can activism, in other words, be directed to foster a community's various commitments? Initiating a situationally relevant action thus becomes the important issue.

What readers might notice at this point is that philosophy is very important when trying to grasp the nature of a community-based intervention. Indeed, philosophy is critical! Some truly difficult issues must be investigated as part of becoming community-based (Lefley 1988). What may appear to be a completely practical and straightforward activity has an incredibly sophisticated pedigree. Additionally, understanding this philosophy can help clarify many issues, when an intervention begins to lose focus due to unexpected problems.

A community-based strategy, for example, is not grounded in the usual empiricism that guides most planning (Smith 1987). In such a philosophy, empirical social indicators—such as race, quality of housing, or unemployment rate—are often used as a proxy for a community. However, when this maneuver is made, a community is treated very superficially, while a problem is explained in terms of a response to environmental, sociocultural, or other objective indicators. The principle shortcoming of this methodology, at least from a community-based perspective, is that participation is not taken into account. In other words, how persons engage their reality is overlooked, along with their biographies. Indeed, biography is symbolic and created rather than simply empirical.

The Importance of Participation

Due to the centrality of participation, projects are initiated that are consistent with the reality constructed by a community. As should be appreciated, participation does not signal merely involvement; participation, instead, relates more to reality construction (Harris 2010). Communities, in short, actively identity their needs and invent appropriate solutions. In this sense, community-based interventions emerge from the reality that has been, and continues to be, constructed and enacted by the members of a community. In this regard, Orlando Fals Borda (1988, p. 93) declares that community-based interventions are based on an engaged epistemology, or a "people's science."

In the parlance of social planning, this involvement of a community allows for the generation of a set of so-called "best practices" with respect to social develop-

ment. What should be noted is that these options are neither universally logical nor culled from standard cases or examples. Rather than ideal, some practices have been tried and subsequently valued and elevated in importance. These strategies, accordingly, have proven to be effective and supported by the members of a community. In this very limited sense, these practices are considered to be the best.

In this regard, at the heart of a community-based strategy is epistemological control. That is, the knowledge base that is constructed by a community guides the development of all practices, including those that go beyond the collection of data. There are managerial and ethical issues, for example, that are unique when they emerge from this source of information. However, most important is that every aspect of a community-based project is shaped by this infusion of local knowledge.

Every facet of a community, in other words, has a biography (Berger and Luckmann 1990, p. 63). Suggested by this idea is that facts and values are constantly reworked by persons, and that these changes are part of any claims about valid knowledge. What a community identifies as a deleterious or unhealthy situation, for example, carries the imprint of the contrasting interpretations that are part of establishing that this condition is factual. Instead of empirical indicators, participation directs the focus of planning to so-called popular experience. These experiences, accordingly, provide the key to understanding the desired direction of a community.

In terms of contemporary planning, community-based projects are sustainable because of this recognition of biography. These interventions will likely continue because they reflect how persons define themselves and their problems, and thus such projects are relevant and rewarding. On a more practical note, community members will support even mundane projects, such as painting a building or erecting a fence, because these activities entail the fulfillment of their plans. The point is that attraction is not necessarily found in the gravity of a project but the connection with a community's biography.

Community-building is a complex component of any community-based project. However, completing tasks and acquiring skills, for example, represent the surface of any real community-based project. On the other hand, without a proper context, an intervention will never be sustained or succeed. For this reason, community-based projects do not simply solve problems but foster the "well-being" of communities (Prilleltensky 2005). In addition to addressing pressing issues, community-based interventions establish the conditions necessary for ordinary persons to direct a project. Allowing indigenous leaders to emerge, along with mastering certain skills, is a vital component of this new orientation. There is no better way to building a community, accordingly, then by fostering participation whereby skills can be put into practice, refined, and improved (Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone 1998). In truth, rather than building a community, these persons are encouraged to express themselves in a planning process that is community-based.

Often those who focus on community development in this manner begin to refer to these groups as having assets; community members, accordingly, are described as resources (Kretzmann and McKnight 1996). Although more flattering than the deficit model, whereby communities, especially those that are poor, are viewed as broken, this approach is not necessarily dynamic. Treating communities as if they consist of an array of assets misses a central point of a community-based

orientation. That is, communities do not simply have traits but invent themselves through human action, or participation. Having a positive view of communities, in short, is not the same as recognizing and incorporating this creative aspect into the planning process.

This difference is crucial to community-based planning. Adopting a positive view of a community does not necessarily mean that these persons will be the centerpiece of a project. They may simply not be abused or overlooked. Community-based initiatives, on the other hand, encourage the participation of community members in every aspect of a project (Leung et al. 2004). The general principle is that this participation provides an intervention with a proper direction and legitimacy. Simply because planners have a positive outlook does not signal a profound change in orientation—a community may be nothing but the "silent partner" in a project (Callaghan 2009).

In this respect, ownership is not the same as control. In some planning circles, a sign of a community-based project is ownership! A community may often have to assume ownership of a failing project. This situation, however, may be the result of a lack of true participation in the early stages of an intervention. Communities should not be expected to own parts or even all of a project, unless control brought about through participation is a vital part of this bargain.

In order to unleash this inventiveness, community-based planners are expected to democratize the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating interventions. In fact, this decentralization is also at the heart of the community-building process (Arnstein 1969). If pervasive participation is going to be inaugurated successfully, democratization is vital. What is most important is to move beyond simply "buy-in" to allow persons to create an intervention; in fact, assumed by buy-in is that a project already exists and needs supporters. This new planning, to use a popular phrase, begins to represent "popular science," based on local expertise and guidance (Rahman 1985).

Democratization of Culture

The basic task of democratization is to remove any impediments that may stifle the full participation of community members in a project (Windel and Cibulka 1981). In this case, democratization has a much broader meaning that is typically the case. The focus, simply put, is not voting and debate. Indeed, these activities do not necessarily guarantee that all persons are included in any discussion, or that diverse viewpoints receive a fair hearing.

A catchy term that is used nowadays to describe this openness is social entrepreneurship. The aim of this process, similar to community-based planning, is to enlarge the pool of those who participate in development activities. Readers, however, should not be confused. There are important differences between these approaches. One of the most important differences pertains to this issue of democratization. Most often, social entrepreneurs are treated as if they constitute a special class of persons, and thus their input is especially sought. Likewise, medical personnel are

characterized often as possessing knowledge and skills more valuable than any other participant (Onyett 2003, pp. 179–180). The participation of these persons, due to their unique qualities, is presumed to make the difference between a successful and unsuccessful project. What is created, accordingly, is a narrow enterprise instead of an open and democratic culture.

The emphasis of a community-project, instead, is on the democratization of culture (Hardina 2006). What this process entails is the creation of a domain where various knowledge bases are placed on an equal footing. Furthermore, a range of acceptable topics or proposals is not established beforehand, thereby restricting a discussion. The point is to promote the introduction of diverse viewpoints, even those that may be viewed traditionally as unworkable, before options are winnowed through debate. In the parlance of contemporary political philosophy, the aim is to challenge hegemony—the imposition of particular and likely irrelevant perspectives—so that viewpoints may proliferate (Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

In a similar vein, certain persons, and their opinions, are not elevated automatically over others. Elitism and discrimination such as racism or ageism are unacceptable. Obviously the issue of power comes into play at this juncture. In other words, particular classes of persons must not be able to monopolize the agenda, due to their education or position. A community-based strategy will falter unless every segment of a community has the opportunity to shape the discussion. Moreover, a community cannot be considered self-directed if this tenet is compromised (Cahill 2007).

A community-based project rests on inclusion, both in terms of persons and ideas, and the creation of a public or popular realm appropriate for uninhibited discussion (Fine 1997). However, most of these projects deal with poor persons, who are often dismissed as irrelevant to the planning process. Also, as long as they are assumed to represent a dearth of high quality information, planning cannot be thought of as truly participatory. Prejudices must be addressed, for example, that portray certain persons as unintelligent or unmotivated, so that participation is widespread and ideas that were formerly unknown may receive serious attention. Planning can thus begin to reflect a community.

A community that is self-directed has the right to enact the reality that is created by its members, provided that these persons give direction to all plans. Traditional options—norms or expectations—must be deprived of their usual seigniorial status that would impede the creation of new programs. Novel health care proposals, for example, may be considered improbable according to the old paradigm. In a new context or reality, however, these possibilities may be very workable. In this regard, reality is democratized.

This sort of democratization goes far beyond the notion of partnership that is used regularly to characterize the relationship between community members and planners, when local input becomes an important issue (Fraser 2005). Likewise, advocacy falls short of the principle that sustains the association between community-based planners and communities. Neither of these processes is comprehensive enough to describe adequately how community members are joined, and how they are linked to community-based planners.

The issue at this moment is how social order is conceptualized. Presupposed by democratization is that community members, along with planners when they enter the picture, are united on the basis of solidarity (Barnes et al. 2003). Most important is that community-based planners are also a part of the community in question, even though they might not reside in that location. In this regard, planners should not be viewed to be part of an elite class (Byrne 2005).

The larger question is what constitutes a community? As noted earlier, a community reflects experiential ties and the associated participation (MacQueen et.al. 2001). In community-based planning, all experts exhibit the requisite solidarity, and thus are expected to behave like any other community member. Specifically, they support their fellow members and solicit their opinions, and are committed to the betterment of the community. In this way, community-based planning is a communal affair that encourages true collaboration and the co-generation of projects. However, in reality, any experts have subordinate roles with respect to the participation of community members.

Planning, accordingly, may now include social indicators, but within the context of a broad range of participants. Any discussion of a community's problems, for example, extends beyond a perusal of the so-called objective features of this neighborhood. The problem with the usual scenario is that the meaning of these indicators is fixed, or tied to empirical properties, with additional sources of corroboration merely included in the planning process (Land 1971). The only advance made with this sort of limited partnership is that more persons are invited to confirm the standard effects of these environmental or cultural elements. This manner of collaboration with health experts or government officials, in other words, does not necessarily promote any awareness of how communities are produced and maintained by their members.

When enmeshed within the biographies that constitute a community, on the other hand, social indicators are understood to be constructed and thus interpreted in a variety of ways. The indication that something is problematic, such as an unhealthy environment, is a matter of interpretation and perspective, with further decisions related to the appropriateness of an intervention based on these initial constructions and further elaboration. Clearly, the issue of democratization is very important in this undertaking, since these interpretations and their accompanying logics should be contested by all community members, with interventions emerging from this process.

The solidarity that binds persons together, including community-based planners with a community, is more profound that a periodic partnership. Solidarity, for example, includes experiences, commitments, and responsibility, whereas a partnership may involve merely sporadic contacts and official displays camaraderie. Likewise, solidarity is predicated on understanding how a community has been constructed in various ways, interpersonally and historically, thereby providing insight into the definitions of any problems and their likely solutions. Anyone who shares this solidarity is able to gain a real understanding of a community's needs and hopes.