

Ken dempsey's community



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Discuss Ken Dempsey's reading on Community In the reading Community: Its Character and Meaning, the author, Ken Dempsey stresses the difficulties that arise when attempting to define this concept of community. It is one of the most contested concepts in the social sciences, yet sociologists persist in using it because the informal relationships we have beyond the household continue to play a significant part in people's daily lives, and they find the notion of community indispensable to talking about these experiences.

The similarity between the conflicting definitions of community is a common reference to humanity. Beyond this there is no basic agreement. There are different types of communities according to who is defining it. For example, some definitions don't refer to geographical area at all while others emphasise this as the main characteristic of community, known as community of place. Yet there are conflicting ideas that community doesn't necessarily have to be an external thing but comes from within an individual, the view that community can just be sharing a common belief or common lifestyle.

One of the more accepted definitions of community arises with a group of people occupying a common territory, sharing a common life, whose members have one or more social ties in common. And the sense of belonging that arises from being a part of this. Most of the writers who have conducted major reviews of the literature on communities acknowledge that communities need not inhabit the same territory in order to be communities but are built around common identities.

Another occurring idea from academics is that communities are groups that are able to meet the daily needs of their members from the resources of their own area and their own people. Yet despite the persistence of this viewpoint, the reality today is that no settlement in the Western world is economically, politically or culturally autonomous. Nor do the inhabitants of any community have all, or even most, of their needs met within the boundaries of the community. It is also becoming increasingly unlikely that most of the significant social ties will be restricted by those boundaries, so in this sense it can be said that we are moving beyond the idea of community as a place where the members are restricted by territory. Dempsey relies mainly on a structural perspective for discussing the nature and experience of community. He focuses mainly on community of place and in particular that of small rural towns, where he states there is a strong sense of belonging to community, as 'everyone knows everyone'.

However, we cannot assume that community members have strong feelings of attachment to one another. In arguing that community exists when a sufficient number of people know one another we focus on the form and not the content or substance of relationships. Psychologically, communities of place are potentially important to their members because people need to feel a part of something. Attachment to place and people informs their personal sense of identity.