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Problematizing Communities in Creative Processes:
What They Are, What They Do, and How They are Practiced

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What They Are, What They Do, and How They are Practiced

Abstract

This discussion paper problematizes the notion of community in creative processes. First the paper looks at three paradigmatic community orientations: communities are communities because of (1) *what they are*, a question of representation and differentiation; (2) *what they do*, a question of performance and functionality, how they establish order and meaning; and (3) *how they are practiced* in creative processes, a praxeological question. Based on the last paradigmatic orientation, a different assumption ground is being developed for the idea of how communities are constantly made and maintained as communities-in-the-making in creative processes.

Keywords

Community, Problematization, Practice, Community-in-the-making

Introduction: Challenging Assumptions

The aim of this discussion paper is to problematize the concept of community as a unit of analysis in creative processes. The community concept and how it is used for theorizing creative processes is in need of problematization since it rests upon a set of assumptions which are “taken for granted” and which need to be disentangled (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011; West & Lakhani, 2008). The notion of community has reached increasing attention particularly in the discussions about creativity and innovation (e.g. Adler, 2015). Amin Ash and Joanne Roberts (2008) edited a book entitled *Community, Economic Creativity, and Organization*, in which they divide types of communities according to types of knowledge and their innovative/creative potential from craft-based over professional and expert to virtual communities. Firms, the authors argue, become increasingly interested in harnessing the creative potential of these aggregates of people “united by common tasks, capabilities, and projects” (p. 23). Not least due to the upraise of the “open innovation” (Chesbrough, 2003) concept, community became also a central concept of innovation studies which looked for the roots of innovative ideas especially in open source software development outside of the boundaries of the firm (West & Lakhani, 2008). And still, the prevailing employment of the community notions stops short of conceptualizing the emergence and, more importantly, the continuous reproduction of a community alongside creative processes, but usually sees innovation and creativity as an attribute of community or community as an embedding social structure for creative processes (e.g. Adler, 2015; Benkler, 2006). Therefore there is a need to look into the common literature on community and to problematize how a community differs from its contextual environment over time, what kind of practices and structures are responsible and in what way they are responsible, in order to differentiate it from other social informal or formal groupings (see West & Lakhani, 2008; Brint, 2001; and Gläser, 2001; Djelic & Quack, 2010 for a similar argument). The domain of literature chosen in this paper for identifying and challenging some of these assumptions reaches from sociological classics

(e.g. Tönnies, 1887; Durkheim, 1893; Weber, 1976 [1922]), and literature on community governance (e.g. Gläser, 2001) over philosophical essays (e.g. Bottazzi et al., 2006) to the recent literature on communities and creative practices (e.g. Reckwitz, 2002).

Alvesson and Sandberg's (2011) methodology is employed as a framework for problematization, challenging, in a first step, existing notions of community by looking especially at paradigmatic assumptions and root-metaphors, and subsequently developing a possible new assumption ground. Following the idea of problematization, I propose not to question the appropriateness of the term *community* (see also Lindkvist, 2005) itself, but to look at the underlying assumptions represented in different ways in the interdisciplinary literature on communities. In this literature I identified three paradigmatic community orientations: Communities are communities because of (1) *what they are*, a question of differentiation; (2) *what they do*, a question of performance and functionality, how they establish order and meaning; and (3) *how they are practiced* in creative processes, a praxeological question. Based on the last paradigmatic orientation, I aim at further developing an assumption ground for the idea of how, in creative processes, communities are constantly made and maintained as communities-in-the-making.

My starting point is differentiation theory. Differentiation theory (e.g. Bateson, 2000; Spencer Brown, 1969) puts the operation of "making a difference" before any epistemological endeavour in theory building. Instead of focusing primarily on the phenomenon of community, I look specifically at what it is distinguished from (e.g. community vs. organization vs. market) and how it is distinguished (e.g. sharing mechanisms vs. hierarchy vs. price). In the following I will briefly identify and articulate the paradigmatic assumptions underlying the community concept and then undertake to further challenge each set of assumptions as root-metaphors (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

"What communities are" is a paradigmatic question of meaning, description, differentiation and typology. In an effort to answer this question, the associated literature draws on what Andrew Pickering (2010) calls representational ontology. Pickering (2010) differentiates "representational ontology" and "performative ontology". He uses this differentiation to describe the ontological difference between entities that seem to be indifferent to their environment, such as trivial machines, and entities that adapt to their environment and are in constant exchange with it, such as the human brain. Communities within the representational (and thereby rather positivistic) assumption exist independently from the researcher's perspective and can be described and categorized as different from their environment, i.e. from other entities such as markets, organizations or individuals. In other words, we can talk about communities in the same way as we talk about these other social entities or systems.

"How communities establish order" is a question of functionality, i.e. mechanisms of integration, rule systems, and governance. The underlying assumption is rooted in a performative ontology: communities are in exchange with each other or react to an environment, and therefore their functioning can be analysed. Looking at the functioning of communities aims at identifying the rules, principles and processes which govern activities in the community. Following the assumption of communities as order-creating entities, the literature looks at certain types of social ordering or modes of co-ordination (Gläser, 2001) and at operations rather than static attributes which make a community a community. The question of control and social ordering is a different observational perspective since it also invites time and temporal dynamics into the picture. Therefore, more than one type of social ordering can exist simultaneously and sequentially.

Finally, “how communities are practiced” has a pragmatic assumption concerning the role of community-generating practices or practices that have a “we-intentionality” (Searle & Willis, 1983) in collective production, innovation and creative processes. Rather than looking at communities as given entities in terms of a constellation of actors who share a common activity, a praxeological ontology opens up the view towards communities-in-the-making, meaning how communities are *co-produced* in a creative process similar to other products that emerge from collaborations (e.g. Gläser, 2001). What is different in this assumption is that the views on representation and performance assume that there are existing communities, whereas a praxeological ontology starts with the mere assumption that there are certain practices that have the potential to activate and sustain something like a community-building process. In other words, these practices generate incomplete structures (see Knorr-Cetina, 2005) which motivate further practices. Community thereby is to be seen neither as a new “locus of innovation” (Dahlander et al., 2008) nor as an extra-organizational arena of innovation. Community in creative processes is much rather something that oscillates between practice and incomplete structure motivating further practice, and – as I will argue – is itself a creative product.

Figure 1 summarizes the questions on community and the underlying paradigmatic assumptions.

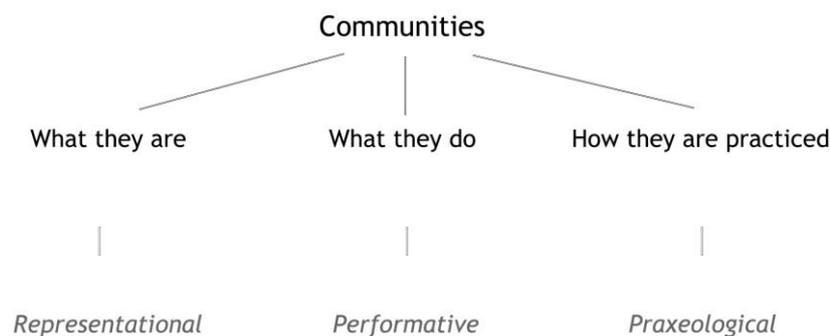


Figure 1. Paradigmatic Assumptions underlying the Community Construct

Communities are communities because of what they are

When looking at the classical literature on communities (e.g. Tönnies, 1887; Durkheim, 1893; Weber, 1976 [1922]), the picture of how the concept was theorized in a representational manner resembles a process of differentiation and questioning differences (see also Brint, 2001). The question in this literature is not so much *why* communities assemble (e.g. sharing something), or *how* they assemble (e.g. by establishing social order), but rather how the pre-given assemblage can be *distinguished* from other social entities.

The community concept in this literature is employed to make a distinction in terms of place or structural organization of an actor assemblage. One frequently used line of thinking (Brint, 2001; Gläser, 2001; Knorr-Cetina, 1982; Weber, 1976 [1922]) about communities starts with Tönnies (1887), who differentiated between “community” (*Gemeinschaft*) and “society” (*Gesellschaft*). This means differentiating between rural and urban social forms of life and relationships. Tönnies developed ideal aggregated types along the dimensions of organic vs.

mechanistic social forms and enduring vs. temporary social forms. This typology still shapes our understanding of the concept of community (Brint, 2001; Gläser, 2001; Adler, 2015). The root-metaphor in this conceptualization is: organic (affectual – the body) as opposed to mechanistic (rational – the machine). Tönnies’ aggregation and differentiation looks as follows:

<p>Community (Gemeinschaft) “rural forms of life”</p> <p>Organic Enduring</p>	<p>Society (Gesellschaft) “urban forms of life”</p> <p>Mechanistic Temporary</p>
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Figure 2. Organic vs. Mechanistic (adapted from Tönnies, 1887, p. 216)

The main assumption underlying Tönnies’ ideas is that, in order to be part of a community, one must be *born* into it. It is rather a question of fate than of actual practice that constitutes membership within a community in Tönnies’ conceptualizations.

According to Brint (2001; and also Djelic and Quack, 2010), Durkheim provides the most important alternative to Tönnies’ conceptualization because he was the first to see community “not as a social structure or physical entity, but as a set of variable properties of human interaction” (2001, p. 8). Durkheim disaggregated the concept into certain variables such as structural (e.g. dense and demanding ties, ritual occasions, group size, etc.) and cultural (e.g. common physical characteristics, way of life, beliefs, etc.). Both sets of variables, according to Durkheim, can be found within rural *and* urban forms of life. Thereby Durkheim questioned the differentiation made by Tönnies.

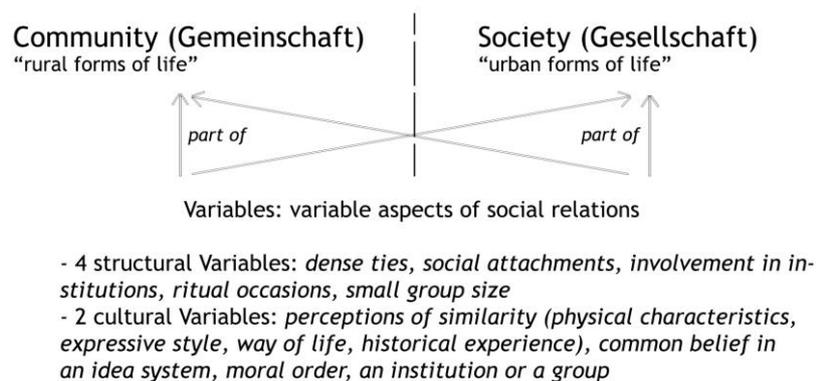


Figure 3. Durkheim’s Community Variables (adapted from Brint, 2001)

Weber (1976) offered yet another form of critique. He criticized Tönnies’ differentiation for being too specific (p. 40) and constructing ideal types that blur the understanding of social relationships. Weber, rather than looking at certain structural/cultural variables describing human interaction, turned to the *orientation* of social action. He thereby specified certain relationships as “communal” (affectual and traditional) and distinguished them from certain relationships that are “associative” (instrumental rational and value rational). Similar to Durkheim, Weber explicitly stated that Tönnies’ communities of place, the urban or the rural,

can have both types of relationships. While Tönnies assumes a difference between two entities, Weber (eventually interested in the question of what explains social action) assumes a difference between two types of relationships.

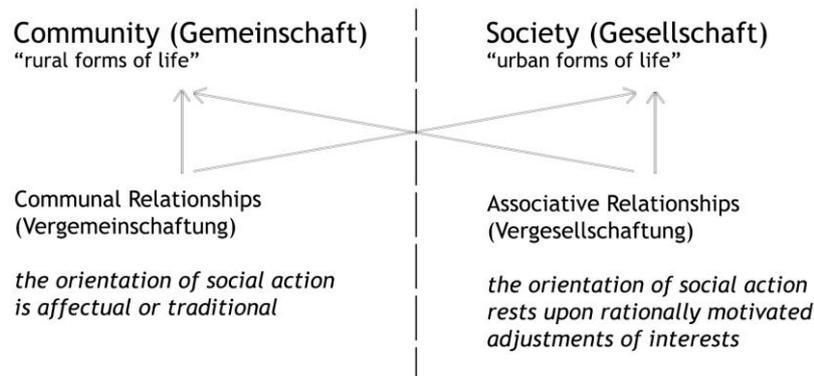


Figure 4. Weber’s Forms of Relationships (adapted from Weber, 1976)

Durkheim and Weber claim that the community concept is rather misleading when it shifts the focus away from interaction and relationships and towards a fixed social structure in time and place. Can we then speak of community as a social entity at all?

As an alternative to this problem, George Hillery (1955) formulated a community concept that puts communities of place side by side with communities of choice. By combining sixteen concepts of classification from the literature from the 94 definitions of community which he found already at that time, Hillery sees social interaction as the basis of all definitions but divides the definitions in defined by geographic area and defined by a common characteristic. This line of reasoning frees the community concept to a certain extent from the old urban/rural dichotomy and questions the role of propinquity, distance and geographical location as a necessary prerequisite for community building. Thereby, Tönnies’ fateful “being born into a community” is also put into question, since according to Hillery, communities of choice can exist side by side with communities of place. Brint (2001), too, states that the completely non-instrumental character of community like entities in the way in which Tönnies perceived them, is unrealistic. But still, he argues, we can talk about social entities, which are “primarily based on affect, loyalty and shared values or personal involvement with the lives of others” (2001, p. 9). Brint differentiates these aggregates of people from other e.g. work-related aggregates which are “ultimately tied up with issues of rational interest”. What Brint does then is take the assumption of Tönnies’ urban/rural dichotomy with the root-metaphors of organic and mechanistic solidarity and reframe it as a value dichotomy. Similar to Weber’s approach of rational/affectual orientations of social action, Brint extrapolates this idea by stating that this value dichotomy eventually creates a certain community-like aggregation of people.

Within this differentiation Brint goes on to develop a typology of communities that consists of (1) the ultimate context of interaction (geographic or choice) which he calls “existential basis of relationship ties”, (2) the primary motive of interaction (activity-based or belief-based), (3) the rates of interaction for geographic communities (4), the location of members (concentrated or dispersed in space) for choice-based communities, and (5) the amount of face-to-face interaction for dispersed communities.

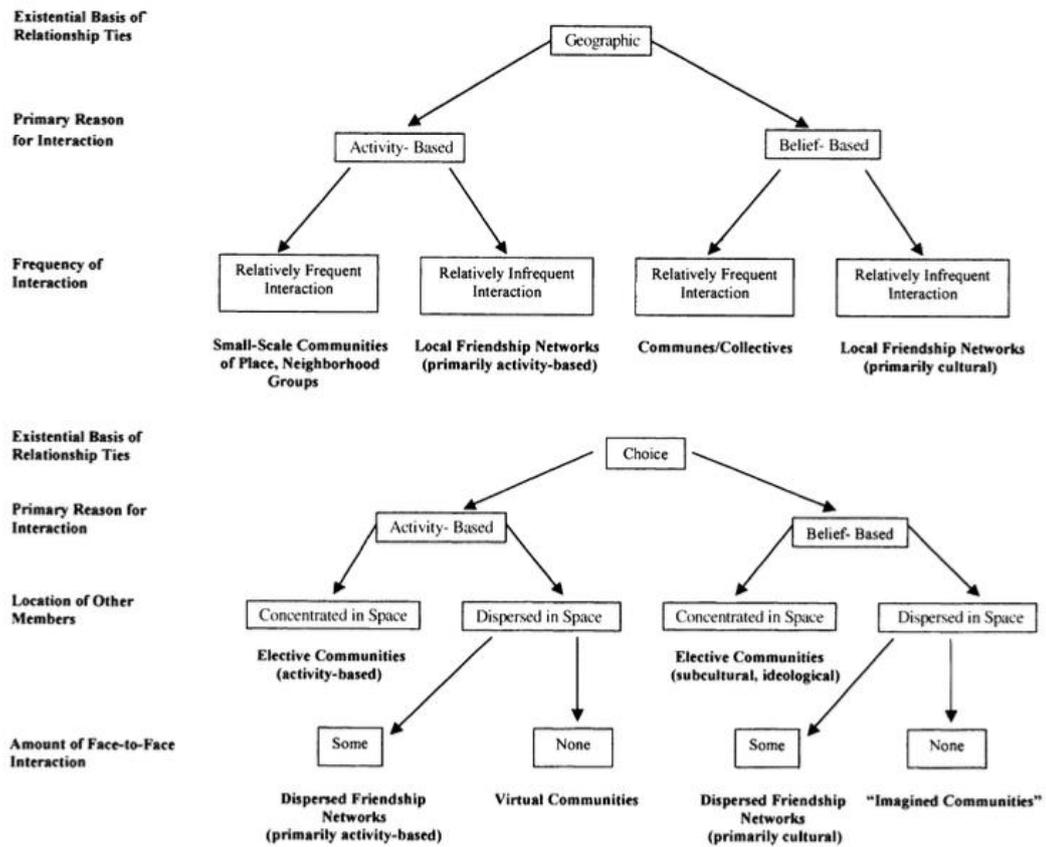


Figure 5. A Community Typology (Brint, 2001 p. 10)

Brint (2001, p. 11) develops eight subtypes of communities: communities of place, communities and collectives, localized friendship networks, dispersed friendship networks, activity-based elective communities, belief-based elective communities, imagined communities and virtual communities (exclusively computer mediated).

Further differentiations of virtual communities were proposed, for example, by Porter (2004). She incorporates individuals and business partners into her definition and further refines the role of technology by stating that interaction is partially supported and/or mediated by technology because virtual communities can have different degrees of ‘virtualness’. Porter includes time into her conceptualization of communities insofar as she looks at the *establishment* of virtual communities. Importantly, she divides member-initiated from organization-sponsored communities (similarly to Grabher & Ibert, 2014) and further divides them, in terms of their relationship orientation, into the two member-initiated forms social and professional and three organisation-sponsored forms commercial, non-profit, and government. To sum up, in the representational ontology, it is essential to define *what* communities are, resulting in a typology of (representational) differentiations. The discussion started with Tönnies’ communities which are defined by place: rural forms of life are different to urban forms of life. Both Durkheim and Weber questioned this differentiation since certain structural and cultural variables as aspects of social relations as well as communal and associative relationships are to be found in rural as well as in urban forms of life. Can we then still ask *what* communities are? According to Hillery (1955) and Brint (2001) we can, provided that we distinguish between communities of place and communities of choice. Communities of choice are distinguished from other entities which are primarily based on aspects of rational interest, such as formal organizations. The root metaphor underlying the

community concept in the representational ontology stays with Tönnies' initial idea of organic (e.g. affectual) vs. mechanistic (e.g. rational) interest.

Communities are communities because of how they establish order

The representational ontology is useful because it results in typologies that help to understand what kind of social systems communities are. The problem with this approach (see also Gläser, 2001), however, is that it cannot explain how collective action is achieved in communities. This is promised by approaches which see communities as entities which enable action (establish order).

Communities as types of social order

Again Gläser (2001) problematizes the differentiations by Brint and Tönnies as based on two overly idealistic assumptions: that communities are about sharing values or beliefs, and are characterized by mutual emotional bonds as well as frequent interaction. Gläser looks at communities which lack these specific properties, but can still be defined as communities. He does not disaggregate the concept again, but looks at it from a different viewpoint, asking, "How does a community establish order?"

This theoretical step brings another dimension into the picture which does not lead to another typology of communities, but to a more dynamic viewpoint of a social entity which acts and establishes order. With the paradigmatic assumptions reviewed so far, the theoretical endeavor was an aggregation and reaggregation of attributes to distinguish between a social entity and its environment. This theorizing was a zooming in and out of the picture, looking at aspects and then looking at the whole. With the inclusion of order, the theorizing includes the position of an observer who can change his or her perspective to look at a certain *functioning* entity from different perspectives. In **Figure 6** I visualize this assumption of an observational perspective which can look at a community from different angles by drawing the entity of a community in three dimensions. This draws on a performative ontology. The question is not so much how we can make a (static) difference by looking (at certain points of time) at communities by describing what they are and what they are not. It is much rather about looking at social order and the way it is created by certain frameworks such as arrangements, regimes and rule systems (Hutter et al., 2015). This view looks at the way in which communities enable actors to "do things" as a social entity compared to other enabling social entities. The debate on community governance (see Bowles and Ginitis, 2002) is rooted in one fundamental question: "Which is the optimal form of government for society?" Is it the market or the state that is most efficient for controlling economic processes? Community in the debate on governance is widely understood as a group/aggregation of people who "interact directly, frequently and in multi-faceted ways" (Bowles and Ginitis, 2002, p. 420). Community governance comes into play when the market and the state fail to allocate resources efficiently (Williamson, 1996); in other words, communities solve certain problems which cannot be addressed by the market or the state. Community in this sense enables action because it is a "problem-solving" entity. Problems such as "insufficient provision of local public goods such as neighbourhood amenities, the absence of insurance and other risk-sharing opportunities even when these would be mutually beneficial, exclusion of the poor from credit markets, and excessive and ineffective monitoring of work effort" (Bowles and Ginitis, 2002, p. 422) can be solved by communities. Likewise, communities can be used both as a form of corporate control and as a site of resistance to corporate power (Faulconbridge, 2017). But what

determines this problem-solving capacity other than something different than the functioning of a market or a state? What gives it an entity-like character?

Gläser (2001) takes a similar stand, but looks closer at the way in which communities establish order (rather independently from unsolved problems). Communities, according to Gläser (who does not specifically speak about governance), are a type of actor constellations that result in a certain type of social ordering similar to other models of social order like markets, hierarchies and networks.

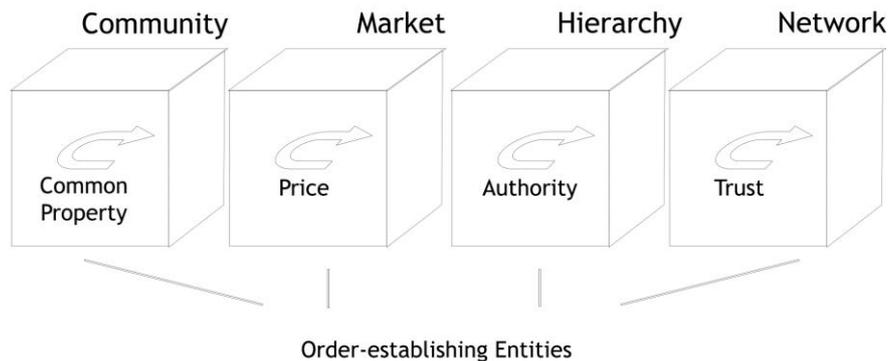


Figure 6. Order-establishing Entities (adapted from Gläser, 2001)

In order to conceptualize community as an “order establishing entity”, Gläser (2001) moves one step up the abstraction level: he does not assume that there is something like a community existing beforehand, and assumes instead that there are only certain actor constellations that can be observed at a certain point in time as establishing a certain kind of social order because, at that point, their respective interests and actions overlap. This “overlapping of interests” is due to what Gläser calls a “common property” that stimulates a feeling of belonging. But unlike in Tönnies’ and Brint’s conceptualizations, Gläser (2001, p. 7) proposes that the idea of a sense of belonging should be free of affective and normative meanings. A sense of belonging, in his words, only indicates that there is something which all members have in common and which affects the interactions between these members. “Though shared values may emerge as a community develops, they do not necessarily play a decisive role and certainly do not always co-ordinate human action” (p. 7). But then again the question remains: what is the nature of this common property, this sense of belonging that is responsible for community governance?

This question has been addressed in an interesting way in the philosophy of mind with the discussion of collective intentionality (Searle & Willis, 1983) to show how different kinds of social orders, not standing side by side, but one embracing the other, are established sequentially by (actor) collections, collectives and communities. The focus here is on roles, plans and mutual awareness as indicators for a sense of belonging.

Social order in collections, collectives and communities

Bottazzi et al. (2006) conceptualize collectives by identifying a difference between collectives and collections on the one hand and social groups (which in this paper I call communities) on the other. Collectives in this sense embrace collections and are embraced by communities.

Communities

Collectives

Collections

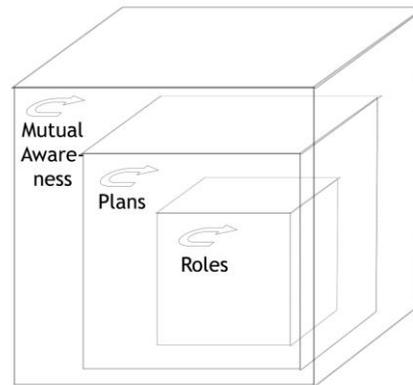


Figure 7. Roles, Plans, Awareness (adapted from Bottazzi et al., 2006)

The main difference between a collective and a collection is the notion of a plan. And the step from a collective to a community consists in the notion of mutual awareness. Collectives in this sense establish order by having (sharing) a plan. Before a plan emerges, we can only talk about collections. A collection is a simple unified entity, such as a collection of books which depends on the properties of the individual books. The representational view on communities seems to emphasize the community character as a collection rather than as a collective by aggregating certain attributes (characterizing roles). A characterizing role, for example, is that of sharing a space (community of place). A collection becomes a collection through descriptions “which contain and specify the covering or characterizing roles of the collection” (Bottazzi et al. 2006, p. 193). A *collective*, though, is a collection of agents (an actor constellation) which, unlike a collection, unifies its agents through a certain kind of *plan* governing collective action. A *community*, finally, in order to establish a sense of belonging, affords mutual awareness. A collective has no need for a collective mutual awareness; it rather needs its agents to play a role according to a plan.

To sum up, the paradigmatic assumptions of communities as order-establishing entities moves beyond the representational approach. Rather than differentiating between communities by place or choice following the root-metaphors of organic and mechanistic, the view on social order conceptualizes communities as different to markets, hierarchies, and networks. What holds these entities together in a performative ontology, is something which the members have in common; but this does not necessarily have to be an affectual or normative value. When looking closer at what actors in communities as order-establishing entities have in common, we can differentiate between roles, plans and identifying properties that result in mutual awareness: a “we-mode” rather than an “I-mode”. Conceptualizing communities as a specific type of social order also involves looking at their *functioning*. The root-metaphor thereby lies within the word governance as a certain steering mechanism in a machine. Establishing order thereby is enabling action. With this perspective, the question of collective action (e.g. plan and identifying properties) can be addressed. What is still not answered within this perspective is how certain communities emerge in practice and how they stay stable over time. This question is important when looking at processes of creativity and innovation and, thereby, at creative communities, communities which make/produce something. In approaching this question I will introduce assumptions from a praxeological ontology which brings practices into the picture.

Communities are communities because of how they are practiced

Up to this point the idea of sharing something, a substance, a place, a value, an interest, was at the heart of community theorizing, whether it be representational or performative. We now turn to the praxeological approach towards communities. Put very simply, practice in communities refers to *doing something in common* whereas the assumptions before focused on *having something in common*. Let's stay with the idea of sharing a practice in practicing communities as the "thing" that keeps a certain kind of community together. Does it make a difference to speak of practicing communities as opposed to communities of practice? Although the literature on communities of practice is vast and very diverse, and the scope of this paper too narrow to review it, I believe it does make a difference for the following reason. In a prologue to *Community, Economic Creativity and Organization* (Ash & Roberts, 2008), Paul Duguid explores the transformation which the concept community of practice has undergone since it was established by Lave and Wenger (1991). Although in the early theorizing Duguid argues that the central focus was on practice, over the years scholarly attention shifted towards the cohesive group. With this focus a common notion is a group of people sharing something stable and frequent such as interest, or common problems. Again, sharing, for some of the literature on community of practice, seems to be more important than *doing something*; the cohesive group is more important than the practice. Lindkvist (2005) points to a similar problem with the communities of practice approach in organizations. Project groups, he argues, are often based neither on a shared understanding nor on a common knowledge base because in many cases their members have not met before and are highly specialized in their competences. He therefore proposes to use the term "collectivities of practice" for certain temporary forms of organizing (e.g. Bakker et al., 2016). Collectivities of practice exist side by side with communities of practice as groups that are organized on a more communal level with the classic element of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire.

In the following, I propose to redirect the view on practice which constitutes communities in creative processes. To do this, the question that has to be answered is: is there a group of people that can act as a community, even if they are not *sharing* anything such as values, or places, or interests, but only engage in creating practice, but without being classified as a collective that stands beside the community? What if those are all "non-necessary attributes" (Djelic & Quack, 2010)?

According to Gläser (2001) – and here is the idea that puts practices back into the centre of the observation – it is the collective production (I call it the *making*) which connects the members of a scientific community. This is precisely the reason why Gläser calls this kind of community a "producing community". Gläser (2001) talks about these producing communities as a special subtype of communities next to, for example, communities of practice. Membership in these communities is not established by sharing values or norms, but rather by collective production. Gläser draws on Thomas Kuhn's idea of a paradigm (as a body of knowledge) that guides scientists and thereby opposes Tönnies' idea of shared norms and values. Gläser puts a "producing community" in line with three other types. I divided his types into the paradigmatic assumptions of making and sharing that constitute communities.



Figure 8. Producing Communities (adapted from Gläser, 2001)

Gläser’s idea of distinguishing a producing community from other forms of community can be associated with the endeavor of this paper to think of creative communities that result, and are constantly maintained, in collective collaborative production.

For a different assumption ground of how creative communities are practiced, I want to go one last step further to offer a more stringent alternative to the idea of *sharing* and look at “producing communities”, not so much as communities bound together by “a making”, but rather as communities that are themselves constantly in-the-making, particularly in creative processes.

A Different Assumption Ground: Practiced Communities as Communities-in-the-Making

In order to develop a different assumption ground, I propose to first take a closer look at the concept of practice. Reckwitz (2002) sketches a theory of practice against the background of other cultural theories from cultural mentalism and textualism to intersubjectivism. Practice theory places “the social” neither “within mental qualities, nor in discourse, nor in interaction” (p. 249), but in practice. What is meant by practice? According to Schatzki (2001), practice is simply the “nexus of doings and sayings”. Reckwitz (2002) describes it as a “routinized way of doing things”: a way of cooking, a way of consuming, a way of working or, as in our case, a way of creating something new in collaboration. Practice in this line of thinking forms a block of elements that are interconnected to each other: “forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge” (p. 249). The practice exists because of the interconnectedness of these elements, which cannot be reduced to a single defining element. Practice is always some sort of “skillful performance of human bodies” (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 251). It is not a mere instrument of use, but a way of creating social order. Bodily performances, Reckwitz states, “give the world of humans its visible orderliness”. The same is true for mental activities. Practice, beside skilful routinized performances of the body, also consists of routinized ways of understanding the world. Finally, things play a central role for practice. Objects are necessary components of practice insofar as they limit and enable certain bodily and mental activities.

The literature on the representational differentiations of communities as well as the performative view on communities suggests that it is stable things, like places, values and shared norms that are taken out of the composition of elements forming practice and constitute the community. But some strong beliefs, values, or a shared place do not *necessarily* hold a

community together. It seems even more likely that communities, the way I see them in creative processes, are in constant danger of falling apart. Or, as Djelic and Quack put it, looking at transnational communities: “They are fluid, relational constructs, constantly on the move and in process. We should consider, rather than communities, processes of community formation, maintenance, decline, and even disintegration“ (2010, p. 7). To see practice at the heart of community building, and to see practice not as a single activity, element, or sharing of a substance, but to see it composed of various elements, we must reconceptualize the understanding of communities in creative processes as the result as well as the context of this practice. When we think of practice in creative processes as a “certain way of making something”, i.e. a thing which has some durability, something tangible, a “creative product”, the community that is part and context of this practice is potentially one of these “things”. The single agent then, the single individual, is a carrier, in the words of Reckwitz, of many practices that have to be coordinated with each other. Each of these practices has the potential to form a community, among other things.

Yet, to not fall again into the trap of a “sharing”-terminology, which would suggest community as a stable context based on shared practice, we invite time into the picture. Practice occurs in a sequence of time and repetition. Social order in this view is always social reproduction, and structure is always a temporary structure. So is the community. To take one step further into the idea of temporary structure, we could say, community as a by-product of creative processes has a special temporary structure: a structure that leads to further engagement. In other words, community is a community-in-the-making that always needs to be worked on continuously. What is shared in a community-in-the-making that makes it fundamentally different to the other community concepts above, its central defining “common property”, is not a more, but a less¹. A pattern of incompleteness (Garud et al., 2008; Stark & Neff, 2004) is the driver for its existence. Any creative practice has, when it is collaborative, the potential to also form a community-in-the-making. This potential, however, is only realized if the practice, in one way or another, creates an incomplete pattern for others to further work with. Within this perspective, the difference between a collective of actors and a community is not that the community shares more values, nor essentially (only) the idea of mutual awareness. However, if a collective creates incompleteness in practice, it is potentially practising a community-in-the-making. Mutual awareness is an important condition, but the key seems to be an incomplete pattern with the need for future practice.

I argue that by challenging the assumptions of the representational and performative ontologies on communities (what they are, and what they do) we can further develop the praxeological assumption ground (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011) on communities in creative processes. Figure 10 summarizes these ontologies with their associated root-metaphors.

¹ This line of reasoning can also be found in the etymology of the word itself and its Latin version *communitas* (Esposito, 2010). At first sight, what defines the *communitas* is the term *common*, something that stands opposite to what is singular or individual, similarly to the word “public”, which stands opposite to “private”, or “general” in contrast to “specific” (Esposito, 2010, p. 5). This is the explanation given by most dictionaries for community. But the other meaning that resides in the word *communitas*, Esposito argues, is the word *munus*, which oscillates between the semantics of *onus* (obligation), *officium* (official position) and *donum* (duty). *Munus* has an obligatory character that is derived from its suffix *-mei*, denoting exchange. Esposito concludes that *munus* is a particular gift, “a gift that one gives because one *must* give and because one *cannot not* give” (p. 5). In this line of reasoning, the “thing” that members of a community have in common is in question. Community in this view refers to the totality of persons united, not by a certain “common property”, but rather by a certain obligation.

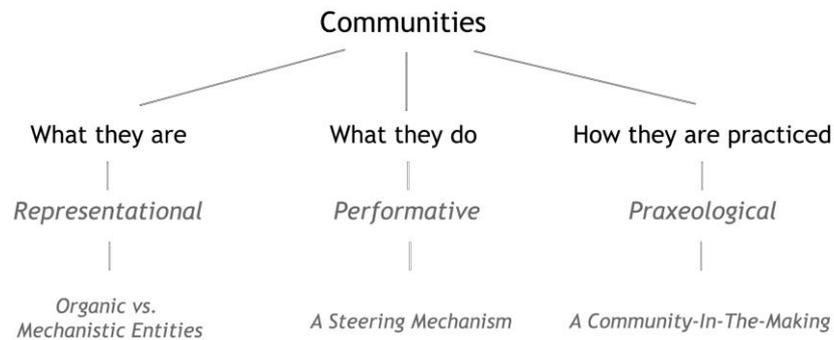


Figure 10. Root-Metaphors in Theorizing Community

The root metaphor starting with Tönnies was that communities are organic or mechanistic entities which are different in rural and urban forms of life. This root-metaphor characterized the representational view on communities resulting in certain typologies up until today. The performative view offered another perspective by looking at communities as order-creating entities. The root-metaphor was the steering mechanism, a mechanism that enables action by offering a different solution than other mechanisms that are to be found in markets, organizations or networks. Finally, coming to the praxeological ontology in community building, I propose a different assumption ground. The root metaphor there is the in-the-making, alluding to Latour’s (1987) idea of science-in-the-making as a messy and ongoing rather than ready-made process. Community is something that is constantly-in-the-making.

In creative processes, communities are activated as, and more importantly, continue to be, communities-in-the-making via certain practices that create incompleteness and thereby foster further engagement. These communities do not have anything to do with communities of place of Tönnies’ conceptualization. They are not social locales (of place, or of choice) that stand opposite to other locales, as a representational approach would suggest. Nor are they to be seen as certain stabilized order-establishing entities with a governance structure, beside other order-establishing entities, as a performative approach would suggest (although, of course, they can be seen like that through this ontological lense). With a praxeological approach, communities are to be seen as intermediary creative products, similarly to other creative products like, for example, scientific knowledge in the field of science, or valuable novelty in any other “creative” field.

Few studies help us to understand the emergence, evolution and continuous reproduction of a fundamentally creative community itself. Thus we must ask, not only how communities foster more or less creativity and innovation, but, as the praxeological view suggests, also how community development itself is a creative and generative process (Garud et al., 2008). This is precisely why I argue that in creative collaborative processes, producing a new idea (content-in-the-making) usually goes hand in hand with a community-in-the-making (cf. Schiemer et al., 2019).

With the further development of a praxeological view on communities, this discussion paper proposes to go beyond common notions of community as a context variable “outside” the creative process and towards studying the emergence of communities and the practices of community-in-the-making as a constitutive part of a creative process itself.

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Organized Creativity - Practices for Inducing and Coping with Uncertainty

The aim of this DFG-sponsored Research Unit (FOR 2161) is to examine different dimensions of uncertainty in several practice areas and investigate what role they play in creative processes in different contexts and over time. Four different projects will be conducted in which the dynamics in the music and pharma industries will be compared. The focus of all these projects will thus be on creative processes both in organizations and in interorganizational networks.

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Organized Creativity Discussion Paper

