

Sense of community in the 2020s

Leena Viinamäki, PhD (Social Sciences), Principal Lecturer, Lapland University of Applied Sciences

The concept of a community is timeless without ties to a location –it can be encouraging at its best and overpowering at its worst. According to Kielitoimiston sanakirja (Dictionary of Contemporary Finnish), a **community** is a group of people or an association, forming an entity based on their financial or ideological goals, etc. (e.g. a *family, extended family, people, profession, sports club, etc.; an economic, ideological community; an international community*), **communal** is characteristic of the community, concerning the community (*a communal phenomenon*) and **communality** is a sense of community, i.e. a sense of belonging to a community (*individuality and communality; manifestation of communality in annual celebrations*). According to Synonyymisanakirja (synonym dictionary), synonyms for the word community include a residential area, republic, society and democracy.

A cursory **7-milestone time trip** to the concept of community and communality illustrates the significance of the community for individual citizens in different eras and centuries. In the 19th century, in the industrialisation and urbanisation phase of Western societies, representatives of classical sociology began to look at social change through a simple modernisation development model historical-philosophical in nature. The models created by Ferdinand Tönnies, Max Weber and Émile Durkheim describe the separation of the community life forms of the retreating old society towards the forms of the modern society. (Aro 2011, 37.) These models are also topical in the globalised, digitalising and increasingly multicultural world of the 2020s.

1st milestone: The concept pair *Gemeinschaft, community, communal relations*–*Gesellschaft, society, market relations* created by Ferdinand Tönnies in the 19th century seems to be thriving again in the globalised and digitalising world (Aro 2011, 39; Zapfel & Promberger 2011; Strathoff & Lutz 2015; Kolev 2020).

2nd milestone: Max Weber described the new kind of interaction between the community and society with ideal type concept pairs (incl. traditional–modern; *Vergemeinschaftung*, *communal*, *subjective*–*Vergesellschaftung*, *societal*, *rational*). The Weber-style ideal type-based research method is still topical in a globalised and increasingly multicultural world, requiring certain formality, ability to simplify and exacerbate as well as historical sensitivity to the context in which the ideal type is linked, from which it can be highlighted and in which situations a different ideal type is needed. (Aro 2011, 39–40; Palonen 2018, 118–119; Palonen 2020; Schwinn 2020.)

3rd milestone: Émile Durkheim created a concept pair describing the adaptive intensity and sense of belonging of communities: mechanical, *non-adaptable* solidarity–organic, *adaptable* solidarity, which continues to have value, for example, in analysing the welfare services system of an increasingly multicultural society (Aro 2011, 36–44; Große Kracht 2020).

4th milestone: There is also a strong tradition of community research in the Finnish social sciences, which has analysed the community and communality from the perspective of different operators (e.g. Lehtonen 1990; Kurki 2000; Nivala 2008; Kangaspunta et al. 2011). According to Heikki Lehtonen (1990, 17), author of *Yhteisö*, which is already a classic in Finland, the established conceptual division of sociological empirical community research in the 1950s allows a *community* to be understood as 1) a territorial unit, 2) a unit of social interaction and 3) a unit of phenomena demonstrating feelings of belonging together and other forms of symbolic unity.

5th milestone: According to Taina Kalliokoski (2020, 197), who recently analysed communality in her doctoral dissertation, communities must strive to promote and encourage their members' space and ability to act individually, make assessments and have critical attitudes in order to develop communality. The emergence of sustainable communality requires the promotion of people's ability to recognise cooperation situations and their role as cooperating parties.

6th milestone: The life's work of Voitto Kuosmanen, who retired from his social work lectureship at the Lapland University of Applied Sciences on 1 January 2021, which is linked to his paid employment, culminates in the promotion of social pedagogical and communal thinking in the Lappish university context, which he has documented in his numerous texts – most recently in this *Lumen* 1/2021 magazine.

7th milestone: In her Lumen 1/2021 column, Sanna Ryyänen describes the multi-location communality enabled by digitalisation and the central role of presence and lingering in the formation of communality that increases well-being.

In addition to being timeless and having no ties to a location, community and communality are ambiguous and multilevel, as is insightfully demonstrated by the articles of the Lumen 1/2021 magazine with their different background communities and perspectives. Together with Communications Specialist *Heli Lohi*, we hoped for the Lumen 1/2021 online magazine both theoretical and case articles on community and communality, on what communality means and can mean in different areas and sectors of living and business – both globally and locally. The number of articles and perspectives greatly surpassed our expectations. The articles in Lumen 1/2021 describe communality of the early 2020s in the Lappish contexts from the perspective of different operators and operating areas, both in the local face-to-face context and in the global remote digital context.

In order to form a positive experience of communality when operating within a community in anticipated or unanticipated situations, it is necessary to have socio-cultural inspiration and enthusiasm, taking into account the operating context, and readiness to also face possible resistance to change with different reasons and manifestations (e.g. [radio sketch by Alivalentiosiht-eri](#) in Finnish) and with constructive solutions (Kurki 2000). The eco-social framework, which simultaneously takes into account the social, physical, cultural, emotional and historical human operating environment (Närhi 2001; Närhi 2015), could be utilised considerably more often, more systematically and more open-mindedly in many communal operating areas of living in today's digitalising and increasingly multicultural Finland.

I would like to thank the writer of the column, PhD *Sanna Ryyänen* of the University of Eastern Finland, and *the writers of each article* for their diverse reflection and analysis on communality.

I wish all of you reading this Lumen 1/2021 online magazine an enlightening and inspiring read!

Leena Viinamäki

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