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The Value of the Sense of Community and Neighbouring

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ABSTRACT *Today, urbanites are less involved in local communities which has resulted in a claim that the significance of local communities and the role of space and neighbourhood layout in the creation of local communities has been exaggerated. Such claims imply that feeling a sense of community among neighbourhood's residents or an attachment to the community is not a value to the neighbourhood. Community research has developed a few indices for evaluating the sense of community and community attachment, but has not focused on the significance of a sense of community in neighbourhoods. The aim of this paper is to explore and review the significance of the sense of community, community attachment and neighbouring in the context of neighbourhoods. This review suggests that feeling a sense of community, attachment to community and neighbouring relationships can increase the feeling of safety and security, residential satisfaction, community identity, civic participation and mental health and well-being.*

KEY WORDS: Sense of community, Neighbourhood, Neighbouring, Urban design, Place attachment

Introduction

Sense of community and community attachment are key concepts in the literature of community psychology and urban sociology. The context of neighbourhood, as a strong example of place-based communities, has been the target of several studies from different disciplines such as psychology, sociology and geography. Additionally, neighbouring is a concept in sociology and community psychology, which occurs in the context of neighbourhoods. Even though the concepts of sense of community, community attachment and neighbouring were not originally introduced in the built environment discipline, they are connected to the literature of built environment through neighbourhoods' spatial configurations.

In the contemporary society, the urbanites'¹ social ties are not limited to people being physically close, due to the opportunities for high speed transport and mobil-

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ity, and virtual networking. In this sense, scholars such as Wellman and Leighton argue that the role of physical space in the creation of community is largely overplayed (Wellman and Leighton 1979). Talen (2000) also argues that planners need to detach themselves from the idea that physical planning can create a sense of community.

On the other hand, a considerable amount of literature from several disciplines focuses on place-based communities such as neighbourhoods. However, the reason behind this investment in place-based community research and planning practice in the context of neighbourhoods is not clear and there seems to be a gap in the literature of neighbourhood community research in response to the debate that the role of space in creating communities and neighbouring patterns has been overestimated.

The claim that a high percentage of human social life is dedicated to communities of interest, virtual communities and friendships is not in dispute (Guest and Wierzbicki 1999; Wellman 2001); however, what is questionable is the degree to which the existence of place-based local communities can affect the quality of residents' lives in neighbourhoods. In other words, how feeling a sense of community, community attachment and the acts of neighbouring could be a value to the local communities?

This paper aims to explore the role of space in the creation of local communities, the value to feeling a sense of community and neighbourhood attachment and neighbouring in contemporary societies. Therefore, in the first instance, this paper has a twofold approach, exploring the role of space in the creation of local communities in one stage and the significance of local communities in another. This paper argues that space has been an inseparable component of community in the past. The formation of the hierarchy of local communities based on spatial arrangements of neighbourhoods and residential blocks in contemporary societies shows that space is still a significant component in the formation of local communities.

Following the discussion of community, three mini literature reviews on the concepts of sense of community, community attachment and neighbouring will be provided. The paper then discusses how these concepts, although different in essence, are interrelated and connected to the spatial settings of neighbourhoods (neighbourhood and housing layout) and in what ways they may benefit local communities.

Community: Place-based Communities to Place-less Communities

The concept of community has been continually redefined through history. Hillery's (1955) examination of definitions of community concluded that three elements were essential components of most definitions: a specific place, common ties and social interaction. Traditional sociologists also have classified the concept of community by three elements: place, interest and identity. The type of community can range from community of place (a neighbourhood or a town) to community of interest (fans of a football team) and community of occupation or practice (a community of people who share a profession). In the community literature, two distinct notions of community of interest and community of place have emerged among scholars (Glynn 1986), suggesting that communities of place and interests can include other types of communities.

The social life of urbanites, who were confined to place-based communities in the past, is now shifted mostly to place-less communities known as communities of interest or networks (Wellman 2005). Community in the historical or traditional

sense was an involuntary aspect of locality. Limited mobility caused neighbourhood's residents to satisfy their everyday and social needs not far from the neighbourhood's boundary. In today's neighbourhoods, place-based communities indeed exist, but territory is not a prerequisite for social interactions among urbanites.

In the past, all types of communities existed within the boundaries of neighbourhoods causing the place to be an inseparable part of community definition. Neighbourhoods' residents were constrained to either work very close to where they had chosen to live or live very close to where they had chosen to work. There was a similar trend for communities of interests such as religious communities. People were usually active members of their religious society through their local churches, mosques or other religious edifices in neighbourhood centres. Therefore, communities in the past were not limited to local communities; rather communities of interests were forming inside local communities.

The concept of "community lost" was developed in the late nineteenth century as a consequence of the rapid development of industrial patterns that seemingly caused gaps between the individual and their local communities. The nineteenth century was a period of rapid transformation in most European countries, changing them from relatively stable agricultural to dynamic, urbanized industrial societies. The leading assumption of "community lost" view was that twin forces of industrialization and urbanization were negative forces that disrupted and destabilized social life (Kempers 2001).

While proponents of territorial definitions of community argue that the community has been lost as a result of "loss" of local communities or the element of place (Lyon and Driskell 2011; Nisbet 1969; Putnam 2000; Stein 1965), advocates of social network theory believe that community has been, in a sense, "transformed", "liberated" or even "saved" instead of being lost (Hampton and Wellman 2003; Wellman 1979, 2005; Wellman and Leighton 1979). Webber's essay on "community without propinquity" (Webber 1963) and the notion of "Community liberated" or "saved" suggests that social relationships in the contemporary society are free from local and spatial confinements.

The community of limited liability perspective argues that individuals' attachments to place are limited by the fact that transportation and communication in modern urban society have reduced the dependence of individuals on neighbourhood ties to meet needs (Hunter and Suttles 1972). The latter advocates suggest that the role of physical space in the creation of community has been mostly overemphasized.

It is indisputable that the social life of urbanites in the modern world has moved beyond the limits of local communities. However, it does not mean that the presence of local communities in neighbourhoods is not beneficial or the role of physical space and neighbourhood in the creation of community has been exaggerated. Reviews of modern societies often cite the loss of community as a result of weak connections with local communities and changing modes of social interactions. Theories of community loss, which are formed in the process of replacing place-based communities by place-less communities, show that place and spatiality are considered as an inseparable part of community in the collective memory of urbanites and scholars (Bernard 1973). The decrease in the formation of local communities has caused early urban sociologists to believe in the theory of community loss, albeit that communities of place have just been replaced by communities of interests. This replacement has been recognized as a loss, suggesting that local communities are more likely to be considered as true communities and that space is a substantial com-

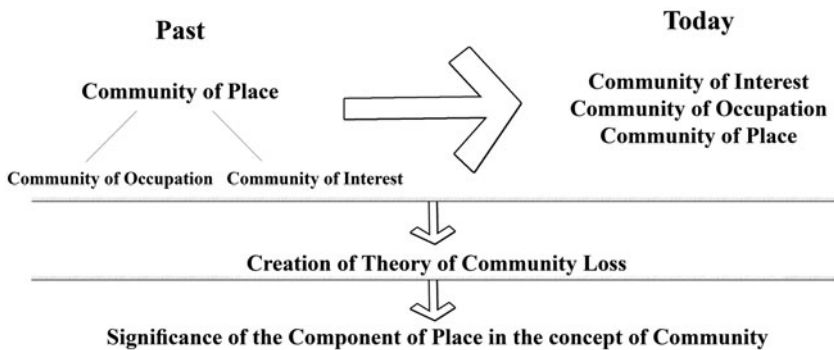


Figure 1. The creation of theory of community loss suggests that the place is a significant component of community in the urban memory of urbanites and scholars.

Source: Author

ponent of community (Figure 1). Therefore, the role of place in the creation of communities does not seem to be overemphasized in the literature of the built environment. Sociologists, Lyon and Driskell (2011), also argue that the theory of decline or loss of community shows two distinct meanings. The first of these relates to the lack of social interactions and psychological alienation and the second relates to territorial components of community.

Figure 1 summarizes this section in a visual representation. In the first instance, it shows that through history, place-based communities were substituted by the communities in which place was not an essential factor. It also shows that in the past, communities of interest and occupation were confined to the boundaries of neighbourhoods (the communities of place) due to the limitations in mobility. However, in the contemporary situation, local communities that were bound to a specific place have been replaced by other sorts of communities (non-local or even virtual), causing the significance of local communities to fade. This replacement has been interpreted as a loss in the literature of community, suggesting that space has been an inseparable component of community in the perception of residents and even sociologists.

This section discussed a historical transformation in the formation of communities: the transition from involuntary membership in local communities to the voluntary involvement in both local and non-local communities. This transition has caused some sociologists to argue that the role of space in the creation of local communities has been exaggerated and place and physical layout of neighbourhoods cannot be a determinant of local communities anymore. The following section argues that local communities still exist and form around the spatial configuration of neighbourhoods and spatial arrangements of neighbourhoods can still play a significant role in the formation of local communities and neighbourly interactions.

Hierarchy of Local Urban Communities

Urban communities which are the focus of this study, in their historical sense, fall under the category of communities of place. However, commonly used boundaries of neighbourhoods such as census tracts, zip codes or elementary school districts sometimes cannot correspond with the naturally occurring patterns of community

that can be found in urban territories (Coulton et al. 2001). Kusenbach (2008) in her study of hierarchy of urban communities defines a four-part hierarchy: micro-settings, street blocks, walking distance neighbourhood and neighbourhoods' enclaves (Table 1).

These categories have been created based on the patterns of practical use, sentiments and neighbourly interactions. Kusenbach (2008) defines micro-setting as small niches of community that sometimes flourish within subsections of urban street blocks. Street block refers to those segments of streets that run between two intersections and all the dwellings that face them. Walking distance neighbourhood refers to sections of the urban environment that transcend individual street blocks yet are still meaningful geographies in the eyes of residents. She refers to enclaves as any intentional cluster of residents which share a significant social status or identity, be it race, ethnicity, nationality, wealth, occupation, sexuality, religion or lifestyle.

Kusenbach's classification shows that communities in a neighbourhood occur as a set of spatial zones based on the neighbourhood's environment. This hierarchy which has been subdivided based on distinct spatial, social and emotional nearness displays a correlation between space (by the scale of propinquity), practical use, sentiments

Table 1. Zones and dimensions of local community.

Dimensions Zones	Practical Use	Sentiments	Neighbourly Interaction and Relationships	Collective Events and Representations
Microsettings	Mutual visibility of private and semi-private routines	Trust and dependency	Passive contacts, sociability, proactive neighbouring and friendships	Informal gatherings, nicknames and "reputation" of places
Street Blocks	Leaving and arriving, short outings and children's play	Tolerance and responsibility	Friendly greetings, sociability and reactive neighbouring	Block-based social events, defence in emergencies and block captains
Walking Distance Recreation (walking) and daily needs	Familiarity	Recognizing others and nodding relationships	Formal organizations, newsletters, neighbourhood events and names or nicknames	Neighbourhoods
Enclaves	Lifestyle necessities, shopping, errands and leisure	Comfort and belonging	Identification of peers, assumed connection and understanding	Holidays, festivals, landmarks and area names or nicknames

Source: Kusenbach (2008).

and neighbourly interaction. Looking closely at neighbourly interactions and relationships, the scale of the neighbourhood community (which is based on space from micro-settings to enclaves) is the determinant of neighbours' interactions from passive contacts and sociability to an assumed connection and understanding. In summary, Kusenbach's (2008) study shows that neighbourhood (or in this sense, local territorial configuration) is the context for a hierarchy of communities with different characteristics and different levels of interaction. Secondly, neighbourhood spatial configuration is the determinant of the hierarchy of neighbouring patterns.

Kusenbach's (2008) model of hierarchy of urban communities showed that local communities exist and form around spatial configuration of neighbourhoods. In fact, the spatial arrangements of neighbourhoods may still play a significant role in the formation of local communities and neighbourly interactions. The following section discusses that online communities have not replaced the local communities; rather, the cyberspace may be utilized as a means of communication among the members of local communities.

Local Communities and the Internet Era

The fact that place has lost its significance in the creation of contemporary communities raises the question of whether the Internet and social media can replace the component of place in the community in the historical sense or not. Regarding the three components of community (specific place, common ties and social interaction), virtual communities are missing the component of place. Driskell and Lyon found that virtual communities are spatially liberated, socially ramified, topically fused and psychologically detached, with a limited liability (Driskell and Lyon 2002). Therefore, they conclude that cyberspace seems to be unable to provide the necessary qualities in the creation of communities. However, this does not mean that the Internet does not have any effect on community patterns. Driskell and Lyon (2002) show that cyberspace is not a substitute for community, but is a new enhanced means of communication having positive and negative effects on a community. Therefore, the Internet cannot substitute for neighbourhoods in the creation of communities, although it might be helpful in maintaining local communities. In social networking websites, several online neighbourhood groups have been created for handling their residents' needs and requirements. Katz, Rice and Aspden (2001) also argue that the Internet probably strengthens ties and creates richer social relationships.

According to Blanchard (2007), sense of virtual community distinguishes virtual communities from other types of virtual groups. The sense of virtual community is defined as members' feelings of membership, identity, belonging and attachment to a group that interacts primarily through electronic communication. Koh, Kim and Kim (2003) argue that sense of virtual community has three dimensions (missing the two dimensions of integration and emotional connections): (1) membership – people experience feelings of belonging to their virtual community, (2) influence – people influence other members or their community and (3) immersion – people feel the state of flow during virtual community navigation. The dimension of immersion can be considered as a substitute for the dimensions of integration and emotion connections in non-virtual communities. The immersion that people feel in virtual communities may not allow a sense of integration and emotional connections among members.

Capece and Costa (2013) define the term “network communities” as the use of networking technologies by and for local communities. Network communities and the Internet use by local communities are believed to increase civic involvement by providing pervasive online resources and by connecting a territorial community to local communication and discussion channels (Kavanaugh et al. 2005). Network communities may also enhance a greater sense of community through the richness of means of communication (Capece and Costa 2013). They can contribute to the awareness of members of being part of a territorial community and encourage the inclination to take an active part in dealing with local problems.

Sense of Community, Place Attachment and Neighbouring

The three concepts of sense of community, place attachment and neighbouring have originated from different disciplines and are different in meanings. However, their similarity lies in their manifestation in the context of neighbourhoods. Neighbouring as relationships between neighbours essentially occurs in localities. The senses of community and place attachment, however, are not necessarily around neighbourhoods and local communities. The sense of community research has mostly been focused in the context of neighbourhoods, but this does not suggest that it is exclusive to this context. For example, Devlin et al. (2008) have studied the sense of community in a dormitory of a college. Nonetheless, the research conducted on the concepts of sense of community and place attachment has recognized and acknowledged neighbourhoods as a milieu and setting for their emersion.

The following section offers a short review of the literature on the meanings and implication of these concepts and their differences and similarities, which is a prologue to the rest of the argument about the significance of feeling a sense of community and attachment to local communities.

Sense of Community: Meanings and Frameworks

Sense of community is a concept in the field of community psychology which has been defined as “the sense that one was part of a readily available mutually supportive network of relationships” (Sarason 1974, 1). In the early 1970s, Sarason pointed to the popularity of books with the themes of loneliness, isolation and the feeling of not belonging. He described this occurrence as “a decline in psychological sense of community” (Cohrun 1994). McMillan and Chavis (1986), whose study is frequently used in the psychological literature, argue that the sense of community is composed of four elements: (1) membership – the feeling that who belongs to the community and who does not; (2) influence – the ability to express and influence the group which works both ways, some influence by the group on its members is needed for group cohesion; (3) integration and fulfilment of needs – the feeling that members are awarded and some needs are satisfied by being a member of the community; and (4) shared emotional connections – the common history of members in a community, which includes the extent and quality of interaction between members (Figure 2).

Collation of Kusenbach’s model (Table 1) to the sense of community model suggests that sense of community in a neighbourhood may occur through a hierarchy through different levels of intimacy. In all of the four levels of neighbourhood communities, the element of membership is the same; however, the three elements of influence, needs and shared emotional connections may differ based on the level of



Figure 2. Elements of sense of community.
Source: McMillan and Chavis (1986).

proximity and territorial closeness. The application of the phrase “shared emotional connections” in this model (Figure 2) seems to be similar to the element of sentiment in Kusenbach’s model (Figure 3). In the smallest scale of community (micro-setting), residents’ connection is based on trust and dependency, while in the largest scale of neighbourhood community (enclave), the sentiment changes to comfort and belonging which can suggest different levels of the sense of community in different territorial closeness.

The existence of hierarchical levels in the sense of community in neighbourhoods indicates that local communities are not and cannot be responsible for providing the highest level of affective components in all levels or even in any of the four levels. Wellman and Leighton (1979) have argued that there is a need for a shift from community (neighbourhood) analysis to a network analysis which can consider the social ties in the whole city. They have suggested that a network analysis might show that strong ties remain abundant and important, but that they are rarely located in the neighbourhood. “With this approach we are then better able to assess the position of neighbourhood ties within the context of overall structures of social relationships” (Wellman and Leighton 1979, 367). The advocates of the network approach such as Wellman and Leighton believe that the number of neighbourhood social ties and the amount of intimacy in neighbourhoods are scarce in comparison to the private communities and other sorts of relationships and friendships and this has become a justification behind the non-significance of neighbourhood social ties and community patterns.

However, the neighbourhood as a local community is not responsible for hosting an avenue for the creation of intimate relationships. Neighbourhoods’ residents are members of several local and non-local communities, which are different regarding shared emotional connections, intimacy and number of social interactions. Local neighbourhood communities do not need to be and cannot provide the context of highest affective bonds and highest level of intimacy. Additionally, the value of local communities is not tied to the amount of intimacy they provide, but refer to the advantage of proximity.

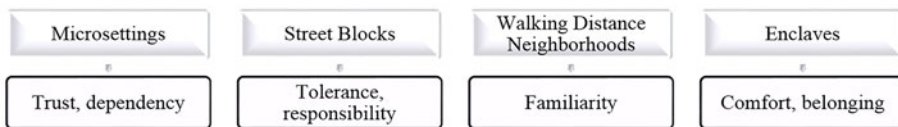


Figure 3. The sentiments of hierarchy of urban communities.
Source: Kusenbach (2008).

From a sociological perspective, the network approach might be more worthwhile since the position of neighbourhood ties within the context of overall structures of social relationships is non-significant; however, from a built environment point of view, neighbourhoods are responsible for providing the highest quality of life for residents. Providing an avenue for the creation of local communities may add to the quality of life for residents. Several studies have looked into the sense of community in neighbourhoods trying to find a reliable index and evaluating it among residents (McMillan and Chavis 1986; Nasar and Julian 1995). The logic behind these studies implies that the sense of community is a significant and inseparable part of a neighbourhood. However, few studies have addressed the significance or effects of feeling this sense among residents and it can be considered as a gap in the literature of community discourse. The significance of neighbouring patterns and feeling a sense of community will be discussed in the following sections.

Community Attachment and Neighbourhood Attachment

According to Hummon (1992), research on community sentiment can be divided into three broad approaches: community satisfaction, community attachment and identity and community life. Community satisfaction research has analysed community sentiment by focusing on the process of community evaluation while community attachment literature has approached local sentiment as the study of emotional investment in a place. Neighbourhood attachment as an example of place attachment is a positive emotional bond that develops between individuals or groups and their neighbourhood (Low and Altman 1992). The length of residence, local social involvements and to a lesser extent the objective features and the individual's subjective perceptions of their neighbourhood can affect the local community attachment (Hummon 1992). Riger and Lavrakas (1981) argue that social bonding and behavioural rootedness affect the strength of neighbourhood attachment. Residents who know their neighbours and feel a part of their neighbourhood experience strong social ties and bonding.

Place attachment generates identification with place and fosters social and political involvements in the preservation of the physical and social features that characterize a neighbourhood. Sampson and Groves (1989) have shown that the higher the neighbourhood attachment, the more likely are individuals to develop a set of norms and to exert effective formal and informal social controls that reduce crime (Mesch and Manor 1998).

Proponents of the liberated community argue that since only a minority of individual social ties are local, people will not experience attachment at a local level. However, Mesch and Manor (1998) argue that local attachment might result from a positive perception of the neighbourhood environment. Place attachment might develop through direct experiences with the neighbourhood's social and physical environments. Individuals evaluate the neighbourhood characteristics, they judge the advantages and disadvantages of place and a positive evaluation fosters positive emotional bonds such as place attachment. In this sense, perceptions of the local environment have a direct and independent effect on neighbourhood attachment. The higher the number of intimate friends and neighbours that are known and live nearby, the higher the attachment to the neighbourhood. Perceptions of the local environment have a direct and independent effect on the neighbourhood attachment (Mesch and Manor 1998).

The length of residence, local social involvements, the objective features of the built environment and the individual's subjective perceptions of that environment shape community attachment. "Housing quality and ownership modestly increase community attachment, though such factors may enhance community sentiment by serving as sources of local involvement as much as environmental resources" (Hummon 1992, 257). While proximity to local landmarks has also been positively associated with neighbourhood attachment, subjective fear of crime and dissatisfaction with the physical quality of the neighbourhood environment have been shown to reduce local attachment modestly (Hummon 1992).

Neighbouring: Meaning and Frameworks

Keller (1968, 29) has defined neighbouring as "the activities engaged in by neighbors as neighbors and the relationships these engender among them". Based on Lofland's (1989) triple model of social realms (the public, the parochial and the private), Kusenbach identifies four distinct patterns of neighbouring: (1) friendly recognition, (2) parochial helpfulness, (3) proactive intervention and (4) embracing and contesting diversity (Kusenbach 2006) (Table 2).

Kusenbach (2006), by comparing Lofland's model of the public realm with neighbourhoods' context, identifies a neighbourhood as a parochial realm in which neighbours differ from strangers in the public realm through the patterns of neighbouring. For example, the "civil inattention" in the public places in cities becomes the "friendly recognition" or "saying hi" among neighbours in a neighbourhood. "Restrained helpfulness" in the public realm such as telling the time and giving directions is replaced by "parochial helpfulness" or the "cup of sugar" example. In comparison to the public realm, residents of the local communities are much less prone to ignore any threat or danger a neighbour might experience. Therefore, the "audience role prominence" in the public realm changes to the "proactive intervention" in neighbourhoods (Kusenbach 2006).

Kusenbach's (2006) model of neighbouring is very similar to the social components of neighbouring in Unger and Wandersman's (1985) model (Figure 4). The importance of social components has in fact caused some scholars to refer to neighbouring as the exchange of social support between neighbours (Farrell, Aubry, and Coulombe 2004). Most studies focus on the importance of interactions and mutual aid in neighbourhoods (Greer 1960); however, Unger and Wandersman's model which consists of social components, cognitive components and affective components provides a more comprehensive approach to the concept of neighbouring.

Table 2. Principles of interaction in the public and parochial realms.

Public Realm (Lofland 1998)		Parochial Realm 'Neighboring'
Cooperative Motility		
Civil Inattention	→	Friendly Recognition
Restrained Helpfulness	→	Parochial Helpfulness
Audience Role Prominence	→	Proactive Intervention
Civility towards Diversity	→	Embracing and Resisting Diversity

Source: Kusenbach (2006).

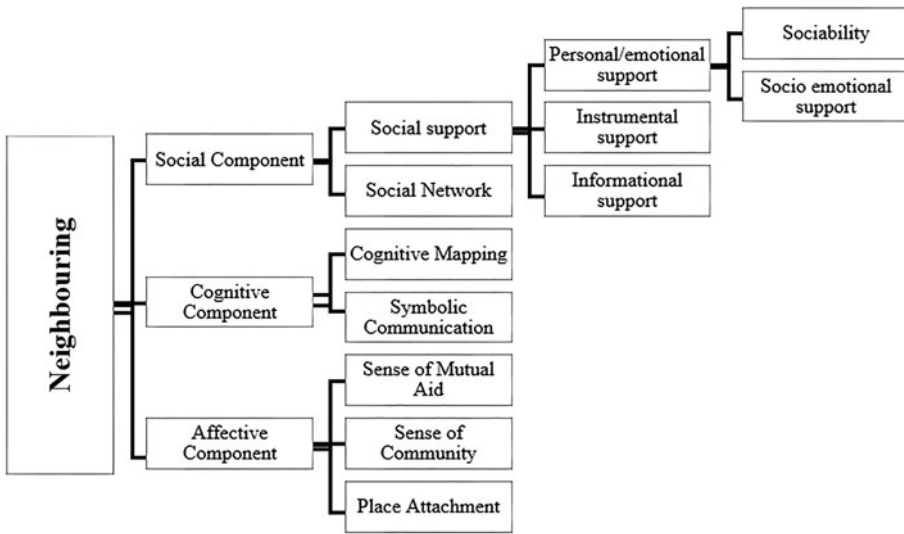


Figure 4. Neighbouring components.
Source: Unger and Wandersman (1985).

In the triple components of neighbouring, social support refers to the material help (borrowing and lending) and emotional support which serve as a buffer for a feeling of isolation. Social networks can refer to the neighbours joining together to exercise their political skills and to improve the quality of their living environment. Also, the neighbours' role in preventing crime can be considered as a social support in patterns of neighbouring. Neighbours' preventative role consists of surveillance of neighbours' property and looking for strangers. Additionally, they can get connected to numerous organization and services in their larger community. Neighbours can use the social and physical aspects of their neighbourhood to develop cognitive maps to understand their environment (for example, by personalization). Neighbourhood cognition also involves a type of non-verbal interaction through the use of the physical environment. The affective component of neighbouring consists of the more latent aspects: sense of mutual aid, sense of community and attachment to place.

Almost two decades have passed from Unger and Wandersman's study focusing on the importance of neighbours and it is possible that the increase in the number of Internet users and also the amount of Internet usage have decreased the importance of informational support and social networks. In the contemporary situation, neighbourhoods' residents are more likely to get their informational support from the Internet and through local websites. However, even on the Internet, the informational support may come from a neighbour or a local resident who might not be known. It is also possible that with today's transportation system and welfare level, the role of instrumental support has declined. However, other components of their model seem to act the same as before.

Similarities and Differences between the Three Concepts

In the context of neighbourhoods, three concepts of sense of community, community attachment and neighbouring seem to be interrelated and even inseparable. Long and

Perkins (2007) argue that place attachment is distinct from sense of community because the former is a spatially oriented emotional construct, while the latter is more of a socially oriented cognitive construct. Whereas a sense of community in a neighbourhood is a feeling of being a member of the local community, community attachment is the bond between the residents and the local community. Therefore, if there is no sense of community (a feeling of being a part of the community) in a neighbourhood, attachment to the community will not occur. In this sense, feeling a sense of community is a prerequisite to a feeling of attachment to that community.

Neighbouring is also tied to the concept of sense of community. Unger and Wandersman have considered the sense of community as a part of affective components of neighbouring. In contrast with Unger and Wandersman's model (Figure 4), Talen argues that sense of community as a generic term often concatenates the social component of neighbouring, and an affective component known as the psychological sense of community (Talen 2000). This contrast suggests that concepts of neighbouring and sense of community are interconnected.

Although the senses of community and neighbouring have been shown to be closely related, researchers have usually differentiated them as two different aspects of neighbourhoods. Skjaeveland, Gärling and Maeland (1996) have explored the differences in the research conducted on these concepts. They argue that research on neighbouring has mainly addressed the total amount of social interactions and supports which neighbours engage in, while the research on sense of community mostly refers to the qualitative aspects like feelings of belonging, mutual influence and being important to each other (Skjaeveland, Gärling, and Maeland 1996).

On the one hand, sense of community and place attachment are psychological variables referring to beliefs and feelings about neighbours and other residents in a neighbourhood. Neighbouring, on the other hand, is a behavioural concept involving social interaction and the exchange of support between neighbours (Farrell, Aubry, and Coulombe 2004).

This section discussed the meanings, similarities and differences of the three concepts of sense of community, place attachment neighbouring and how they are connected to the boundaries of neighbourhoods. The following section will argue that what makes a local community different to other types of communities is the advantage of proximity and everyday face-to-face contacts. The final section discusses how the concepts of sense of community, place attachment neighbouring may be valuable and be considered as an asset to the local communities.

Proximity of Members: An Advantage of Local Communities

Neighbours are defined by proximity. The proximity of neighbours provides opportunities for every day, face-to-face interactions that members of other social networks could not otherwise achieve. Neighbouring patterns are not exclusive to intimacy, but they are determined by vicinity and proximity. Friends may live far apart and yet continue to have spiritual closeness. Neighbours may be worlds apart, even though they live very close. However, a lower level of intimacy in neighbourhoods does not suggest that there is no potential for a sense of community. The shared interests among neighbours do not originate from their affection; rather, it can be derived from shared interests in enhancing the qualities of the local community and the common milieu in which they live.

The proximity of neighbours puts them in a unique position to perform functions which other network members or non-local community members would find challenging. Neighbours sometimes provide emotional and material aid in times of need. They may provide a sense of identification and serve as a barrier from the feelings of isolation, which are often associated with the city life. Informal ringleaders in neighbourhoods may provide dwellers with a connection to several organizations and services in their neighbourhood or larger community. Neighbours may also bond together to exercise their political skills and to better the quality of their living environment. Contribution and participation in neighbourhood organizations have been mostly a reason for solving neighbourhood problems (Unger and Wandersman 1985).

Significance of Feeling a Sense of Community, Community Attachment and Neighbouring in Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhood is a phenomenon whose significance seems to be rooted in its conventional everyday function which involves continuity and permanence and creates the neighbourhood sense of place in the urban collective memory (Kallus and Law-Yone 2000). The urban neighbourhood has traditionally been defined as an urban space where residents share a communal bond built upon local communities and social networks. Collective expectations for communal bonds in local communities have changed through history.

In the past or in small villages, neighbours were usually either from kin with blood relations or the ones whose antecedents were well known. In the contemporary society and with the growth of cities and villages, however, the neighbour may be a total stranger, one whose ancestors and habits are unknown (Keller 1968). Therefore, patterns of relationships in a modern neighbourhood cannot be exclusive to strong ties and close friendships like those of the past, but it is mostly defined by patterns of neighbouring (friendly recognition, parochial helpfulness, proactive intervention and embracing and resisting diversity) (Table 1). Therefore, the sense of community in a neighbourhood cannot be around a community of friendships with strong ties; but it is exclusive to the community of neighbours whose goals and expectations may differ regarding their culture, age and other personal characteristics. It would be a misconception to believe that neighbouring always provides mutual closeness and care. On the contrary, there are times that neighbours intrude upon privacy and even become a reason for discomfort (Kusenbach 2006). Conflict relationships can be a source of severe problems and might have an even greater impact on people's life than positive interactions. According to Nieuwenhuis, Völker and Flap (2013), some of the factors that explain the likelihood for negative relationships are the willingness of residents to intervene on behalf of the neighbourhood, religious diversity and individually perceived conflicts in the neighbourhood.

Even if neighbourhood networks usually are neither strong nor closely knit, and, for the most part, are of limited importance to the participants, this phenomenon cannot, however, be ruled out as uninteresting. As Fischer (1982) has remarked, people do not live in "spaceless realms"; neighbourhoods are foci of emotional and financial investments and potential sources of friends for children and adults. Schiefloe (1990) discusses two main reasons for a continued preoccupation with local ties: the first reason is that neighbourhood ties are of differing importance to different people, and

for some even may be crucial². The second reason is that studying neighbourhood networks gives important general insights into network structures and processes.

All in all, local ties in the format of a sense of community, community attachment and neighbouring are the features that may transform a neighbourhood from a “public realm” to a “parochial realm”. The existence of the sense of community in a neighbourhood may modify the role of the people who live next door from a total stranger to a neighbour with potential shared interests in the local community. The values of the patterns of neighbouring and feeling a sense of community, which have been summarized from an interdisciplinary literature, will be discussed in the following section.

Feeling of Safety and Security

Neighbouring in terms of safety is two-sided. This means that neighbourly interactions provide residents with practical support and this results in feelings of safety and security (Kusenbach 2006), while increased neighbouring has been found to result from feelings of safety (Newman 1972). Perceptions of safety encourage residents to interact more (Baum and Palmer 2002).

There is a correlation between neighbourhood’s safety and preference for neighbouring (Doolittle and Macdonald 1978). By promoting neighbourhoods with high levels of resident participation, safety is increased and consequently the level of neighbouring is likely to be increased. Ross and Jang (2000) also report that social ties with neighbours buffer the effects of neighbourhood disorder on fear and mistrust.

According to Unger and Wandersman (1985), neighbours can be considered an important resource in preventing crime. Neighbourhoods that have a high degree of social interaction may be more likely to control crime informally through surveillance of a neighbour’s home and looking out for strangers.

The sense of community in neighbourhoods is also associated with emotional safety. McMillan and Chavis (1986) argue that the membership is an element of sense of community which provides emotional safety for residents. Perceptions of crime may influence the sense of community and people with a weaker sense of community perceive more crime in the neighbourhood (Francis et al. 2012). Additionally, residents who perceived their neighbourhood environment to be safe and interesting have been shown to have a higher sense of community (Lund 2002). The attachment to neighbourhood is also associated with fewer perceived incivilities on one’s block and less fear of neighbourhood crime (Brown, Perkins, and Brown 2003).

Residential/Neighbourhood Satisfaction

Neighbouring interactions have been found to have a correlation with feelings of satisfaction with the neighbourhood (Ahlbrandt 1984). According to Forrest and Kearns (2001), the neighbourhoods’ historic role as an arena for extended domestic activities (shopping; clothes washing; etc.) is dislocated as these functions are performed either in the home or out with the neighbourhood.

At the same time, though, the neighbourhood may become more important as an arena for recreation and leisure. In a sense, the neighbourhood becomes an

extension of the home for social purposes and hence extremely important in identity terms: “location matters” and the neighbourhood becomes part of our statement about who we are. (Forrest and Kearns 2001, 2130).

Patterns of community and neighbouring can affect resident’s satisfaction with the neighbourhood. O’Brien and Ayidiya’s (1991) study shows that although personal characteristics may affect how people perceive their neighbourhoods, satisfaction with a neighbourhood is determined primarily by identification with the community. According to Cohrun (1994), the membership aspect of sense of community may be an important contributor to an individual’s commitment or attachment to a neighbourhood and satisfaction with that neighbourhood.

Place/Neighbourhood Identity

Cuba and Hummon (1993) define place identity as an interpretation of self that uses environmental meaning to symbolize or situate. According to Kusenbach (2006), neighbouring provides residents with some form of personal identity. Social participation in the local community is essential for community identity, and that patterns of intercommunity spatial activity promote a regional identity (Cuba and Hummon 1993).

Mannarini et al. (2006) argue that neighbourhood identity can be achieved by place identification, as residents identify with and work to sustain a good quality of their residential environment. The identity of the neighbourhood grows from the continuous relationship between the place and its residents; the neighbourhood is expected to become its residents’ cultural creation and at the same time a means for the preservation of the cultural continuity of the city (Oktay 2002). Kim and Kaplan (2004); however, consider community identity as a dimension of residents’ sense of community.

Local Organizations and Civic Participation

A strong sense of community in neighbourhoods can lead to greater informal social control that can aid in addressing local problems (Jacobs 1961; McMillan and Chavis 1986; Newman 1972). Chavis and Wandersman (1990) argue that sense of community serves as a catalyst to encourage neighbourhood participation in three central ways: by affecting one’s perception of a community’s environmental quality, by enhancing social interactions between neighbours and by increasing the perception of control and empowerment within the community.

Community organizations can benefit residents and neighbourhoods in different ways. Brower (2011) argues that community organizations create opportunities and reasons for residents to meet one another and work together and can generate a sense of community and resident participation. An individual’s participation in formally organized groups seems strongly related to neighbouring behaviours (Unger and Wandersman 1982). Neighbourhood organizations often provide the necessary links to maintain and improve neighbourhoods and solve problems which might be very difficult for an individual to solve (Unger and Wandersman 1985).

Participating in neighbourhood activities has been found to be indicative of neighbouring activities at the individual level (Unger and Wandersman 1982). Having neighbour contacts makes it more likely that an individual will be familiar with and

join in an organization, and participation in formal organizations may enhance and encourage local informal relationships, which help the organization sustain members' commitment and enthusiasm. Local social involvement, in particular with friends and kin, is the most consistent and significant source of attachment to place (Mesch and Manor 1998).

Health and Well-being

A higher sense of community in neighbourhoods and patterns of neighbouring can affect residents' physical health and mental well-being. In their study of three random samples in South Carolina and Alabama, Davidson and Cotter (1991) have found that the three aspects of happiness, decreased worrying and improved personal coping are significantly related to sense of community. Those with a strong sense of community were generally happier, worried less and perceived themselves to be more capable at handling their lives. This suggests that enhancing a neighbourhood's sense of community could also affect the general psychological health and well-being of its residents (Cohrun 1994).

It is these residentially based networks which perform an important function in the routines of everyday life and these routines are arguably the basic building blocks of social cohesion—through them we learn tolerance, co-operation and acquire a sense of social order and belonging. Who and what we are surrounded by in a specific locality may also contribute in important ways to both choice and constraint and, less tangibly and more indirectly, to notions of well-being and social worth. (Forrest and Kearns 2001, 2130).

Riger and Lavrakas (1981) in their study of the town of Seaside, Florida, have indicated that the sense of community can be an explanatory tool for individual well-being. Feelings of membership, need fulfilment and shared emotional connections with neighbours were shown to be associated with individual health. According to Farrel et al., social support derived through social interaction between neighbours is likely to contribute to a greater sense of well-being. Furthermore, a sense of personal well-being may facilitate an individual's interest in neighbouring activities (Farrell, Aubry, and Coulombe 2004).

The importance of the neighbouring relationships can be higher for groups such as children, elderly and handicapped people who are likely to spend a significant time in and around the home. Guest and Wierzbicki (1999) argue that neighbours and neighbouring retain greater importance for the poor and the elderly, while the mass of the population may develop new and more spatially diffuse networks.

Conclusion

The element of place is an inseparable part of community to the extent that the decrease in the number of place-based communities has been associated with a community loss in the sociology discourse. Creation of urban communities and residents' bonds in a hierarchical form based on the scale of proximity suggests that place and territory can be a significant yet complex factor in the formation of local interactions and a sense of community. In the contemporary society, mobility of neighbourhood residents, media and virtual networking has caused the concept of community not to

be bound to the boundaries of locality. Yet, still the existence of local communities, attachment to local communities, neighbouring patterns and feeling a sense of community can be considered valuable to the quality of life in neighbourhoods.

Investigating the significance of the sense of community and community attachment in neighbourhoods was considered as a gap in the literature of community research. This study by exploring the meaning and implication of the concepts of neighbouring and sense of community and community attachment has tried to define the characteristics that these concepts can bring to the neighbourhood. Neighbouring is defined by proximity and the value of neighbouring can be exclusive to the element of proximity. Local communities are not responsible for providing the highest amount of affective bonds in all levels and among all residents, but to provide a better living situation in the context of neighbourhoods. The summarized values that were discussed in this study are feeling of safety and security, residential satisfaction, community identity, local organizations and civic participation and health and well-being.

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Notes

1. The word "urbanite" refers to the residents of cities and big towns.
2. Research on urban networks by Fischer (1982) demonstrates that people with "competing commitments" are less capable than other groups to maintain ties to neighbours (Campbell and Lee 1992). According to Schiefloe (1990), motivation for local involvement seems to be negatively correlated with extensive participation in extra-local networks. Informants who have emotionally satisfying and/ or time-consuming network ties outside the local area usually express preferences for low-involvement neighbour relations. One can therefore argue that the neighbourhood is a kind of "residual arena for the establishment of personal social networks".

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