



Local Communities

Johan Barstad

Kaštieľ v Ladcoch (acronym: MaHoLa) , Ladce, Slovakia

17.10.2022

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants

Local Communities

- There is never only ONE community! For anyone
 - So, we often say '*communities*'
- There are two main types of communities:
 - Spatial or Geographic Community
 - Communities of Affect, or Communities of Feeling
 - Also called Communities of Interest

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants



Geographic community

- A Physical Location (Anywhere)
 - Varying definitions – local, regional, national
 - And namings – habitated area, villages, hamlets, suburbs, towns,
 - Common denominator:
 - an area where ‘a group’ is located
 - some formal aspect(s) attributed to the group
 - Geography
 - Administrative/managerial

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants



Geographic community

- Size and scale matter
 - how the community works within itself, and how it retains beliefs and identities. (proximate – distant)
- Large scale tends to require simpler definitions of identity in order to encompass diversity
- The smaller scale is the level at which people *interact* with each other
 - Although: 'large' and 'small' are highly relative
- Geographically, communities tend to be made up of multiple smaller communities, nested within each other



Communities of Affect

- *Communities to which we connect ourselves*
- *Often voluntary membership – not born into*
- *Across a very wide range of things*
From vocation to age to interests to hobbies to.... Anything
And further: families/households/clans
- *We can (and generally do!) belong to multiple communities at the same time*



Communities Role in Our Societies

- Communities are the core units where we work, involve ourselves and actually live,
- They consist the framework around our belonging to and relations to other people, structures and settings
- Everything happens in this (more or less clarified) community context

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants

 **Kaštieľ
Ladce
MaHoLa**

Communities Role in Our Societies

- We 'grow up' in them (both literally and relatively)
- They shape us and how we develop
- They may assist, support and empower us
- Or they could repress, discourage and obstruct...

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants

 Kaštieľ
Ladce
MaHoLa

WHY SO?

- Because we are not the only ones there
- Because they are run by traditions, rules and norms
- Because they need to be nourished and tended to
- Because they become what we (either actively or passively) allow them to become!

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants



«Traditional Societies»

- Communities were relatively stable over time
- But also rather strict and unyielding to individualism
- Were there to secure the survival of the community!
- Was the safety-net in absence of state/government



«Modern Societies»

- Quick to change
- Large throughput (people, tasks, ideals, norms)
- Losing importance
 - To the modern state (the welfare state)
 - To market economy
 - To other types of 'communities'
 - The media-community
 - Political communities



The Village Animal (Bygdedyret)

(Tor Jonsson, poet, Norway, 1950's)

- In rural communities a feeling that the community was *outdated*, as well as 'controlling' and 'oppressing'
 - No room for 'otherness'
 - No room to follow your own dreams
- A negative transparency – you could not hide from the community's view

Result: leave the (rural) community for the 'big city'

- Become anonymous – but free (unseen)

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants



The Nosy Neighborhood Woman (Nabokona)

Gro Harlem Bruntland (former Prime Minister) held a speech some 15 years ago:

- «we must welcome back the nosy neighborhood woman»
(the very entity «Bygdedyret» tried to escape from)

Why this change of mind?

- Had realized that the transparency of community was what consisted the community
- That the anonymity of urban life erased relations and contributed strongly to unhealth

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants



So:

- Communities can be both bad and good
 - often at the same time - for different participants
- Still – they have an important role to play in the societal fabric

Thus emerged our answer:

- There are no quick fixes (*... seldom is for anything societal*)
- Communities become what we let them become
- We need to work WITH communities – NOT best left alone

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants

 Kaštel'
Ladce
MaHoLa

- This goes for us all as individuals
- As well as for authorities and institutions

Norway: a long tradition of local community studies, experiments and interest.

- For good and for 'not so good'....

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants



Have Found:

- Active and well-functioning communities may improve development
 - Social
 - Relational
- As well as
 - Economical

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants

 Kaštieľ
Ladce
MaHoLa

Community Entrepreneurship

Interacting actively with your community^(*), you can improve your chances of success, security and sustainability.

Getting

- Support from communities' members

More important:

Access to communities' assets

- Particularly their ideas and creativity

Iceland
Liechtenstein
Norway grants



(*) any kind of community of
relevance to the entrepreneurs



