

11-17-2002

Neighborhood Associations: The Foundation of Community Development

Roger A. Lohmann

West Virginia University, roger.lohmann@mail.wvu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/faculty_publications



Part of the [Community-Based Research Commons](#), [Leadership Studies Commons](#), [Nonprofit Administration and Management Commons](#), [Organization Development Commons](#), [Public Administration Commons](#), [Rural Sociology Commons](#), [Social Policy Commons](#), [Social Welfare Commons](#), [Social Work Commons](#), [Urban Studies Commons](#), and the [Urban Studies and Planning Commons](#)

Digital Commons Citation

Lohmann, Roger A., "Neighborhood Associations: The Foundation of Community Development" (2002). *Faculty & Staff Scholarship*. 2579.

https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/faculty_publications/2579

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Research Repository @ WVU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty & Staff Scholarship by an authorized administrator of The Research Repository @ WVU. For more information, please contact ian.harmon@mail.wvu.edu.

Neighborhood Associations: The Foundation of Community Development¹

Roger A. Lohmann
West Virginia University

Introduction

The problems of locality development, including how to transform an underdeveloped locality into a more developed area and how to sustain continuing development in an already developed area, are among the universal challenges facing local government everywhere.

A substantial practice literature on “how-to” build neighborhood organizations exists. For one of the most general statements, (see Moynihan, 1965; Cunningham & Kotler, 1983). Particularly important here has been the suggestion that neighborhoods have an important role to play in urban redevelopment (Halpern, 1995). One of the earliest suggestions along these lines were proposals for the establishment of information centers in urban neighborhoods (Kahn, 1966). This idea is actually quite well established in many large urban communities in Great Britain, Western Europe and the United States today.

Definitions

In what follows, a number of terms will be employed. Before beginning, therefore, let us define them:

Neighborhood – A defined or recognizable physical territory within a city or rural region. Any of a number of types of small spatial or areas within a city or rural region. James V. Cunningham (1965, 29) wrote “The average person has need for a place of limited scale where he can not only establishes (sic) a home but from which he can face the enormity of the metropolis.” In the following, we differentiate street-level, district and other levels of neighborhood.

Locality – This geographical term is used here as a general referent for all types of human settlements, consisting of populations, housing, organized communications networks (e.g. a local telephone system or cable television system). In this sense, a locality may consist of a single, several or numerous distinct neighborhoods. Locality also generally refers to the life space that the average resident of a settlement is likely to traverse during an ordinary day. Thus, for example, during the European middle ages most people there lived in small, rural communities within the bounds of a “six mile limit”. That

¹ An earlier version of this manuscript was presented at the Annual Meeting, Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and voluntary Action. Montreal Canada. November, 2002.

is, because of transportation limitations, many people never traveled more than six miles from their place of birth throughout their lifetime.

Sector – A non-geographical term used for classification or categorization of various organized social activities, including organizations, associations, and gatherings, or assemblies. The common theory of voluntary action, for example, is grounded in a four sector model classified by outputs or goods produced: public, governmental or state sector; private, household sector (aka intimate sphere); commercial or market sector; and commons, aka third, nongovernmental, non-market or independent sector (Ostrom & Ostrom, 1977).

Village – A human settlement consisting primarily or exclusively of residential structures or dwellings without a fully-formed “market” or commercial zone. In larger villages, there may be a small number of associated supportive services such as grocery stores or fueling stations for automobiles.

Town – Following Max Weber, a town is a residential settlement with a market. In terms of contemporary urban theory, a central business district (CBD) or commercial sector servicing any but the most ordinary daily needs differentiates a village from a town. Towns are identifiable by the existence of such a CBD or market sector.

City – A larger town or locality with a higher measure of self-governance or local control, larger population and higher degree of specialization and differentiation of neighborhoods. Cities rather consistently display evidence of all four sectors, either in specialized neighborhoods, like a CBD, shopping centers, strip malls, concentrations of government buildings (city halls, court houses, federal buildings, and the like), theater or arts districts, and mixed use areas or neighborhoods with locales of some or all sectors.

Suburb – A planned or recently created village or town in close proximity to a larger city, especially one in which a majority of the workers living there work outside the suburb in the surrounding urban area.

A Hierarchical Concept

At least since the Roman Empire, the concept of locality has been a hierarchical one in several important senses. The Roman classification (taken over from the Greeks) included the *parish*, or as we might say neighborhood community, the *polis* or self-governing city, and the *dominion*, or region. These three terms, labeled here as neighborhood, city and region still form an important urban hierarchy recognizable throughout much of the world. At the same time, it is important to recognize that in some important respects

this is a distinctly western concept. Many of the nuances of Asian, and in particular , Japanese, Chinese and Indian concepts of the neighborhood, city and region are not well known or understood in Europe or North America. However, it appears that they are in several important respects dramatically different than those found in Europe and the Americas, where the Roman tradition, and particularly the Greco-Roman concept of the *polis* has been strong.

Urban places of all types from small to very large tend to exist in hierarchical clusters within regions. Towns, cities and villages tend to exist within their own distinctive regional hierarchies. One of the most elegant conceptualizations of this in the social sciences is found in economic theory; variations of which are known as central place theory and export balance theory. The fundamental idea of central place theory is that economic regions are composed of hierarchical clusters of geographically dispersed production units, and that the larger and wealthier of these units (cities) exist and thrive by drawing surplus value from the surrounding towns and countryside. Hence the label “export balance” – cities, it is argued, survive by trading with other cities and their hinterlands on terms that leave them with surplus wealth (export balances).

Thirdly, large, medium and even relatively small urban places display an internal organization equivalent in many respects to that of towns and villages. It is this level of smaller scale organization, to which we might apply such various terms as borough, neighborhood, suburb, or street (in a very special social sense discussed below) where much of the daily lives of ordinary people are lived.

What lessons can we draw from this? First, within any given nation (e.g., Japan), one should expect to find major cities (e.g. Tokyo), secondary and tertiary cities, towns and villages and it should be possible to organize these hierarchically not only in terms of size and wealth, but also in terms of their functional dependence upon one another.

Moreover, within the largest urban centers, it should be possible not only to locate a specific community in the socio-economic pecking order, but also to do the same with whatever collection of districts, neighborhoods and streets it is composed.

The key question to be asked about these hierarchies from a locality development standpoint is where to best locate the locus of these local development efforts?

In the United States, neighborhood organizing is a long-established approach to practice in several fields including social work, rural and urban sociology and agricultural extension. (Fisher, 1995) Part of what is known about the process of neighborhood organizing and coalition is the result of naturalistic observation of neighborhood responses to disaster. (Taylor, 1996)

The best answer appears to be: In as many places as possible, provided adequate mechanisms for coordination of these diverse efforts can be created.

Neighborhood

The concept of neighborhood has been an important one in the development of actual western cities at least since the Romans and in intellectual theorizing about locality at least since the late 19th century. Jane Addams' famous Hull House social settlement and Lilian Wald's only slightly less well known Henry Street Settlement both had a strong commitment to service to the surrounding neighborhoods. (Block, 1969) (Hall, 1971) Along with hundreds of other, lesser known examples, they were instrumental in establishing the fundamental idea of neighborhood community centers. The impact of this idea of neighborhood was so significant with Progressive-era social reformers that when it came to memorializing her experiences, the Charity Organization Society organizer Mary Richmond entitled her memoir *The Good Neighbor in the Modern City*. (Richmond, 1913)

However, the importance of neighborhood was well established long before the Progressive Era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his classic *The City in History*, Lewis Mumford describes the medieval European neighborhood in the following manner:

The division of the town into quarters, each with its churches, often with a local provision market, always with its own local water supply, a well or fountain, was a characteristic feature; but as the town grew the quarters might become sixths, or even smaller fractions of the whole, without dissolving into the mass. Often, as in Venice, the neighborhood unit would be identified with the parish and get its name from the parish church: a division that remains to this day.

(Mumford, quoted in Cunningham, 1965, 30)

It was not until after World War I, however, that the concept of neighborhood became an important part of urban theory and practice. During the 1920's, an American city planner, Clarence Perry, translated Ebenezer Howard's somewhat earlier notion of English garden towns into an urban planning concept of neighborhood which is still highly influential, even though controversial. In the 1920's, an American planner, Clarence Perry, translated Ebenezer Howard's notion of English garden towns into a planning concept of neighborhood which is still highly influential: the notion was of a small, self-contained city with definite boundaries and a population limited to that sufficient to support an elementary school, with quiet residential streets, a rigid division of land uses, and a centralized shopping and playground complex. (Cunningham, 1965, 31)

One of the fundamental reasons for focusing on the neighborhood is the result that Scherzer has, in the case of New York City, termed “unbounded community.” (Scherzer, 1992) Perry’s conception of neighborhood was of a small, self-contained city within the larger city with definite boundaries and a population limited to that sufficient to support an elementary school. Neighborhoods, he suggested, should have quiet residential streets, a rigid division of land uses, and a centralized shopping and playground complex. (Cunningham, 1965, 31)

From the very start, Perry’s notion and the underlying concept of development directed at the scale of localities was not without its detractors. In the early period of urban renewal in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Reginald Isaacs led the opposition to the neighborhood concept in planning, out of concern that planning might render static and lifeless what would otherwise be vibrant and dynamic urban areas. (Cunningham, 1965, 31) This is a theme that the New York journalist Jane Jacobs returned to vigorously two decades later.

By the early 1960s, a variety of social scientists saw the neighborhood as a dying social institution: Emile Pin declared that, “The neighborhood community...has been emptied of most of its content and there is no doubt that it will not regain it.” (Quoted in Cunningham, 1965, 33) Roland Warren (1963) saw local neighborhoods as victims of a ‘great change’ in American community living: “the great change in community includes the increasing orientation of local community units to state and national systems... Decisions, policies and programs of local units, although they must conform in some respects to community norms, come to be formulated in centralized offices outside the community and come to be guided more by their relation to extra-community systems than by their relation to other parts of the local community. Thus the ties between different local community units are weakened, and community autonomy, defined as control by local people over the establishment, goals, policies and operation of local community units, is likewise reduced.” (Warren, quoted in Cunningham, 1965, 34)

Warren’s differentiation of vertical and horizontal integration in communities survived even while the underlying idea of a great change in which they are grounded is largely ignored today.

In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs and what might be called the “street level” school of neighborhood theory mounted a scathing attack on the effects of the Howard-Perry concept of urban neighborhoods defined by quiet streets and rigid zoning. She was also critical by implication of the notion that neighborhoods had lost their salience. At the time, Jacobs critique was part of an overall assessment of the impact of urban renewal. (See also, (Goodman, 1972)) In the hands of others, this strain of urban critique also included a near fatal assault on public housing in the United States,

Importantly for our purposes, Jacobs formulated a three-level concept of neighborhood as community, anchored most fundamentally in the *street level*, where neighborhood people actually spend much of their lives. She also cited as important what she called the *district neighborhood*, with which people identify and which offers a scale on which people can organize to get what they need from local authorities; and the metropolis. (Jacobs, 1961) While the street is important for daily living (as suggested by the television show, Sesame Street), it is the district neighborhood which is important

when people have concerns, complaints or grievances, or even merely questions about matters of local governance such as schools, streets, water, sewer, trash collection and the like.

Elsewhere in urban theory, in *The Emerging City*, Scott Greer noted what is still the planning norm in many American communities: “Though the suburban neighborhood is not the site of the husband’s occupation, he spends most of his free time there – 60 to 70 hours each week. And for his wife and children, the residential neighborhood is the center of the world. The bedroom community is, in many matters the basic community.” (Greer, as quoted in Cunningham, 1965, p. 27) It is important to note that even though most American households now include working wives, the basic concept of a residential neighborhood as the center of their social world is still largely intact. As James Cunningham noted some time ago, “The average person has need for a place of limited scale where he can not only establishes (sic) a home but from which he can face the enormity of the metropolis.” (Cunningham, 1965, 29)

Cunningham also pointed out that the concept of a district neighborhood is a theme running through much of twentieth century thought: It originates in Ebenezer Howard’s notion of a town large enough to have its own shopping center, continues in Jane Jacobs district big enough to swing its own political weight and in Greer’s notion of an area big enough to support community organizations. (Cunningham, 1965, 37) See also (Cunningham & Kotler, 1983) In noting the alleged decline of neighborhood scale, Roland Warren is paying homage to the same ideal.

During the 1960s, the City of Minneapolis was among the leading American urban planning centers in defining the neighborhood as basic to its city planning: “The foundation of the . . . city is the neighborhood. Here it is that democratic, comprehensive planning begins. Small, local organizations, pursuing the common interests and problems of their areas, exemplify a Minneapolis neighborhood in action. The neighborhood is the immediate center for action for the housewife and homeowners, most schools, churches and small businesses.” (Quoted in Cunningham, 1965, p. 26) This spirit can still be observed in the city of Minneapolis through the web site for its Neighborhood Revitalization plans www.nrp.org/.

The Neighborhood organizations of many other North American cities have similar offices, including the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development www.pppnd.org/; The Neighborhood Network in Kansas City <http://www.kcneighbor.net.org/>; and The Neighborhood office of the City of Fort Worth www.fwlinc.org/. Private businesses can sometimes get into the act as well, as in the case of Las Vegas area newspapers. www.viewnews.com/

All of these organizations are bound together by the National Neighborhood Coalition www.neighborhoodcoalition.org/. The Center for Neighborhood Technology (<http://www.cnt.org/>) has a unique mission: To invent and implement new tools and methods that create livable urban communities for everyone.

In the 1970’s a “new localism” became evident in thinking about neighborhoods; one which still holds powerful sway in American social thought. It was embedded in the community thinking of the previous decade as indicated, for example, by the Minneapolis Planning statement above. It was also associated with concepts of community growing out of the community action program and the community mental health centers act of the

1960s, both of which made the community the principal locus of service intervention and delivery.

In a rare bit of bi-partisan thought, many of these “liberal” ideas were refocused and vitalized over the next two decades by “neo-conservatives” focusing on concepts like “decentralization,” “neighborhood power,” “the new localism,” and “reinventing government”. One of the interesting dynamics associated with this was the emergence and clarification of thinking about neighborhood and community centers that emerged as part of an integral part of this. Morris & Hess, for example, proposed a general methodology for “grassroots” organizing in the neighborhood district, consisting of building neighborhood awareness, creating or encouraging local businesses, exercising greater control over the local economy, improvement of neighborhood housing, development of institutions of neighborhood governance, identifying the limits of neighborhood self-sufficiency and expanding neighborhood cooperation. (Morris & Hess, 1976.)

This dynamic conception of neighborhood as basic to city planning is still widely evident in American city planning today, as the discussion of Albuquerque, New Mexico below and a check of any of the following web sites for a number of “Neighborhood Offices” in city government will confirm. We will now discuss two aspects of this: neighborhood service delivery and neighborhood associations.

Service delivery: Neighborhood and community centers²

The term neighborhood and community centers generally refers to decentralized educational, recreational social service and/or social action programs operating out of buildings located physically in (urban) neighborhoods or (rural) communities. The term is a generic one and encompasses **settlement houses**, religious missions, county or municipal youth-activity and senior centers and other, similar facilities. In cities like Chicago and New York, networks of neighborhood-level centers have been organized into coalitions like United Neighborhood Houses of New York (gateways.unhny.org/unh_exhibit/today/index.html)

One of the insights from these centers is the importance of a physical location. Even in more rural areas, the planned and intentional communities in Appalachia, such as Arthurdale, West Virginia (circa 1937) and Rugby Tennessee (circa 1840) usually featured a community center building, as do many contemporary middle class housing sub-divisions in the region. Often, in these cases, more attention is paid to the physical building than to any distinctive community center programming or service delivery.

In general, settlement houses were characterized predominantly by their

² A revised version of this section was published as Community Centers and Settlement Houses. **Encyclopedia of Appalachia**. Ruth Abramson and Jean Haskell, Eds. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. 2006. 165-166.

pattern of young, upper-middle class, educated men and women coming to live there for a time. Religious missions are characterized both by their religious affiliations and their proselytizing, missionary outlook. After World War II, most settlement houses abandoned their residential programs and became neighborhood or community centers, whether or not they continued to use the name.

From the late 1960's through the mid-1970's and beyond, many communities in the Appalachian region and throughout America created senior citizens' clubs and public funds available through the Older Americans Act were used to initiate Senior Citizens Centers. Following passage of the Older Americans Act in 1965, and several crucial amendments in the early 1970's, senior citizen centers have sprung up in all of the larger and many of the smaller communities throughout the U.S. In fact, the senior center may be the single most pervasive type of community center in the United States today.

One of the long standing ideals of the center movement has been the co-location of a broad array of coordinated services operating out of a single location. Such multi-service centers have also sprung up in conjunction with senior programs, family resource networks, and a number of other auspices. Neighborhood Service Centers are discussed below.

Comprehensive Community Centers

The idea of a neighborhood service center has also been generalized into the ideal of a single, one stop services center, offering comprehensive, coordinated services. (Japan. Keizai Kikakuchō., 1998; Hall, 2001; Hanifan, 1920) **One of the important** Two other recent suggestions are also associated with the idea of neighborhood or community centers, in this case supports for other organizations and for neighborhood residents, respectively.

Management Support Organizations

One of the interesting recent developments in many urban communities is the emergence of *management support organizations*(MSO's), which are designed to provide financial, human resource, computer and network technology and other forms of technical support and assistance on a consultative basis to large numbers of small nonprofit organizations which lack such resources on an in-house basis. In general, the focus of these MSO's is to build operational capacity among nonprofits.

Community Support Organizations

An even more recent development has been the emergence of community support organizations (CSO's). (Conner & Kadel-Taras, 2000) According to these authors, CSO's "seek to build the community's capacity to

systematically address social problems by assisting efforts that work across multiple nonprofits and across multiple sectors of the community.” A CSO should be an impartial, skilled, local intermediary dedicated to fostering local alliances.

Neighborhood Research

One of the better known of all urban theories, the “concentric zones” theory of urban structure first put forth by Robert Park encompasses a hierarchical concept of neighborhoods falling within “zones” as we move outward from the urban center. Combined with Jane Jacob’s distinctions, one would expect to find street-level neighborhoods within identifiable neighborhood districts (like the Halsted Street of Jane Addams in Chicago, or Greenwich Village in New York) within larger zones (like the North Shore in Chicago or the Back Bay in Boston). Although there has been much criticism of the accuracy of this view, it has proven to be highly insightful for much of what followed.

During the 1960s, James Cunningham identified six distinct types of neighborhoods; three in the core city and three that he referred to as “outlying types”. (43) In the core city, according to Cunningham, one finds *slums*, characterized by deteriorated and dilapidated housing; *gray areas*, defined by declining, but still structurally sound, housing; and *redevelopment areas*. The major addition to this typology in the past three decades would be to distinguish between two distinct patterns for redevelopment areas. In one type, formerly residential areas were converted to commercial or even industrial uses, government buildings, highways, parking and the like, as was the pattern in much urban renewal. In the other, associated with a process termed *gentrification*, tracts of deteriorated and dilapidated housing of historical interest or value are rehabilitated rather than being removed and converted into middle and upper-middle income housing. In either case, it is important to point out, the result is much the same: lower income tenants are squeezed out.

In outlying areas, which have been the great urban growth areas in America for more than five decades, Cunningham saw three basic types of development: One of these was *tract suburbs*, along the lines of the famous Levittowns, where developers cleared large tracts of land and builders constructed individual homes that were either all identical or featured a number of patterned variations in style, color, size and other variables. Another was what he called *plush suburban villages*, in which the development process begins with uncleared land and the sale of individual lots to homeowners who designed and built individual, and more expensive homes, usually framed by large lawns and mature trees. It is important to note that after fifty years, the differences between these two types are much less evident than they were to social critics in the 1950s and 1960s. Finally,

Cunningham notes, the urban neighborhoods in outlying areas also include what he calls *old towns*, or existing towns and villages embraced by the expanding suburbs. It is important to note that this latter category and the process of urbanization it points up is one reaching well back into history. Most of the central neighborhoods of the city of London, for example, were once independent towns and villages: Westminster, Knightsbridge, etc. Also, the towns of Lexington and Concord made famous at the start of the American Revolution are now part of the Boston urban area.

Perhaps the principal addition of a new type of outlying neighborhood in contemporary urban regions would be the edge cities, like those across the Potomac River from Washington DC. It is important to note also that these labels – from slum to edge city – may be applied to distinct neighborhoods in the original sense of the term, or they may apply to larger neighborhood districts, in Jacobs’ sense of that term.

More recently, Brower identified four distinct ideal types of neighborhoods. (Brower, 1996) in a study of 60 neighborhood associations in Oklahoma City. He found a relationship between the “leadership complexity” (the number of officers) and organizational size and neighborhood stability. (Austin, 1991) An earlier study examined the role of leaders in networking among neighborhood human service organizations. (Galaskiewicz, 1981) This is a fundamentally important point: One of the clearest implications of past practice in this area is that neighborhood organization works, or works best, only when indigenous, vigorous and self-sustaining neighborhood leadership exists, emerges in response to crisis or is encouraged and trained. Without leadership, much of the potential of neighborhood organization remains latent.

As the previously cited web sites suggest, technology also has an important role in defining neighborhoods. In the 1920s and 1930s in rural America, for example, community telephone companies sprung up along existing community and rural neighborhood lines, and “party” (that is, multiple-user) lines of neighbors were a common experience. More recently, in the early 1990’s in the United States there was a movement for community-based computer networking. (see Lohmann& McNutt, 2000) and there have been proposals for neighborhood-based networking to counter the spatial ubiquity of virtual communities online. (Doheny-Farina, 1996)

Unobtrusive measures can often be used to determine information about neighborhoods. Early research into rural communities examined the ruts in rural driveways to determine community boundaries. It was assumed that drivers near the edges of their rural neighborhoods would turn toward their neighborhood community more frequently when leaving their farmsteads, while drivers near the center of their neighborhoods would be more likely to turn both ways. So those farm driveways with large accumulations of loose gravel on one side of the driveway were deemed to be at or near the edges of

neighborhoods in the opposite direction.

Today, concern for neighborhood is often an international concern. An exploratory study designed to analyze the evolution of neighborhood movements in Rio de Janeiro City (Brazil) focuses on actions related to the struggle for public schools. This research sought to determine the degree of political autonomy of the neighborhood associations and the nature of the educational demands and their relationship with the ideology that underlay the movements. Using an oral history approach, interviewees were selected among the presidents and former presidents of the existing slum and neighborhood associations. Analysis of the first neighborhood movements for public education illustrates a strategy modeled on a poorly politicized population using a traditional patronage format (exchange of votes for school buildings). A second phase beginning in 1983 involves a more autonomous structure and a new belief that the state had a duty to provide and maintain educational services. Assessment of results of the organizations' fights shows effects that were insignificant compared to the efforts involved. However, the process helps citizens to learn their duties as well as civil rights. The study concludes that these social movements emerged from the serious deprivation generated by great economic deprivation. However, their development is possible only with the declining strength of the military regime. (Moulin & Others, 1991)

There is probably also good reason to encourage multiple neighborhood organizations with cross-cutting memberships. A study by Galaskiewicz investigated the hypothesis that under conditions of environmental uncertainty, leaders of neighborhood service organizations would establish cooperative relations on the basis of their own personal connections in the neighborhood or their status-group affiliations. Data on the cooperative working relationships among 181 human service public and private nonprofit organizations were examined in four Chicago neighborhoods. In all four neighborhoods, organizations whose leaders had common organizational memberships tended to have cooperative ties with one another. However, in more turbulent areas, public and private organizations whose leaders had a similar racial or educational background were more likely to establish cooperative relationships with one another. (Galaskiewicz & Shatin, 1981)

This concept of social networks reaching across the urban region offers a powerful answer to Warren's fears about the declining significance of neighborhoods and has also been closely related to the emerging twin concepts of social capital and civil society.

Resource-Poor Neighborhoods?

One of the common misconceptions about urban, inner city neighborhoods with large concentrations of poor people is that they lack organization and social coherence. A large body of urban studies literature dating from the

1960s should have dispelled this notion.. (C.f. the works of Herbert Gans, Banfield, Moynihan and others) In the case of ethnic neighborhoods on the West End of Boston, Gans coined the term “urban villagers”. (Gans, 1965, 1995; Gans, 1991) Even so, the idea remains strong in many quarters.

From that community literature, we have learned, for example, that in urban, inner-city neighborhoods, it is often the street corner that becomes a critically important, focal unit of neighborhood organization. (Liebow, 1967) Similarly, in both urban neighborhoods and smaller communities and rural areas, it may be the front porch or stoop which offers an important locale for neighboring. (This tends not to be true in suburban neighborhoods). In other cases, it may be the neighborhood tavern or pub which becomes a neighborhood gathering place. In such cases, one of the surest signs of distress in neighborhoods is when people no longer feel safe standing on the corner, sitting on the stoop or walking down to the pub.

Another of the misperceptions about poorer urban, inner-city neighborhoods is that such communities lack the resources to deal with their own problems and must rely exclusively on outside expertise, resources and control. This research is effectively countered by other research showing that those in need rely on neighbors extensively for help. Indeed, only family members provide more assistance than neighbors in most instances.

From the opposite point of view, Kilburn and Maume (1999) argue that two conditions are necessary for the development & maintenance of a neighborhood organization: (1) The neighborhood must perceive an external threat. (2) There must be resources to contribute to these organizations. They concluded that neighborhoods with the most significant urban problems are not those most likely to organize neighborhood associations. Instead, affluent areas are more likely to organize. In light of these findings of Kilburn and Maume (1999), it is reasonable to suggest that public policy and philanthropic agencies would do well support community organizations for those with fewer resources.

Herbert Rubin speaks of inner city neighborhoods as “neighborhoods of despair” but describes how creation of small, nonprofit, community-based organizations has brought new housing and new jobs to poor areas of Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Minneapolis and other cities. (Rubin, 2000) Stanley Greenberg and his associates have conducted extensive research on modern, urban neighborhoods in Atlanta, and other cities. (Greenberg, 1973) (Greenberg, Rohe, Williams, & National Institute of Justice (U.S.), 1982) (Greenberg, 1995; Greenberg, 1999; Greenberg & Schneider, 1996)

Sheldon Danziger discusses the neighborhood itself, along with work and family, as major “resources” against poverty in poor, African-American neighborhoods (Danziger & Lin, 2000). For other recent work on neighborhood organization see also (Ahlbrandt & Brophy, 1975; Altman &

Wohlwill, 1976; Hammerman, 1975; Langton, 1978; Litwak & Meyer, 1974; Rafter, 1978; Silver, 2001; Snell, 2001; Spergel, 1972).

Neighborhood Associations

One type of community-based organization in the U.S. most commonly associated with large urban areas, but also found in smaller cities, is the neighborhood association. Formation of such associations usually occurs in stages, consistent with the Morris-Hess typology discussed above. Neighborhood associations can be defined as: 1) membership associations of people; 2) who come together to maintain or improve the quality of neighborhood life; 3) and to protect their common economic and social interests. (Rich, 1980; Oropresa, 1992; Mesch and Schwirian, 1996)

Such associations are typically associated with fairly stable memberships, which change only as people move into or out of the neighborhood, and with popularly elected leadership from within the organization itself. The author of this report, for example, was an organizer of a neighborhood association in his home community more than twenty years ago and served as president of that same association for a five year period in the 1990s.

Types of Neighborhood Associations

No official or widely recognized typology of neighborhood associations is currently known to exist. However, there are a number of widely recognized. For example, in many suburban neighborhoods in the U.S., the most elementary form of neighborhood association is the **homeowners' association**, open to all who own the residential property in which they reside. (Dilger, 1992).

One important variant of the homeowners' association idea in recent decades has been the **historic district homeowners' association**. In Boston, Massachusetts, Alexandria, Virginia, Baltimore, Maryland, Charleston, South Carolina, Savannah, Georgia, Santa Fe, New Mexico and most of the oldest American communities, including such small city examples as the Victorian Restoration district in Wheeling, West Virginia for example, such homeowners' associations have been important in preserving and rehabilitating portions of the world's heritage of built environments.

Another more recent variant on the idea of the homeowners' association adapted to the changing realities of urban living in the largest cities is the **condominium association**. In this sense, a condominium is the term for any individually owned unit of real estate, especially apartments or town houses, situated in a building or on land that is owned in common by those individual unit owners. If the building is large enough (like the famous Watergate apartments in Washington DC) it may form virtually its own

neighborhood, located within a larger neighborhood (as our hierarchical concept suggested above). In many instances, a condominium association might exist alongside another form of neighborhood association, with residents of the condominium belonging to both and active in both, either, or neither.

In the United States, for example, one fairly typical response to a piece of national legislation known as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which shares federal revenues with local governments has been the formation by city governments of networks of officially recognized neighborhood associations.

In one study to be presented at the ARNOVA conference in December 2000, for example, Karen King (2001) found that in the city of Albuquerque New Mexico a formal relationship between city government and neighborhood associations was forged in the 1980s, creating a means for neighborhoods to offer input on land use and other decisions. A municipal Office of Neighborhood Coordination (ONC) was created there in 1981 and an ordinance outlining its role with neighborhood associations was adopted in 1987. In July, 2000 there were 319 neighborhood associations known to exist in Albuquerque, including 182 officially recognized by the city under the law. There were also 17 recognized area coalitions of these neighborhood associations. These latter are analogous, perhaps, to the previously discussed neighborhood action programs in Minneapolis, Kansas City, Fort Worth and other cities.

It is useful also to distinguish such formally created or *crescive* neighborhood associations, like homeowners' associations, and condominium associations created by owners or real estate developers, from more spontaneous **grassroots associations** that may spring up in response to particular problems or issues about which people feel strongly.

This may include, but is certainly not limited to the NIMBY response noted below. Grassroots associations are composed of citizens who come together spontaneously when they perceive that a serious local problem or issue is not being adequately addressed by elected officials or community leaders. In that respect, they may be a supplement or an alternative to other such responses, including angry crowds, collective behavior, riots and civil disturbances. The social historian Charles Tilly has followed closely the transition of forms of urban and rural protest from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries as part of a larger study of European revolutions. (Tilly, 1993) He found that what he called the "style of contention" of urban protest has evolved over the centuries, and that the formation of grassroots associations is an important element in this evolution. For another historical slant on this in the case of Boston, see (Vale, 2000)

One other historically important type of neighborhood association is the

common resource pool (Ellickson, 1991;) Ostrom, 1990; Ostrom, 1994; Ostrom, 1997) Perhaps the most famous examples of this were found throughout the European middle ages in the reality of the village commons (Kerridge, 1992); Adams, 1973) Such common interest associations are also found in Japan. (Norbeck, 1972) and India (Chakravarty-Kaul, 1996) and elsewhere in the world.

Long and bitter experience, in the European commons, the “cattle wars” between farmers and ranchers on the common grazing lands of the 19th century American frontier, and elsewhere has shown several things: One is that common resource pools not managed, regulated or controlled by some type of association are subject to long-term resource degradation or depletion because of a condition termed the tragedy of the commons. (Hardin, 1962) The essential insight of this idea is the observation that what is everyone’s property is, in effect, no one’s property; everyone feels able to utilize it freely but no one feels obligated or in a position to preserve and protect it. Common goods are thus highly susceptible to overuse, abuse and exploitation. This is an insight with many applications in the case of neighborhood associations. Much of the challenge of neighborhood leadership, for example, involves efforts to overcome the “free rider” problem: Individuals may be reluctant or unwilling to join with their neighbors in community ventures because they believe that they will benefit from those efforts in any event.

The second insight, however, is an even more important one, and that is that the process of creating a representative oversight body to manage the common pool resource and regulate its use is often a straightforward possibility: Through organization and leadership, both the free rider problem and the tragedy of the commons can be overcome, as thousands of practical examples at the neighborhood level attest. It may be in the form of a condominium association board charged with managing the common (shared) areas of a building – hallways, entries, elevators, sidewalks, etc. – or a cattlemen’s association apportioning grazing rights or a conservation district committee allocating water rights in a dry or desert terrain, or a neighborhood committee charged with managing a community garden. Regardless of the form, there is ample evidence available to show that the tragedy of overuse of common resource pools is readily averted by active management which involves: 1) determination of the depletion point, at which the resource can no longer be sustained; and 2) allocation of access to the common resource pool to individual users at levels that in the aggregate are below this depletion point.

Reasons for the formation of neighborhood associations

There are likely to be at least three principal reasons for the formation of neighborhood associations: Neighborhood associations are often a formal

requirement of real estate law, created by real estate developers when suburbs or new developments are formally planned and laid out or **platted**. In such cases, they may or may not be active and contributing to neighborhood problem solving.

Where neighborhood associations are not required by law, and even in cases where they exist but have long been inactive a sense of immediate crisis occasioned by some perceived threat to neighborhood peace, property values or some other widespread concern may be enough to reactive an inert association or bring a new association into existence.

One of the most common and well-known reasons for the formation or activation of neighborhood associations is the widely recognized **NIMBY response**. NIMBY is an acronym for Not-In-My-Back-Yard. It usually comes about when local urban planning, zoning or economic development officials are found to be planning to place an undesired public facility in a neighborhood. This might be anything from a sewage treatment plant, or disposal site, to a public school, group home for mentally retarded or a prison. In such cases, the NIMBY response

A final reason for the creation of a neighborhood association is a general, shared sense of the need to protect or provide for neighborhood needs. Although the NIMBY response or some other similar common interest may have been the original reason for the formation of a neighborhood associations, such associations frequently endure after the original crisis has passed because of a strong sense on the part of at least some of the members that the association is still needed.

Conclusion: Neighborhood and Sustainability

One of the emerging concepts which has influenced social development thought in the past 15 years is the idea of *sustainability*. The concept of sustainable communities assumes a process of social and/or economic development that has as a high priority the needs of the future generation. Thus, for example, one would suspect that neighborhoods would be multi-generational social organizations capable of sustaining themselves over more than a single human life time. It is also clear that the fundamental idea of neighborhoods as desirable forms of urban organization has existed for many centuries and is likely to continue to exist well into the future.

The reasons for the durability of the concept of neighborhood have much to do with the locales in which ordinary people live their daily lives, and the building up of multiple layers of relationships through regular contact over a life time.

References

- Adams, I. H. (1973). The Legal Geography of Scotland's Common Lands. *Revue-de-l'Institut-de-Sociologie-(Solvay)*, 259-332.
- Ahlbrandt, R. S., & Brophy, P. C. (1975). *Neighborhood revitalization : theory and practice*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books.
- Altman, I., & Wohlwill, J. F. (1976). *Human behavior and environment : advances in theory and research*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Austin, D. M. (1991). Community Context and Complexity of Organizational Structure in Neighborhood Associations. *Administration and Society*, 22(4), 516-531.
- Block, I. (1969). *Neighbor to the world; the story of Lillian Wald*. New York,: Crowell.
- Brower, S. (1996). *Good Neighborhoods: A Study of In-Town Suburban Residential Environments*. New York: Praeger.
- Chakravarty-Kaul, M. (1996). *Common Lands and Customary Law: Institutional Change in North India Over the Past Two Centuries*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cunningham, J. V. (1965). *The Resurgent Neighborhood*. Saint-Laurent, Quebec, Canada: Fides Publishers.
- Cunningham, J. V., & Kotler, M. (1983). *Building Neighborhood Organizations*. South Bend IN: Notre Dame University Press.
- Danziger, S., & Lin, A. C. (2000). *Coping with poverty : the social contexts of neighborhood, work, and family in the African-American community*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Dilger, R. J. (1992). *Neighborhood Politics: Residential Community Associations in American Governance*. New York: New York University Press.
- Doheny-Farina, S. (1996). *The Wired Neighborhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ellickson, R. C. (1991). *Order Without Law: How Neighbors Settle Disputes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Fisher, R. (1995). *Let The People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing In America*. New York: Twayne.
- Galaskiewicz, J., & Shatin, D. (1981). Leadership and networking among neighborhood human service organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26(3), 434-448.
- Gans, H. (1965). *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian*

- Americans*. New York: Free Press.
- Gans, H. (1995). *The War Against the Poor: The Underclass and Antipoverty Policy*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gans, H. J. (1991). *People, Plans and Policies: Essays on Poverty, Racism and Other National Urban Problems*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Goodman, R. (1972). *After the planners*. New York,: Simon and Schuster.
- Greenberg, M. (1995). *The poetics of cities: designing neighborhoods that work*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Greenberg, M. R. (1999). *Restoring America's neighborhoods: how local people make a difference*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Greenberg, M. R., & Schneider, D. (1996). *Environmentally devastated neighborhoods: perceptions, policies, and realities*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Greenberg, S. B. (1973). *Politics and poverty: modernization and response in five poor neighborhoods*. New York,: Wiley.
- Greenberg, S. W., Rohe, W. M., Williams, J. R., & National Institute of Justice (U.S.). (1982). *Safe and secure neighborhoods: physical characteristics and informal territorial control in high and low crime neighborhoods*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Justice National Institute of Justice.
- Hall, H. (1971). *Unfinished business: in neighborhood and nation*. New York,: Macmillan.
- Hall, J. (2001). *Canal Town youth: community organization and the development of adolescent identity*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Halpern, R. (1995). *Rebuilding the Inner City: A History of Neighborhood Initiatives to Address Poverty in the United States*. New York1: Columbia University Press.
- Hammerman, H. (1975). *General bibliography on neighborhood theory, urban sociology, and communal alternatives*. Monticello, Ill.: Council of Planning Librarians.
- Hanifan, L. J. (1920). *The community center*. Boston, New York etc.: Silver Burdett & company.
- Jacobs, J. (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage.
- Japan. Keizai Kikakuchō., Shakai Chōsa Kenkyūjo., & Library of Congress. Japan Documentation Center. (1998). *Shimin katsudō dantai ni okeru yūshō jigyō no jittai to kadai ni tsuite no chōsa hōkokusho*.

- Tōkyō: Shakai Chōsa Kenkyūjo.
- Kahn, A. J. (1966). *Neighborhood information centers; a study and some proposals*. New York,: Columbia University School of Social Work.
- Kerridge, E. (1992). *The Common Fields of England*. New York Manchester University Press.
- Kilburn, J. C., Jr., & Maume, M. O. (2000). The Paradox of Neighborhood Association Formation and Membership. *Research in Community Sociology, 10*, 327-344.
- Langton, S. (1978). *Citizen participation in America : essays on the state of the art*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books.
- Liebow, E. (1967). *Tally's corner; a study of Negro street corner men*. Boston,: Little Brown.
- Little, Richard S., and Margaret Little. *Arthurdale : Its History, Its Lessons for Today*. photographer Roy Kelly. Morgantown: Richard and Margaret Little, 1976.
- Litwak, E., & Meyer, H. J. (1974). *School, family, and neighborhood: the theory and practice of school-community relations*. New York,: Columbia University Press.
- Lohmann, R. A. and McNutt, J. Practice in Electronic Communities. Encyclopedia of Community Organization, M. Weil, Editor. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (In Press)
- Moulin, N., & Others, A. (1991, April 3-7, 1991). *Neighborhood Association Movements and the Fight for Public School in Rio de Janeiro State*. Paper presented at the Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association
- Moynihan, D. P. (1965). The Professionalization of Reform. *The Public Interest, 1*(1).
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons : the evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ostrom, E., Gardner, R., & Walker, J. (1994). *Rules, games, and common-pool resources*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Ostrom, V. (1997). *The Meaning of Democracy and the Vulnerability of Democracies: A Response to Tocqueville's Challenge*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Norbeck, E. (1972). Japanese Common-Interest Associations in Cross-Cultural Perspective. *Journal of Voluntary Action Research, 1*(1), 38-45.
- Rafter, D. O. (1978). *The theory and practice of neighborhood planning in the 1970's: a comprehensive bibliography*. Monticello, Ill.: Vance

Bibliographies.

- Richmond, M. E. (1913). *The good neighbor in the modern city*. Philadelphia, London: Lippincott.
- Rubin, H. J. (2000). *Renewing hope within neighborhoods of despair : the community-based development model*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Scherzer, K. A. (1992). *The Unbounded Community: Neighborhood Life and Social Structure in New York City, 1830-1875*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.
- Silver, E. (2001). *Mental illness and violence: the importance of neighborhood context*. New York: LFB Scholarly Pub. LLC.
- Snell, C. (2001). *Neighborhood structure, crime, and fear of crime: testing Bursik and Grasmick's neighborhood control theory*. New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC.
- Spergel, I. A. (1972). *Community organization; studies in constraint*. Beverly Hills Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Spiegel, H. B. C. (1987). Coproduction in the Context of Neighborhood Development. *Journal of Voluntary Action Research*, 16(3), 54-61.
- Stefano Fenoaltea. (1988). Transaction costs, Whig History, and the Common Fields. *Politics and Society*, 16(2-3), 171-240.
- Taylor, R. B. (1996). Neighborhood responses to disorder and local attachments: The systemic model of attachment, social disorganization, and neighborhood use value. *Sociological Forum*, 11(1), 41-74.
- Tilly, L., & Tilly, C. (1981). *Class conflict and collective action*. Beverly Hills: Published in cooperation with the Social Science History Association <by> Sage Publications.
- Vale, L. J. (2000). *From the Puritans to the projects: public housing and public neighbors*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.