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CONFEREECE OUTLINE

Community is among the foremost political concepts. Coexistence, human or otherwise, inevitably raises questions about how this togetherness should be conceptualised and how the politics of community is or should be carried out.

Questions regarding the ways in which communities are formed, who is included or excluded by them, and what rights or access this allows or curtails, remain central to many of the experiences and struggles that dominate today’s social and political landscape. Indeed, political struggles are often if not always concerned with communities who share experiences of oppression, contesting exclusion from a wider dominant community, or pushing for the creation or recognition of alternate communities. Given the centrality of community to politics across the world and throughout history, the concept is in continual need of critical analysis, reflection, and (re)thinking.

This event aims to bring together scholars from a wide variety of disciplines to critically explore, question, and interrogate ‘community’ as a political concept, including how it is used by people all over the world in structuring their lives. How, on what basis, and to what effect do different understandings of community inform politics and contemporary social and political struggles? Are communities always constituted by exclusion, and to what extent is this justified? What role has community played in current global experiences including the COVID-19 pandemic and climate and ecological crises? What role does or should community play in every facet of social and political life, including education, media, religion, law, and social movements? And vice versa, how do these aspects inform and create new forms of community and new ways of sharing coexistence? With this in mind, this event aims to explore not only political communities, but also other forms of community, including but not limited to religious and moral communities, as well as how these interrelate.

We also intend to explore the concept of community on a more abstract theoretical level. What does ‘community’ mean in the first place? To what extent does the concept of community presuppose sameness, and what degree of difference can it accommodate? How did contemporary philosophical understandings emerge historically, and to what extent is community still a useful concept for contemporary politics? How does community relate to, or oppose, other concepts (for example, society)? To what degree are mainstream understandings of community Eurocentric?
Gerald Taylor Aiken, Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research

‘The Micropolitics of Community Pursuing Climate Justice’

This talk theorises the use of community in pursuit of environmental aims and objectives. My motivation is prompted by my concern that while there are no shortage of examples of community and eco-community, there are far fewer studies focusing specifically on the beguiling notion of community itself. That is the interpersonal, intersubjective bonds that bind oneself to another. This is true in both the transitions literature more widely and the search for collective responses to environmental challenges. A nuanced and non-romanticised understanding of what is it that gels and coheres people together in community is required if we are to accurately understand the potential of togetherness to achieve something environmentally. Specifically, I examine what happens when community is translated from a mode of activity to a form of policy. To that end, I rely on extensive ethnographic work with urban eco-community movements in Edinburgh and Luxembourg, and also the policies that they rub up against.

I take up the question of community because it’s my contention that togetherness—specifically community—is crucial to finding a way to live well in an ecologically damaged world. However, the forms that community takes are capacious. Community has a wide array of meanings, both progressive and regressive. Community can be used as a carapace, to exclude difference and to produce a homogenous, exclusive sense of belonging. Community, concurrently, can be used with a sense of porosity, a heterogenous and amorphous feeling of belonging which is defined not by identity but by an orientation, and a desire to pursue certain tasks. I want to cradle this difference in this talk by analysing the ways in which community can be put to use pursuing different tasks, or orientations. Specifically, I see the translation of community action into community policy as a moment where certain aspects of community which are often latent, pre-reflective, invisible, can be grasped and understood. It is in the tracing and analysing of how community transforms that I focus my analytical lens.

Gerald Taylor Aiken is a Rachel Carson Centre for Environment and Society fellow at the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research. His research focuses on the role of community in the transition to low-carbon futures.

Dilar Dirik, University of Oxford

‘Community through Resistance: Making a Non-State World’

The Kurdish freedom movement is a popular mass movement that attracts people from different regions, ethnicities, religions, and class backgrounds. The presence of youth,
women, minorities, and the poor across the different sites is particularly noticeable. Often, entire families are mobilized, which makes this a highly intergenerational struggle. Through a complex network of self-organized structures – from communes to regional umbrella congresses, and through different strategies and tactics – from education to armed struggle, it organizes, in a highly structured way, myriads of cultural, social, political, and self-defense institutions to realize its ‘radical democratic, ecological and women’s liberationist’ paradigm.

This talk will show examples from the political culture of this movement to argue that its notion of community is fundamentally based on non-state resistance and justice-seeking in a context of state violence enabled by global power dynamics. In doing so, it will argue that the movement’s ideology and corresponding political practice offer the main ground for its claims to legitimacy. Instead of speaking in the abstract on behalf of ‘the people’, the movement is able to refer to thousands of grassroots self-organized revolutionary structures that it helped build over years and across territories to represent collective and organized political will against a system that renders their lives disposable. On one hand, this globally oriented political vision appeals to the new era of planetary justice struggles beyond nationalism or the nation-state; on the other hand, its focus on ideology and ground-up organizing among largely lower-class communities are very much in the fashion of old revolutionary movements. The combination of the strengths of different left traditions is what continues to draw diverse political constituencies to the movement, such as local communities and radical social movements, within and beyond the Middle East, thereby creating new forms of transnational political community beyond state-imposed borders.

Dilar Dirik holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Cambridge. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher and course convener at the University of Oxford and author of the forthcoming book, ‘The Kurdish Women’s Movement: History, Theory, Practice’ (Pluto Press 2022).

Bonnie Honig, Brown University

‘Rethinking Refusal from Rawls to the Bacchae: Toward a Democracy of Contagion’ Revolutionary constitution-making in the 18th century U.S. is described as an “outbreak” by Hannah Arendt. This talk looks at the power of contagion in democratic theory, focusing on the idea of democratic contagion and on efforts in political theory and popular culture to contain it from John Rawls' A Theory of Justice to Euripides' Bacchae to the recent film, The Fits, (2015, dir Holmer).

Bonnie Honig is Nancy Duke Lewis Professor of Modern Culture and Media and Political Science at Brown University. Her research and many publications range from agonistic democracy to feminist theory, film and literature, and beyond.
PARALLEL SESSION 1:
CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY

Shawn Bodden, University of Glasgow

Finding a place at the Foosball table: The techniques and troubles of making community space in Kispest, Hungary

In a long-vacant restaurant in Budapest’s outer working-class district of Kispest, a group of volunteers assembles a second-hand foosball table. It’s the centerpiece of their new community space, and they position it in the doorway in hopes that local young people will take notice—and join in. Over the coming year, the table becomes a key technique for building their community, but also a key trouble in working out just what kind of community they want to be. In learning to play foosball together, the volunteers and young people negotiate the terms of their shared space—and their place in one another’s lives. Drawing on long-term ethnographic and participatory research as a volunteer in Budapest community spaces, I will share the story of this foosball table in order to understand the ongoing and everyday conceptualization of community by people working to find a place within one. Drawing on Ethnomethodology and Ordinary Language Philosophy, I aim to take the ‘everyday’ of political theory seriously by elaborating a theoretical understanding of community that does not precede, but rather proceeds from the ongoing and open-ended work to craft a shared and shareable community space. By dwelling on ordinary circumstances and projects in which the task of conceptualizing community becomes a situated, ongoing and pluralistic challenge, I reflect on the imperfect, uncomfortable and alienating aspects of creating community—especially within the fraught political context of ‘illiberalism’—and the ambivalent experience of working to find good enough ways to carry on together nonetheless.

Lydia Baan Hofman, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Shared and partial connections: Using imagination to reframe a response-able ‘we’

In times of global ecological urgencies, more vulnerable groups suffer the most. Both vulnerable human and nonhuman groups are excluded (and worse) in hegemonic discourses on who ‘we’ is and who need to be taken seriously in dealing with environmental crises. “Response-ability” in a reframed, more-than-human community is called for.

I borrow the notion of response-ability from Haraway (2008, 2016). For her, response-ability is primarily an epistemological task: Researchers should cultivate response-ability in how they make knowledges, particularly in times of ecological crises. In an earlier phase of my research, I formulated an extended account of nonscientific response-able practices that help others than professional researchers to train response-abilities.

In this paper, I investigate the crucial role of the imagination in training nonscientific response-abilities. Response-able practices require investigating situated relations: with whom am I connected — and therefore, to whom can I respond? The notion of imagination I construct here connects our situatedness to that of other more-than-human beings. Imagination frames our “community sense” (Arendt 1992): it frames our assumption of whom we share a world with. The imagination schematizes, i.e., structures our world.

For response-ability, imagination needs to schematize dynamically, in continuous response to the voices and actions of others. Thinking with insights from decolonial and posthuman studies (e.g., Santos 2018; Brown & Imarisha 2015; Spivak 1985; Despret 2016), I rework Arendt’s
schematizing imagination to allow for a plurality of meaning-giving perspectives, particularly of neglected and oppressed “views from below” (Haraway 1988).

Gathering perspectives is not enough for training response-abilities however: for whom should be taken seriously and to whom should we respond? We need to engage with certain perspectives to find orientation in response-able practices. A dynamic imagination needs to allow for “partial connections” (Strathern 2004), for shared conceptualizations that not only connect beings semiotically but also materially. Partial connections allow for unexpected, shared worlds.

A shared world is never an “innocent” being-together (Haraway 1986) and requires further orientation. But a reframed community sense is first needed. Imagination enables responsibility to formerly excluded and unnoticed beings. ‘We’ takes on another meaning.

Trevor Stack, University of Aberdeen

“Community” as a public good: A comparative ethnographic approach

In a recent publication, I define citizenship as a particular relationship to authority. Citizens are members of a community that is “political” in that the governed are somehow engaged in the governing. I start this paper by proposing that one way to grasp the contours of political community is to consider the figure of the citizen, understood as the persona that is engaged in the ruling.

I go on to consider the answers I received to my questions about citizenship in interviews across two Mexican regions, comparing them to answers I received from Anglo interviewees in the East Bay Area of California. Across these contexts, I identify dimensions of the citizen persona, which varied with consequences for political community, notably in the distribution of political authority, including how it was limited.

One variable was how citizen status was formalized, and how citizens’ relationship to authority was regulated. Another variable was how good citizenship was understood and evaluated. My focus will be on how “community” figured as a public good among Anglos in the East Bay, where good citizenship was understood in terms of offering “service to community.” Most commonly, people “volunteered” portions of their time through associations of any and every kind. When talking of service to community, my Anglo interviewees usually talked about community as something external to them. Even if in some sense they lived physically in community, for example as homeowners, nevertheless they could remove themselves from it. I consider the contrast to Mexico, and the implications for citizens’ relation to authority across these contexts.

I end by touching on another way that “community” figured in the East Bay. Redevelopment is a longstanding strategy of California city governments. They expropriate an area of “blighted” land and invest public funds in it, with a view to recouping the funds in the long term, through an increase in property value and therefore tax. In the city of Martinez, opponents to redevelopment cited corruption and power-seeking, but their main objection was that redevelopment would undermine “community.” Martinez had a population of around 35,000, and it sprawled into neighboring Concord (250,000) and Pleasant Hill (50,000). However, residents often distinguished the “downtown” area, which included a mix of older houses, county government buildings, and generally run-down stores, bars, restaurants, and bail-bond offices, from the expansive outlying “suburbs” in which there were malls and other such facilities. Residents of the downtown made much of the “face-to-face” character of life there. I conclude by considering the political and theoretical implications of fetishizing the face-to-face under the sign of “community”.

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PARALLEL SESSION 2: COMMUNITY, GENDER & FEMINISM

Nadia Kiwan, University of Aberdeen

(De)Constructing communities of political action: Intersectional Muslim feminism in contemporary France

This paper will explore emerging feminisms in contemporary France which are informing French public discourse in unprecedented ways. It focuses on a new generation of Muslim political actors who challenge established ‘universalist’ understandings of feminism by adopting an intersectional activism. This paper will thus consider Muslim women’s claims-making in a political context where such demands are regarded as a ‘challenge’ to universalist and secularist conceptions of the national community. The term ‘claims-making’ here should not be understood to mean demands made on the state whereby community is understood in terms of limited adjustments and accommodations, for example, regarding mosque space, dietary or vestimentary issues. Rather, in the French context, I argue that intersectional Muslim feminist claims-making refers to identifying and naming practices of systemic discrimination which affect French women of Muslim heritage (claimed or unclaimed). Such experiences may include disadvantageous treatment in education, in the workplace, in healthcare settings (including during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic) or in their interactions with the police and other agents of the French state. I argue that through their activism, intersectional Muslim feminists contribute to a redefinition of both the national community and feminist communities of political action because of their challenge to a universalist conception of the body politic.

Francesca Cesarano, San Raffaele University

Culture, gender and autonomy: An all-or-nothing approach

Although different definitions of adaptive preferences have been articulated since the 1990s, they all generally agree on the fact that women’s endorsement of sexist and discriminatory norms does not necessarily legitimate these norms. (Elster 1983, Bartky 1990, Nussbaum 2001, Meyers 2002, Sen 2002) On this ground, especially women from minority cultural communities have been portrayed as less than autonomous beings, resting on the assumption that their culture stifles their capacity for ‘genuinely’ autonomous choices. Such a deterministic understanding of culture combined with a delegitimation of self-regarding choices has been rightly criticized by postcolonial and transnational feminists. These two elements are said to enter the debate only when the choices under scrutiny do not reflect a specific set of usually Western values. (Narayan 1997; Mohanty 1988; Khader 2011) Therefore, taking seriously these charges of ethnocentrism and cultural stereotyping, feminist scholars have tried, on the one hand, to distance themselves from a conception of culture as a determinant of action, trying to articulate a multiculturalism without culture (Phillips 2007), on the other, to deliver a new account of transcultural feminism that does without the notion of autonomy. (Khader 2019)

In my paper, I shall argue that both accounts, the former elaborated by Anne Phillips, the latter proposed by Serene Khader, are built on conceptual premises that prevent them from adequately criticizing the dynamics of gender oppression that they intend to capture. In Multiculturalism without Culture (2007), Phillips aims at de-essentializing the concept of ‘culture’ by comparing cultural influence to the functioning of other social categories like ‘gender’ or ‘class’. However, levelling the influence and relevance of culture to that of class and gender disregards the moral significance of cultural membership. She delivers a too simplistic account of cultural belonging in favour of an individualistic conception of agency. She sweeps away exactly what makes the legitimacy of state interference with culturally
oriented choices so hard to assess: namely the fact that cultures and cultural communities have a constitutive role for the subject’s agency and one’s sense of identity.

On the other side, in *Decolonizing Universalism* (2019), Serene Khader contends that precisely because various modalities of individual flourishing exist, even within communities with ‘metaphysically traditionalist worldviews’, the notion of autonomy is not suited to determine whether or not a practice is oppressive. However, her account of traditional feminism either leaves undetermined what counts as oppressive, thus leaving too much unquestioned, or proposes a thick conception of oppression that conflicts with the idea of a non-ethnocentric political framework.

I shall argue that dealing with cultural accommodation and gender injustice requires keeping together both the notions of culture and autonomy. The charges of ethnocentrism should not be dismissed. On the contrary, both culture and autonomy should be jointly revised in light of them.

**Gabriela Loureiro, University of Edinburgh**

*Can feminist hashtags build communities? An intersectional approach to digital feminist activism in Brazil*

This talk focuses on the community-building aspect of digital feminist mobilisations in Brazil and its inequalities, unravelling feelings of belonging and alienation that result from social organizing around a common cause and the ways in which these feelings relate to the histories of feminist activism more broadly. While the creation of feminist collectives online often lead to a public demand for accountability and personal reflection on different levels, they also reproduce limitations in terms of building sustained change that belong to a long legacy of conflict amongst groups involved in collective struggle. Hence, I delve into theorizations of intersectionality, demonstrating how building campaigns with intersectional lenses demands more than adding different identities to the mix “and stir”. I situate intersectionality within debates about the work of coalitional politics in order to think projects of difference, bringing theory and praxis into the discussion in order to illuminate the current limitations of Brazilian digital feminist activism and community coalitions more broadly. The overall premise of this paper is that hashtag campaigns repeat feminist activism’s history of radicality and co-option, but with new sets of limitations and potentials that further limits the pursuit of social justice.
PARALLEL SESSION 3: COMMUNITY & THE DIGITAL WORLD

Mercy Fekadu Mulugeta, Addis Ababa University

*Online politics and offline communities: Hate speech & social media in contemporary Africa (focus on Ethiopia)*

Studies that explore the link between dangerous speech on social media and conflict/violence overlook the existence and dynamics of communities. On the other hand, methodological discussion still lack clarity on how to produce the knowledge on the link between violence and social media using consistent yet ethical methods. Furthermore, the available studies on social media and online behaviours have focused on the global north. In Africa, the need to study the link between online dangerous speech and violence and conflict in real life is justified for three reasons. One is concerning increased polarization of religious and ethnic identities which has led to contentious politics both off and online. A case in point is Ethiopia, which has undergone a series of political reconfiguration in the last six years, the major harbingers of which were widespread protests, the rise of armed and non-armed ethno-nationalist youth movements, attempted coups, displacements and religious conflicts. Secondly, access to the internet and social media is increasing exponentially. While Ethiopia is one of the world’s least connected countries, there is an exponential growth in internet and social media usage. This warrants the attention of both researchers and policy makers. Thirdly, social media actors mirror the contentious nature of politics on the ground (in Ethiopia too). I try to conceptualise the link between online dangerous speech, offline communities and violence is necessary.

Anthony Longo, University of Antwerp

*Digital reconfigurations of community building: An object-oriented approach to interactivity*

Since the 1990s, academics have observed how the internet and social media have come to provide an important space for community building for marginalised groups. Such a space has been more broadly described as a ‘digital public sphere’, commonly defined the communicative sphere of interaction provided by online media where citizens can gather to discuss common concerns. The theorization and assessment of this development is predominantly based on the public sphere theories of Jürgen Habermas and Hannah Arendt. I argue that this approach leads to necessarily limited and misleading results, as it cannot take into account the medium specificity of digital platforms and how they play a role in new forms of online community building. By analysing several cases of online activism and public discourse, I show how digital objects play a fundamental role in the emergence of online communities. Rather than ‘being present’ in the digital public sphere, we ‘make ourselves present’ through the creation and engagement with digital objects, such as tweets, post, like-buttons, etc. This type of interaction does not denote an interpersonal kind of interactivity, as traditional theories have intended, but an object-oriented type of interactivity. This suggests that in order to properly theorise online communities, we should recognise the relevance of both human and non-human actors. This paper therefore expands the theoretical and conceptual framework of ‘community’ as used in contemporary approaches to digital and social media.

Audrey Verma

“Does that mean you can’t say anything about environmental destruction anywhere unless it’s at your doorstep?”: Online environmental campaigns and the question of community
This paper considers the ways in which digitisation problematises the already fraught notion of community, meshing the lines between local, national, regional and global in ways that are salient for environmental justice. Drawing on ethnographic research with two grassroots environmental campaigns in Scotland and India that have distinct digital-social lives, this paper makes three related observations. First, digital participation blurs the already unclear boundaries of ‘community’. Communities of interest e.g., those who signed campaign e-petitions, invoked ideas of global interconnections and shared responsibilities. Communities of interest may thus be conceived of as communities of place wrought at larger scales, brought together under an environmental concern, able to coalesce visibly and vocally given the affordances of digital platforms. Second, where online platforms hold the capacity to expand and mobilise communities of interest and knowledge, digitally-facilitated inclusion and participation of these groups creates discernible tensions with and for those who identify in terms of communities of place. Challenges and contradictions around whose voices and opinions (should) matter emerge time and again. Third, digital campaigns raise questions around the validity of digital participation as a form of ‘care’ and ‘caring’ for the environment, and how partisanship over substantive matters of care play out discursively online, often in reductive ways.
PARALLEL SESSION 4: RESISTANCE & SOLIDARITY

Begüm Özden Fırat, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University

Failed solidarities: Crisis, corona, and networks of mutual aid in Turkey

The political horizon of social struggles in Turkey have been directed towards creating and institutionalizing economic and social practices that organize the realm of social reproduction in non-capitalist ways, inventing a different culture in which an anti-capitalist common sense can cherish, at least since the Gezi Uprising of 2013. This political spirit quickly made a comeback in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in the form of neighbourhood-scale solidarity groups, which tried to reformulate what a local community is and what it does.

In this presentation, I look at the predicament of neighbourhood-oriented pandemic solidarity groups that emerged responding to the social urgencies created by the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey. I hope to open up a discussion concerning when and where this form and level of organization, gathered around the ideals of direct democracy, reciprocity, and solidarity, failed by rethinking pandemic solidarity networks established in the first wave of the pandemic, which understood local everyday space/scale and everyday life as a political ground. I focus on the social, cultural, and political contexts in which movements emerge and argue that such local movements cannot fulfil their potentials due to structural conditions. I put forward six dynamics paving the way of ‘failure’: the first two factors are related to the organizational forms, demands, and repertoires of solidarity networks (Politics of the scale of the neighbourhood and The omission of the gendered relations of the household), the other four are related to the emergence of populist authoritarian regimes and the socio-historical structuring of urban neighbourhoods and the entrenched culture of cooperation (The politics of Kulturkampf and organizing among ‘strangers like me’; the populist politics of the state and local governments; The pressure of already existing local networks of ‘solidarity’; Blurring of conceptualizations of charity and solidarity).

These factors, related to the restructuring of the state and the formation of authoritarian populist regimes in the last decade, have been present since before the pandemic started. The ways in which the state has dealt with the consequences of lockdowns and social distancing seem to have reinforced the effects of these factors on the neighbourhood level. While the practices of solidarity include powerful practices and ideals set forth by our movements, I argue that they run the risk of being ‘incorporated’ by populist regimes and their opponents alike.

Arianna Introna, Open University of Scotland

Crip communities of care: Recognising disability in the midst of our movements

If your activism ignores disability, it is not activism. This is the challenge that disabled activists have repeatedly brought to social and anti-capitalist movements. By combining Marxist theory, disability studies and anarchist theories of prefiguration and mutual aid I will explore the ways in which rising to this challenge involves a two-fold critical and practical move. First, it calls for recognition of the ways in which our (and all) bodyminds are marked by an irreducible potential to misfit the processes of capitalist production, which invites specific forms of theorising and organising. Second, it challenges us to crip the forms of prefiguration that we may want to embed in our movements and theorise as constitutive of those.
According to Alfred Sohn-Rethel, the activities of the individuals which make up a society interrelate in ways that necessitate a ‘minimum of uniformity’ so that the society can function ‘as a whole’ (Sohn-Rethel 2021, p.4). The same applies to the communities of struggles that sustain our movements. Recognising disability in our midst, I will suggest, transforms strategic debates around ways to build a counterpower that challenges state and capital alike, and ties these to processes of subjectification unfolding between and within movements. It does so by reconfiguring our communities of struggles as crip communities of care. In these not only is the primacy of social reproduction as mutual aid asserted, but it is organised for by centering the unruliness and non-normativity of multiple body-minds and access needs. The key contribution that crip perspectives can offer to the theory and praxis of mutual aid resides precisely in the open-endedness they predicate, as this is fundamental to the realisation of the promise that mutual aid holds, according to Catherine Malabou, to materialise ‘the paradoxical solidarity of the unchained’ (Malabou 2021, p.26).

Jo Krishnakumar, SOAS University of London

*Sanghatan Humari Shakti Hai*: An ethnographic mapping of sex workers’ organised communities in South and West India

Marginalised populations often see communities made by people who are also marginalised in the same ways as them as the only safe space they can exist in, in their entirety. In this paper, I explore sex workers’ networks and organising efforts through the National Network of Sex Workers in South and West India as they work in a continuum of crises.

I draw on what anthropologists know about marginalised networks and communities where Non-Governmental Organisations are focal points of community reach and community building, to see how sex workers diverge from known ways of working. Through an ethnographic mapping of the network, I pin how ‘the community’ is at the heart of the ‘the social movement’, the importance of peers within HIV/AIDS interventions central to sex worker organising, and eventually moving to the need for the ‘sanghatna’ (collective) to shift focus towards themselves in policy and action through available state mechanisms. The sanghatna also brought in ways to collectivise against known and often tolerated police violence, making workplaces safer, and creating mechanisms to combat any use of force (sexual trafficking, intimate partner violence, extortion etc) that workers had to usually deal with alone. This made the sanghatna first responders to issues of their own workers, and politically also gave them evidence to argue that decriminalising sex work, and involving adult consensual sex workers in discussions about sexual trafficking is in the interest of all stakeholders involved.

The often abstract concept of the sanghatna/ collective has also turned into physical spaces within networks, mutual aid centres, helpdesks to access social schemes and offices that act as community safe spaces to spend time with ‘those who understand’, as put by one of my interlocutors. During the pandemic, the need and function of the community has become multifold- the meaning of community, community members and community living differs on the fringes of society, and offers us a chance to critically examine how communities can be reductive when forced to be homogenous, expansive when in crisis and often the best option for immediate aid for most individuals.

*‘In the collective lies our strength’. Hindi translated to English.*
PARALLEL SESSION 5: COMMUNITY, POLITICS & IDENTITY

Maxim van Asseldonk, University of Aberdeen

In search for the people not to be found: Constituent power in a prefigurative key

Constituent power remains a vital conceptual resource for democratic theory. In its most elementary form, it expresses the idea that the legitimacy and authority of laws and political institutions must in some way be traced back to the people. This raises the question of how ‘the people’ is to be defined or demarcated. Seeking to demarcate the community that authorises its own laws and institutions has led many philosophers to propose highly problematic answers based on naturalised ontologies. Others have instead struggled to find such a community immediately present to himself. This paper engages with that question by focusing on contemporary receptions of one such author: Rousseau. In a recent book, Çiğdem Çıdam argues that since Rousseau, western political thought has been on a quest for immediacy – that of a people or community immediately present to itself. This has led to a problematic neglect of the intrinsic theatricality of politics. Rousseau, however, always failed to discover said immediacy. Drawing on the work of Bonnie Honig and Jean-Luc Nancy, this paper asks what a theory of constituent power might learn from Rousseau’s failure. From Nancy, I adopt his insistence that the lost community whose immediacy Rousseau sought to discover was never really there – a point which resonates with his more general argument that Being is always Being-with – community – but that this community exists only as absence. The loss of community or of ‘the people’, however, need not mean the loss of the idea of constituent power. Instead, drawing on Honig’s productive interpretation of the figure of Rousseau’s lawgiver, I propose theorising democratic peoplehood instead as a claim which spurs on collective action, by means of which the existence of the people is prefigured. Keeping in step with Nancy’s insistence that community has no real or fixed insistence, I argue instead that the fullest extent to which such a thing as ‘the people’ can exist is in its being prefigured.

Jonna Pettersson, Malmö University

Civic integration and the negation of collective selfhood – Conceptualising community through Ricoeur’s notion of ipse- and idem-identity

State membership conditioned on prior civic integration in the polity is increasingly becoming the modus operandi in the process of acquisition of formal belonging in the nation-state. Requirements of immigrants to prove language skills, undertake knowledge tests, or complete courses of civic education, have become central in attaining formal legal membership in the political community. However, while civic integration often is furthered as an emancipatory process and way to strengthen social cohesion, this paper maintains that civic inclusion deviates from a notion of integration as the mutual transformation of immigrant and receiving polity alike. Instead, civic integration is argued to make way for a notion of community based in sameness rather than in an inclusive and reciprocal respect for diversity.

This paper approaches the question of civic inclusion through Paul Ricoeur’s discussion of ipse- and idem-identity. It is argued that the distinction between integration as a practice of inclusion in a political community based in the reflexivity of the collective self, and assimilation as a process through which newcomers conform to the sameness of the community, breaks down in practices of civic integration. Further, drawing on idem-identity, civic integration is seen to not only defeat its own goals of political emancipation of the immigrant and the social cohesion of the community, but also to negate the very possibility of collective reflexive selfhood.
Instead of forming a process of mutuality and reciprocity, civic integration is argued to align with practices of assimilation that extends also to the host community, since civic integration establishes a notion of what ‘we’ are by virtue of our similarity, rather than through a democratic co-existence emerging with the joint commitment to a shared public life and the mutual experience of alterity of the other as well as the self. By contrast, the paper engages the figure of ipse-identity and the shared reciprocity of collective reflexive selfhood as a possibility to conceptualise a notion of community that does not presuppose sameness as its primary goal. Doing so, community is suggested to emerge with reciprocal encounters and engagements and to be continuously forged in a relationship of mutual exchange and commitment to a shared political co-existence.

**Marie Wuth, University of Aberdeen**

*Longing for belonging: The affective roots of identity and community*

Longing is the desire for something that we miss and yet do not know, for a part of us that is nevertheless intangible, for an image that we draw ourselves but will remain opaque. This pressing, devouring need is and necessarily remains unfulfilled, because when we long for something we are desiring a fiction. It is this fundamental unfulfillment that sets the desire to belong at the root of community. Longing for belonging expresses a complex relation between parts and whole, between self and an-other, that is in its plural and singular form. It is the desire for one another, for a we, for another being, or rather a form of being, we belong to and can immerse ourselves in. It is also a longing for an other, for a being, singular or collective, that is different, the other from which one may distinguish themselves. Longing for belonging, in other words, is a wish for proximity and distance that sets and dissolves boundaries at the same time. In this paper I will discuss what I consider to be three critical aspects of longing for belonging as a foundational affect for political communities. Those aspects unfold in a somewhat dual dynamics and encompass the spatio-temporal dimension of belonging, the desire for an-other and the co-presence of agreement and disagreement. All three aspects articulate the complex dimension and mechanisms of power and images connected to longing for belonging as visible in the narratives unfolding from this feeling. Following the assumption that longing for belonging is the affective root of community I shall show how it creates narratives of identity that are crucial for the construction, organization and perseverance of a collective body. These narratives are interwoven in the relationships of the parts composing the whole, they shape its form in past, present and future. Thus, these narratives are constructions of identity, which depict where we come from, where we are now, where we go to and most importantly a vision of a ‘we’ one longs to belong to. Simultaneously narratives of identity include and exclude, dominate and suppress, conceal and reveal what is rendered agreeable and disagreeable. They are means and expressions of power that not only frame our longing for belonging and construct what we consider to be our identity but make for the inherently political character of community. Against the background of Spinoza’s philosophy and in conversation with feminist affect theories this paper will formulate an approach towards community based on the power of affect.
PARALLEL SESSION 6:
COMMUNITIES ACROSS BORDERS

Janina Louise Pescinski, Queen Mary University of London

*Building community through solidarity at the Franco-Italian border*

This paper considers whether there can be radical political potential in the community building practices that are embedded in everyday acts of solidarity between migrants and citizens at the border. It takes as its focus the town of Briançon on the Franco-Italian border, where citizens have hosted approximately 16,000 migrants since 2017. At citizen-run Refuge brings together transient migrants, local volunteers, and European activists who are all committed to helping the migrants on their journeys. Here, mundane tasks, like doing laundry, cooking meals, and buying train tickets, take on outsize meaning because these everyday activities, when done for and with people without legal status, are relegated to the margins of legality and thus become political. The people present at the Refuge thus form their own community that contravenes the norms of the nation-state. Ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic illustrates how the new emergency presented new challenges and new forms of repression. Yet rather than destabilizing solidarity, responses were integrated into the routine practices already established. The paper considers how citizens and noncitizens build a solidarity community that challenges the state’s practices of migrant exclusion, and by doing so suggests that a new, more expansive conceptualization of citizenship.

Angelos Theocharis, Durham University & GCRF UKRI Living Deltas Hub

*“What we have here I would call a community”: Disputed membership and negotiated identities in diasporic cultural spaces*

The Russophone community in Britain represents a diverse social, demographic, and ethnic group comprised of UK citizens and residents of Russian and Soviet heritage, including expatriates and migrants from the former Soviet Union, the Russian Federation and neighboring countries, bound by one common denominator, the Russian language. The actual size of the community has been a matter of dispute, as well as the existence or not of a cohesive diasporic community sharing a cultural identity. Some scholars maintain that despite the extent and the visibility of the performances and practices of a Russophone community-at-large around Britain, no diasporic identity or unitary communitarian consciousness has been forged nor seems to be in the making. The aim of the present paper is to examine the constitutive elements of a diasporic community by looking at the complex and multi-layered relationship of Russian speakers in London with diasporic cultural organisations and community spaces. Drawing on my two-year ethnographic study of community cultural events in London, I will argue that diasporic identity is approached by the interviewees as an intentional stance, a personal choice to socialise with other Russophone migrants. This stance can be selective and focused on the most familiar or stimulating activities, clubs, and cultural initiatives rather than representing the pursuit of everything ‘Russian’. For most interviewees, the sense of community within diasporic cultural spaces derives from the reaffirmation of cultural bonds between the members grounded in their shared post-Soviet heritage, as well as from literature’s ability to bring people together. Nevertheless, this membership is liquid, with most members participating in several community initiatives at the same time, and does not necessarily translate into socialising outside this space. The diasporans attend the meetings of a cultural group with regularity, join celebrations and play games, express their sense of belonging to its community, yet they are ready to withdraw from the group’s functions if it ceases to serve its purpose like members of ‘liquid communities’ (Bauman, 2000; 2001; 2009).
Mohamed Muse, Leiden University

*Somali diaspora’s identity and ‘jaaliyadaha’ community organisations in the Netherlands*

Diaspora communities are central to transnational livelihoods and networks. There are different actors that are involved in any transnational networks. Sometimes these actors act and operate as communities in transnational spaces to create and maintain identity outside their countries of origin. Same transnational spaces can also facilitate remittances inflows to diaspora’s countries of origin. This can be illustrated by the case of Somali diaspora in the Netherlands and their use of different spaces such as jaaliyadaha and small shops to create and maintain diasporic identity. I have conducted ethnographic observations and qualitative interviews in the Netherlands to enquire the role of jaaliyadaha and other community organisations in the process of creating diasporic identity among Somali community.

Keywords: Community, Hawala, Transnational Networks, Diaspora Communities, Somali Diaspora, ‘Jaaliyadaha’
PARALLEL SESSION 7: MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

Cansu Sonmez, Gran Sasso Science Institute

Infrastructural developments and marginalised communities in contested territories of Italy and Turkey

Infrastructural developments can lead to economic and social development for communities by connecting regions, goods, and people (Priemus and van Wee, 2013; Wu, Chen, and Huang, 2018). However, constructions of mega infrastructures in the name of promoting and promising sustainable energy sources, economic growth, urban and regional development adversely alter social, political, spatial, ecological, and economic dynamics of a territory. They lead to social, environmental, and political upheaval and resistance by the affected communities. This paper analyses and compares the case of Turin–Lyon high-speed railway project (Treno Alta Velocità or TAV in Italian) in the Northern Italy and the case of Ilisu dam in South-eastern Turkey (Northern Kurdistan). The paper focuses on the movements of “NO TAV” in Italy and “Save Hasankeyf Stop Ilisu Dam” in Turkey. The paper examines territorial contestations of these mega infrastructures; infrastructural understanding of marginality; cross-cultural and regional dimensions under the neoliberal regimes; and collective embodied experiences of resistance. The paper seeks to address common political ecological patterns and connectivities of Italy and Turkey through the implementations of mega infrastructures in the regions that are perceived as geographically remote and marginalised. The paper asks: how do struggles and resistance over two different infrastructural developments in marginalised and contested territories of Italy and Turkey intersect and are embodied by the marginalised communities? In doing so, the paper draws out how the construction processes of two mega infrastructures justify and escalate infrastructural violence on political subjectivities with marginalized bodies. Qualitative empirical fieldwork with a comparative case study approach is carried out both in Ilisu dam-affected towns in Tigris Valley in Turkey and in Susa Valley, in Italy.

Keywords: high-speed train; hydropower; infrastructure; embodiment; violence; urban political ecology; marginality; resistance; NO TAV; Hasankeyf

Denisse Román-Burgos, University of Aberdeen

Hass avocado growers and the struggle for a fair price in Tancitaro, Michoacán

In 2016, Hass avocado growers in the Mexican state of Michoacán mobilised to demand export companies a fair price for their product. They stopped harvesting the fruit for two weeks to intervene in the supply and thus increase their prices. These events were known as the Hass avocado grower’s movement.

Although identifying as a movement of equals against a common enemy brought together many people, class differences and historical inequalities complicate the narrative. By using ethnographic material that will show how class shapes different types of Hass avocado growers and thus how the value of production varies from one grower to the other, this paper will discuss how the material conditions of reproduction shaped the movement and other political strategies promoted by its leaders.

The Mexican state of Michoacán grows and exports the largest Hass avocado volume in the world. The industry dates to the 1960s however, it was boosted by the signing of the North
American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. The core of its production lies on land that was collectively owned for most of the 20th century, however, this regime was dismantled and transformed into private property by state reforms in the 1990s. This paper will enquire whether a political common ground can be constructed or not in a region where access to land is differentiated, and Hass avocado trees, which are imagined as the commons, exist today only as private property.

Millie Creighton, University of British Columbia

*Merging people and place in “communities of memory”: Exploring the ongoing affects and meanings of the triple disasters of March, 2011 in six communities of Tohoku, Japan*

The concept of community once more commonly suggested people who lived in close proximity, i.e. residents of a village, whose economic existence was tied together via interconnected cooperative labor and personal involvements. Community is now used in a wide variety of ways, often describing those having a similar affiliation, or some perceived identity definition, such as religion, ethnicity, gender orientation, perceived disability, etc., whether they know and interact with each other or not. This paper looks at the earlier concept of community, involving people in close residential proximity, often for generations, connected through dense intersecting criteria. It explores this sense of community in more rural areas of Japan where people and place merge with the identities of community members tied both to other people and the place in which they have lived and worked, as they perceive it, for centuries. It specifically explores communities affected, and in some cases displaced, by the triple disasters (major earthquake, subsequent tsunami, and nuclear plant meltdown) that shook the Tohoku region of Japan on March 11, 2011 (now called 3.11). Disasters occur elsewhere, but adding to the difficulties in these cases was that these were not just residential neighbourhoods, but “communities of memory” where people’s attachment to place merged with that to people, through long-term participation in community festivals, rituals, and customs. They were also “communities of imagination” for which the future was projected in relationship to others in the places where their communities had “always” been. The paper explores these issues of people, place, and community in six communities affected by the disasters, and members’ experiences over the next 10 years. It also looks at attempts to rebuild community in a “temporary” (meaning 4-6 years) residential area for evacuees from communities where people were unable to return. These communities, like the Tohoku region itself, are understood as oppressed in the larger geopolitical arena of Japan, with less power and agency than metropolitan centers. The Tohoku region has even been called similar to a colonized area. It is thus too simplistic to think of the triple disasters as ‘Japan’s disasters’ as they affected communities and their members already in an oppressed situation by Japan—as even the presence of the nuclear plant reflects. The paper addresses such differences and at times confrontations among the communities based on personal ties with each other and connectedness to place vs. the projected “national community” of Japan.
PARALLEL SESSION 8: COMMUNITY & THE ENVIRONMENT

Giovanna Gini, Queen Mary University of London

Partial healing in a damaged world: Fish and humans’ kinship

This paper explores the partial healing of the community of Enseada da Baleia after forced relocation. The people of Enseada are Caiçaras, artisanal fishers who live in Cardoso, which is an island located southeast of the coast of Brazil. Cardoso Island recently broke in two as a result of erosion, sea-level rise, and frequent storms. The waves of a cyclone in 2016 washed away Enseada’s land, houses, trees, and fishing points – their home. Following this catastrophe, the community had to relocate without the aid of any entity. On the contrary, the community fought for its right to relocate under self-determination principles. They needed specificities to carry on, to survive in this epoch of new endings and beginnings, the Anthropocene. The community chose a location that was previously inhabited by Erci, their late community leader. Erci chose this specific location taking into consideration that the land should be fertile and with access to fishing points, therefore, guaranteeing that Enseada would stay together and carry on as a community, a family, as Caiçaras. This paper focuses on the process of choosing the location for re-building and the partial healing of the material and non-material community—particularly their relationship with fish. The paper interrogates: how does making kin between human and nonhuman help to stay with the trouble? In other words, how does making kinship between humans and non-humans help in surviving the Anthropocene?

The ethnography notes in this paper came from a period of isolation with the community during the Covid-19 pandemic. During this moment of uncertainty, fishing – their traditional practice – makes them overcome the pandemic and its impact on their income and food security. Through fishing, drying fish and eating fish, the community come together. This brought different temporalities with the memory of those that are not here anymore. Erci, for example, died just before the relocation. While drying the fish, the women spoke about the elders and how their teaching is crucial for their survival. Ancestral knowledge gets to mix with new ideas and processes of working and commercialisation under social solidarity feminist principles. Working, eating, and celebrating together makes them stay together. The possibility of partial healing, of staying with the trouble among us - humans and non-humans - is not possible without joy. Collective joyful practices, like eating fish, are essential in staying with the trouble in a dying world.

Ella Hubbard, University of Sheffield

Conceptualising community within the bioregioning movement

This paper draws on my research with bioregional activists in Scotland and USA to unpack competing understandings of community within the bioregioning movement. Bioregional thought has a particular spatial imaginary in which the world can be mapped through naturally occurring bioregions. Bioregions can be defined by features like watersheds, geology, or nutrient cycles. It also critiques political boundaries, arguing that they prevent successful management of environmental problems, and that human communities have become disconnected from the place in which they live (their bioregion) and the more-than-human interdependencies in which they are entangled. The solution that bioregionalism poses is to organise human communities as defined by, and within bioregions.

This paper argues that there are two contrasting understandings of community in bioregional
thought. One that evokes right-wing ecological perspectives of community, which privilege the ‘native’ at the exclusion of all others. The other is radically anti-essentialist, seeing community as a state of coexistence within and across bioregions, which incorporates other species. This understanding is in line with Jean Luc Nancy’s conceptualisation of community as a state of being-in-common.

The paper raises questions such as how do we incorporate the non-human in our conception of community? How do social movements navigate different understandings of who and what belongs? And what can we learn from a bioregional ontologies of community?

Jacob A. E. Nielsen, Kostas Stavrianakis & Zoe Morrison, Robert Gordon University

*Communities and climate change initiatives: A troublesome mess?*

This paper examines how communities are conceptualized and enacted in climate change initiatives. Communities in climate mitigation and adaptation projects are often portrayed as having troublesome properties. On the one hand, community-based participatory, consultative and collaborative approaches are increasingly seen as essential to the success of climate change initiatives, however despite these promises the outcomes of community-based projects are often mixed. At the same time, in much of the literature on the implementation of climate mitigation technologies, communities are often portrayed as troublesome entities where Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) sentiments prevent the implementation of technologies that are portrayed as being essential to address climate change. This troublesome nature of communities is often seen as something that ought to be overcome through the use of better engagement strategies, project management tools, and theoretical frameworks.

However, in this paper, we will seek to examine these troublesome properties as productive sites that can create insights into underlying social, political, economic, and environmental processes and contestations. We will argue that the troubles communities bring are not due to imperfect implementations of climate change initiatives, but rather covers over underlying tensions and contestations. By staying with the trouble and mess that communities bring the paper seeks to move away from approaching climate change initiatives as a-political means to achieve climate goals. Instead, it will illustrate how climate change initiatives are sites where people, knowledge, techniques, and materialities come together to form shifting patterns of resistance and control. These shifting patterns evolves around contestations about the boundaries and relevance of communities, what types of knowledge counts, and what the social-environmental implications of these projects will be.

To explore these questions we will use community acceptance of Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) projects as a case study of the multifaceted roles and shapes communities may have within climate change initiatives. We will draw on a critical review of the literature of community acceptance of CCUS together with preliminary auto-ethnographic data from an ongoing multi-sited EU funded CCUS project.
Sophie Lauwers, University of Aberdeen

Religious minorities and the un-settling of national culture

Many liberal democratic theorists and policy makers consider protecting and promoting ‘national culture’ to be a necessary ingredient for viable democratic political communities. Although nativist defences of (Judeo-)Christian culture have been subject to critique, liberal democrats have defended ‘liberal’ civic models of nationalism as resisting the problems of ‘illiberal’ ethnic models. In this paper, I analyse governmental and societal discourses in Western Europe in order to argue that – despite such aims – liberal endorsements of ‘national culture’ (re)produce the symbolic and material subordination of ethnic and religious minorities. In the first part, I outline the function of ‘national culture’ and ‘nation-building tools’ in liberal democratic theory and practice. I focus in particular on the criteria liberal national culture must fulfil, namely a) accessibility to different backgrounds and b) non-invasion of freedom of conscience. Under these conditions, national culture is assumed to be benign and dynamic, automatically incorporating minority cultures over time. Second, I contest these assumptions by showing how discourses of national culture in Western Europe reproduce the idea of a pre-political and homogenized ‘historic nation’, with a particular religio-cultural heritage that needs to be protected. This communicates that those who are not part of the ‘historic nation’ do not truly belong. Such Leitkulturism is most explicitly found in populist radical right discourses that announce the ‘invasion’ of non-Christian, primarily Muslim, migrants. However, the narrative of protecting a national culture against ‘new’ destabilising influences is echoed by advocates of moderate liberal nationalism. Moreover, liberal attempts at mitigating religious inequality, focused on reasonable accommodation, tend to reinforce the self-evidence and de-politicization of ‘national culture’. Third, I explore the repercussions of these findings for government policy on religion and culture. Here, I argue for policy measures that facilitate the pluralization of religion and culture in the public sphere, rather than a procedural liberalism and strict secularism. This, however, will require unsettling essentialist and de-politicized understandings of ‘culture’, as well as explicit attention for structures of social and political inequality.

Paul Carls, Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research

The Durkheimian moral ideal: The imagined ideal community and its role in political conflict

Some of the most important conflicts in Western democracies surround the issues of multiculturalism, immigration, and national identity. These conflicts revolve around models of the ideal community that individuals seek to concretely realize through social and political action. These visions of the perfect community are what Émile Durkheim calls moral ideals, which are highly normative ideas of what the community should look like and which set a collective goal for a group to realize along with moral prescriptions on how to achieve it. Because different groups sharing the same social space pursue different, often antagonistic visions of the ideal community, moral ideals are a key feature of social and political conflict.

In this paper I identify and discuss four moral ideals related to multiculturalism and the nation that are prevalent in Western democracies and that are at the heart of social and political conflict. They include: the ideal of non-domination, in which all sources of domination, including hierarchical and exclusionary social and political institutions, have been dismantled; the ideal of political liberalism or constitutional patriotism, in which a community is united not
by common ethnic or cultural ties but by allegiance to shared political values; the ideal of an ethnico-cultural nation, in which members are united to varying degrees by shared ethnic and/or cultural traits; and the ideal of the biological nation, in which members of the community are united fundamentally by a shared racial heritage.

These ideals all contain criteria for inclusion and exclusion and compete with each other for power and influence within the political sphere as a means to gain access to (or to dismantle) state power. The result is political conflict that takes place essentially within a moral framework. Durkheim’s work, particularly his sociology of morality and religion, is well-suited to explaining these conflicts. It provides analytical tools, including the idea of the sacred, the moral authority, and a theory of moral legitimacy, to identify the motivations of those engaged in such conflicts, as well as why they are often times so intense. This paper will explore key features of Durkheim’s work in this respect, and using examples taken from Germany and the United States will illustrate conflicts involving the four moral ideals mentioned above.
Recreating and contesting school community in northern Chile: Identities, acculturation, and conviviality

This paper explores how teachers and students of a school located in the north of Chile produce, experience, signify and recreate school community in a context of territorial transformations and increased migratory flows. Based on a school ethnography conducted in a diverse school in Iquique, this paper aims to discuss and rethink the ways in which the educational community perceives itself in connection with broader social relations and that are related to processes of exclusion, inclusion and conviviality in the northern territory of Chile.

After the end of the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) in which Chile, Bolivia and Peru disputed territories, Iquique officially became part of Chile, ceasing to belong to Peru. The annexation of Iquique and other regions to Chile generated a series of state interventions - through Chilean public education - called Chileanisation (Mondaca et al., 2018). Thus, the local population experienced processes of acculturation that sought to promote Chilean traditions and culture to replace those of Peru. In this regard, Iquique and the northern area of Chile have faced territorial, identity and social transformations that, consequently, have modified the configurations of the ‘national community’ (Cortés Saavedra, 2022).

In this sense, this presentation seeks to account for entanglement processes between the regional, local and school communities and to describe how a school community receives, reinterprets, and contests such changes. Thus, the ways of understanding and defining community will be transformed as the school community and the local community enact the cultural practices and social identities of the northern zone of Chile.

References


Anna Teitz, University of Aberdeen

Searching for community in micropolitical placement contexts

This PhD project aims to understand student teachers’ experiences of micropolitics during the school placement component of their initial teacher education. Though there have been a number of studies focusing on school placements and their effects on students’ learning, there exist considerably less concerning the way they interact with the school as an institution (Cohen et al., 2013; Malderez et al., 2007; Zeichner, 2012). Schools are complex organisations where different interests and expectations meet, and student teachers must learn how to integrate themselves into these organisational contexts to become functioning members of the school community.

Drawing on interviews with participating students and their mentors, narrative inquiry addressed the research questions by focussing on social discourses, helping to situate the
experiences of the participants in their wider socio-cultural contexts, and uncover the micropolitical factors (LaPointe, 2010). The interviews for this study took place in April 2020. Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) argued that finding belonging was not an easy task for student teachers, and they could face a number of obstacles in their quest to become a member of the teaching community. This too is reflected in this study, with the student teachers sharing a variety of stories of trying to integrate in their new placement communities. Meanwhile, Wenger (1998) argued that even when student teachers tried to integrate with their communities, their status within the micropolitical context prohibited true integration. Becoming a part of the school community emerged as an important interest for the student teachers, who all talked about their success and times when they felt unable to join their placement community. These narratives about trying to integrate with the community show that community is an important aspect of the developing micropolitical literacy of student teachers.

Belonging and isolation emerged as a guiding theme within this study. In the narratives of this study, belonging to a teaching community became a micropolitical learning point, as student teachers tried to act within the micropolitical contexts to join in the teaching community. This shows that community, certainly within the teacher education context, is a political field and only those proficient in navigating micropolitical actions were successful in joining their communities.

Key words: Student/pre-service teacher, micropolitics, belonging

References


