

ARTICLE**Development, Public Participation, and Cultural War**

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Aiming for emancipating humans from inequality and poverty, the concept of development has evolved to better define criteria for a higher quality of life in larger populations. Development scholars and practitioners consider people's democratic participation in decision-making as a vital element in supporting equality and sustainability of projects. Nonetheless, in practice, due to imbalances in power relations, stratifications in community and different perceived benefits by stakeholders based on their cultural differences, participatory approaches are often deficient in achieving inclusivity and/or cohesion. After the presidential election in 2016 and the widening and deepening of the cultural gaps ("wars") between different social groups, finding democratic approaches to negotiate meanings and addressing discriminatory behaviors is vital for sustaining both justice and economic productivity in the United States. Through case-study research, this paper investigates how Community Cultural Development (CCD) approaches, as an increasingly growing community-building strategy, can influence collaborative and inclusive processes in communities where social disparity hinders decision making and implementation of development projects.

Keywords: Development; Democratic Participation; Decision Making; Sustainability; Cultural Gap/War; Discriminatory; Justice; Community Cultural Development

Introduction

They [cultural differences] have never been probably more prominent since the Civil War than they are at this moment! I would say that a couple of keys to connecting people across them is through the work of arts and cultures (Brooks 2017).

Development

As an ambiguous term, "development" is used descriptively and normatively to refer to a vision a process, or an action through which a society moves toward a "good change" (Chambers 1997, 1743), or a "desired objective"(Jamal and Dredge 2014, 19). What is considered as "development" can shape the assumptions, values, actions, processes, and aims of governments, organizations/institutions, or individuals whom through deliberate efforts try to change things in a society for the better. Competing development paradigms (i.e. Modernization, Dependency, Economic Neoliberalism, Alternative development such as development from below approaches, Post-development, Human Development, and the search for a new paradigm) have evolved since the end of World War II; however, development as a multi- and inter-disciplinary field of research (Potter 2014) and practice has not changed "its normative concern with emancipation from inequality and poverty" (Hettne 2002, 11).

Development models that have relied on economic growth alone have not been successful in eradicating poverty and promoting justice because of two main reasons. First, an increase in a nation's gross domestic product (GDP) does not necessarily ensure higher average household incomes, especially in a globalizing world. Put differently, GDP does not consider the "distribution" of income; therefore, it can give high marks to states with high levels of inequality. Secondly, GDP-based development approaches assume that a single economic number can represent all the key components of individual's lives, a sharply reductionist claim that fails to account for the role of justice, freedom, and equality in human fulfillment.

To this end, a number of scholars regard development as the improvement of “the quality of all human lives and capabilities by raising people’s levels of living, self-esteem, and freedom” (Todaro and Smith 2012, 5). Based on Amartya Sen’s theory of human development (Sen 1990), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its definition for development emphasizes the role of democratic participation; “the basic objective of human development is to enlarge the range of people’s choices to make development more democratic and participatory [...] each individual should also have the opportunity to participate fully in community decisions and to enjoy human, economic and political freedoms” (UNDP 1991).

Public Participation

To support democratic development, scholars and decision makers from a wide range of policy sectors appear to take hold of the public participation agenda (Abelson et al. 2003). Beierle and Clayford (2002) defined public participation as “any of several ‘mechanisms’ intentionally instituted to involve the lay public or their representatives in administrative decision making” (6). One should note when it comes to decision making, citizens’ role and impact on development projects can vary broadly: from no influence/effect on decisions (e.g., information enhancing meetings), to partial public participation (e.g. Consultations with local residents), to total public influence over the outcome (IAP2 2014).

As Cornwall (2008) explains, although opening spaces for dialogue through inviting participants is necessary, it does not automatically lead to effective participation (275). Relatedly, Beierle and Cayford (2002), after analyzing 239 cases of public involvement in decision making, demonstrated that compared to participation context, participation processes (mechanisms and elements of participation such as the participants’ degree of motivation and the quality of their deliberation) are more important in determining the success or failure of public participation. Due to unbalanced social and political power relations among participating groups and relative lack of public power in comparison with final approval powers (Arnstein 1969) beside contestation among diverse set of actors each with their own projects, public participation is rarely a seamless linear process. Since communities are not blocs of solidarity and most of them are likely to be socially differentiated and diverse (Dorman 2002, 133), deliberation as “allowing individuals with different backgrounds, interests and values to listen, understand, potentially persuade and ultimately come to more reasoned, informed and public-spirited decisions” is a common thread weaving through the current public participation debate (Abelson et al. 2003, 241).

Cultural War

Through scrutinizing public political and mass media discourse, Deborah Tannen (1999) tried to unfold the prevalent tendency towards adversarial forms of communication, confrontational exchange, use of military metaphors, aggressively pitching one side against the other, and the predominant dichotomous way of thinking in the context of the United States. By describing this phenomenon as the “argument culture” she found the roots of these patterns based in the Western, Anglo-Saxon culture, and diagnosed an increasing spread of the argument culture via its global expression in Western-dominated media. Outlining the enormous impact of language and ritualized forms of interaction, she expressed concerns about the consequences for democracy, quoting the philosopher John Dewey: ‘Democracy begins with conversation’ (Tannen 1999, 27). James Davison Hunter (2018), in his chapter “The American Culture War,” explains that the new cultural divides in the United States are no longer informed by specific doctrinal issues or styles of religious practice and organization; instead, they revolve around Americans’ fundamental understandings of value, purpose, truth, freedom, and collective identity” (5).

The unsettled value-based conflicts among community groups hinder development projects by decreasing economic productivity (Hsieh et al. 2013) and endangering democratic participation and, consequently, sustainability of benefits from development projects. This problem is especially important in today’s United States’ political climate where there is a dramatic polarization in the choices of individuals, very little of which can be explained by the economic hardship faced by them; instead, “most of the divide appears to be associated with sexism and denial of racism especially among whites without college degrees” (Schaffner, Macwilliams, and Nteta 2018, 30).

Hunter describes that what animates each of the opposing groups is their difference over moral authority; one characterized by a sense that “ultimate reality is rooted in the transcendent” and the other not believing in fixed standards outside of human experience, valuing instead what one can apprehend through her/his senses in personal experiences (Hunter 2018, 5). Attention to the roots of the current cultural war is especially relevant to the democratic development goal of enlarging the range of human choices when it comes to the political debate over abortion, gay rights, education policy, public goods, and other related issues. Given the

fact that many of the above-mentioned conflicts are rooted in engrained cultural beliefs, through case study research, this paper explores the dynamics of community cultural development as an increasingly common strategy in creating spaces for dialogue among different groups of diverse backgrounds to support inclusive participation processes within communities.

Community Cultural Development

A relatively recent approach, aimed at bringing cohesion into communities, is engaging diverse stakeholders in art and culture-based activities (Goldbard 2015). Thomas and Rappaport (1996) have highlighted the unifying power of culture in shaping collective identity: “What is typically thought of art is a powerful means for communicating narratives that interpret experience and shape our collective understanding of ourselves” (317). Based on the mutual relationship of art and community, Dewey (2005) believes art is both given by and represents the community that is its context. Defining collective art as a ritual essential to building a sane society, Fromm (1990) has emphasized the significance of art by claiming, “Collective art is shared; it permits man to feel one with others in a meaningful, rich, productive way” (302). How art and culture promote inclusionary processes is a matter of critical importance, as Sharp, Pollock and Paddison (2005) show in their research on the role of public art as part of the wider urban regeneration project: “Processes through which artworks become installed into the urban fabric are critical to the successful development of inclusion” (1001).

Culture and art are increasingly understood as inseparable parts of development theory and praxis. As Amartya Sen (2000) declares: “[c]ultural matters are integral parts of the lives we lead. If development can be seen as enhancement of our living standards, then efforts geared to development can hardly ignore the world of culture (1). Through connecting community identity to the development of a stimulating local economy, arts and culture are among popular tools for development in disinvested communities “where residents lack meaningful access to economic and social opportunities” (The Annie E. Casey Foundation 2006, 9). Low-income and/or segregated communities adapt arts- and culture-based methodologies to strength the cultural identity, heal trauma, and foster a shared vision within community (Stephenson and Tate 2015).

Today’s arts-based community development, or a community cultural development, movement is founded on the belief that “the arts can be a powerful agent of personal, institutional, and community change” (Cleveland 2011, 1) Adams and Goldbard (2005) choose the “Community Cultural Development” (CCD) among the many existing labels for its broader inclusion of approaches. A community’s emphasis on participation and collaboration in the development of their culture includes art and many other forms of possible interaction and development to demonstrate an ambition of “conscientization¹” and empowerment through a bottom-up approach (4). One such example is William Cleveland’s (2011) model of Arts-Based Community Development (ABCD), which includes arts-centered activities that support “the sustained advancement of human dignity, health and/or productivity within a community” through educating and informing, inspiring and mobilizing individuals or groups about themselves and the world, nurturing and healing people and/or communities, building and improving community capacity and/or infrastructure (4).

A number of scholars and practitioners believe that participatory decision-making approaches cannot be formulaic—participation should evolve from and through the community in question (Bass, Dalal-Clayton, and Pretty 1995). In his case study research on NGOs’ success in understanding and responding to the needs of local communities, John Hailey (2013) revealed interesting findings. He showed that closeness within communities arose not from the application of the well-known formulaic approaches to participation—they were conspicuous by their absence—rather, success was achieved through long-term efforts by NGO leaders to build close personal relationships with individuals and groups in the communities with which they worked. Essentially, what makes CCD distinct from other participatory development approaches is how it recognizes and expands the agency of the communities and individuals involved, “because it engages the whole person and the entire population... in culture-based community development, actions, emotions, ideas and the social fabric that binds them are all relevant, all simultaneously engaged. The work always starts with community members’ own stories” (Goldbard 2015, 20).

Bowles considers arts activities as tools via which community members can take greater control over their lives by finding and conveying social issues that are relevant to individuals and communities (Bowles 1989).

¹ Paulo Freire defines critical consciousness as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire 1973, 1–4).

This can be described through the less obvious power of art and its capability to re-create and re-present reality (Marcuse 1978). As Goldbard concludes:

Apart from the artistic skills, artists working in the community teach cultural citizenship: empathy, social imagination, resourcefulness, resilience, improvisation, communication. These capacities may be learned directly as explicit lessons or indirectly: When the members of a group share and explore individual visions of their community's future, they are practicing holding dual viewpoints simultaneously (2015, 22).

Community Cultural Development: A Case-Study

Located in Letcher County and serving as the county seat, Whitesburg, Kentucky, a town with 2,139 residents (U.S. Census Bureau 2010), has been home to Appalshop, a multi-disciplinary arts and education center since its foundation in 1969. Appalshop was primarily an economic development project for the War on Poverty which was founded by the American Film Institute as a branch of the New York-based Community Film Workshop Council (CFWC) (Lind, Rubens, and Swanson 2017). The originating grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) supported vocational programs in media production to instruct film-making to the disproportionately large numbers of minorities and youth suffering from unemployment in Whitesburg and other communities in the nearby region. The Appalachian Film Workshop also provided local residents opportunities to consider how the region was being presented to the outside community (Williams 2002, 360–61).

To reverse the pattern of outsider-uplift which, according to Shapiro (1978) was the dominant development paradigm in Appalachia, Appalachian Film Workshop operated a collective experimental tradition. In 1974, Appalachian Film Workshop evolved into a nonprofit organization, Appalshop, which over the ensuing years developed into a nationally-recognized media center engaged in filmmaking, video production, recordings, literature, theater, presentation of live performances, and radio broadcasting. The subject matter of Appalshop's work has ranged from documenting traditional arts, to investigating history, to referring to the social issues currently affecting the region (Appalshop 2013).

In 2014, with the continuing decline of the coal industry in central Appalachia, Appalshop's leaders partnered with economic specialists from Lafayette College's Economic Empowerment and Global Learning Project (EEGLP) and researchers from *Imagining America (IA): Artists and Scholars in Public Life*², to design a national initiative for rural community livelihoods and economic development by focusing on the role of arts and culture in promoting individual voice and collective agency to foster conditions for equitable socioeconomic development (Culture Hub 2016). Although economic diversification through art and cultural events seems to be an important goal of this initiative, the partners actively buttress community-building component of the project as the social infrastructure of sustainable development.

The Letcher County Culture Hub is a focal point and mechanism in efforts to realize the project's goals. The effort is a growing collaboration among "community centers, artist and artisan organizations, business associations, volunteer fire departments, elected officials, government and educational organizations, and local for- and nonprofit corporations," organized and facilitated by community organizers at Appalshop (Culture Hub 2016).

The primary principle underpinning the Culture Hub is that communities have latent assets that are transformable into community-wealth, if community members can unbind their imaginations and tell new stories about themselves. Dudley Cocke (2015), artistic director of Roadside Theatre, has defined CCD as an approach "that utilizes the inherent intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and material traditions and features of a community to encourage individual agency in support of community well-being" (136). Collaborating in the Culture Hub, partners have developed new cultural events that are drawing visitors and creating new markets for artists, musicians, and other cultural producers. These efforts are also strengthening the anchor institutions that reach the most disenfranchised citizens of the county and encourage the emergence of new businesses in domains ranging from food production to technology. Spurring economic development through an asset-based model, while increasing equity by bringing the excluded and self-excluded (Cornwall 2008)

² *Imagining America (IA)* was launched at a 1999 White House Conference initiated by the White House Millennium Council, the University of Michigan, and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation by focusing on renewing participation in all walks of the United States' life: "Honor the Past – Imagine the Future." (Imagining America 2017). Led by faculty director Erica Kohl-Arenas, IA is currently based at UC Davis, its third host campus after University of Michigan and Syracuse University, as of July 2018. Comprised of a network of college and university members and community partners, IA's annual programming includes convening a national conference and cultural organizing institutes, and collaborative research and action projects (Imagining America 2017).

to the table, Culture Hub attempts to establish sustainable development. This paper explores Culture Hub's employment of community cultural development in order "to engage in cooperative, value-creating public deliberations and negotiations, [...] in the face of deep differences of interests and values" (Forester 2006, 20).

Collaborative Bottom-Up Approach

Culture Hub, as a collaboration of community-based organizations, seeks to promote bottom-up approaches in decision-making and implementation of the plans instead of acting as a managerial governance model.³ In March 2018, I conducted an interview with one of the Culture Hub's partners, Mike Soderman where he emphasized the role of "ordinary citizens" as main actors in creating and driving Culture Hub's projects:

It's really easy to elapse into the typical top down [administrative model]. [...] Culture Hub came in part in resistance to that dominant model. So how can large numbers of ordinary citizens organize through the organizations that [...] they have themselves built, [...] they're grassroots development organizations, whatever, DRIVE the process of culturally driven development and engaging institutions and engage others as opposed to being engaged BY institutions and others" (Mike Soderman).⁴

In Culture Hub, community leaders and change experts bring their knowledge and background to support the conditions for community development; however, as catalysts they are not the ones who create the change. Amy Brooks, who is the program director and dramaturg in Roadside Theatre⁵, in an interview I conducted in 2017, explained the catalyst role of cultural initiatives, such as community theatres, by stressing the importance of participants' self-reflection and voluntary change in their mindsets:

[T]ransformation happens in people's minds [...] we don't make these changes for them [...] we help create the conditions for them to begin to make these changes in communication with each other. So while we facilitate we bring our own methodology and our training and our backgrounds in the art we produce. We bring that into their circles and their communities, but [...] the capacity is already there potentially to organize and create changes for themselves (Brooks 2017).

Ansell and Gash (2007), in their research on collaborative governance, found several factors for successful participatory collaborative processes which include face-to-face dialogue, trust building, and the development of commitment and shared understanding. They also argue that when collaborative forums such as Culture Hub focus on "small wins," this procedure can deepen trust, commitment, and shared understanding of participating members within the community (Ansell and Gash 2007).

Dialogue, Debate and Negotiation

In every contentious deliberative setting, moderators face institutionally-primed questions of "facticity and truth, justification and legitimacy, meaning and identity" (Forester 2006, 23). In the Appalachian coal mine towns, regardless of residents' collective qualities, examples of value-based conflicts are myriad. While it is problematic to link any set of traits to an entire group within the diverse American culture, there are certain characteristics, which comprise the persona (or identity)⁶ of a person, that have been widely applied to Central Appalachians and should, therefore, be assessed in any contextual discussion of the region's people (Hutchinson 2016, 125). Scholars and writers of Appalachia have identified sets of similar qualities of mountaineers, namely individualism and self-reliance, traditionalism and fatalism, being family-oriented, neighborliness, and religious fundamentalism (Jones 1994; Weatherford 1964; Weller 1993), many of which are innate sources of conflict in a community. Environmentalists versus coal miners or advocates of gay and abortion rights versus more conservative religious groups are familiar examples of value/identity-based controversies in rural Appalachia. More specifically, the disagreement between those who believe in self-

³ Bottom-up approaches are those that work from the grassroots—from a large number of people working together, causing a decision to arise from their joint involvement. As Stewart et al. put it: "an incremental change approach that represents an emergent process cultivated and upheld primarily by frontline workers" (Stewart, Manges, and Ward 2015, 241).

⁴ Mike Soderman (Pseudonym). Interview with Neda Moayerian. Whitesburg, Kentucky, March 8, 2018.

⁵ Roadside Theater was founded in the coalfields of central Appalachia in 1975 as part of Appalshop. It is dedicated to artistic excellence in pursuit of the proposition that the world is immeasurably enriched when people and cultures tell their own stories and listen to the unique stories of others (Roadside Theater 2018).

⁶ Persona can be defined as an individual's social facade or front that, especially in the analytic psychology of C. G. Jung, reflects the role in life the individual is playing. From: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/persona> (accessed June 21, 2018).

sufficiency and independence from federal government and those who advocate government intervention and regulation in the economy is one of the main conflicts in Appalachia which hinders many development projects in this region. To overcome these institutionally-primed issues, the facilitators (e.g. Culture Hub in the case of Whitesburg Kentucky) employ three distinct discursive processes of dialogue, debate and negotiation (or collaboration). According to Forester (2006), in dialogue the goal is to understand the knowledge and incentives of the other individual. Here the Culture Hub's role is to facilitate the dialogue between individuals and communities to promote understanding.

To facilitate dialogue, Culture Hub adopts different techniques, including the *one-to-one relational meeting* to serve as a tool to understand personal drives and incentives of individuals to be engaged in collaborations which often take place in a private place: "What it does is it helps you work through all the layers until you get to the heart and the passion of the person you're talking to" (Melanie Rodge)⁷. Culture Hub also engages *story circle methodology*⁸ as another medium for sharing personal experiences and narratives. This approach can also be used as a platform for debates and collaborations. In my interview in 2018 with Kayla Heatherwood⁹, a Culture Hub's partner representative, she shared her personal experience of story circles:

I was surprised that I thought I knew [the other partners in Culture Hub] and I was like oh my gosh! I have never heard the story before, oh that explains! Oh I see! [...] I learned much about those people on that trip [Culture Hub partners' representatives] and myself [...] it was a very structured dialogue (Kayla Heatherwood).

The purpose of dialogue is primarily to form and enhance interpersonal trust and empathic understanding, which are two main factors in sustaining a collaborative procedure. In my interview (2018) with Naomi Slinger, a Culture Hub's partner representative, she emphasized the importance of encompassing diverse groups in dialogues in order to increase empathic understanding of confronting ideas as a point of strength in a given context:

I'm at the point now where I'm saying I think it's very fortunate that we do have people that differ from us. I think that's what makes us strong country and that we allow people to think things in some respects, it can be very offensive to me at the same time, but I have to recognize that, you know, I don't have all the answers (Naomi Slinger)¹⁰.

By creating a safe space for group discussions, Culture Hub also aims to provide its partners with an equal opportunity to be heard. "Fair hearing" supports the legitimacy of inclusive processes (Ansell and Gash 2007). In their project, Wooley et al. (2010) measured the effectiveness of human groups by the level of their "collective intelligence," which according to the study's results is not strongly correlated with the "average or maximum individual intelligence of group members but is correlated with the average social sensitivity of group members, the equality in distribution of conversational turn-taking and the proportion of females in the group" (2010, 686). The latter finding can be a challenge for teams to meet with the growing sexism in the United States "which is seen as language that discriminates against women by representing them negatively or which seems to implicitly assume that activities primarily associated with women are necessarily trivial" (Darweesh and Abdullah 2016, 87). Currently, there are more female than male partner representatives in Culture Hub's organizational structure. The proportion of females in Culture Hub may seem encouraging, especially given the small-town context of Whitesburg; yet the quantitative gender ratio does not necessarily guarantee the equality of power and voice among male and female members. Therefore, it seems active interventions for promoting equally distributed conversations among both female and male members should be one of the critical roles of the facilitators in Culture Hub. Behaviors like "conversational turn-taking" and "average social sensitivity," i.e. the "personal ability to perceive, understand, and respect the feelings and viewpoints of others" (Bender et al. 2012, 403) are aspects of what is known as team psychological safety, or the "shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking" (Edmondson 1999, 354). Edmondson argues that psychological safety is formed when all team members are confident that other members will not embarrass, reject, or punish them for speaking up, "it describes a team climate characterized by interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which

⁷ Melanie Rodge (pseudonym). Interview with Neda Moayerian. Whitesburg, Kentucky, March 8, 2018.

⁸ According to Roadside theater definition: "A Story Circle is a group of people sitting in a circle, telling personal stories, led by a Story Circle facilitator. Each Story Circle is different according to its purpose." (Roadside Theater 1999).

⁹ Kayla Heatherwood (pseudonym). Interview with Neda Moayerian. Whitesburg, Kentucky, March 8, 2018.

¹⁰ Naomi Slinger (pseudonym). Interview with Neda Moayerian. Whitesburg, Kentucky, March 8, 2018.

people are comfortable being themselves" (1999, 354). Relatedly, Mike Soderman believed that Culture Hub has created an ambiance where even members with traditionally less-flexible ideologies are more receptive of new/challenging ideas from other members:

That wouldn't have happened without Culture Hub because it allowed him [one of the Culture Hub members] to say 'this is who I am. I believe in coal and Trump and Blah, blah blah, but I don't feel threatened by these people who believe differently from me, so I am therefore able to open up my mind and think about this other possibility which doesn't obviate these other things' (Mike Soderman).

As noted before, the second discursive process in contentious environments with multiple stakeholders and/or diverse value systems is "debate." Whether about "the facts" or justification in debates, the participants seek to establish or refute an argument (Forester 2006). According to my interviews with several of Culture Hub partners' representatives, the organization does not intend to moderate debates, so much as it actively facilitates dialogue to identify issues and mediate negotiations in order to craft collaborative solutions. In doing so, Culture Hub has successfully helped its members think about inter-subjectivity of truths¹¹ and socially constructed realities.¹² Members believe in "meaning deconstruction" where they try to discover, recognize, and understand underlying assumptions (both unspoken and implicit) on preconceived ideas and frameworks that form the basis for conflicting thoughts and beliefs.

The research indicates the normative conflict is deeper than values and opinions. As Hunter (2018) explains, such language misinterprets the nature of "the cultural forces at play and the moral commitments of those individuals and groups involved" (7). Transforming lifestyle choices and preferences are different from one's deepest assumptions that inform moral imaginations regarding what is good, true, and right. In the latter, it is not easy to negotiate meanings; and to attempt to convince one party to accept or refute a supposition during debates seldom bears fruit. This resistance to accept "facts" which contrast with one's internal beliefs can be explained through dissonance theory and self-justification.

According to cognitive dissonance theory, most people have relatively favorable views of themselves as competent and moral individuals with the ability to predict their own behavior (E. Aronson et al. 1974). Therefore, they often experience dissonance after engaging in an experience where they feel stupid, immoral/guilty, or confused (J. Aronson and Aronson 2012). An example of cognitive dissonance came up in of my interviews in 2018 with Abraham Kortson when he tried to make sense of the confusion and ambiguity caused by grave changes happening to coal industry during the past few decades:

We are on the right path to come back [...] The coal industry has started to move again in Eastern Kentucky. We are seeing an increase of probably 20% in the last year [2017] and talking to the coal people we were always in the coal industry [...] and I know these people they're real, they are telling me now that the demand for coal is coming back at a really high rate of speed and coal is not just made to burn [...] you have neon you have aspirin all types of different things that come out of coal. And why we were trying to do away with the coal business is to burn it clean, burn it clean (Abraham Kortson).¹³

Communication is a fundamental element to develop negotiations and constructions of meaning in collaborative and inclusive processes in order to achieve cohesion and/or consensus within the community (Koschmann, Kuhn, and Pfarrer 2012). According to Forester, negotiation or cooperation among different community groups and stakeholders in a development project can be defined as "an agreement upon a course of action when no established Authority can simply impose an outcome!" (2006, 23). In comparing debates versus negotiations, Forester notes several differences between the two processes:

¹¹ Intersubjectivity argues that each thought community shares social experiences that are different from the social experiences of other thought communities, creating differing beliefs among people who subscribe to different thought communities. These experiences transcend our subjectivity, which explains why they can be shared by the entire thought community (Zerubavel 2009). Proponents of intersubjectivity support the view that individual beliefs are often the result of thought community beliefs, not just personal experiences or universal and objective human beliefs.

¹² The central concept of social construction of reality, according to Berger and Luckmann (1991), is that people and groups interacting in a social system create, over time, concepts or mental representations of each other's actions. These concepts eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles played by the actors in relation to each other. When these roles are made available to other members of society to enter into and play out, the reciprocal interactions are said to be institutionalized. In the process, meaning is embedded in society. Knowledge and people's conceptions (and beliefs) of what reality is become embedded in the institutional fabric of society. Reality is therefore said to be socially constructed.

¹³ Abraham Kortson (pseudonym). Interview with Neda Moayerian. Whitesburg, Kentucky, March 8, 2018.

- Mediators in negotiations and cooperation lead groups from reciprocal blaming and defensiveness to the formation of concrete proposals responding to one another's concerns;
- Rather than treating deep values as positions to be defended or criticized; in negotiations mediators know that parties who differ radically in their "Biblical interpretations can agree practically on where the stop signs should go" (2006, 23);
- In contrast with debate moderators, mediators try to find and identify differences in priorities and interests that enable stakeholders to help each other—to realize mutual gains made possible because the parties have differing priorities;
- Mediators seek to manage interdependence, to build relationships, to craft agreements on action to change the world.

In my interview with one of Culture Hub's partners, Mike Soderman mentioned how negotiations as non-linear processes happen during story circles:

There is often a way to reframe a story [...] we did a Story Circle and a lot of discussion afterwards and figured out and we're still refining it, but I think everybody left feeling like 'okay we can chart a way forward that speaks to all of our values' (Mike Soderman).

Conclusion

The need for collaboration and inclusive processes to achieve sustainable development calls for strategies to bring people with diverse worldviews together and ignite constructive dialogues among them. In most cases, negotiating meanings and reaching consensus is not an easy task. This is not only due to diverse stakeholders and their different incentives and perceived benefits for collaboration, but also at a deeper level based on actors' conflicting fundamental cognitive orientations. Attention to this problem is critically important considering the current political climate where discriminatory behaviors such as sexism and racism are encouraged by the governing power in the United States and thus the social segregation throughout is exacerbating (Schaffner, Macwilliams, and Nteta 2018).

Exploring the processes in Letcher County Culture Hub in adapting Community Cultural Development (CCD) approaches, this paper investigated how employing culture and interpersonal approaches can facilitate dialogue, debate, and negotiations within an ideologically-conflicted group of participants. Based on interviews with key informants, the research indicates the deliberate application of methods such as *one-to-one relational meetings* and *story circles* are successful in identifying the community members' problems, assets, and incentives to encourage collaborations, which increase interpersonal trust and empathic understanding. Culture Hub has chosen to act as a mediator of negotiations to construct new imaginations, rather than declaring itself as a moderator of debates where one should accept or reject an idea which can lead to undemocratic processes of tyrannical consensus or self-justification/hypocrisy due to cognitive dissonance. Culture Hub is specifically successful in leading its members to consider the social construction of multiple realities. Although, Culture Hub has been a positive force in bringing previously adversarial individuals and groups to the table and reaching consensus among opposing members in several projects related to community livelihood and economic development, the nascent initiative and its long-term impact on transforming deeply held assumptions to create a cohesive just community cannot be fully assessed yet.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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