

## Appendix G

### Definitions of community

Gosling (1996:145–146), building on Jacobs, offers six ways in which the term 'community' is commonly interpreted:

**1. Communities of ascription** – Local neighbourhoods and their social structures, focusing especially on people's shared experiences and outlooks, and on how social networks operate. It is often this image of community that is referred to as 'traditional'. A salient feature of such social networks, however, is that membership of them, and of sub groups within them, is generally by ascription rather than choice.

**2. Elective communities of interest and commitment** – defined by shared characteristics other than locality. Although these shared characteristics may be more or less freely chosen (e.g. being a vegetarian) defining oneself as a member of such a community is an existential choice. The proliferation of communities of interest can be taken as a sign of increasing value pluralism and of de-traditionalisation. They are often seen as emancipatory in comparison with traditional local communities, which tended to be oppressive towards some sub-groups – particularly women and incomers.

**3. Communitarianism** – (especially Etzioni's (1993) version), which returns the focus to the 'social contract' in local communities, emphasising reciprocal responsibilities and duties. Individuals cannot be allowed to do whatever they want (in opposition to libertarianism), while communities can do things for themselves (in opposition to state-ism).

**4. Social-ism** – Another version of communitarianism arises from the argument that people can only be conceived of and understood in a social context. Societies have to flourish in order for individuals to do so; attention must therefore be given to the development of society as a whole, as well as to choices for individuals (Mulhall and Swift 1992, Bell 1993, Avineri and de-Shalit 1992).

**5. Common sympathy** – Beneath much of the above (and closely allied with 4.) lays the desire to see community as a distinct means of describing social relations. Such relations are based on common sympathy, voluntary reciprocity and mutual respect, precisely the qualities emphasised by attachment theory as promoting secure and trusting relationships. These are rather different categories from those used to describe social relations as markets (with a focus on exchange) or as fixed by hierarchies of state and employing organisations (focusing on authority and force).

**6. Community development and self management** – voiced mainly by practitioners in opposition to market forces and state bureaucracies. In practical terms it has given rise to co-ops, credit unions, development trusts and numerous self-help and voluntary sector organisations. This is the stuff of civil society, in the defence of which campaigning groups are mobilised.