

“Community” – Where to from Here?

Abstract

In her 2006 book titled “Technically Together”, Michele A. Willson raises the following concern: “As relations are mediated or become more abstracted from concrete embodied interactive forms, ... they become thinner and potentially more instrumental, thus undermining the possibilities and spaces for mutuality” (86).

Though she does not make explicit use of system theoretical or cybernetic concepts, it seems easy to reconstruct her argument in a system theoretical or cybernetic perspective. This is what the paper aims at.

The notion of “community” shall be clarified as a system theoretical concept expressing an emergent property. The impact of the new Web tools on the formation of communities shall be reviewed. Willson’s assumption of an overlay of the forms of community by which the predominant form is considered as influencing the others will be endorsed. In contradistinction to “communities of practice” and “communities of interest”, a concept of “communities of action” will be formed to denote true communities that strive for solving the integration–differentiation dilemma by the application of the system theoretical principle of unity-through-diversity.