



Engaging Communities
An Interdisciplinary Conference
May 1-3, 2009
University of Alberta



JODI DEAN

KEYNOTE EVENT FRIDAY MAY 1
TORY 3 - 36
5PM
RECEPTION TO FOLLOW



ENGAGING COMMUNITIES
INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE
HOSTED BY THE SOCIOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS MAY 2-3 2009
HUMANITIES L-3

WWW.TINYURL.COM/2009COMMUNITY
ENGAGECOMMUNITY@GMAIL.COM
ABSTRACTS DUE MARCH 15, 2009



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We would also like to thank the following volunteers:

Andriko Lozowy, Conference Co-Chair
Barret Weber, Conference Co-Chair
Amy Klassen
Amy Swiffen
Bryan Sluggett
Emily Snyder
Greg Bowden
Julie Hudson
Paol Hadden
Parvinder Hira-Friesen
Patrick McLane
Paul Joosse

A Special Thanks to our keynote speaker:
Jodi Dean, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York.

Call for Papers

5th Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta.

The graduate students of the Department of Sociology at the University of Alberta are pleased to invite submissions for Engaging Communities. This interdisciplinary graduate student conference will be held 1st - 3rd of May, 2009 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Engaging Communities endeavours to generate critical dialogue about multiple conceptions and forms of community in our own social contexts and intellectual milieus. Everyday we traverse social landscapes populated and enmeshed with bodies and minds. These are spaces marked with patterns of human flow, and distinct possibilities of individuation and subjectivization. But what do we mean when we speak of "communities"?

We welcome papers that address the individual, historical, social, ethical, virtual and political aspects of communities. We would like to be as inclusive as possible, without detracting from the focus on what it means to engage with and as communities.

Conference Schedule May 01-03, 2009

FRIDAY MAY 01, 2009 (Events will be held in Tory 3-36)

4:00- 5:30 **Registration**

5:30 **Keynote Address: Jodi Dean 'Biopolitics is post-politics'**

6:30-8:00pm **Opening Reception**

**SESSION SCHEDULE: All sessions to be held in HUMANITIES CENTRE L-3
(with the exception of lunch to be held in Tory 14-28)**

SATURDAY, MAY 02, 2009

8:15 am – 9:00 am **Breakfast**

9:00 am – 10:20 am **Session 1: Community Actions**

Discussant: Dr. Sara Dorow

Diana Benschop Community as Action, Community as Performance

*Abu Sadat Nurullah Virtually Spiritual: Understanding Religious
Communities in Cyberspace*

Hannah Goa Exploring Community in North Edmonton

10:20 am – 11:20 am **Session 2: Situations/ Truth/ Praxis**

Discussant: Dr. Marie-Eve Morin

*Brent Vizeau The Present VØid of the Situation in Badiou's 'Ethics of
Truth'*

Patrick McLane Representation and Decision

11:30 – 12:50 pm **Session 3: Politics & Power**

Discussant: Dr. Jodi Dean

Amy Swiffen From Hegemony to Biopolitics

*Barret Weber Did Somebody Say Green Politics?: Against Democracy as
Pure Form*

*Angela Robinson Interminable ethics, interminable failure: Or What Might
Make Learning From Failure (more) Possible?*

12:50 am – 1:30 pm **Lunch (Location: Tory 14-28)**

1:30- 2:50 pm Session 4: Boundary-making & Nationalisms

Discussant: Dr. Stephanie Hayman
Jennifer Woo Nationalism and Authenticity

Emily Snyder 'Reach out and engage all Canadians': Exploring the Role of The Collective in the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Bryan Sluggett Pastoral Dreams, Urban Hauntings: Baseball Stadiums in New York City

2:50- 4:10pm Session 5: Control, Community, and Jouissance

Discussant: TBA
Timothy Swiffen Engaging Communities in a Control Society

Marie-Eve Morin Thinking Community beyond Sacrifice

Dan Webb The Categorical Imperative to Enjoy: Adorno and Žižek on Contemporary Communal Ethics.

Break

6:00pm- Social Event: Upper Crust Café (10909 86 Avenue NW)

SUNDAY MAY 03, 2009

9:00-10:20am Session 6: Identities, Places and Bodies

Discussant: Dr. Doug Aoki
Andriko Lozowy Walking into what is community?

Rylan Kafara This is Not For You: The Grunge Movement as an Alternative Community

Leilei Chen Yi-Fu Tuan's Cosmic Hearth: Another Discourse of Community

10:30-11:50am Session 7: Arts Community

Discussant: Dr. Rob Shields
Marie Leduc Bourdieu and Rancière and the Community of Artists

Ondine Park Art and the City Region

Mickey Vallee Notorious H.I.T.L.E.R. - On Mashups and Media Contingencies

11:50- 12:00pm Closing Remarks

Conference Abstracts

1. Diana Benschop
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Community as Action, Community as Performance: An Ethnography of Speaking analysis of the Hispanic population of one Canadian city

This research investigates the role of a common language in the construction of social networks within the highly heterogeneous Hispanic community of Edmonton, Alberta. Application of the Ethnography of Speaking paradigm reveals that this in this particular speech community (Hymes 1974), norms of interaction and attitudes about self and community are neither stable nor universal. Analysis of participants' social networks, linguistic choices, and ethno-linguistic attitudes provide a detailed illustration of the avenues of solidarity and the sources of conflict within the community. Based on the variable and often ephemeral expressions and manifestations of community among this population, this researcher proposes that just as ethnicity is often described as performance (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985, Negrón 2007), community can be similarly conceived of as a performative entity, rather than a concrete social structure. Within the growing body of research on the Hispanic population of Canada, this study comprises the single example of research on its internal diversity since Anderson (1977). Also, this research points out some of the issues faced during immigration and resettlement, most notably the widespread problem of underemployment, which is common to many immigrant communities.

2. Leilei Chen
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Yi-Fu Tuan's Cosmic Hearth: Another Discourse of Community

This paper probes the possibility of another discourse of community -- both in-person and virtual -- prompted by Tuan's travel narrative and elaborated in his other book titled *Cosmos and Hearth: A Cosmopolite's Viewpoint* (1996). In the latter book, he contemplates "cosmos" and "hearth" as two scales that anchor what it means to be fully and happily human. I argue that, the discourse of community Tuan constructs offers us a possibility to remain simultaneously local and global. His concept of cosmic hearth, echoing what Kwane A. Appiah calls "rooted cosmopolitanism," embraces a home that is different from abroad by

seamlessly relating to it, transformed by it, enlarged and enriched by it, a place that has its enclosure but at the same time remains open to the sphere that is outside and foreign.

3.. Hannah Goa
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Exploring Community in North Edmonton

Since 2002 Alberta has experienced an unprecedented rate of economic growth. As a result, suburban housing developments have been growing up around the city. While some parks have been built into the developments, these new communities have no nearby commercial or social services. Furthermore, other than the parks in the summer, there are no gathering places for neighbors to meet. How do people living in these new developments understand community? In this research project I worked with a group of youth from the Castle Downs' YMCA Leaders-In-Training program. Using photovoice these youth explored the idea of community including what they like, don't like, and would like to see changed in their communities in North Edmonton.

4. Rylan Kafara
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This is Not For You: The Grunge Movement as an Alternative Community

The 24 September 1991 release of the Nirvana album Nevermind marked the watershed moment where 'grunge' music was launched into the mainstream of American culture. The grunge movement, however, did not begin with Nevermind's release. Instead, it had formed within a music scene by those that were actively creating new mediums of expression within their community. From the venues, festivals, radio stations, fanzines and record companies, to the actual music and the connection between the performers and the audience, an 'alternative' to the status quo was created. This paper will show that by presenting a challenge to the mainstream music industry and the materialistic value-system of the United States in the 1980s, the grunge movement followed a series of earlier twentieth century American protest movements that used music as a strategy for change. The movement was formed on the geographic periphery of the United States, but would have a significant cultural effect on the entire nation.

5. Marie Leduc
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Bourdieu and Rancière and the Community of Artists

Pierre Bourdieu and Jacques Rancière are two seminal thinkers who have invested much of their work on theorizing the politics of communities. They have also both posited the redemptive role of aesthetics as one of the few possibilities for imagining a better community to the extent that Rancière proposed that “We can thus dream of a society of the emancipated that would be a society of artists” (Rancière 1991: 71). Yet, the foundation of Rancière’s philosophy, outlined in his books, *The Philosopher and His Poor* (2004) and *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991) is built upon a deep disagreement with Bourdieu’s sociological method, a method that Bourdieu believed provides important insight into how social structures that we so often take for granted – such as schools and cultural institutions – contribute to social domination. This paper will review this disagreement and explore the implications it might have on “engaging communities” in political change.

6. Andriko Lozowy
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Walking into ‘what is community’?

A conference on communities? On engaging communities? Allow me to pause for a moment and start, in the middle. The word community evokes some sense of heart, of movement of blood-flow and life force. Some virility of action and gathering, some impetus. Collections of bodies, cohesion, collusion. Of town halls, meetings, and forums, witch-hunts and hangings. Evocative as it may be the word community does also appear to be elusive, mysterious, ghostly, transparent – yet opaque, thoughts of smoke and mirrors, of them and us, the long belabored ‘other,’ of ‘bare-life’ of joined at the hip, of fused by circumstances. So what does it mean to interrogate community, or worse yet – to look for it, and to ask of what it means to be in relation to it, ask questions of belonging and not belonging, of space and place, inclusion, and exclusion, Indeed we could collectively ramble-on a speculative list ad-infinity regarding communities.

This presentation will be structured like a walk, I know where we’re going and you folks are coming along to see the sights and sounds. Our destination is Fort McMurray.

7. Patrick McLane
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Representation and Decision

Alain Badiou writes of the State as an entity which exercises its power in maintaining idealized representations of collective life while neglecting real political struggles. He argues that only the “groundless decision” to force the acknowledgment of some previously marginalized politics can challenge State power. I turn to the work of Giorgio Agamben to argue that the arbitrary decision on what deserves to be acknowledged defines the reprehensible exercise of sovereign power, regardless of whether it is made by a State or by revolutionaries. Indeed, one of Badiou’s favored examples of commendable politics, that practiced by the Jacobin Committee of Public Safety in 1793, exposes the extreme indistinction of representational state violence and the radical politics which would claim to break with it.

8. Marie-Eve Morin
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Thinking Community beyond Sacrifice: Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy on the Plurality of Singularities

The emphasis on the concept of singularity (we are all, each of us, absolute singular) seems to stand in direct opposition to our common understanding of community. In this paper, I want to develop both Jacques Derrida’s and Jean-Luc Nancy’s understanding of a the at first glance contradictory concept of a “community of singularities.” Furthermore, I want to argue that Derrida’s understanding of singularity as absolute secret leads him to understand the plurality of singularities as necessarily sacrificial while Nancy’s conceptualization of singularity as plural exposition allows us to reach a true plurality.

9. Abu Sadat Nurullah
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Virtually Spiritual: Understanding Religious Communities in Cyberspace

With the widespread adoption of the Internet in our daily life, expressing about and engaging in faith-building has gone from traditional to virtual. This paper explores the dynamics of online religious communities and their spiritual use of technology for fostering religious discourses in cyberspace. In particular, the study focuses on: (a) understanding the way followers of the same faith around the world communicate with each other for advancing a religion, and in that process engage in online community building that reiterate their common voice; (b) exploring current sociological discourses on religious communities in cyberspace, and the way major religious groups (Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, and Hindus) manifest themselves online; and (c) analyzing the dialogical interaction patterns among members of online religious communities. Drawing from previous research on religious communities in cyberspace, this paper underscores the role of cyberspace in augmenting religious participation online. Implications are discussed in relation to Campbell's (2005) account of the "spiritual shaping of technology".

10. Ondine Park
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Art and the City-Region

This paper will report on some of the conceptual underpinnings and problematics of a research programme of the City-Region Studies Centre on the arts, engagement with the arts, and the contribution of these to the place-identity and arts-community of the city-region. This paper takes as a starting point understanding the research programme's key terms -- 'arts', 'engagement', 'community' and 'value' -- very loosely and exploring what these might mean and how these meanings might come together. The City-Region Studies Centre (CRSC) is a research unit of the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Extension.

11. Angela Robinson
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Interminable ethics, interminable failure: On what might make learning from failure (more) possible?

Turning to the work of psychoanalytic thinkers D.W. Winnicott and Wilfred Bion, as well as the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, this paper concerns itself with the inevitability of ethical failure within self/Other relations and presents considerations for what it might mean and require of the self and community to

engage and learn from failure. As a question of/for pedagogy, social relationality, the psyche, and ethics, I am interested in exploring the conditions in which we—as subjects who fail, and interminably so—might be able to tolerate the affective force that recognizing and learning from failure calls forth. This presentation, therefore, will take seriously the ways people (within communities) refuse to engage (their) failure so as to move towards a consideration of how even “hateful” responses to failure—denial, aggression, indifference—might be thought of, prepared for, and responded to in more complex, productive, and even compassionate ways.

12. Bryan Sluggett
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Pastoral Dreams, Urban Hauntings: Baseball Stadiums in New York City

Baseball, perhaps unlike any other North American sport, is read explicitly through historical remembering. In America, baseball has deep cultural roots to an imagined pastoral ‘national pastime’, in which enclosed stadiums provide a ‘field of dreams’ against the alienation of city life. Ballparks are places of commercial spectacle, where dreams and desires become embedded into the local team and stadium, but they are also places of nostalgia and haunting. This paper considers the affective contribution that baseball stadiums have had to the historical remembering of New York City’s imagined community (Anderson, 1991). My reading is presented against the backdrop of anxieties and pleasures in urban life. I consider how dreams of a racialized and gendered pastoral life in the city are remembered in cultural texts as the game and city itself has become increasingly global and commercial

13. Emily Snyder
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‘Reach out and engage all Canadians’: Exploring the Role of ‘The Collective’ in the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission

As part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, a court-mandated Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has been set up in Canada to address the historical and contemporary injustices and impacts of Indian Residential Schools. The TRC was established in 2008 and is still very much a work in progress. While there are numerous directions that research on the TRC could take, the focus here is on ‘the collective.’ Specifically I am exploring two related questions: 1) what is meant by ‘the collective’ (and similar

broad terms) when this term is used by the TRC? 2) As someone who is part of the collective in Canada, what might it take for me to be engaged in the TRC? I encourage others to consider their own positionality and how they would answer the question of what it might take for them to be engaged in a national process of reconciliation and what they perceive their responsibilities to be.

14. Amy Swiffen
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From Hegemony to Biopolitics

A recent column in the National Post by Robert Fulford argued that the social science and humanities research that is publicly funded in Canada adds nothing to the public interest of Canadians (October 13th 2007). In this paper, I consider this issue through political philosophy's recent turn to biopolitics (Agamben 1998, 2005, Foucault 1978, Zizek 2004), which focuses not on the status of difference and community, but on the value of life and conceptions of universality. Some social science scholars have also begun to turn to concepts of biopolitics in order to understand the politics of studying shifting conceptions of community and belonging (Lash 2007, Arditì 2006, 2007). Of particular interest to me is how the notion that research should connect to the "public" is parallel to the political and ethical demand to engage communities that that many of us place on ourselves as researchers. My discussion will elaborate on this work and offer a critique of the injunction to engage community for its implicatedness in the workings of biopolitics.

15. Timothy Swiffen
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Engaging Communities in a Control Society

As has been increasingly articulated by certain academics, power in modern society has seemingly shifted away from the closed-systems of control associated with disciplinary forms of power and now operates under open-systems of power in what Deleuze calls 'control society.' The rise of the control society has been accompanied by a paradigm of governmentality commonly referred to as "risk management." If we indeed find ourselves in the condition of a risk society, then we must investigate the impact of such ideological paradigms and structures of power on the bodies and spaces which are subject to the most intense and direct forms of "engagement." When confronting the question of

“engaging communities”, therefore, it is essential to come to terms with how bodies within communities are conceptualized and managed under the conditions of neo-liberalism. It is my intention to probe some of the ramifications that these paradigms of power and systems of governance have on specifically marginalized and racialized bodies and spaces. Before we can answer the question of how we should engage communities, a more pressing question needs to be addressed. Does the possibility exist under contemporary forms of power to allow for an “engagement” that is not always already imbued with and contingent on fundamental inequalities?

16. Mickey Vallee
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Notorious H.I.T.L.E.R. - On Mashups and Media Contingencies

A mashup is an intertextual convergence between otherwise unlikely sources, and since DJ Danger Mouse's "Grey Album" was released for free digital distribution the form has been subjected to optimistic praise throughout media and musicological circles. Mashups are celebrated for signifying a postmodern indifference to historicity, meta-narrative, and paternal authority, blurring the lines between producer and consumer and reaching a global audience in an instant. However fitting the postmodern toolbelt might seem, my presentation will exercise caution in celebrating this recent media contingency. My approach challenges the boundless optimism of media communities such as youtube where mashups are shared, arguing that viewer preference subtly negates the historical weight of otherwise shocking and visceral processes, such as the voice of Notorious B.I.G. rapping through the images of Hitler at the 1934 Nuremberg rally.

17. Brent Vizeau
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The Present VØid of the Situation in Badiou's 'Ethics of Truth'

I will present an outline of Alain Badiou's "Ethics of Truth" as a way of describing socio-political situations and how radical change therein is possible. As an eventual site, Badiou's notion of the void plays an integral role in his conception of radical political change. As the 'place' where events are possible, the void enables subject formation, the creation and maintenance of truth procedures, and the eventual transformation of the situation in which it is present but not represented. By way of explaining Badiou's reappropriation of classical concepts

such as subject, truth, event, and void, I will suggest that his “Ethics of Truths” provides a new and interesting way of thinking true political novelty.

18. Dan Webb
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The Categorical Imperative to Enjoy: Adorno and Žižek on Contemporary Communal Ethics.

In the 1960s, Theodor Adorno wrote strongly against the reifying consequences of Kant's categorical imperative as manifest under the social conditions of late capitalism. Subjectivity, Adorno argued, becomes overdetermined by the category “Mind” and forgets the truth-content of the value-set “body” (suffering and physical desire). My assertion is that over-time the focus on the truth-content of the suffering and desiring body has transformed itself into a reification of the health of the physical body, which negates the possibility of enjoying the truth-content of, in particular, physical desire. I believe it is Slavoj Žižek's work that best helps us understand this transformation. His theorisation of “decaf reality” and the shift from a Kantian categorical imperative (“You can, because you must!”) to the contemporary superego inversion (“You must [enjoy], because you can!”) demonstrates how an ethics of desire – which was to make ethical community possible in Adorno's formulation – can in fact lead to a breakdown of communal relations.

19. Barret Weber
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Did somebody say green politics?: against Democracy as pure form

In the current turn to ‘green’ everything -- green cars, buses, houses, economies, materials, and, essentially, politics -- is capitalism as a fundamental economic and cultural doctrine challenged, strengthened, or left in abeyance? Has anything really changed in the ways in which we view politics and community given the advent of the ‘green shift’, with only oblique reference to the failed proposal by the Liberal Party of Canada? I investigate one positive aspect of the movement to a more self-assured green politics in the last four or five years in Canada and globally: that is, the attempt to reassert a balance between society and nature in favor of the latter. These are questions that push at how we conceive of Substance, of that which exists, and which I will identify as a materialist problem par excellence. What are the conditions of a green materialism and how might these relate to reigning conceptions of democracy?

20. Jennifer Woo
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Nationalism and Authenticity

In my paper I would like to address how the language of authenticity has been applied to the nation. Authenticity is an ethical concept that has been traditionally associated with individuals as opposed to collective entities. Nonetheless, certain philosophers such as J.G. Herder have applied the concept to nations (Lindholm, p. 100), and it is common to hear individuals use phrases such as “real Canadian way” or “true-blue Aussie.” Seeing as the concept of authenticity is related to the concept of autonomy (Taylor 1992, p. 27-8), and the nation is connected to the ideal of political autonomy (Miller, p. 30), it is important to study how nations may be understood as authentic. Depending on how nations are perceived to be authentic will lead to insights regarding how and why claims for national autonomy are made.