

(Re)assembling Communities

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Abstract This article seeks to bring together studies of community from both the New and Old Worlds and examine their various strengths and weaknesses. Whilst applauding many of the recent developments, particularly the emphasis on communities as the outcome of practice and agency, I suggest that there are three specific difficulties present in the current studies of community: an underlying subtext which supports modern political notions of community as a timeless form of sociality; a prominent anthropocentric vision of community as the province purely of human beings; and a failure to fully embrace the role of affect and emotion. By rethinking communities as assemblages, this article seeks to build on the firm foundations constructed in the last 15 years to present new possibilities for taking this important concept forward.

Keywords Community · Assemblage · Politics · Affect

Introduction

Communities have become an increasingly explicit topic for Anglophone archaeologists in recent years. Whilst the term ‘community’ itself has been employed for some considerable time (e.g. Childe 1940), the more recent analyses have focussed on what communities are and how they are constituted through the identities and practices of their members. In this paper, I want to review some of these new approaches (though space of course precludes every study being mentioned) from both New World archaeologists (e.g. Canuto and Yaeger 2000; Minar 2001; Sassaman and Rudolphi 2001; Wernke 2007; Varien and Potter 2008a; Voss 2008) and their Old World counterparts (e.g. Haynes 1999; Fowler 2004a; James 1999; Knapp 2003; Mac Sweeney 2011; Moore 2007; Neustupný 1998; Whittle 2003, 2005). I will

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concentrate almost exclusively on the emergent literature in archaeology, rather than the myriad uses of the term in other disciplines (for a broader review of the history of the term beyond archaeology, see Mac Sweeney 2011: Chapter 2).

What I aim to demonstrate is that there are a number of themes in studies of community in archaeology, which these accounts develop to varying degrees, and by combining different aspects of them, their strengths and weaknesses can be partially addressed. I say partially because there remain a number of issues requiring attention that will enhance our conceptions of past communities. The first of these is that the problems with the term itself have yet to be fully addressed. Although subjected to a substantial critique in anthropology (e.g. Creed 2006b), most archaeologists have not yet paid full attention to the pitfalls inherent in the term, particularly in the way in which it is romanticised and idealised both by professional politicians and their opponents (but see Mac Sweeney 2011 for a counter example). The term community is often sustained by its opposition to society or the state (Watts 2006, p. 101). Whilst society is seen as something big and impersonal, communities are the face-to-face connections people feel are missing from their lives, something that was allegedly commonplace in the neighbourhoods of our grandparents but now absent from the hectic world of hypermodernity. In this, political discussions often align themselves with Tönnies' (1955) distinction between *gesellschaft* and *gemeinschaft*. The former is associated with modern society, politics and separation between people, whilst the latter refers to community, a more intimate, emotionally satisfying and cohesive form of sociality. It is highly dubious in my mind whether such an opposition is helpful in the slightest (see also Esposito 2010), and in any case the political centrality of the term should warn us that we need to be careful about its use at the very least. I am not suggesting that current archaeological approaches automatically lead to this romanticised view of community, or that they are themselves imposing Tönnies' dichotomy, but this reading of their work remains open unless it is explicitly challenged.

The second significant problem I want to address in the use of the term community is its underlying anthropocentrism. Humanism and anthropocentrism are now under sustained attack across academia, as writers attempt to elude the enlightenment stumbling blocks that continue to lead our interpretations down certain avenues and not others (e.g. Bennett 2010; Harman 2009; Henare *et al.* 2007; Latour 1999). In archaeology, this has most succinctly been expressed in the calls for a symmetrical approach to the role of humans and things in the past (e.g. Olsen 2007; Webmoor 2007; Webmoor and Witmore 2008; Witmore 2007), drawing explicit inspiration from the work of Latour (1993, 1999, 2005a). This work has real implications for the kinds of pasts we write about, opening up the possibility of making them more nuanced, democratic (*sensu* Latour 2005b) and non-dichotomous. Building on, but diverting from this approach, I want to draw on other sources to describe communities as *assemblages* (Bennett 2010; DeLanda 2006; Deleuze and Guattari 2004; Thrift 2008). As such I explore how an understanding of communities as not merely made up of humans but also of things, places, animals, plants, houses and monuments has much to offer us. Turning to assemblages involves, as we will see, a consideration of affect, and its role in communities, and will allow me to further our understandings of how communities are formed through affective fields that prefigure divisions of human and non-human, subject and object (cf. Harris and Sørensen 2010). An engagement with the role of affect and emotion forms the third area in which

community studies in archaeology can be developed, as Whittle (2005) has already done much to demonstrate.

The Emergence of Community Studies in Archaeology

As noted above, the term community has been thrown about with some abandon, though little critical attention, for many decades in Anglophone archaeology (though this is not the case in other research traditions where it has been the focus of explicit research for far longer (see Neustupný 1998)). One of the difficulties for Anglophone researchers has been the multifarious meaning of the term itself (Mac Sweeney 2011, p. 5). Famously, Hillery (1951) was able to identify 94 different definitions of the concept in the 1950s. Until recently, the majority of archaeological interrogations of the term have focussed on the community as a relatively stable, face-to-face form of sociality, centred on co-residential units that were, to some extent at least, self-perpetuating (e.g. Kolb and Snead 1997). This draws on Murdock's (1949) definition of community as the number of people who reside together and have regular face-to-face contact and Arensberg's (1961) investigations that took community to be both object and sample for social research.

Kolb and Snead have offered a straightforward, if rather strict, definition of what counts as a community: 'a minimal, spatially defined locus of human activity that incorporates social reproduction, subsistence production, and self-identification' (1997, p. 611). Communities for Kolb and Snead are prefigured, bounded and uniformly human. They also emerge in a straightforward, functional and natural way from human associations (Isbell 2000, p. 248). As Knapp (2003, p. 567) has so rightly pointed out, such an approach fails to engage with the potential for human agency and has difficulty in explaining how communities transformed themselves diachronically. Furthermore, their implicit reliance on Arensberg implies some agreement with his conclusion that a community has to include both men and women and several generations (Arensberg 1961, p. 255). Such a perspective explicitly rules out monasteries and other sites that would seem to be rich in potential for exploration from a community approach, not to mention the numerous other single-sex communities we can see emerging for distinct periods of time in the ethnographic record.

Community Studies in the New World

A different approach to community has recently emerged in New World archaeology, however, beginning with Canuto and Yaeger's (2000) edited volume, *The Archaeology of Communities*, and followed by a number of other studies (e.g. Varien and Potter 2008a; Wilson 2008). In the introduction to the volume, Yaeger and Canuto (2000) outline their view of community, not as a pre-given entity but rather as something that emerges from the conjunction of people and practice (cf. Cohen 1985, p. 17). Space and place are important here (communities emerge through interaction in specific physical venues), but they do not reduce the community *solely* to a spatial unit (Yaeger and Canuto 2000, p. 6). Community for them relies on co-presence, rather than co-residence (Yaeger and Canuto 2000, p. 6). Drawing explicit inspiration from theorists of practice and agency (notably Bourdieu and Giddens) community here is

conceptualised as structure and outcome of people's engagement with the world, both historically constituted and dynamic. Crucially Yaeger and Canuto recognise the performed nature of community—that it requires interaction above all. This emphasis on practice, agency and structuration theory is even more explicitly advanced by Varien and Potter (2008b), as is the interaction between identity, history and the social construction of communities.

A second key idea has been foregrounded in discussions of community from this region and that is the notion of 'imagined communities', drawing on Anderson's (2006) famous critique of nationalism. Rather than concentrating on the natural community, the self-sustaining face-to-face groups described and analysed by Kolb and Snead (1997), Isbell (2000, pp. 249–250) has called on archaeologists to recognise the importance of the 'cross-cutting allegiances' and the community's 'dynamic and contested nature'. Isbell eschews more traditional attempts to define communities on the ground in contrast to outlining their imagined qualities and suggests that the apparent stability of the natural community is entirely a product of archaeological interpretation rather than a reality for people at the time. For Anderson (2006, p. 6), the key aspect of imagined communities was that they relied on the idea of an identity shared amongst people who would most likely never, in reality, meet face-to-face. Isbell (2000) extends this to the smaller communities under archaeological consideration. It is the goals and values of particular groups of people that define their communities according to Isbell, not their apparent co-residence. In this, he chimes with Whittle's (2003) concern with the 'moral community' (Bailey 1969; cf. Houston *et al.* 2003).

The idea of the imagined community is extremely useful; however, it is questionable whether or not the hard and bounded lines that Isbell draws between the natural and the imagined community are equally as actionable (see also Creed 2006a, p. 45). As Varien and Potter (2008b, p. 3) point out, the imagined community is difficult to define. Perhaps the most useful approaches are those that link the two together, exploring both face-to-face interactions and the senses in which these communities were understood as dynamic, transformative and emergent through practice.

An example of this is Yaeger's analysis of the process of community formation through practice during the classic Maya in western Belize. Yaeger (2000, p. 126) examines the different practices that constituted and transformed differing scales of community at San Lorenzo, a residential site of 20 mound groups 1.5 km from the regional political capital of Xunantunich that peaks in size during the Late Classic period (AD 680–780) (Yaeger 2000, p. 128). He distinguishes between three forms of practice. First, those that created a shared sense of habitus, such as the communal use by this group alone of a local chert quarry and the similarity in alignment and spatial proximity of houses (Yaeger 2000, pp. 129–130). These practices created places where people could mingle and work together, instantiating a routine engagement that would foster a local sense of community. Second, he identifies more explicit practices aimed at consolidating community solidarity, particularly through feasting (Yaeger 2000, pp. 131–133). These practices, whilst proclaiming shared community, also had the capacity to demonstrate differences between groups as to who could host the feasts and who could call on the largest pool of communal labour to construct the bigger houses. Finally, he traces how wider identities were cited and a different scale of community constructed, which involved certain local residents and those from

other settlements nearby. These were local elites (the ones who could host the feasts and had the largest houses) who had access to jade and other resources that tied them in to a wider Mayan community not accessible to others at San Lorenzo (Yaeger 2000, p. 134).

Isbell (2000, p. 258) is critical of Yaeger, arguing he ignores local variation, multiple perspectives and gives too much credence to a pre-given natural community, in contrast to the emphasis on imagined communities Isbell would prefer. This criticism is not entirely fair to my mind. Whilst Yaeger could indeed have considered more closely the variation within the local community in terms of age and gender, he is right to concentrate on how the practices of making, building and dwelling facilitated a sense of local community. There is nothing natural or pre-given in what he describes. Furthermore, Yaeger (2000, p. 136) is precisely correct to concentrate on the manner in which multiple, mutually dependent, communities cross-cut each other and can be nested within one another (cf. Brosius 2006, p. 228; Canuto and Fash 2004; Evans and Knight 2001; Preucel 2000, p. 73; Watts 2006, p. 105), something missing from many accounts that presume that co-residence is the primary feature of any community.

Beyond these studies, a second approach within New World archaeology has drawn on studies of situated learning to outline the potential for studying so-called *communities of practice* (e.g. Minar 2001; Roddick 2009; Sassaman and Rudolphi 2001). This term comes from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991; Wenger 1998), which treat communities as the site of learning. By taking part in groups dedicated to particular forms of practice (e.g. dealing with insurance claims in the case of Wenger (1998)) these communities emerge. Crucially, any person belongs to several communities of practice at any one time (Wenger 1998, p. 6), thus making them multiple and open ended—new members are helped to learn the shared repertoire of actions by current initiates—as well as ever-emergent (Wenger 1998, p. 49). Both people and communities emerge through these practices, shaping each other (Wenger 1998). Drawing on these ideas Sassaman and Rudolphi (2001), for example, examine the traditions of pottery making in the Savannah River region of Georgia and South Carolina from 4,500 years ago amongst Classic Stallings groups. Through a detailed study of thousands of sherds from multiple sites, they outline how different fabrics, decoration and use of the pots relate to the different kinds of communities of practice in which the potters were caught up (Sassaman and Rudolphi 2001, p. 416). The shared patterns of practice cross the generational boundaries in these groups because they are situated within shared communities of learning (Wenger 1998, p. 99).

The emergent field of community studies in New World archaeology offers many important developments in studying community. By allowing agency and practice to take centre stage, they offer a historically situated, contextual approach. Furthermore, ideas of communities of practice open up another avenue for exploration, particularly by extending our understanding of the maintenance and transformation of tradition over time. In many cases, by recognising that communities have both an ideological *and* a spatial component, they begin the work of transcending the dichotomy of the natural and imagined communities. Communities are not free of the history of places, even if they are not determined by residential relationships (Pauketat 2000). One of the difficulties with the work on community here is that it continues to centre purely on people, however. One notable exception is Pauketat's recent work where he has

argued that communities should be recognised as a ‘quality of places, experiences, practices and even human bodies’ (2008, p. 249) and that they are ‘emergent properties of a relational field’ (2008, p. 241). In doing so, he embraces a far more active role for places and things within the construction of community that has many similarities with the view I seek to set out below.

Community Studies in the Old World

Much of the recent motivation for community studies has come from the New World, as touched on in the preceding section. However, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the contribution of Old World archaeologists to this topic. Although more fragmented (outside of the long-running Czech investigations into this topic (see Neustupný 1998)) and often more concerned with meaning than on-the-ground social relationships, a number of important developments have been made. Not least of these is the emphasis on emotion and conviviality developed by Whittle, whose work I turn to in a moment. First though, allow me to note a number of other important contributions.

The concept of community has been of importance recently in studies of the Roman Army (Haynes 1999; James 1999, 2002). Haynes, for example, has examined the way in which this complex institution was made up of multiple communities, not only in terms of its regiments but in terms of ‘cult groups, soldier’s dependents, and the socially isolated families of commanding officers’ (1999, p. 10). Entry into the army often embroiled soldiers within a complex web of symbols and cultural references transforming them as individuals, even as they transformed the army/community of which they were part (Haynes 1999, p. 13). As such, there are similarities here with Wenger’s ideas of communities of practice, where the army formed exactly one such community. James (2002) expands this point by emphasising the potential for viewing the Roman army as an imagined community, in the manner of Anderson (2006). Soldiers, James (2002, p. 42) points out, were seen as a distinct group by both themselves and wider society, helping to foster a broad imagined community that transcended ethnic, regional and class backgrounds. The concept of the imagined community has also been drawn by Thomas (2010) to consider the way in which shared forms of pottery decoration and architecture allowed people in later Neolithic Britain to conceptualise themselves as part of a large-scale community.

Gamble (1999) and Neustupný (1998) have both usefully considered the nature of community (though Gamble does not use that word) and in particular how different scales of interaction within and between communities might be structured (see also discussions in Whittle 2003, pp. 67–69). Gamble (1999, p. 51) has differentiated between a number of scales of networks, from the intimate, via the effective and extended to the global. This reminds us both that communities can involve very different kinds of interaction, from the emotional bonds linking people who share a single house through to the relationships that characterise less commonly encountered people, perhaps living in the same settlement. None of Gamble’s levels can precisely be equated with the term community, though the effective network perhaps comes closest. Rather than meaning Gamble’s work is of little use to us, this instead suggests we may be better off thinking of multiple overlapping scales of community, as Yaeger (2000) has also noted.

Neustupný (1998) by contrast uses a different set of relations to make a similar point. He develops the longstanding Czech concept of the community area, to propose a three-fold division of the world into the communal world: people you live with on a day-to-day basis; the strange world: which is that which surrounds the communal world, only rarely visited and known to some people more than others; and the world of otherness, a level between the two which includes humans and other beings who do not live in the same community but share artefacts and symbols with the community under question (Neustupný 1998, p. 19). Usefully Neustupný (1998, p. 10) relates these different areas to the landscapes under occupation and uses them to critique simple associations between archaeological sites and single communities (see also Yaeger and Canuto 2000). The community area is, for Neustupný, much more than people being ‘spatially aggregated’ (1998, p. 10). In this sense, he correctly attempts to bridge notions of the natural and imagined community (though he does not use these terms). However, as Whittle has noted, both Neustupný and Gamble offer very ahistorical views of community, which tend to float about above the archaeological material waiting to be applied and tend to ‘submerge history’ (2003, p. 68). Furthermore, as with almost all studies of community in archaeology, they entirely privilege the role of humans. As Neustupný says, community for him is about ‘*the creation of a specifically human world*’ (1998, pp. 13–14, original emphasis). As I will outline below, this perspective is problematic.

Whittle himself takes a different perspective on community, seeking to place values and emotions at the heart of how people live together in the world. Developing ideas of the ‘moral community’ (Whittle 2003, p. 13; cf. Bailey 1969; Houston *et al.* 2003; Pauketat 2000, p. 19), he has offered a series of nuanced engagements with particular historical contexts (Whittle 2003, 2005). Amongst the *Linearbandkeramik* (LBK) groups of Neolithic central Europe for example, Whittle has examined how lives centred around the longhouse created a moral community constituted along ‘varied dimensions’ (2003, p. 143; 2009; Bickle and Hofmann 2009). The building and orientation of the longhouses linked people to particular kinds of pasts and particular ideas of dwelling, which asserted community values. The architecture of the house bound people who moved into the community together and maintained a connection both to other LBK communities and to the past from which people had emerged (cf. Bickle and Hofmann 2009). Crucial to this was the repeated acts of building and rebuilding the house, which took place more often than would have been strictly necessary, suggesting a shared emphasis across the LBK world of building communities through the lifecycle of this architecture (Whittle 2003, p. 141, 2009).

In turn, in examining the Early Neolithic Körös culture of the Carpathian Basin in Hungary, Whittle (2005) emphasises the importance of the aesthetics of conviviality. This concept, taken from Amazonian ethnography (Overing and Passes 2000a), switches the focus of community from either settlement, or broad senses of imagined communities, to the day-to-day work of getting along and ‘living-well-together’ (Harris 2006, 2011; Overing and Passes 2000b; Whittle 2005). The key to understanding Amazonian sociality, argue Overing and Passes (2000b, p. xiii), is the concept of conviviality. By this they mean much more than the traditional English definition of ‘having a good time in the company of others’ (Overing and Passes 2000b, p. xiii). Instead, drawing on the work of Ivan Illich (1973), conviviality is seen as including both an attention to informal and performative co-operation in the

production of ‘sociable sociality’ and the attention paid by members of groups to the emotional wellbeing of others (Overing and Passes 2000b, pp. xiii–xiv).

Thus, in the Körös settlement of Ecsegfalva 23, Whittle (2005, p. 68) examines how the daily routines and choreography of living, farming, herding sheep, gathering, sharing and feasting created the emotional bonds that sustained a shared sense of community. Through occasional acts of building and burning small flimsy structures, the smashing of pottery and the deposition of material into pits, the locale was further textured with particular kinds of material, helping to create a feeling of specific place for the community (Whittle 2005, p. 66). This emphasis on values and emotions at the heart of community is extremely welcome. Not only does it rightly remind archaeologists of the importance of emotion and affect to the kinds of practices and place relations we routinely uncover (Harris 2009, 2010) but it also situates the construction of community precisely within these affective bonds (Amit 2002). Going beyond concepts of the imagined community then, it forces us to face up to the ‘felt community’ something contingent and worked for, rather than coldly conceptualised (cf. Turner 1969, p. 127). Whittle also recognises the key role of architecture and material things in these processes, whether in the form of the longhouse in the LBK example or the texturing of place through burning and deposition at Ecsegfalva. Below I will argue that we can build on Whittle’s excellent foundations to offer a less anthropocentric account of material things, emotion and affect that will further develop our understandings of past communities.

Three other accounts of prehistoric communities are also worth mentioning at this stage. The first is Moore’s (2007) account of southern British Iron Age communities. In an insightful paper, Moore (2007) undertakes an analysis that moves our understanding of communities away from them being the building blocks of chiefdoms (cf. Cunliffe 2005), towards an understanding of the concept as emergent from specific material and landscape relations in the daily life of settlement and agriculture. Moore (2007, p. 91) recognises explicitly that material culture plays a key role in ‘constructing and reproducing Iron Age communities’. He examines the manner in which the production and use of querns, for example, allows particular social relationships to be created and traced over wide areas. Furthermore, he analyses the construction and maintenance of enclosures in terms of communities’ commitment to place, allowing him to examine how people made sense of their broader connections through working and transforming the landscape (Moore 2007, p. 93). Linking the settlement evidence to these kinds of practices allows Moore to demonstrate how communities have connections beyond their own boundaries, creating a ‘set of shared concepts that facilitated negotiation over land rights and social reproduction’ (Moore 2007, p. 95). However, despite the strength of the article, the concept of community itself is left undefined, and so it is more difficult to gain an insight into how these same practices might work in other contexts. Furthermore, this silence on what a community actually is leaves a sense that the community is something obvious, or natural, taking us back to the position so effectively critiqued by New World archaeologists.

This criticism cannot be levelled at Knapp’s analysis of Bronze Age Cypriot mining communities. Knapp is explicitly aware of New World discussions of the concept of community and seeks to build these into his account. Knapp (2003, p. 567) is rightly critical of Isbell’s (2000) hard distinction between imagined and natural communities (Creed 2006a, p. 45) and suggests that a combination of the two better

enables us to understand communities as the outcome of practices on-the-ground. Situating his study within long-term perspectives on the changing landscape, Knapp (2003, p. 576) is able to trace how the miners formed a ‘socially distinct imagined community’ within a more ‘complex, spatially extensive, and multifunctional’ regional community. This multi-scalar approach to community, like those of Yaeger, Neustupný and Gamble, is particularly useful, as his combination of the imagined community with actual social relations.

As a final example of old world studies of community, I would like to briefly turn to the work of Fowler (e.g. 2004a, b), who in many ways has offered the study of community closest to the one I would like to proffer, though there remain a number of crucial differences. Fowler’s approach to community emerges through his studies of personhood. Drawing on analogies from India and Melanesia, Fowler critiques the concept of the Western individual and suggests that personhood often emerges from relations (of differing kinds) rather than from a prefigured and bounded identity (Fowler 2004a). Such a conception not only opens up personhood, making it potentially partible (as in Melanesia) or permeable (as in India), but also crucially raises the possibility that objects, animals and places can be ascribed personhood as well, as they too may be constituted through the same relationships. Drawing on this point, Fowler thus argues that communities too may be constituted not only by humans, but by animals, places and things as well (Fowler 2004a, Chapter 5, 2004b, p. 95; see also Jones and Richards 2003; Ray and Thomas 2003; Pollard 2006). Fowler’s account of a more-than-human community is extremely important and echoes many of the concerns I develop below. However, like Moore’s work (and unlike many New World examples), it does not go far enough in defining community, leaving the term open to misinterpretation, which as I show below has potentially problematic consequences.

Power and Community

Additionally, it is worth touching on the important issue of power. Although not discussed explicitly by many of the analyses above, it has cropped up in several examples both Old World and New, not least in issues of community interaction and political dynamics (e.g. Canuto 2004), and is certainly significant enough to mention here. One of the most important discussions of this in Old World archaeology has come from Thomas (2002) in relation to Late Neolithic Southern Britain, responding to the analyses of this period by Renfrew (1973). Renfrew (1973, p. 552) saw the monumental constructions of Neolithic Wessex as part of the emergence of five ever more competitive chiefdoms centred on monuments like Avebury and Stonehenge, which eventually coalesced into a single group focussed on the enormous earth mound of Silbury Hill. Earle (1991, p. 92) by contrast uses the evidence of earlier long barrows to identify four separate chiefdoms, from which those focussed on Avebury and Stonehenge emerged as dominant in the Late Neolithic. Neither of these articles concentrates on communities per se, though of course each deals with issues of social relations and organisation directly relevant to the current discussion.

As Thomas (2002) has noted, however, that there are significant problems with the conceptions of power outlined by both Renfrew and Earle. Rather than seeing power as something that emerges top down from central authority figures, Thomas calls for

a view that sees power as ‘inherently relational’ and constantly enacted through particular networks (2002, p. 38). Drawing on Foucault, Thomas provides a coherent picture of power not as something exercised by chiefs, but rather as emerging from the ongoing practices of people through their engagements with each other and the world around them. In turn, he has related this to ideas of both multi-scalar and imagined communities (Thomas 1996, p. 180, 2010). This is a far better fit with the version of community I outline below. Thomas’ (1996, p. 178) work moreover has suggested that different kinds of authority (however localised and context-specific) emerged through the construction and use of henge monuments, rather than prefiguring or dictating their emergence (as Renfrew or Earle would have it).

In many ways, Thomas’ view of power has been paralleled by a wider range of discussions through the use of the term heterarchy (Crumley 1995; Ehrenreich *et al.* 1995; Joyce and Hendon 2000; Robb 2007). This term captures the way power is structured through multiple different fields of action rather than being strictly hierarchical, or associated solely with social structure. This has allowed Mehrer (2000) to explore the emergent world of Cahokia, in a New World example, and Robb (2007) to look at the competing worlds of prestige in Neolithic Italy, to give an Old World one. In this latter example, Robb (2007, p. 241) traces how hunting allowed people (probably men) to accumulate prestige, but in a manner that was not transferable to other contexts until the very end of the period; a precisely heterarchical scenario.

Summary: Archaeological Approaches to Community

To conclude this section of the article, then, I want now to summarise the major strengths and weaknesses of approaches to community in both New and Old World archaeologies. The weaknesses will then be more fully explored and addressed in the next section. As the references indicate, different papers exemplify the various strengths and weaknesses to varying degrees.

Strengths

- A commitment to seeing communities as the outcome of local agency and practice (e.g. Allison 2008; Knapp 2003; Moore 2007; Owoc 2005; Pauketat 2000, 2008; Schachner 2008; Varen and Potter 2008b; Yaeger 2000; Yaeger and Canuto 2000), including the formation of communities of practice (Kohring 2011; Roddick 2009; Sassaman and Rudolphi 2001)
- A recognition of the importance of the imagined nature of community and a willingness to go beyond seeing communities as simply the natural outcome of residency and co-presence (Isbell 2000; Knapp 2003; Pauketat 2008; Yaeger 2000, 2003)
- An attention to the emotional aspects and convivial nature of community and an emphasis on the importance of this to social relations (Whittle 2005)
- An attention to how communities operate at multiple overlapping and nested scales (Gamble 1999; Knapp 2003; Neustupný 1998; Preucel 2000; Yaeger 2000)
- An attention to the heterarchical and relational aspects of power (Mehrer 2000; Robb 2007)

Weaknesses

- A failure to adequately consider modern political implications of the term community. Associated with this is an emphasis on the positive aspects of community as a beneficial and unifying concern. Often this downplays the dissonance and violence within communities as well as reifying modern distinctions between community and society (though exceptions exist to this latter point, e.g. Pauketat (2000) on politics and Whittle (2003) on interpersonal violence).
- An anthropocentric approach to community that sees community as the outcome of human social relations, separated from animals, places, things and people. Where attempts have been made to incorporate these (e.g. Knapp 2003; Moore 2007; Whittle 2003; Yaeger 2000), they remain external as expressions or mediums of community practice, rather than active agentic members of the community itself, with the exception of certain accounts of community and personhood (e.g. Fowler 2004a; Ray and Thomas 2003). Modern distinctions between humans and non-humans are thus perpetuated.
- An insufficient attention to the role of affect, the manner in which communities are constituted through the emotional engagements of people, things, animals and places. Whittle (2005) is a notable exception in this regard, but even here emotion remains a wholly human province. As I will show below, a fuller attention to the distribution of affect between people, places and things can open up a new understanding of how communities operate.

Communities Reworked

Undoubtedly the studies of community developed in both the Old and New Worlds in the last decade or so provide an important foundation for the moves I wish to make. It remains vital, however, that we open new avenues for study and liberate the term community for use in a world where humanism and modern dichotomies are under increasing attack. As such, I now want to turn to the three weaknesses I have defined, set out each in more detail and proscribe potential remedies for each.

The Political Implications

Community, as the introduction indicated, is far from a neutral or untroublesome word. At the heart of this lies the long standing distinction drawn by Tönnies (1955) between society and community, as already noted. The former is urban, alienating, separate from our daily lives and provenance of government and the nation state; the latter is a romanticised association of people who dwell in intimate face-to-face, often implicitly rural settings (Creed 2006a; Esposito 2010, p. 137). Its absence is noted and bemoaned by newspapers, its creation through terms like ‘care in the community’, applauded by politicians. Most recently in Britain, we have seen the term community takes a key role in Prime Minister David Cameron’s ideas of the so-called Big Society, which he explicitly opposes to the state. Authors like Putnam (2000) and Etzioni (1998) have written explicitly political and influential tracts that have celebrated precisely this unreconstructed view of community (Creed 2006b, p.

21). As Creed has pointed out, “political and economic projects, from rain forest conservation to urban employment zones, focus on ‘the community’ as the appropriate vehicle for change” (2006b, p. 3).

This ‘obsession with community’ (Creed 2006b, p. 3) means archaeologists need to be extremely cautious with how we use the term. What projects are we assisting by locating different kinds of communities in the past? If community is seen as a lost and much mourned aspect of modern society, are we merely legitimising one particular narrative by conveniently locating it in the past? If we do not interrogate the term thoroughly, we are in danger of merely replicating our present assumptions. As Raymond Williams (1976, p. 76) pointed out, community never seems to be used negatively, yet as we know from feminist and other scholars, the small intimate worlds of households and villages need not engender positive experiences for many of their occupants. The communities we uncover are surely as often characterised by violence and destruction as conviviality (in its more strict definition). Thus, when Yaeger (2000, p. 194) discusses the ‘deep horizontal sense of comradeship’, something Knapp (2003, pp. 570–571) applauds, there are worrying echoes of the supposedly lost communities of the present, something that has important political implications (cf. Creed 2006b, p. 5; Pandey 2006).

This recognition of the political implications of the term community is not intended to put us off using it, however. The power of the analyses archaeologists have developed means it would be fool hardy to fling the baby out with the bathwater. Furthermore, as I emphasised above, it is not necessarily archaeologists themselves that are romanticising the term. Rather, when we do not challenge the modern political connotations of what community might mean, we open ourselves up for misrepresentation. Instead, we need to be increasingly careful about how we use the term in order to prevent these abuses. Indeed, I would suggest many of the accounts are already on the way to doing so with their attention to local practice, agency and so on. Nevertheless, when authors fail to engage with what the term community means, they open up the potential for precisely the kind of retrojection and legitimisation of modern political narratives archaeologists need to avoid (Creed 2006b, p. 5). Instead, we need to recognise that community can be as much a source of ‘tyranny and inhumanity’ (Scherer 1972, p. xii; cf. Watts 2006) as positive associations and sociable sociality.

One essential move to address these issues is to actively recognise that violence was as much part of these communities as anything else (Pauketat 2008, p. 246; Potter and Yodder 2008). For example, consider the long barrows and chambered tombs that make up much of the funerary evidence from Early Neolithic societies in Britain. Mostly constructed after 3800 cal BC (Whittle *et al.* 2011), many of these monuments (including Ascott-under-Wychwood, Wayland’s Smithy 1 and Tulloch of Assery B) contain the remains of people who died violently (Fowler 2010; Schulting and Wysocki 2005; Smith and Brickley 2009). They were either bashed over the head or shot with flint arrowheads. These violent deaths were a crucial part of the community; indeed, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the construction of at least some chambered tombs may have been begun precisely to deal with the outcomes of these particular kinds of violence (Cummings and Harris 2011; Fowler 2010). The small-scale communities of people, pots and animals that dominated Neolithic Britain would have constantly relied on larger-scale connections for breeding animals, trade and marriage partners. In turn, these connections contained the potential for violence.

In its aftermath, tombs such as Wayland's Smithy 1 may have been constructed as a means of bringing different groups together (cf. Cummings and Harris 2011; Fowler 2010, p. 16). The tomb here instantiated these communal gatherings in the stone and wood binding people together through these materials. The construction may have helped mediate the kinds of violence that, whilst not endemic, would have been a part of these communities' lives. In writing about communities in which violence played an important role, we help to challenge narratives in the present that see timeless, socially progressive communities as a utopian resource to deal with political problems in the present.

Its Humanist and Anthropocentric Nature

The understanding of community as a beacon of lost connectivity, raging against the dying light as a faceless, impersonal, society sweeps all before it, is connected to a second, and I suggest, more substantial problem. That is the manner in which communities are viewed as entirely human constructions. Although accounts have recognised the importance of place (e.g. Knapp 2003) or architecture (e.g. Whittle 2003), these are secondary elements to a community made up not just principally, but solely, of people. The agencies that create the communities so well described by Yaeger and Canuto (2000) are also exclusively human. Such a perspective, I suggest, is problematic in the light of developing thought across the humanities and social sciences (e.g. Harman 2009; Latour 1993, 1999; Thrift 2008; Viveiros de Castro 1998). Put most potently by Latour, the currently dominant approach in effect proposes that human beings and things are entirely separate from one another, one under the auspices of culture (humans) the other under the auspices of nature (things). This is to accept what Latour (1993) calls the modern constitution, a particular way of thinking about the world that gained in popularity from the seventeenth century onwards. Of course we are well used to hearing these Cartesian dualities decried, but the trouble is they remain stubbornly intransigent in many aspects of our thought. A new attention to things is called for, therefore, and not simply to the manner in which they may have a form of secondary or derivative agency as proposed by Gell (1998; cf. Robb 2004). Instead, we need to acknowledge the manner in which agency emerges from the relations between humans and non-humans rather than from either side. As Latour (1993, p. 82) notes, in making objects mediators of relations, rather than simply 'things-in-themselves', we bring them into the community.

Authors such as Olsen (2007), Witmore (2007), Webmoor (2007) and Shanks (2007) have built on Latour's work to call for a symmetrical approach to archaeology. Rather than dividing the world into subjects and objects, aspects of culture and nature, these approaches begin with an assumption of symmetry between the human and the non-human. Agency does not reside with humans, nor can it be devolved into things (this is *not* an approach that calls for object agency). Rather, it emerges from the connections between people and things, the networks that characterise both past and present. Within this approach to the world, then, all things (whether human or not) are capable of playing key historical roles. Such a move is essential to archaeology because things were and are 'indispensable constituents of the social fabric' (Olsen 2010, pp. 37–38) and giving them their historical dues will allow our

narratives to be both richer and, importantly, more accurate (*sensu* Latour 2004). This is vital because it opens up the potential for us to write different kinds of narratives about the past and gain new perspectives on the world, without imposing our own preconceptions on to the time/spaces we study.

What does this mean for communities? Primarily it forces us to recognise that as long as communities are seen as solely being made up of human beings, we are in danger of perpetuating a particular modernist take on the world. In contrast, I propose that we embrace a view of communities that begins with the relationships amongst humans, animals, plants, places and material things. This does not mean reducing people and things to being the same; rather, it recognises that the differences between them *are in themselves relational* (cf. Harris 2012). The communities we study do not impose themselves *on* particular places; rather, they emerge *through* them. In taking this perspective, therefore, we can appreciate how communities are sustained beyond face-to-face interactions. As a number of authors have noted whilst co-presence is required for community, co-residence is not (e.g. Yaeger and Canuto 2000). Extending communities to include material culture allows us to appreciate how co-presence can be attained without human beings necessarily coming together (or indeed being present at all).

One area of study that has deliberately focussed on the potential roles of non-humans within communities is of course work that has explicitly addressed the concept of personhood in archaeology. As mentioned above, Fowler, for example, has argued extensively for a view of community as including ‘living people, the dead, things, and places’ (2004b, p. 95). This emphasis on the relational entirely chimes with the view of community I have just advocated. Where it differs from my approach, however, is in largely continuing to privilege the person over the non-person. Thus, although the concept of the person is now extended to include non-humans, it still plays down the role within the community for those objects and animals, for example, that are not constituted as persons, or are not conceived of as substances that play a role in this constitution. Turning from personhood to a more symmetrical account thus acknowledges the manner in which communities are formed not just from humans and non-humans, as Fowler and others would acknowledge, but from persons and non-persons as well. Cattle, for example, do not have to be kin, therefore, to be part of the community.

This makes a real difference to how we understand communities because it means that whether or not past peoples understood themselves as members of a particular community is not in itself of primary importance (*contra* Mac Sweeney 2011). This will of course make a difference to the communities we study, but this question is not in itself definitive. Mac Sweeney (2011, p. 32) has recently argued that communities only emerge when people are consciously aware of them, and we need to identify practices that can be associated with the deliberate construction of a discursive and place bound group identity, linked to a deliberate separation from other groups. This position, whilst attractive in that it offers a tight definition of what a community might be, returns to a position of human exceptionalism—it requires that the existence of a community depends upon the perception of the people involved. This reduces community to an idealist conception (see Mac Sweeney 2011, p. 35) and denies a fully active role to the places, animals and things I argue are just as important as people. To suggest that the human perspective on the matter at hand is of primary

importance is to once more remove people to a separate ontological plane. It returns us to a world of dualities.

From Networks to Affective Assemblages

There are a number of problems with a purely symmetrical approach, however, that need outlining here. First, there is a clear problem with Latour's view of networks, which are distinctly a-temporal (Harman 2009). Because for Latour 'nothing contains anything else' (Harman 2009, p. 104), any change to the network means an entirely new network has been produced. If we took this point of view literally, it would mean communities would have no endurance—they would be transformed each time a person, a thing or an animal left it (see Harman 2009, p. 129). Clearly this is not the case as communities do endure, in part through the active partnership of non-humans (Olsen 2010, p. 140). Rather than concentrating on ideas of networks, therefore, which can feel frozen in time, we need to think about *assemblages* I suggest. This concept, taken originally from the work of Deleuze and Guittari (2004), is now finding extensive application across the social sciences, including in archaeology (Bennett 2010; DeLanda 2002, 2006; Lucas 2012; Ong and Collier 2005; Thrift 2008).

Assemblages are 'diverse elements of vibrant materials of all sorts' (Bennett 2010, p. 23), and they are 'compositions that act' (Due 2002, p. 132). The concept of assemblage makes room for all manner of humans and non-humans as well as gestures, actions, signs and symbols (it offers a flat-ontology equivalent to that of Latour's network), but crucially the assemblage is in a state of becoming; that is, it is in process rather than being static. Thus, Bennett (2010), for example, has drawn on the term to examine how electrical grids prone to blackouts can be understood as a 'volatile' assemblage of coal, heat, electricity, power stations, humans, cables and so on, when considered as an assemblage. Whilst an assemblage depends upon the emergent properties of all its parts, it is not reducible to them (DeLanda 2002, p. 72). This state of becoming means that assemblages are always in process, in flux and are flowing. The linkages within an assemblage are thus not between two prefixed entities, but rather along the connections that constitute them. There are obvious parallels here with Ingold's (2011) concept of the meshwork, not least in the fact that Deleuze is the original source of inspiration. I prefer the term assemblage both because of its archaeological connotations and because it recognises the source of the ideas as I have developed them here (for more on the relationship between Ingold, Latour, Deleuze and meshworks, networks and assemblages, see Harris 2012).

This turn to assemblages reinforces the need to consider in more depth both affect and emotion. As noted above, Whittle (2005) has already demonstrated the importance of considering emotion. Within communities, emotions offer a powerful political resource to be drawn upon; their existence can demand particular courses of action, pushing against other considerations and desires (e.g. Alès 2000; Harris and Sørensen 2010; Seremetakis 1991).

There is an obvious rejoinder to this, however. Does this attention to emotion not merely restore the anthropocentric approaches I have just argued against? After all, are emotions not the province of human beings (and perhaps animals)? This is demonstrably not the case (Ahmed 2004; Harris 2009, 2010), particularly when we

expand our understanding of emotion to include affect (Thrift 2008). In a recent paper, Sørensen and I have developed the concept of the affective field (Harris and Sørensen 2010). This examines how emotions and other affects emerge through the conjunction of people, things and places. Rather than belonging solely in the domain of human beings, affects are the engagements with the world associated with all forms of substance (cf. Spinoza 1996). The relations that form assemblages are precisely relations of affect; the ways in which different bodies (human and non-human) press into each other, leaving impressions. In animals, these affects *can* register as emotions, but the affects themselves are not necessarily limited just to animals or human beings. Material things emerge within affective fields, and it is this that allows them to become sticky with emotions and transfer particular sensations between different contexts (Ahmed 2004); think of the way a souvenir becomes an evocative reminder of a past holiday. Moving to consider communities as assemblages thus reinforces the need both take emotion seriously and to reconsider the way lines of relations are in themselves affective, and affective fields are the outcome of particular assemblages.

What does this mean archaeologically? It means that when certain archaeological finds turn up in different kinds of contexts, we can consider how they mediate connections between those contexts and link them into a single assemblage—a single affective community. Thus, take a particular kind of pottery, say Late Neolithic Grooved Ware from Southern Britain. This pottery occurs both in domestic sites and at large ritual enclosures—henge monuments. The way pottery moved between these sites allowed particular kinds of affective connections to be drawn between them; the scales of community instantiated through the assemblages that formed at henge monuments could now be experienced in daily life when Grooved Ware was made, used, handled and deposited. Grooved Ware thus made a scale of community manifest—or rise forth (Agamben 1993, p. 28)—in daily life that would otherwise only have been recognised at larger scale gatherings. In other words, people felt they were part of a larger community whenever they used this pottery, and this feeling was generated with and through this material culture. The pottery here is not only the symbolic referent for the imagined community (Thomas 2010), however, but an active member of communities that operated at multiple scales, through the way it disclosed affective relations. The presence of Grooved Ware allowed these scales of community to intersect in a manner which would simply not have been possible without it (cf. Harris 2012).

Communities, I suggest, are a particular set of assemblages that operate at a range of specific scales and that always involve human beings. Whilst the presence of human beings *is essential*, they are never the only members of these communities—as I have argued they include places, things, animals and plants as well. Community is thus a term for describing the emergent consequences of these affective relationships. The scales at which they can operate are varied (both geographically and temporally) and multiple but not, crucially, infinite. It is not accidental that this remains a general definition. Which assemblages are communities and which are not cannot be determined prior to analysis because the emergent qualities of a community lie in the assemblage and its relationship with its interlocutor (the archaeologist in this case). They lie in our abilities to trace the affective relations that matter in other words. This means, of course, that what counts as a community will not be the same in different times and different places.

Conclusion

Thus, alongside the progress being made on the issue of community in archaeology by a range of scholars, there is the potential for future research to enhance our understandings and dramatically challenge modern preconceptions. For example, as I have argued here, unless we are specific about what we mean by community and unless we consider the role of violence, alongside a host of other potentially ‘negative’ practices, we are in danger of reifying and legitimating the concerns of politicians in the present. We risk thrusting back images of a form of sociality that never existed, blinding us to past practices as well. Unless we allow things as well as people to be part of our past communities, we will continue to write only half the histories of the times we study. Finally, unless we grant both people and things roles within assemblages, bound together through lines of affect and emotion, we will fail to understand how these communities were sustained through time and across space. Communities are thus assemblages of people, places, animals and things, bound together at times by co-presence, but always by particular kinds of practice and the affective fields these generated. Crucially ideas of practice and agency remain central here, and communities are not something people and materials have; rather, they are what people and materials *do* (Pauketat 2008; cf. Thomas and McFadyan 2010; Varien and Potter 2008b; Yaeger and Canuto 2000).

Jim Deetz (1977, p. 11) warned archaeologists to remember that ‘communities are composed of people’ (see also Yaeger and Canuto 2000, p. 10). From the perspective of the late 1970s, this must have seemed like a necessary rejoinder to the domination of people-free systems theory and other functionalist approaches to material culture. Of course Deetz was right; communities are composed of people, at least the ones archaeologists are interested in, but not *just* people. In a world in which we have reduced materials to signs, texts and symbols, it is time to give them their place back as part of the communities we study as archaeologists. Ridding ourselves of unhelpful oppositions like subject and object will allow us to see the things we recover not as the material remnants of past societies but active participants forming relations between past and present, revealing and disclosing parts of past worlds. So if I only partially concur with the quote at the start of this paragraph, I am in total agreement with the sentence that follows it: ‘*in reality, the community and the archaeological assemblage are one*’ (Deetz 1977, p. 11, my emphasis).

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