Community Building Journalism (97)

How do activists, would-be activists, and those interested in learning about and participating in any movement or community of practice get a sense of what the best practices are, what the underlying philosophies are, who the leadership is and what they're thinking, what the key institutions and organizations are and how they're developing, what the most useful resources and tools are, and what's going on in other communities? How do people learn how to participate with a critical and reflective perspective?

Regular publications serve key roles in movement-development and community-building. Tom Paine's Common Sense at the beginning of the American Revolution, arousing the colonists in a radically new "common sense" way is indicative of what can be found in any social and political movement, large or small, specialized or general.

There are many ways of providing this information: face-to-face get-togethers; email/discussion lists, blogs, web sites and bulletin boards; books and articles; faxes and radio. It can be a challenge to determine the most appropriate communication tools. Movement/community-building journalism and their publications are most often written and produced by the actors and participants in the movement and provide reflections on the roots and meanings of specific contributions to the field; they tie particular events and achievements, programs, institutions, and actors to a wider field of interconnected activities that together point toward renewed possibilities for people creating a healthier and more democratic common world. Developing journalism and communication venues that present in-depth news, events, and developments in a field is essential. And covering key organizations and institutions can help offer a map and guide.

Written by Peter Miller

Informal Learning Groups (98)

Overemphasis upon formal education can lead to an oversight of alternative learning methods that could be more appropriate within certain contexts. Particularly for adult populations looking to increase their understanding on relevant subjects, the option of pursuing formal training is not conducive due to the investment in time and extra resources it takes. As a result, people find it difficult to acquire the skills necessary for them to address a radically changing global economy, and thus many capable people continue to remain behind. Overall, the pattern tends to be mutually reinforcing as knowledge is created curiosity tends to be ignited furthering greater levels of self and group directed investigations. It's up to individuals, groups, communities and businesses to promote these endeavors, and thereby increase the intellectual capabilities of its local residents.

Written by Justin Smith

Community Animators (102)

Development professionals often find it difficult to adequately assess the broad spectrum of problems a community faces, as well as grasp and utilize the various assets the community has to work with. The lack of grassroots knowledge has proven problematic in that development schemes are often mismatched in scale and relevance to the community's needs, abilities and liabilities. Thus the conceived solutions for encouraging community capacities and livelihoods fall short of their objectives. The community animator can act as a critical link between the community and any NGO Collaborator. It should be noted that by those in the field for social change that local citizens and activists can often better activate a community's sentiments and bring about awareness for the possibility to realize change than an outsider who may be perceived to have little understanding of the real issues at stake.

Written by Justin Smith

Arts of Resistance (111)

Repression and other forms of injustice and other social ills are often overlooked, dismissed in a cursory way, or deemed to be inevitable and immutable. Even when these problems are acknowledged, resistance to them can be shallow, erratic, uncoordinated and ineffectual. Although art can be used to deliver a message of inspiration and information for the disempowered, it is often irrelevant; it can be a tool of the powerful and a diversion of the wealthy. In many cases, corporate media has replaced the tradition of people and communities telling their own stories. Art can convey beauty, love and joy. It can also convey justice, fairness, dignity and resistance. Engaging in art can hone creativity by encouraging exploration within a plastic medium. The future itself is a plastic medium and we will never know how malleable it is if we don't explore it. Resistance art can be a seed that helps people understand their situation and how they might work to improve it.

Written by Douglas Schuler