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Defining Community Health in the 21st Century

Evolution, definition, and role of communities

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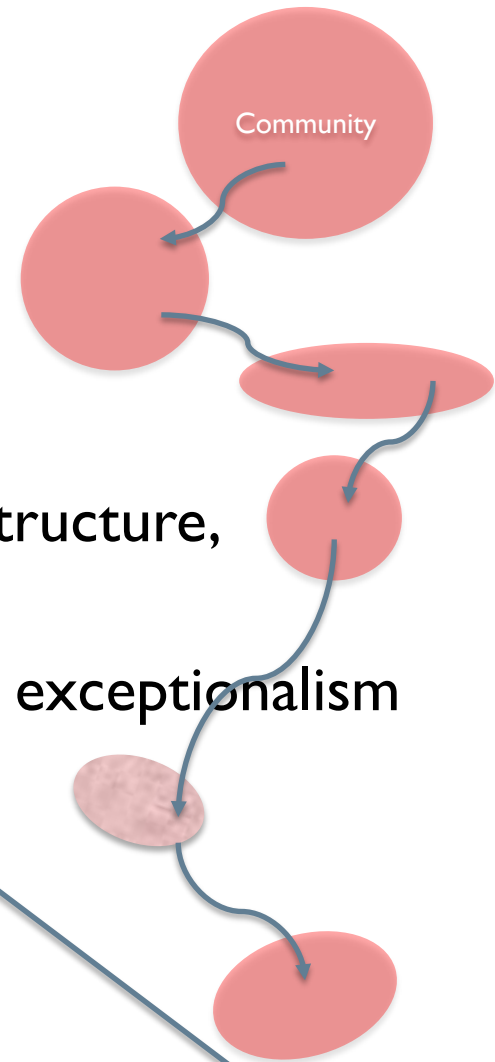
PAHO; 14-16 JUNE 2017



Introduction & Acknowledgements

How have we looked at community in health systems?

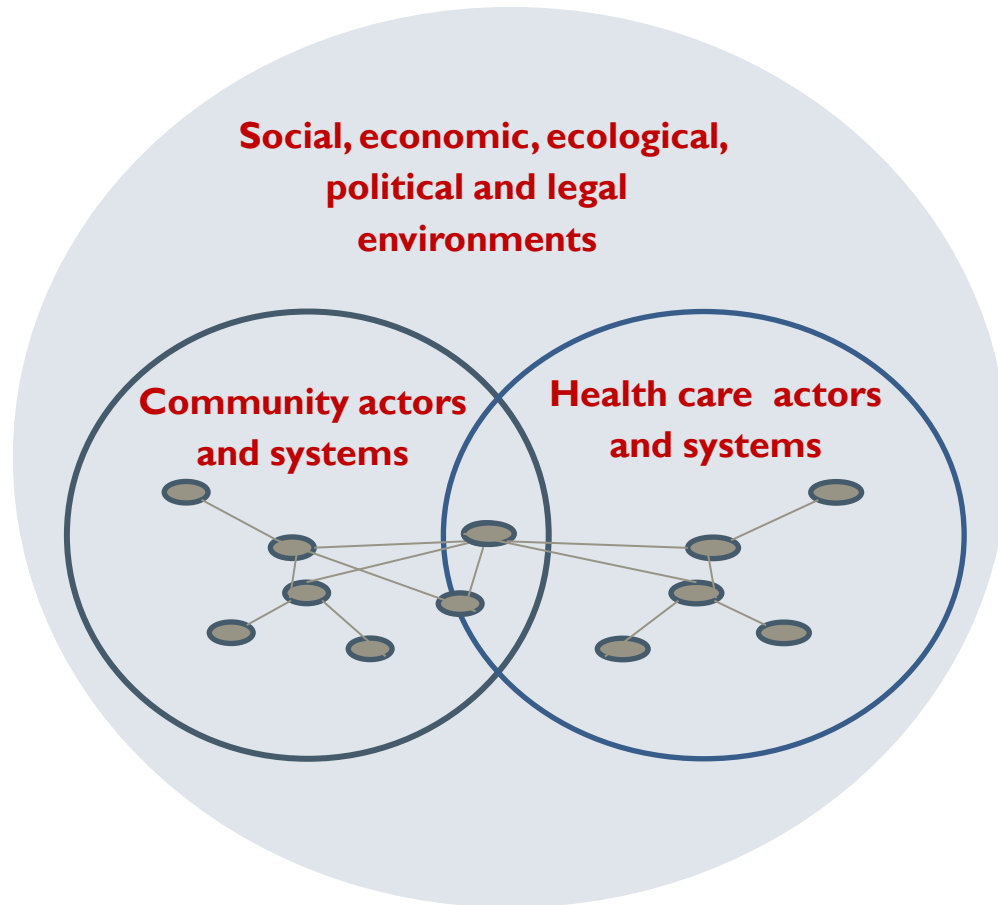
1. Alma Ata; Health for All
2. Selective PHC
3. Decentralization; Bamako Initiative; Tanahashi
4. Nat'l Health Systems & Donabedian model (structure, process, outcome)
5. World Development Report – DALYs – AIDS exceptionalism
6. Health systems performance
7. Complexity, Transition, and Systems Thinking
(van Olmen)



Community Health

- The **science** and **practice** of working **in**, and working **with** communities, in order to **protect, improve and maintain** the health of the population. Community health helps reach those who are **most vulnerable**, and addresses **citizens' concerns** and health priorities.
(MCSP 2014)
- Community health activities **change** with changing technology and **social values**, but the goals remain the same.
(WHO 2004)

Community in Systems for Health



Building Viable and Resilient Systems for Health DGH Strategic Orientations 2017-2020. *Save the Children US, Department of Global Health. March 2017. Internal document* –

Van Olmen 'Dynamic Health System Model'
Maternal and Child Survival Program 'Beyond the Building Blocks'

UNICEF model

USAID CH framework

WHO co-production

SC Community 'Social Ecological Model'

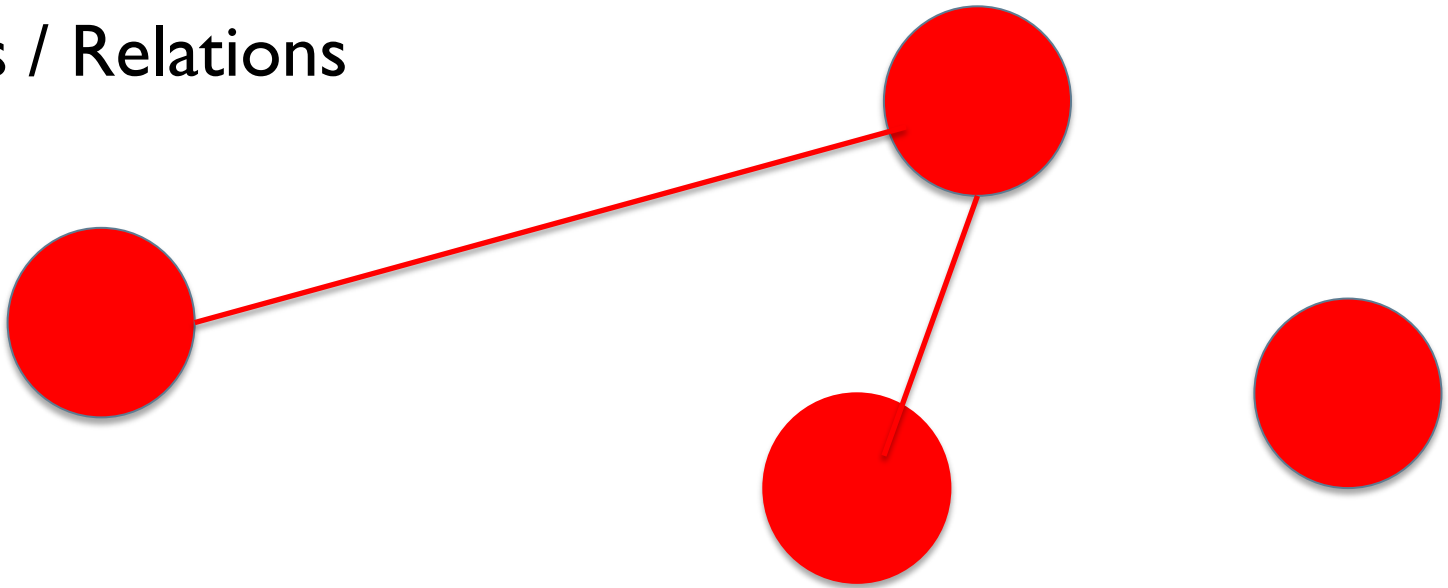
Defining... Community

“Group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings.” (McQueen / WHO)




- Shifting definitions:
 - Physical space
 - Virtual space
 - Inhabitants of those spaces
- Limits of ‘characteristics’ to define community:
 - being “in but out”

Defining... Community

- Boundaries
- Ties / Relations



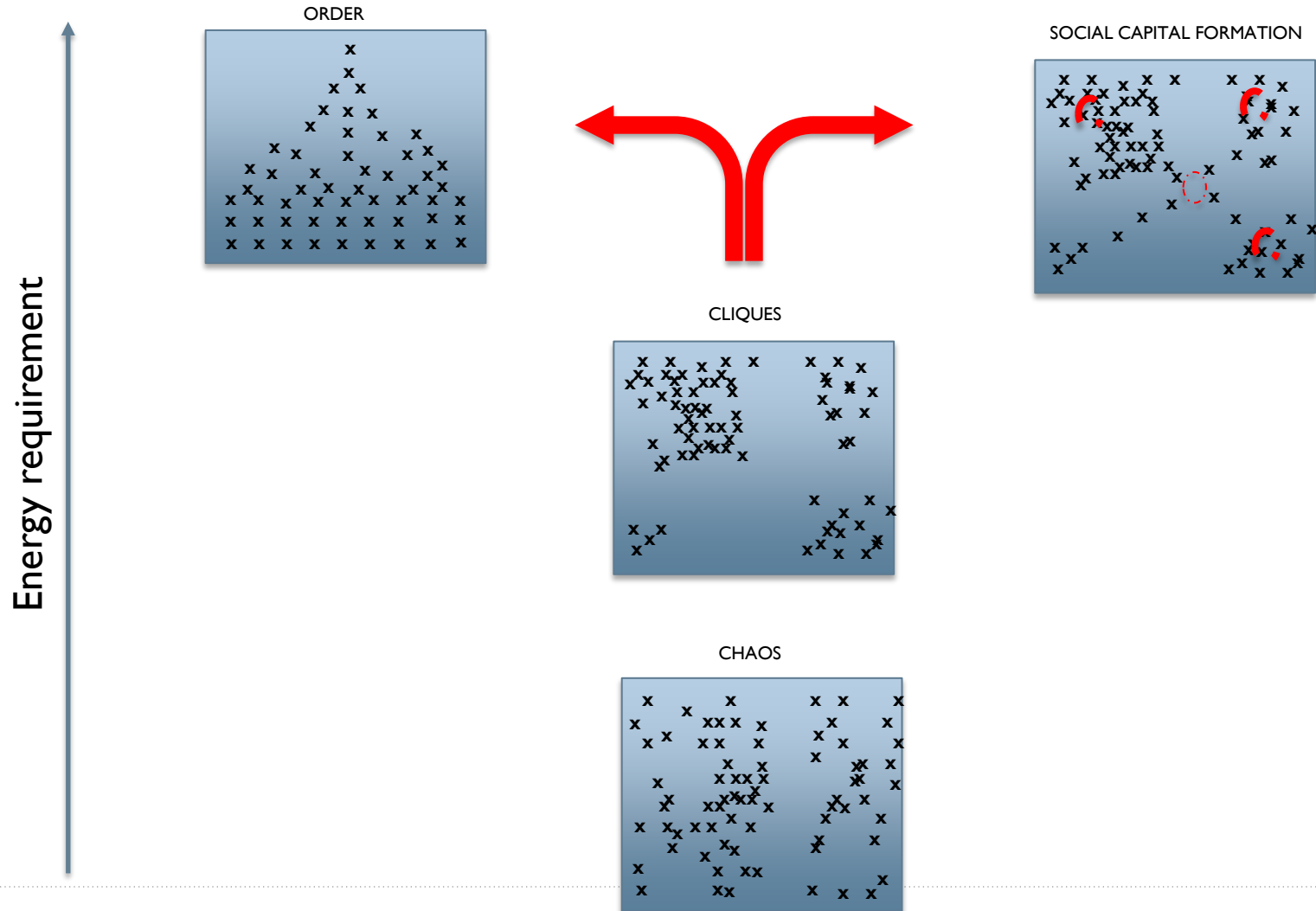
Possible lenses for community roles

Community as...	Language	Perspectives	Evidence problem	Evidence timeline
Beneficiaries (service -centric vision)	<i>Targets – coverage area - clients</i>	Unitary  Pluralist	Complicated  Complex	Short(er)  Long(er)
Resource (utilitarian vision)	<i>Bamako Initiative – outreach capacity / ‘volunteers’</i>			
Agents of change (social vision)	<i>Empowerment – social capital – community systems – participatory health development</i>			
Power center (political economy vision)	<i>Social accountability – people-centered health services</i>			

2 examples

- WARMI – CAC – PLA Groups
- French drought, 2006

Entropy & social/organization life



Potential problems with...

... instrumentalist approaches

- Cooptation and corruption of local social processes?
- Displacement?
- Hidden agendas?
- Trust?
- Narrow definition of health?
- ...

...social infrastructure (platforms) approaches

- Lack of control?
- Epistemological challenges?
- Loss of focus with interacting dynamic processes?
- Changing priorities?
- Changing purposes?
- ...

Caution

Do no harm!

Focus!

‘No free lunch’ as a theorem of community health

What mix of power, social, utilitarian and service approaches will we need for RMNCAH, NCDs, addiction, road-traffic injury, GBV, mental health, disability, violent conflict...?

Conclusion: definition & role of communities

- **Relationships** and **agency** are at the core of community ... and of health
- Value of diverse **community/social platforms**
 - keywords: community organizing, societal partnerships, learning, & accountability
- **Negotiated agendas**
 - Do no harm
 - Health as part of social change and sustainable development
 - Dialogue: social agendas *and* health technicity
 - Epistemological humility

Is a more ambitious vision of community health also more humble?

Thank you

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