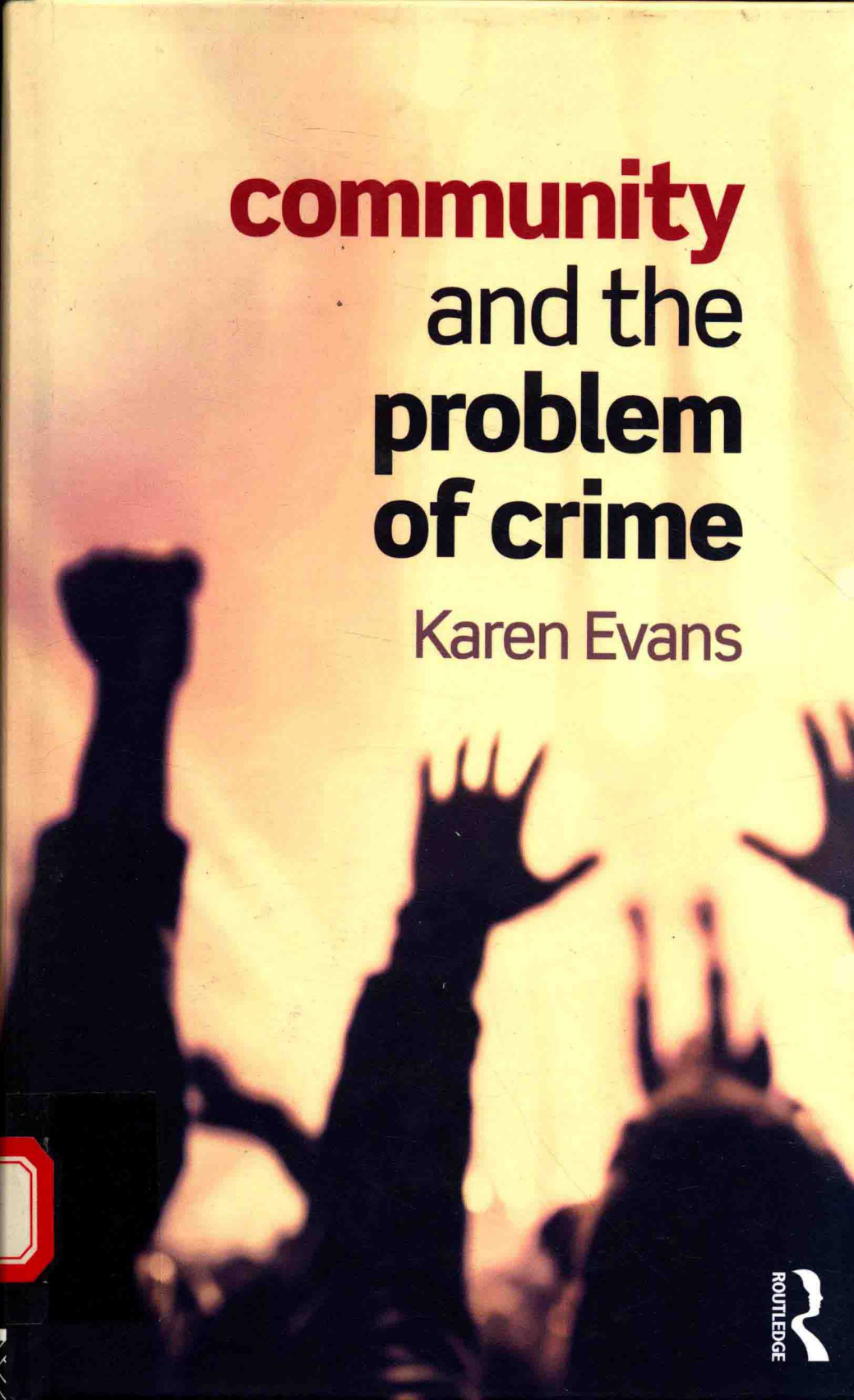
community and the problem of crime

Karen Evans



ROUTLEDGE

COMMUNITY AND THE PROBLEM OF CRIME

Karen Evans

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'Karen Evans's latest book, *Community and the Problem of Crime*, represents an excellent analytical and empirically grounded guide to this highly contested and massively important area of social scientific inquiry. This challenging yet accessible monograph will become an invaluable "must-have" text for students of sociological criminology in particular. Evans makes significant contribution to our cumulative sociological knowledge of the crime–community "nexus".'

Gordon Hughes, Chair in Criminology, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, UK

'The concept "community" is much used and abused in studies of crime, disorder and crime prevention. The language of community is frequently deployed as cause, location, symptom and solution for all manner of social problems. Fortunately, at last there is a book which brings a splendid, constructively critical, perspective to bear on this many-faceted phenomenon, even engaging with the diverse and contrary tendencies of real communities – marginalisation, stigmatisation, privatisation, securitisation and militarisation – as they reshape the social contexts through *which we move/in which we live*. A refreshing and original read.'

Peter Squires, Professor of Criminology & Public Policy, University of Brighton, UK

'This terrific book provides an exploration of the paradoxes and contradictions of "community" as these relate to crime and social justice. It demonstrates how community is seen to be both a source of social problems and the solution to it, and how it is strategically applied in ways that incorporate and/or marginalise specific population groups. Providing a theoretically informed analysis of concrete cases, trends and issues, the book makes a wonderful contribution to critical appraisals of the dynamics of contemporary society. A vital resource.'

Rob White, Professor of Criminology, University of Tasmania, Australia

COMMUNITY AND THE PROBLEM OF CRIME

The relationship between crime and community has a long history in criminological thought, from the early notion of the criminogenic community developed by the Chicago sociologists through to various crime prevention models in research and policy. This book offers a useful theoretical overview of key approaches to the subject of crime and community and considers the ways in which these have been applied in more practical settings.

Written by an expert in the field and drawing on a range of international case studies from Europe, North America, Australia and Asia, this book explores both why and how crime and community have been linked and the implications of their relationship within criminology and crime prevention policy. Topics covered in the book include:

- the different crime prevention paradigms which have been utilised in the 'fight against crime',
- the turn to community in crime prevention policy, which took place during the 1980s in the UK and US and its subsequent development,
- the particular theoretical and ideological underpinnings to crime prevention work in and with different communities,
- the significance and impact of fear of crime on crime prevention policy,
- different institutional responses to working with community in crime prevention and community safety,
- the ways in which the experience of the UK and US have been translated into the European context,
- a comparison between traditional Western responses to the growing interest in restorative and community-based approaches in other regions.

This book offers essential reading for students taking courses on crime and community, crime prevention, and community safety and community corrections.

Karen Evans is a senior lecturer at the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology at the University of Liverpool, where she has been employed since 1999. Immediately prior to this lecturing post she was Community Safety Co-ordinator working for the Moss Side and Hulme Partnership in Manchester, UK. With a first degree in Economics and Politics and an employment history, which involved working with the homeless and as a welfare rights advisor, Karen was a somewhat reluctant criminologist. Her research into urban transformations alongside the late Ian Taylor in the early 1990s led her into research into experiences of crime and victimisation in various cities in the Northwest of England, collaborating with Sandra Walklate and others in Liverpool. Karen's work since that time has focused, although not exclusively, around communities in excluded neighbourhoods and their responses to marginalisation and deprivation. She has taught the module Community and the Problem of Crime in Liverpool for the last ten years.

To VK and Alan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book arises out of a module Community and the Problem of Crime which I designed in 2003 and have been leading at the University of Liverpool in the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology for the last decade. For a number of years I have shared the teaching of this module with other experts in their field who are based in my department. I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution they have made to my understanding of the subject. In particular, I would like to thank Lynn Hancock for her sustained contribution to the module, for her tireless enthusiasm for teaching and for sharing her expertise in this area.

This book has been written at a particularly difficult period of my life during which I have lost a number of people who have been very important to me and who have helped to develop my confidence and abilities. To those who remain and who have supported me throughout this time I give my thanks – to Dave in particular who has had his own troubles to bear at this time but who has remained a fantastic source of strength to me. I must also thank my good friend Ivor Smith for inspiring me with his enthusiasm for my subject and his love of the work of John Clare and Andrew Davies. Thanks also to my copy editor, no other than my mother Barbara Evans, who checked my references as I packed her house into numerous boxes. If any references or indeed tableware are missing or broken, then I take full responsibility.

I would also like to acknowledge the part Microsoft has played in the production of this book. Without the global dominance of this corporation and the contribution of its Windows 8 software writers in particular, the writing of this book would have been made so much easier.

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INTRODUCTION

This book has emerged from the module Community and the Problem of Crime which I have been delivering as module leader since returning to Liverpool University in 2003 from a postdoctoral fellowship overseas. The idea for the module was informed by my work as a Community Safety Co-ordinator in the Moss Side and Hulme Partnership in Manchester, UK, a post I held from 1996 to 1999 while I was working on my doctoral thesis based at the University of Salford. I had previously worked with Sandra Walklate on an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded project Community Safety, Personal Safety and the Fear of Crime, which was one study in the ESRC's *Crime and Social Order Programme* directed by Tim Hope. This programme was expertly run with many seminars and events which brought the successful award-holders together with experts in the field; the arguments and conversations which I was involved in during that time have stayed with me and shaped my understanding and approach to my subject in the intervening years. I was lucky enough to spend a great deal of time with academics such as Tim Hope himself, Adam Crawford, Tony Jefferson, Evi Girling, Richard Sparks and Ian Loader and many more who have continued to write and work in the same area and to have therefore continued to shape the development of my ideas. It was this group of academics who introduced me to so much relevant criminological theory and helped me to transition from a welfare rights and housing advisor with a Master's in Applied Social Research to become an academic teaching, researching and writing around crime and social order well into the twenty-first century. These are the lessons I took into my role as Community Safety Co-ordinator in 1996. I was somewhat disconcerted to find that practitioners and funders who presided over the expenditure of millions of pounds in local areas had little idea of, or recourse to, the theories which shaped the practices which they were implementing. In my own way during that three-year period, I attempted to ensure that the work carried out in Moss Side and Hulme - which was as my job description required to ensure that it was 'a safe place

to work, visit and play' – was informed by academic research and theory, and I vowed that I would always teach the subject at university as a theoretically informed module.

Having taught the module for over ten years now, and having witnessed the major changes which have taken place in both academic understanding and in the practice of delivering community safety and crime prevention on the ground, I have realised that it is more important than ever to ground our comprehension of the subject within a clearly argued academic framework. The claims made by policy-makers about, and on, community have become ever more boldly stated and widely framed as if they were universal truths. I hope this book will demonstrate that there is no such thing, and instead that our thinking about community and the uses to which it has been put have changed significantly over the last century and will alter fundamentally in the future too. I have also been concerned that students are even more removed today from the critical way in which we first met the invocation of community in policy discourse. This is unsurprising, as in the more than two decades which have passed since the ESRC programme was first conceived, much of what we then questioned has become a truism in everyday discourse. I was very pleased then when I was approached by Routledge to write this book and saw it as an opportunity to re-engage with the ideas which were so significant at that time and to test how far they had maintained significance over the ensuing decades.

Having said this, I should note that the book has become in the writing less about what community is or is not and more about how the state uses the term 'community' to confer rights upon some groups and to exclude others from exercising those rights. This is not a book about crime prevention either as many authors have addressed this subject in more authoritative ways. It is a book, however, which questions the ways in which the concept of community has been utilised within agendas of crime control and how perspectives forged in the West have gone global. It is particularly concerned, too, with how the problem of crime has come to predominate and to persist as one of the most significant organising problems of national governments in the West, even at a time when recorded crime figures have steadily dropped year upon year.

I have tried in my writing not to fall into the everyday, accepted language of crime and criminality, but this goal has been very difficult to achieve. I am uncomfortable with terms such as offender and victim but have had to make use of these terms in order to write about the concerns which have predominated in government and popular discourse. Community, too, is a problematic concept. John Bruhn has written that 'community enjoys the rather dubious distinction of [being] one of the most frequently and variably used terms in social science' (2011:14). There is no standard definition of the term which could usefully limit and focus its use. Notoriously, Hillery, investigating the concept in 1955 found 94 different definitions had been applied to the term (Konig 1968:22) yet it remains an enduring concept, peddled by politicians and policy-makers as a desirable, almost, ideal state of existence to which we all should aspire and is used widely and largely uncritically

in common parlance. Community has been studied to some extent within every academic discipline concerned with human (and some animal) behaviour and has been found in the interactions of like-minded or co-located people, but also in the ways in which organisations or businesses can cluster together for optimal effect. In criminology, the concept of community has generally referred to place-based community, rarely occupational community, although of course there are occupations which might be useful to research as far as crime and social harm are concerned. Further interrogation of the financial community, for example, would be in order at this time, as would interrogation of occupational cultures which sustain harm upon various publics.

The meanings attached to community have been many and varied, but at its most basic the term is used to refer to 'people having something in common' (Crow and Allen 1994:3), and that shared 'something' is in some way acknowledged and realised in practice by some proportion of those who would constitute its members. Communities are not limited to the place-based, realised through a common territory, but can also be interest-based and realised through some form of collective endeavour – whether this is apparent in collective action or less tangible in a sharing of common interests. It is perfectly possible therefore to be a passive member of a community; to feel attached to either an interest or a residential community but without actually becoming involved in common activity with other members of that community. We must be more careful, however, about our use of the term 'community' and must not invoke its use where it does not exist. Where shared interests exist but are not acknowledged, or acknowledged but not realised in some small way, then this does not merit the conferring of the status of community; to do so would render the term almost meaningless. Yet the status of 'community' is often conferred on social and territorial groupings of people who do not acknowledge or realise their 'community' in these ways. The term 'community' can thus be (mis)applied to particular neighbourhoods and geographical localities or in a very sweeping way to denote social groupings where the user of the term believes they do or should share common interests or attachments. Indeed, political and social policy interventions throughout the twentieth century and beyond are littered with such misappropriations of the term 'community'.

As Anthony Cohen (1985) reminds us, 'community' is bounded and also relational. Implied in the term are relations of inclusion but also of exclusion, of the 'we' as opposed to the 'them'. It is not surprising then that in recent decades the concept of 'community' has also become central to many aspects of criminological study where the construction and fear of 'the other' has been a recurring theme. In the sub-discipline of crime prevention, however, community has been used in a less defined and more nostalgic manner to evoke ties that bind residential neighbourhoods together in shared experiences and common interests. In order to make sense of the multiple uses – and abuses – of the term 'community' within criminology, it is important to trace the ways in which 'community' has been incorporated into

the discipline over time and to chart the many ways in which the concept has been put to use in theory-building and in practical policy-making. Rather than offering a new definition to add to Hillery's long list, it is hoped that a study of the way others have developed the concept and generated interest in it will reveal more about what is perceived to be the essence of community and why it has become so widely idealised and used as an organising concept in government and policy-making.

The book is organised as follows.

Chapter One looks at the various ways in which academics and policy-makers have worked with the concept of 'community' over different periods. It looks first at classic community studies of the early to mid-twentieth century and how these studies have informed late-twentieth-century understandings of community and which underpin the turn to communitarianism much later in the twentieth century. The chapter reveals that the concept of community has retained a power and significance despite whole-scale economic, social and political upheaval. At times and under certain social conditions, community has been rejected as an organising force within society, but it has been returned to repeatedly and held up as a social good which must be preserved or rebuilt.

Chapter Two considers the place which the concept of community has played in techniques and systems of crime control and prevention. The chapter recounts the move from community to state control of the problem of crime and the various interventions which the state has deployed in its struggle to reduce and contain rates of recorded crime. From this point onwards, community played a secondary role in crime control, called on in different periods to collaborate with the state and contribute to the maintenance of order. Rather than being seen as a solution to crime, communities were initially blamed for harbouring and disseminating the wrong values and were subject to particular scrutiny. Since the 1970s, however, communities have increasingly been brought into the crime control arsenal and have been called upon to play a significant role in crime prevention.

Chapter Three examines ways that the problem of disorder has been conceived. It explores in particular the construction of the 'problem community' and the different ways in which this 'problem' has been perceived and acted upon. From the early theorists of crime and community, working-class neighbourhoods have been cast as socially disorganised, but this chapter questions some of the assumptions upon which this representation of economically disadvantaged communities has been based, suggesting that some communities are differently organised but that this difference need not be perceived of as problematic. From Chapter Four, with much of the work done in sketching out the theories which have been significant in shaping understandings of both community and the problem of crime in previous chapters, the remainder of the book looks at the ways that these theories have informed the more substantive and policy-based agendas which have developed as a consequence.

Chapter Four considers the debates which have proved important in rebuilding community and neighbourhood, which began after the Second World War but which changed in emphasis and focus after the end of the postwar economic boom. Postwar

reconstruction changed into post-boom regeneration agendas. These increasingly looked to the restructuring of local neighbourhoods as a means of solving problems which had arisen at a more global level. The chapter includes two case studies outlining problems of flight from the city and possible solutions which have been put in place to reverse the declining fortunes of cities and rural economies in both Japan and Spain. The chapter explains that communities have been co-opted into this regeneration practice and held responsible for their ultimate success or failure.

Chapter Five explores differences within and between what are loosely termed 'communities' beginning with a consideration of the differences between and within cities which can give their neighbourhoods a distinct character. The chapter then goes on to discuss the different fractures which exist within what can be considered place-based communities and the difficulties which these have posed in the construction and maintenance of cohesive communities in the present day. This chapter reveals multiple perspectives within the city, that not all social groups experience their neighbourhoods and social environments in the same ways. It looks at the complex networks of inclusion and exclusion which shape our experiences and have to be acknowledged and understood if any positive changes are to be made to improve access to the city and the right to the city for all. Three more case studies are introduced in this chapter which address the different issues faced by ethnic minority groups and women in the city as well as the presence of 'illegitimate' communities.

Chapter Six starts with a discussion of Hillyard's concept of 'suspect communities' and then considers ways in which, not only the state, but also popular discourse has coalesced around suspicion of certain minority groups, cultures and ways of life. Hillyard developed the concept of suspect communities after doing research on Irish people arrested on suspicion of committing terrorist offences in the 1970s, and Pantazis and Pemberton updated his analysis to include the treatment of Muslims after 9/11. They show how both groups have been targeted for unwelcome attention and considered as responsible for their own isolation and the stereotypes which abound concerning their values and lifestyles. This suspicion, rather than culminating in a myriad of 'communities' living side by side, has created tensions at a national and local level. The chapter looks at the ghettoization and stigmatisation experienced by other groups from the Jews in medieval Europe to the black population in the United States today. The chapter also asks whether the concept of 'suspect community' could be further extended to aid our understanding of the state's treatment of the poor in neo-liberal economies.

Chapter Seven reflects on the policing of communities – their monitoring, regulation and control – which is carried out at a number of different levels and by various organisations. The chapter starts with a look at the ways in which the state interacts with communities through the formal organisation of the Police but then moves on to include more recent insights into governance which have created the expectation that communities will monitor, regulate and control themselves. This chapter introduces in more detail the strategy of responsibilisation, which has been

highlighted by David Garland and which has helped criminology to understand the drive to co-opt communities into the crime control agenda in the late twentieth century. It looks further, however, to the increasing militarisation of policing local neighbourhoods perceived as troublesome, and the gap between the rhetoric of community involvement and the reality of communities which are coerced into order through targeted state surveillance and over-policing.

The final chapter returns to the theme of community itself. It explores the limitations of community as an organising concept while arguing that the concept still has relevance today, especially in those areas which are increasingly abandoned by the welfare arm of the state. The chapter also considers the inherently exclusionary qualities of community and the tendency of communities to separate as well as to unite. While 'community' is held up as a positive social formation, this chapter uses case studies from the UK and abroad to demonstrate how the building of communities can produce barriers to progressive policy-making. This chapter explores how competition for resources and influence can result in the formation of separate communities occupying adjacent or shared spaces. It also examines how the dynamics of the relationships between them can be factors which exacerbate rather than reduce criminogenic tendencies. It concludes with a look at how post-exclusionary discourses of community might be framed and the possibilities this might introduce for crime prevention/community safety in the future.

While my own knowledge base is firmly located within the UK and has developed from a Western perspective, I have attempted in this book to include case studies from further afield in order to demonstrate the global reach of the ideas and the policies which have dominated the agenda of crime control within nation-states and increasingly internationally. I ask my students to reflect in their study on a number of processes which have become almost universal in their application to the problem of crime; first stigmatisation, followed by responsibilisation and privatisation. In recent years I have added securitisation to this list, and I fear also that in the coming years the militarisation of responses will also need to be more clearly emphasised.

There are many areas that I have not been able to touch upon in this book, and I fear that my treatment of some issues has been too cursory, but the limitation of this medium for the dissemination of ideas has dictated a certain brevity. I have added questions and suggested further reading to each chapter in the hope that the reader's appetite will be whetted by my initial round-up of the issues and that the reader will take the time to reach further into the debates of their own free will.

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1

THE MEANING AND USES OF COMMUNITY

Classic and premodern 'community'

Aristotle in Book 1 of *Politics* claimed that '[a] social instinct is implanted in all men by nature' and [...] human life cannot be conceived as existing outside of the social ... he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god' (Aristotle 2012). Humans are not solitary creatures but co-operate with one another to produce food and shelter and to reproduce future generations. They therefore live in close relationship to others, building codes, rules and laws which govern their social relations and make such close co-existence possible. In doing so, they are building a common way of living and being. These shared experiences lead to commonly held understandings and belief systems which become a shared culture as ways of being and thinking are passed down from one generation to the next. Social organisation is forged through a need to belong and to get along with others using common frames of reference and common understandings in inherently collective enterprises. Hence, the concept of commonality, of 'community,' is considered as 'natural' to humanity and is based on the co-operative relations necessary to ensure survival.

The types of social institutions which people build change as societies acquire new knowledge, systems of production and technological expertise. Hunter/gatherer societies developed social relationships which aided a transitory and unsettled existence. The technologies which they had to aid their survival were basic – weapons with which to hunt, tools to build shelter and pots to cook with. A shift to farming and cultivation around 20,000 years ago demanded a different set of social relationships to reflect a more settled way of life, but co-operation was still key to their survival. As pastoral and agrarian societies began to emerge in the Middle East and Europe, people developed more complex divisions of labour and

role differentiation. These societies became less egalitarian (Engels [1884] famously referred to hunter/gatherer societies as 'primitive communism') and more hierarchical as the concept of private property emerged and became institutionalised in systems of law. The accumulation of property in private hands, Engels argued, allowed the generation of profound inequalities of material wealth and power and the development of a class-based system whereby those with shared power and interests collaborated to rule over others. Where power was passed down family lines and aristocratic and monarchical systems were established to aid this process, familial ties took on particular significance. These inequalities in power were deeply established by the time the classical civilisations of the Middle East and southern Europe were firmly established and private ownership was extended to the ownership of people as well as land and goods. Agricultural workers were tasked with feeding growing cities, and slave labour was put to work for the powerful to enable successful war-making and empire-building.

It was in the Classical period, Konig (1968) argues, that the Greek city-state first developed the concept and practice of building 'community' as a form of social organisation which was separated from ties of kinship. The city-state developed a form of rudimentary democracy which functioned only for the elite groups in society and which was deemed necessary for 'modern' political and social organisation to develop. It also required a collective defence to protect the city against attacks by outsiders. The term 'community' which we use today is derived from the Latin prefix *com* together with the verb *munire*, meaning "to fortify, strengthen, or defend." Thus, from the start the idea of community was linked to a political purpose and to the exclusion of others, but in its formation it also bound otherwise unconnected people together in a powerful, affective bond through which those included were strengthened and protected.

Before the idea of nation brought people together under a common institutional and legal framework, the concept of community acted as a form of social glue at a local level. While the power of city-states in classical civilisation eventually diminished and new political and economic systems took their place, local allegiances remained paramount. However, as Sharpe has described, 'Contrary to popular myth' people did not live together in 'idyllic village settlements' (Sharpe 2001:134). Indeed, as he points out, class divisions were a truly salient feature of pre-industrial society. Sharpe writes of England that:

> [t]he early modern small town or village was as likely to be riven by problems, albeit of a different nature, as any modern city. Legal records, criminal and civil alike, contain ample evidence of social tensions and interpersonal malice. Indeed by the eighteenth century, most English villages, although capable of showing community spirit on occasion, were often so socially stratified as to make it possible to speak of a number of 'communities' within their boundaries.' (2001:134)