

# From Communities to Networks: Updating Our Views on How Groups Organise

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## **Abstract**

The imminent restructuring of the local governance institutions of Auckland, presents considerable opportunities to the Auckland arts sector to develop greater cohesion and co-operation amongst its members. Concepts of community and networking need to be re-examined and a model for community building needs to be selected and developed, in order to effectively advance the interests of this particular community. Traditional notions of community are likely to be too constrictive for the purposes of this sector, and networking approaches may place too much emphasis on economic logic, at the expense of the interests of those members who do not share these kinds of goals. This paper attempts to find a synergy between these concepts, as well as taking insights from social capital theory and the concept of a 'weak-tie' connection between individuals. It examines methods for building greater cohesion within groups and strategies to maintain effective group organisation. Theories expounded by Mancur Olson are applied to produce a practical indication of a method for group organisation. The use of selective incentives is considered as an integral part of this process. Although a particular sector has been identified as the model group for the purposes of this research, the research hopes to produce findings that have the potential for wider application. It is hoped that the use of this example will help to tease out practical issues of implementation of the concepts examined, which will form a model for future enquiries of this kind concerning other types of groups.

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## Introduction

This paper examines concepts and theories which have been offered by social science theorists, as to the nature of communities and networks, as well as how other groups organise themselves in our society. It first looks at how these concepts have been defined, before going on to examine what strategies have been suggested to aid the formation of such groups. The use of selective incentives and coercion are identified as methods to employ when developing communities. Computer networks are referred to as a form of community infrastructure essential for consideration when analysing a modern concept of community. As well as compiling insights from a diverse range of theorists, the paper attempts to apply the insights to the context of the Auckland arts sector. Rather than comparing and contrasting the differing ideas offered on group formation, the paper aims to amass them in a way that shows how elements from each theory can be selected and combined to benefit this particular context and others like it. Through this process, the paper hopes to offer a new sense of what community can mean to groups in society today. It proceeds from the conceptual basis of 'chosen' groups in society as opposed to those which exist by default attributes. Arguments for the importance of groups in society were not able to be addressed within the scope of this paper; rather, it presumes that communities exist within society and that analysis of how they are formed effectively will be of benefit to those who wish to perpetuate this state.

## Background

The Auckland arts sector can be considered to be made up of businesses in the creative industries, as well as public and not-for-profit groups involved in supporting the promotion of artists and creative people. With developments occurring in the structure of local governance of the Auckland region, a number of issues have arisen for the sector. Attempts have been made to influence policy developments that will impact on it, through the use of submissions and meetings with public representatives. However, the sector is struggling to present a cohesive voice to government due to the lack of connective mechanisms between its members. Previous organisation of sector members has been minimal and not comprehensive. A couple of not-for-profit organisations, Artists Alliance and The Creative People's Centre, have voluntarily taken up roles in initiating greater interaction amongst members, towards the goal of representation of the sector's views in local government developments. While these activities are still at an early stage, there have been informal indications by these leaders that the development of a representative voice for the sector is on the agenda.

The Auckland arts sector has been chosen as the model case for this paper as it provides a good example of a large, latent group that has indicated that it wishes to be more cohesive but is facing barriers in doing so. The paper will examine how its members share a common interest and could benefit by operating collectively. In the Auckland context, the ability to do this is becoming more imperative, due to decisions being made by government to restructure Auckland's institutions. There could also be said to be a market failure in society that is causing these barriers to the group's progress towards organisation. Therefore, there is an argument to be made for there being a role for government in assisting the cohesiveness of this particular community. If other groups can demonstrate their position as being similar to this case, they may be able to adapt the arguments made within this paper to their own cause.

## Concepts and Definitions of Groups

Traditional notions of community emphasise the need to protect the concept of community from that of economic logic.<sup>1</sup> As opposed to those belonging to associations, members of communities are said to be those who prioritise communitarian values - friendship, voluntarism, care, trust, mutualism, altruism, co-operation and benign intentions - above any goals for instrumental gain.<sup>2</sup> Radical communitarians build on this view, but suggest that community cannot be considered to be 'coterminous with society,' rather they see society as being made up of a variety of groups with particularistic interests.<sup>3</sup> Radical communitarians also wish to extend the view of community from being a concept which is regionally bound. They would instead like to include within the definition of community the idea of groups which are 'chosen' and formed voluntarily.<sup>4</sup> These kinds of communities are those formed around a common purpose or interest, and are united by their solidarity with one another.<sup>5</sup> However, communitarians would argue that these common interests are distinguishable from the kinds of interests held by what is commonly considered to be an 'interest group.' Amitai Etzioni states that 'communities address a broad band of human needs and have a shared history, identity and fate' whereas interest groups are 'simply seeking privileged treatment for office equipment.'<sup>6</sup> Through these kinds of statements we can see that the concept of community has evolved through time. Communitarian theorists have established a high standard of what constitutes a community. However, as the

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<sup>1</sup> Adrian Little (2002) *The Politics of Community*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press., p. 25

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 28

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 66

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 96

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 156

authors of some of these theories admit, the concept is an amorphous one and has been used in general terms to describe a large variety of groups in society.

In the same way that communities distinguish themselves from associations, networks are differentiated from hierarchical types of organisation. Networks have no organisational authority which arbitrates or controls.<sup>7</sup> Instead the members of the network, or 'nodes', come together repeatedly, to interact and exchange with each other, while maintaining their original autonomy.<sup>8</sup> The nodes of the network are said to define the network itself, as well as each other. Their relationship is dynamic and constantly changing, with negotiation and shifts between the positions of the members which produce a positive kind of instability.<sup>9</sup> Network theory does not exclude members with instrumental motivations - in fact it considers them inevitable. It allows for a diverse membership which is not predicated on an idea of sameness.<sup>10</sup> However, there is still a need for a shared set of rules and standards which aid the functioning of the group.<sup>11</sup> Common protocols, values and goals provide the basis on which the network can co-ordinate its activities and build its relationships.<sup>12</sup> These kinds of processes arise from the network itself, which continually defines its environment over time and for its own purposes.<sup>13</sup> Networks therefore have a marked sense of fluidity and flexibility, more so than the concept of community. Where the concept of community has been defined by communitarian theorists, the concept of a network has been left almost entirely to the component parts of the network to define.

Mancur Olson offers a view of group organisation that goes beyond the traditional definition of a community and could even be said to be contradictory to its basic premise. Olson sees the main function of an organisation as advancing the common interest or purpose of its members.<sup>14</sup> If it is unable to do this better than its members could do so individually, then he sees the organisation as having little justification of its legitimacy.<sup>15</sup> To be considered an organisation, Olson requires that a group be acting in a co-ordinated

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<sup>7</sup> Felix Stalder (2006) *Manuel Castells: the theory of the network society*, Cambridge, Polity Press. p. 177

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 179

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 178

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 179

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 180

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Mancur Olson (1965) *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press. p. 5

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 7

manner and towards a collective goal.<sup>16</sup> Olson points to the theory of groups offered by Aristotle to support his argument: 'Men journey together with a view to particular advantage, and by way of providing some particular thing needed for the purposes of life, and similarly the political association seems to have come together originally, and to continue in existence, for the sake of the general advantages it brings.'<sup>17</sup> While this may imply a community made up of members with instrumental goals, who are only associating with each other to benefit their own ends, it does not necessarily preclude a community formed on the basis of communitarian values either. As Arthur Bentley said, 'there is no group without its interest'<sup>18</sup> - even if a group has decided to organise according to communitarian principles, it is likely that it will also be unified by a common interest. Unlike communitarians, Olson does not believe that the inherent value of a community, or the benefits it may offer, will be sufficient to motivate a rational individual into joining or forming the community.<sup>19</sup> His theory on community building is discussed below, when the problems of collective action and public goods are raised as considerations for community builders. Although Olson's discussion of groups uses the language of organisations, the concept of community can be seen to fit within this body of theory. Communitarians may require a specific culture around group formation, but they are still subject to the issues of collective action that Olson raises.

Theories on social capital originate from arguments made by social economists such as Robert Putnam, about the positive impact of groups (or strong connections between individuals) on the economy. Through the development of this theory, the concept of community has been reintroduced into academic debate. While this paper does not examine the arguments around the role of communities or their impact on society, these kinds of theories are worth considering for the influence they have had in shaping the concept of community. While methods for increasing social capital and traditional communities in society were initially supported through these theories, critics have argued instead for the recognition of the importance of communities with 'weaker ties.'<sup>20</sup> Communities and high levels of social capital, argue these critics, risk shutting out newcomers and retarding innovation.<sup>21</sup> A collective which was overly comprehensive might prevent an individual from participating in any other groups, and in this way subsume the

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<sup>16</sup> John J. Wallis in Mancur Olson, Heckelman, J. C. and Coates, D. (2003) *Collective choice: essays in honor of Mancur Olson*, New York, Springer. p. 221-2

<sup>17</sup> Olson, p. 6

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 8

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 2

<sup>20</sup> Richard L. Florida (2005) *Cities and the Creative Class*, New York, Routledge. p. 31

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

individual's identity within its own.<sup>22</sup> Focus groups have highlighted concerns that communities will be invasive and prevent people from pursuing their own lives.<sup>23</sup> Those interviewed preferred to have a 'quasi-anonymity,' with weaker rather than stronger connections between themselves and others in society.<sup>24</sup> These weak ties are seen to be more inclusive ways of building networks, creating openness, and allowing for novel combinations of resources and ideas.<sup>25</sup> They also welcome pressure and influence from outside, avoiding what Olson suggests could cause the demise of a community.<sup>26</sup> These arguments have been applied specifically to traditionally cohesive groups in society, like civic clubs and regional communities. However, considering the points raised within these debates is an essential part of the process when attempting to build a modern community and deciding what concept of group organisation that it should manifest.

## Constructing Community

More and more arguments are being developed concerning the need for communities to be constructed. Traditional group theory tends to assume that community formation will simply occur when needed, through the actions of the members who wish to participate in a community. However, as Olson has demonstrated, even when rational actors can agree on the need to form a community, they may still fail to do so. Olson points to the fact that there are many groups in society which, despite their needs, are not actually organised.<sup>27</sup> Radical communitarians, such as Adrian Little, have also recognised the need to develop the theory of community building and assist community construction.

We cannot just assume that communities exist in the requisite form (even though they may do so to some extent)... Rather, communities may sometimes need to be manufactured and policies may have to be directed towards the creation of spaces for them to develop and flourish.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Stalder, p. 179

<sup>23</sup> Florida, p. 30

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 31

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Olson, p. 132

<sup>28</sup> Little, p. 8

Little also emphasises the importance of the development of practical methods for community formation, rather than purely theoretical analysis of the concept.<sup>29</sup> The argument for aiding community manufacturing does not necessarily suggest that an authoritarian approach be taken to community building. Instead, there is a recommendation that attention be given to improving the 'spaces' or environments in which community formation will occur in the hopes of encouraging it.<sup>30</sup> This involves developing social arrangements which enable associative relationships to realise their full potential.<sup>31</sup> Ensuring institutions provide a setting with a foundation of rights, fairness and equal representation of interest, is an essential step towards creating an environment for community building.<sup>32</sup>

A more contentious element of the debate about community building is the role that the government has to play in the development of communities. Due to the unique resources available to it, the government could be a perfect candidate for the role of fostering institutions supportive of communities.<sup>33</sup> Little believes that trust is not apolitical or merely spontaneous, but can be promoted through public policy in order to help manufacture the conditions for community to form.<sup>34</sup> The task of solving problems of collective action is often relegated to government, as the only agent with significant enough capacity to coordinate a broad range of actors in society. It is commonly accepted that government should be the provider of public goods, but whether this can be extended to collective goods, which are those sought by a section of society rather than the whole, is another question. There is also concern that communities instituted by government will be authoritarian, and discourage co-operation within the community if the structure is being imposed on its members.<sup>35</sup> Communitarian André Gorz argues that communal bonds will be undermined if they must be formalised by institutional structures established by the state.<sup>36</sup> However, without government involvement, the community may not have access to measures that encourage participation from members. John Joseph Wallis defines a community's success as being limited by the size of its membership, and the 'selective incentives made available to it by government'.<sup>37</sup> Wallis implies that these kinds of

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 10

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Nalbandian, p. 61

<sup>33</sup> Little, p. 144

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 113

<sup>35</sup> Little, p. 131

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 158

<sup>37</sup> Wallis, p. 231

incentives are only accessed through government and therefore only government can be the provider of this essential element in community formation.

One way to avoid an authoritarian imposition of a community structure on its intended members is to collaborate with those members during the formation process of the community. By engaging in a collaborative approach, arguments that support the self-emergent ability of communities can be accommodated. Network theorist Manuel Castells has indicated a case for these kinds of 'emergent effects,' stating that networks are self-organising and able to establish order without deterministic planning.<sup>38</sup> Free market advocates do not allow for government interference in community formation and suggest that if there is a need for communities, those who have the need will organise to create them.<sup>39</sup> However, as Olson has demonstrated with his theory of collective action, this is not the case, and so there is action required by society in order to meet those demands for community. Collaboration between the state and the members of the proposed community will help to ensure that the community is effective in its actions and endures past the point of initial formation. As Little has propounded, '...solidarity must be developed gradually and manufactured through ongoing dialogue between institutions of the state and groups and associations in civil society.'<sup>40</sup> This kind of engagement will also help to demonstrate the broad social consensus needed in order for government to recognise that its support is required in the community development process.<sup>41</sup>

## Considerations for Community Builders

One of the definitive premises of Olson's work is the connection he makes between groups and the collective good or goods that they provide to their members. His work, *The Logic of Collective Action*, centres around the development of a method to deal with the problems posed by collective action and collective goods.<sup>42</sup> Traditional group theory suggests that if a group of individuals will receive greater benefits operating as a group than as individuals, it is rational for them to form a group and they will therefore do so.<sup>43</sup> Olson disputes this, identifying benefits that are a result of group action as collective

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<sup>38</sup> Stalder, p. 192

<sup>39</sup> Little, p. 112

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 51

<sup>41</sup> Wallis, p. 231

<sup>42</sup> Mancur Olson (1965) *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.

<sup>43</sup> Olson, p. 20

goods and therefore the causes of disincentives for individuals to form groups. He states that:<sup>44</sup>

... the achievement of any common goal or the satisfaction of any common interest means that a public or collective good has been provided for that group. The very fact that a goal or purpose is common to a group means that no one in the group is excluded from the benefit or satisfaction brought about by its achievement.

Olson identifies the common dilemma of collective goods, which is similar to that of a public good in that they are non-excludable to those who stand to benefit from them.<sup>45</sup> The only difference is that public goods are a common good of society, whereas collective goods are a commodity sought by a group or section of society. Because of the non-excludable nature of collective goods; members of the community have no incentive to support the burdens associated with building or maintaining the community, as they will inevitably benefit from the collective good being obtained in either case. However, if no one supports the community then it is unlikely to achieve the collective good at all, and so the dilemma of community formation stands.

In the case of the Auckland arts sector, the collective good would be increased representation and recognition of the sector in local governance. This would entail funding and provision of buildings and resources. The sector currently receives some funding and recognition, but with the government restructuring, there have been suggestions that this support to the sector be curtailed. Operating as a group, the sector could generate the necessary pressure to preserve or even increase these resources. Its members could not however, influence public agencies as individuals, as their opinions would not be representative of the whole sector, so they could not be said to have the official mandate of the sector. If the government were to give greater recognition to the arts in Auckland, it would likely be in the form of building in considerations of the arts into public strategies and budgets. The developments would impact on the sector as a whole and those who were not members of an official arts community would benefit equally to those who were. The formation of such a community must take these considerations into account, and follow recommendations made by Olson as to how to avoid such dilemmas.

Both community and network theorists agree that a common goal, purpose or interest between the members of a group, as well as a common culture that surrounds the achievement of this purpose, is essential to the group's cohesion and success. This

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 15

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 21

purpose provides the framework in which interactions between members take place and builds a sense of solidarity among them.<sup>46</sup> An agreed and explicit common interest is said to be more important than either a structure or a deep similarity of members in the community.<sup>47</sup> A shared interest is what motivates the members of a community to join the group and contribute to its success. If an individual member does not understand the goal clearly and their relationship to the other members, they will not be sufficiently committed to the community.<sup>48</sup> For that reason, the manufacturing of a community cannot be imposed on its members; the common goal and the desire to act collectively towards it must be recognised by the community itself.<sup>49</sup> A common culture is a set of values which facilitates the communication between members, and informs the codes of behaviour in which they operate.<sup>50</sup> If a cultural framework within a community is clearly established and agreed upon, then differences and misunderstandings of interpretations will be minimised. This is because the level of 'noise' is reduced; that is, the difference between what is sent and what is received when messages are communicated and decoded.<sup>51</sup> Castells sees both noise and consistency as the two essential factors for consideration when analysing the success of networks. Consistency relates to the level of commitment a member feels to the community, it is said to be high when a member sees their part in the network as advancing their individual goals.<sup>52</sup> Networks are a useful point of reference for these considerations, as they are recognised as structures which are communication rich, as opposed to formal hierarchies which are communication poor.<sup>53</sup> If a community gives due attention to these considerations and identifies a strong common purpose and culture, they are likely to make progress towards building a cohesive and enduring organisation.

The desire to effectively promote and represent the views of the arts, could be said to be the common interest which links the members of the Auckland arts sector. However, as the sector is made up of actors with both instrumental and non-instrumental goals (that is, businesses and not-for-profit organisations), there may be some differences to reconcile before the sector can have a coherent culture. Those members who rationally seek to maximise profits through their actions may not be willing to take on the communitarian values of friendship, voluntarism, care, trust, mutualism, altruism, co-operation and benign

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<sup>46</sup> Little, p. 57

<sup>47</sup> Stalder, p. 179

<sup>48</sup> Little, p. 131

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Stalder, p. 189

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 190

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 182

intentions, if those values will compromise their other aims. However, this should not mean a relationship between these two types of members is impossible. Gorz believes that groups with a variety of goals, both instrumental and non-instrumental, belong in our society.<sup>54</sup> If he concedes this fact, can it be argued that a community, which is like a microcosm of a society, could similarly include members with both instrumental and non-instrumental goals? This paper does not wish to impose a system of values on the arts community by suggesting what its common purpose may be, but if the sector can work together to clearly identify what common interest unites them, then they may be able to establish a sound basis on which to form a community. How the sector can set up mechanisms to improve the minimisation of noise in communication is discussed below in the section on community infrastructure.

## Strategies for Building Communities

Olson has identified barriers to group organisation, based on the issues raised by collective action and collective goods. Olson suggests that these barriers can be overcome through the use of coercion or incentives to individuals who will become the members of the group. These coercive measures or incentives need to encourage the members to bear the costs involved in the achievement of group objectives, which they would benefit from whether they supported the group or not (due to the nature of collective goods).<sup>55</sup> Olson points to findings produced by Max Weber which argue that maximisation of income is the ultimate driving force for individuals in society, and that ideological motivations will not be sufficient to encourage their continuing effort and support in lieu of this ultimate driver.<sup>56</sup> Weber has observed that 'performance throughout society is proportional to the rewards and sanctions involved'.<sup>57</sup> It is therefore essential to give consideration to what rewards and sanctions will be offered to potential members when forming a community. With regards to coercion, Olson identifies compulsory membership as an example of a measure which ensures contribution and participation by members of the group.<sup>58</sup> Castells also supports the idea of coercion to maintain the status of a network, but his disciple, Felix Stalder, believes this concept has been updated to a more effective method of control, that of exclusion.<sup>59</sup> Stalder believes an effective way to encourage and monitor the commitment of a member to the community is to pose the threat of expulsion from the

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<sup>54</sup> Little, p. 123

<sup>55</sup> Olson, p. 2

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 13

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 134

<sup>59</sup> Stalder, p. 203

community and the removal of privileges of association and social inclusion.<sup>60</sup> Stalder and Castells believe that within a network structure, this process occurs almost naturally, and is determined by the level of contribution that each member makes to the shared goal of the network.<sup>61</sup> If a member fails to contribute, or their contribution is negative, the recognition of their importance will be diminished in the eyes of the other members and the network may even choose to reconstitute itself without that member.<sup>62</sup>

An alternative approach to coercive measures is to develop positive incentives that encourage group formation. As Olson has established, the prospect of greater representation in government and other political goals will not be enough to motivate membership participation. There must also be some kind of non-political, non-collective good which is offered as an incentive.<sup>63</sup> Olson has observed successful organisations where lobbying is a by-product of the primary goal which maintains the organisation - that is, provision of a selective incentive to members.<sup>64</sup> These selective incentives must exceed the costs that the organisation requires the members to contribute. If the costs outweigh the incentives or benefits that the individual stands to gain by becoming a member of the organisation, then the rational decision will not be in favour of supporting the group.<sup>65</sup> The organisation may choose to associate with another group or private provider in order to supply the non-collective good to members; making a joint offering of both a non-collective and a collective good with the hopes of motivating members to contribute.<sup>66</sup> Alternatively, the community may cultivate its own economic element that is able to produce and supply this secondary benefit.<sup>67</sup> Failing these two options, the organisation could use its lobbying powers to obtain specific non-collective goods required by its members, which those members may not otherwise be able to get. It is important to note that the non-collective goods offered by the organisation as an incentive, must not be available to members outside of the organisation, as this would remove the incentive to join. This is where government may be able to assist, as it alone often has access to resources that individuals do not have, for example, through the public agencies and funding organisations it has developed or the international connections it has made. Finally, it is essential to remember during this process of developing incentives that the provision of

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 188-9

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Olson, p. 133

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 134

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

the collective good provides the ultimate justification for the existence of the community. As Olson has propounded: 'Only where collective goods or common purposes are concerned is organization or group action ever indispensable.'<sup>68</sup>

The potential members of an Auckland arts sector will need to be canvassed to accurately identify what type of coercion or incentive would motivate them to join and participate in the community. Their level of willingness to support the costs of maintaining the group will be a crucial factor in its success. These costs will include those associated with providing communication among the group's members; facilitating bargaining and co-ordination among them; and staffing and maintaining the formal elements of the organisation.<sup>69</sup> By networking more closely with each other, the members stand to develop new relationships with suppliers, potential clients, and fellow advocates, as well as sharing information and ideas that could improve their individual practices and projects. The threat of exclusion from this kind of sphere may well be a motivating factor for some. Due to the difference between members, certain kinds of incentives may be more effective with some members than others. Lobbying for the lease of public spaces on behalf of not-for-profit organisations that rely heavily on government support and funding will be more relevant to those types of members. For members with commercial enterprises, the assistance by the arts organisation for tax breaks for those members, and other such measures, may provide a good incentive to those members to participate and support the organisation. The development of information resources on the status of the sector and the sharing and documenting of discoveries and ideas could be another benefit available to the community. The community will need to identify ways to provide these benefits and protect them from being available to those who are not supporting the development and success of the community.

In order to accompany theoretical analysis of community with practical methods for its development, as Little urges us to do, we could look at approaches to building an infrastructure for community. This infrastructure will mostly likely be one which is centred on facilitating communication. Political scientist Robert Dahl, believes that organisations can be a useful mechanism for individuals by filtering down the increasingly complex information available in society, in a way that is relevant and accessible to them.<sup>70</sup> Stalder sees social organisation as being an inherently communicative process, and therefore the means of communication play a very important role within the community.<sup>71</sup> He believes it is vital to the community's success and efficiency that this structure is set up to allow for

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<sup>68</sup> Olson, p. 16

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 47

<sup>70</sup> Dahl, Robert (1998) *On Democracy*, New Haven, Yale University Press. p. 186

<sup>71</sup> Stalder, p. 196-7

the fastest and most noise-free communication as possible.<sup>72</sup> Stalder and Castells point to the importance of computer-based communication and advanced information technologies as part of this structure and its ability to minimise noise. They have observed that the use of these technologies has led to the augmentation of human capacity to such an extent that networks have been able to organise themselves in unprecedented sizes, and manage the related high degrees of organisational complexity.<sup>73</sup> A computer-based structure could be an effective starting point for initiating a wider community structure. The Auckland arts community is one which is relatively well linked to computer and internet resources, so an online network would be one which would be immediately accessible to a wide range of potential members of the community. Through the connections enabled by this network, information could be shared and further plans for community building could be instigated and co-ordinated. The success of such a network would also indicate the potential size and nature of the community, as well as providing a mandate for further action and support towards community development.

## Conclusion

By looking at a range of concepts from theories on communities, groups, organisations and networks, this paper has developed a view of group organisation that can be utilised within the context identified and in other contemporary approaches to community formation. Firstly, a series of points for consideration were identified for community builders. The group needs to give thought to the common interest and goals it shares and the collective good it seeks to obtain. It needs to define what values and culture will shape the framework within which it operates. It should consider how the group can create greater cohesion between its members without encroaching on their lives and autonomous identities. Secondly, this paper examined theories on techniques which can be used to build communities in such a way that their formation will be successful and enduring. Olson's insight into the use of coercion and incentives has raised a strategy to be considered by those who are involved in the implementation of community building. It has been suggested that the Auckland arts sector should review these strategies and produce answers through the surveying of preferences and ideas of its potential members. Once these preferences have been established, the sector may be able to work in collaboration with government to develop the cohesion and representation of the sector. In this way, a structure for community can be developed that accommodates the varying goals of its members while uniting them further through the goals that they share.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 189

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 186

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