

# How Do We Know Our Community?

John O'Brien and Beth Mount

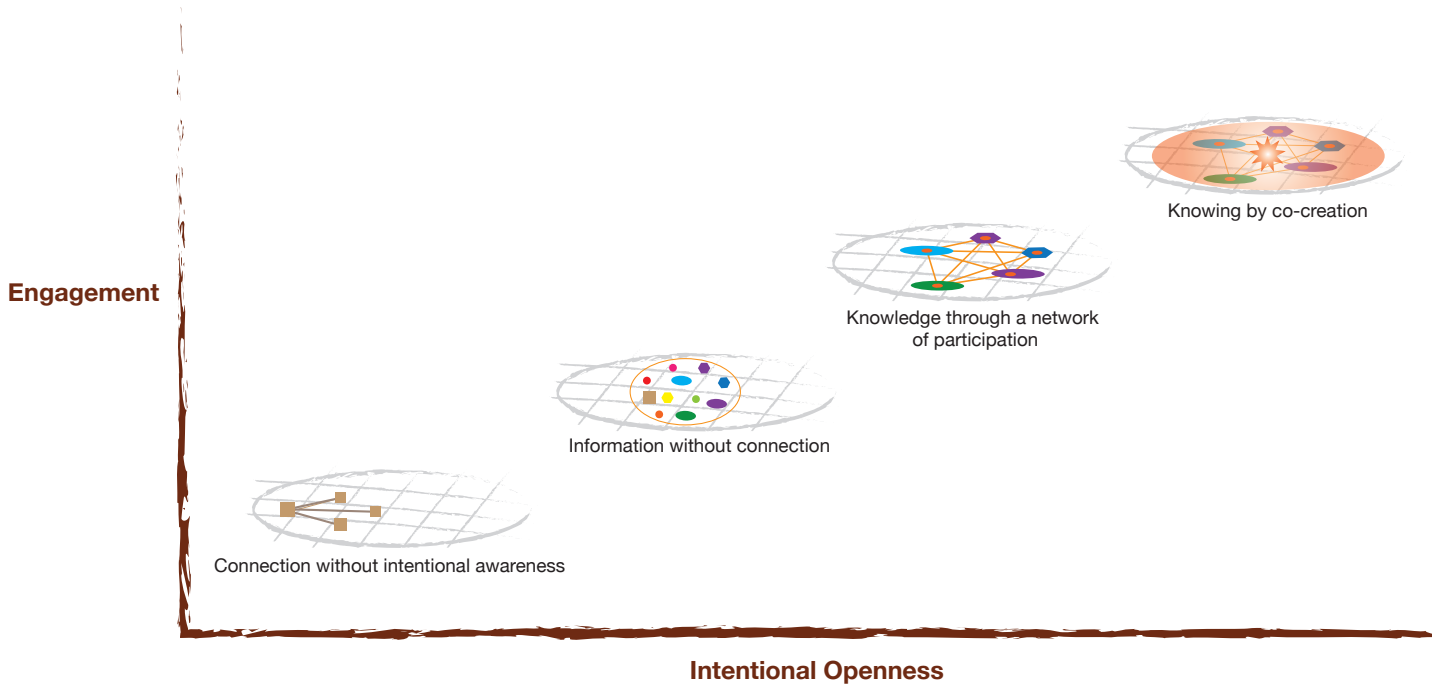
The way we know our community is fateful for our capacity to support people at risk of marginalization to occupy contributing social roles and develop diverse, good relationships.

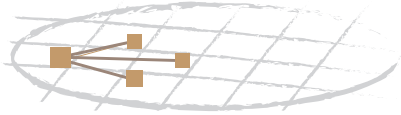



This framework visualizes a person with DD, their allies and partners as if they form a neural net: each person can act as a sensor and the whole can make sense of what comes in and orchestrate action toward interesting opportunities and more useful knowledge.

The worksheet on the next page allows assessment of two determinants of the extent, depth and suppleness of community knowledge:

- The extent to which we are personally **engaged** in the settings and activities that compose life in community.
- The degree of intentional **openness** to sense possibilities for involvement and action.

Use the worksheet to start a conversation about how you currently know your community and how you might come to know it better.



Level of Knowing	How We Know	
<p>Level 1 <i>Habit</i></p>	<p>We have well established pathways to familiar places that adequately meet our needs for occupation, shopping and leisure. We recognize neighbors, co-workers and others who frequent the same places and may exchange cordial greetings or pass the time of day. We navigate familiar pathways by habit. What we know is encoded in routines.</p>	 <p>Connection without intentional awareness</p>
<p>Level 2 <i>Data collection</i></p>	<p>We research community resources to identify activities of possible interest and resources of potential use. We check on-line directories, research reports, neighborhood news-boards, local Facebook sites and other social media. We do walk-arounds and asset mapping exercises to locate available resources. We compile activity catalogs, maps and event calendars to inform ourselves about <i>what's out there</i>.</p>	 <p>Information without connection</p>
<p>Level 3 <i>Personal engagement</i></p>	<p>We are personally engaged. We take active roles in established opportunities in neighborhood, civic, sport, culture, education and work life. Knowledge increases as relationships grow more diverse and cross boundaries. News of community life and opportunities flows through the web of conversation and everyday exchange of requests and agreements with others who share our activities. Our identification with local initiatives gives us a feel for more of the life of our community and we understand more of the diverse perspectives and gifts of our fellow citizens at a gut level.</p>	 <p>Knowledge through a network of participation</p>
<p>Level 4 <i>Co-Creation</i></p>	<p>Intentional relationships among people concerned to build a community that works better for everyone generate an awareness of the whole community. This awareness reveals the highest possibility for the community and a recognition of what wants to be born to better realize that possibility. We know our community as co-creators –engaging heart, head and hands in developing new capacities. Knowledge is carried in possibility rich stories of self and community that are shared in trusting relationships.</p>	 <p>Knowing by co-creation</p>