Community - how it may be defined by the theorist, what it subsumes, its basis, and how it is perceived by its practitioners - is of crucial importance to the social scientist. This paper proposes to discuss these issues in relation to two expatriate Baltic British communities which, though similar in terms of voluntary diaspora, economic and social background and geographic placement, are separated by a century of time. I believe that by contrasting two such similar but different groups, the specificities of both become more salient and their placement within the theoretical discourse which concerns community less problematic.

The fact of their temporal sitings brings into play the modernity/postmodernity dialectic, which, superficially, could be implemented to 'explain' differences, but which provides no explanation for continuities, nor for the process by which changes have occurred. Simply deploying terms such as coherent, integrated, metanarrative, the inviolability of the nation state and so on in analysis of communities sited in the 'era' of modernity, and seemingly inevitably oppositional terms in analysis of postmodern entities, is a course which, I argue, must be approached warily.

Using primary data collected from 18 months participant observation of expat British activities in Helsinki in 1998 and 1999; and the unpublished diaries and published memoirs of active members of the St. Petersburg expatriate British community, circa 1890, I have attempted to inform theoretical perceptions of the two time frames involved via the praxis, discourse and endogenous perceptions of this similar - and connected - group situated in both eras. Naturally, and conversely, theoretical appraisals of the two eras also have an important role in informing ethnographic discussion of communities sited within them.

This is not, per se, an ethnographic study of the lifestyles of the two groups involved, although some such description of the St. Petersburg community is included - both to site the group for the contemporary reader and because it is fascinating. The study is, however, a reproduction of the practical means by which community was maintained and strengthened among the St. Petersburg Brits and how it is constructed and maintained in a newer incarnation in Helsinki in the late 1990's. This has involved extracting discursive topics which appear with great regularity and conformity of deployment and understanding among contemporary Brits and those of last century; behavioural patterns; measures of group acceptability; methods of group discipline and reward and the siting of these within the communities.

While only tentative 'conclusions' may be drawn on such a subject, such as I present tend towards the view that, if one gives weight to the views, perceptions, discourse and praxis of members of communities concerned, there has not been the social rupture between community praxis in the eras of 'modernity' and 'postmodernity' suggested by such as Lyotard and Bauman, despite superficially salient evidence for this.

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Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited
Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information