



what works
wellbeing

Community wellbeing: Concepts and questions



A brief explanation of the conceptual review from the What Works Centre for Wellbeing (September 2017), and questions to help you assess community wellbeing in your area.



What is this about?

The Community Wellbeing Evidence team at the What Works Centre for Wellbeing have carried out a [conceptual review](#) of how community wellbeing is currently defined and used in theory and practice.

This set of slides include the key findings from that review, and sets out some questions that might help you think about what community wellbeing means in your area.

What is community wellbeing?

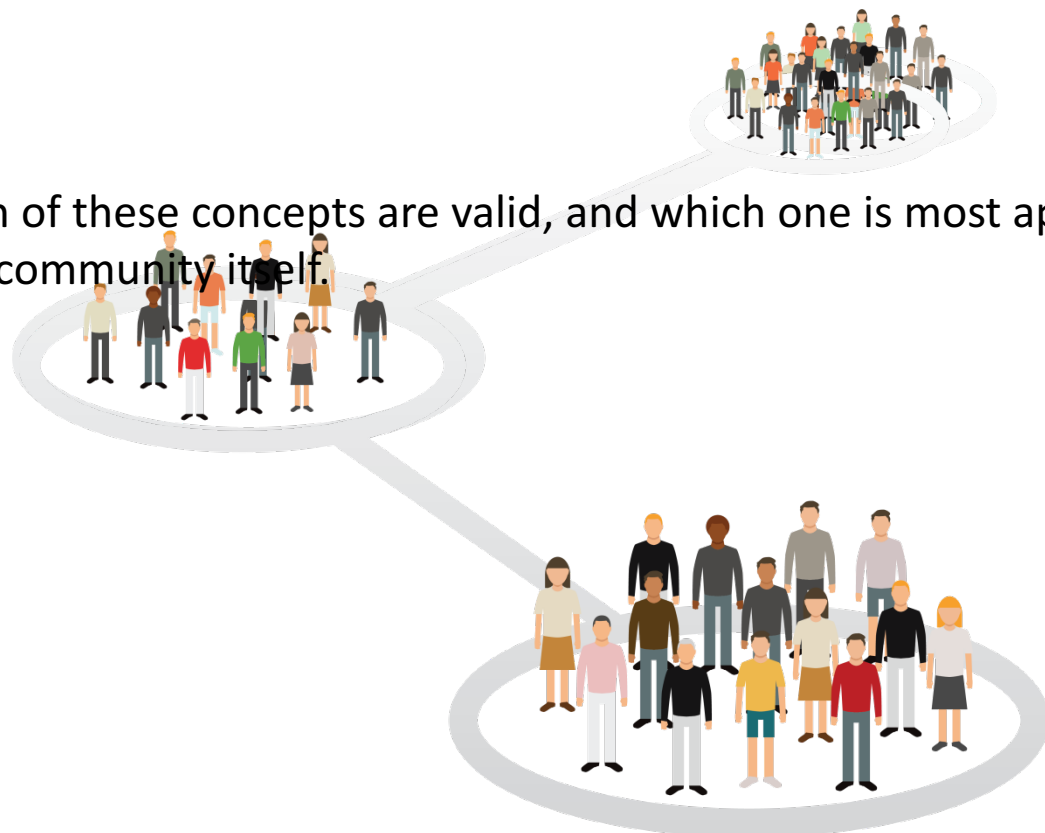


It's something more than the sum of peoples' individual wellbeing (which can be thought as 'population wellbeing').

What is community wellbeing?

There are two ways we can think about community wellbeing:

Both of these concepts are valid, and which one is most appropriate will depend on ideology, politics and the community itself.



1 The wellbeing of the community itself is an individual's wellbeing. The individual focuses on how they are feeling together to fit with the social norms, practices and expectations. The individual's sense of wellbeing is the individual's own sense of wellbeing. The individual's sense of wellbeing is the individual's own sense of wellbeing.



Our working definition

We have chosen this this broad, working definition to guide our thinking, which includes both the ways of looking at community wellbeing outlined in the previous slide:

“Community wellbeing is the combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfil their potential.”

[Wiseman and Brasher, 2008: 358]



How can we assess community wellbeing?

Community wellbeing can be assessed according to different aspects of life, but usually includes health, economy, social relations and security. In our review, we found some important aspects that are often left out.

These include:

- sustainability
- inequality
- considerations of intangible cultural heritage
- inter-generational relations.

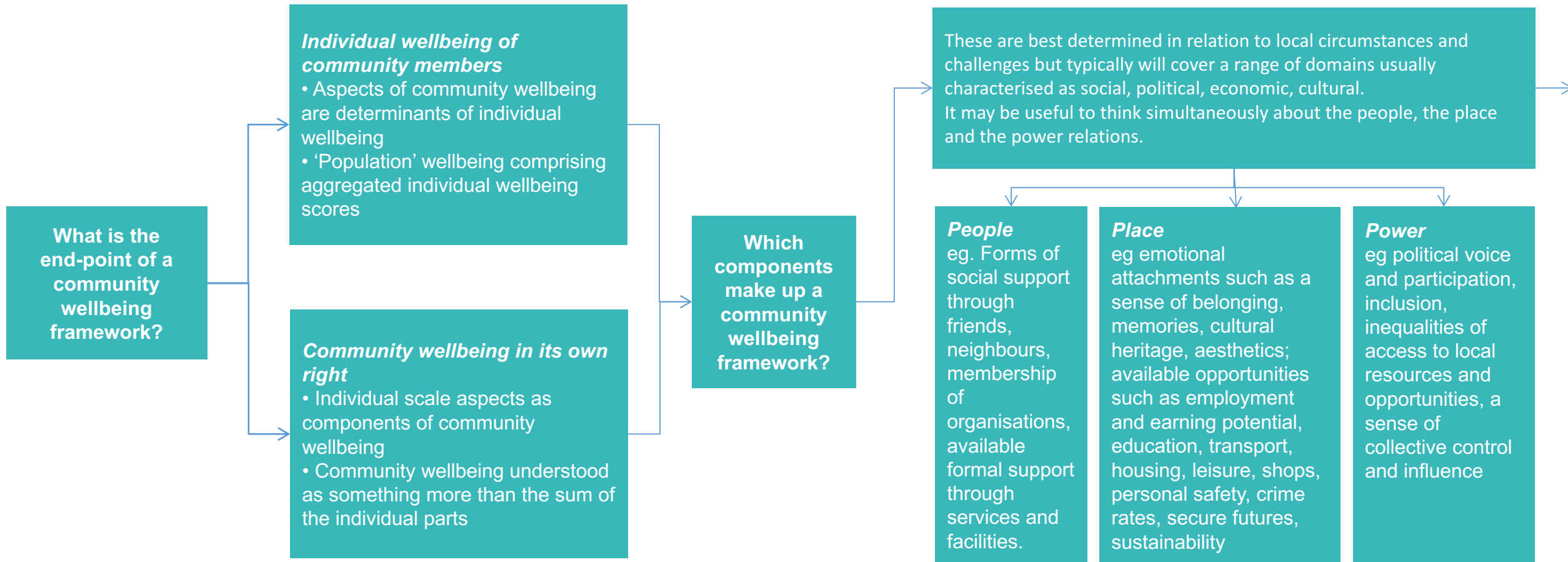
How can we assess community wellbeing?

Community wellbeing could be measured through:

1. **Expanding on objective aspects of quality of life** that are understood (e.g. crime, safety, health, education, employment, housing, income, etc.) which we can measure (these will often be the things that are already being measured). Capturing this 'extra something' may be tricky and require approaches to collecting information beyond counting things, such as discussion groups, story-telling and analyses of local media or visual outputs.



Developing your own framework for community wellbeing: guiding questions (part one)



Developing your own framework for community wellbeing: guiding questions (part two)

How can we capture the inter-personal nature of subjective wellbeing that constitutes community wellbeing?

Quantitative

- Individual assessments of community scale factors (eg local government, provision of services, available green space etc.) can be aggregated.
- If the community is understood as something that thinks, functions, feels in some way 'together' rather than as individuals who share individual experiences of the same things, then group data collection may be more appropriate.

Beyond numbers

- Individual stories, narratives or case studies of particular institutions in the community or of interventions provide more nuanced and detailed information on local processes and pathways to community wellbeing
- Group discussions allow deliberation, possible consensus or identification of points of disagreement around community wellbeing. Different group discussions can be held with different constituencies in the community (eg different age groups, neighbourhood groups, gender groups etc)
- Local media, social media, other cultural fora and local policy documents all shape and reflect local values; these sources about local collective life can be used as sources of information.



thank you!

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