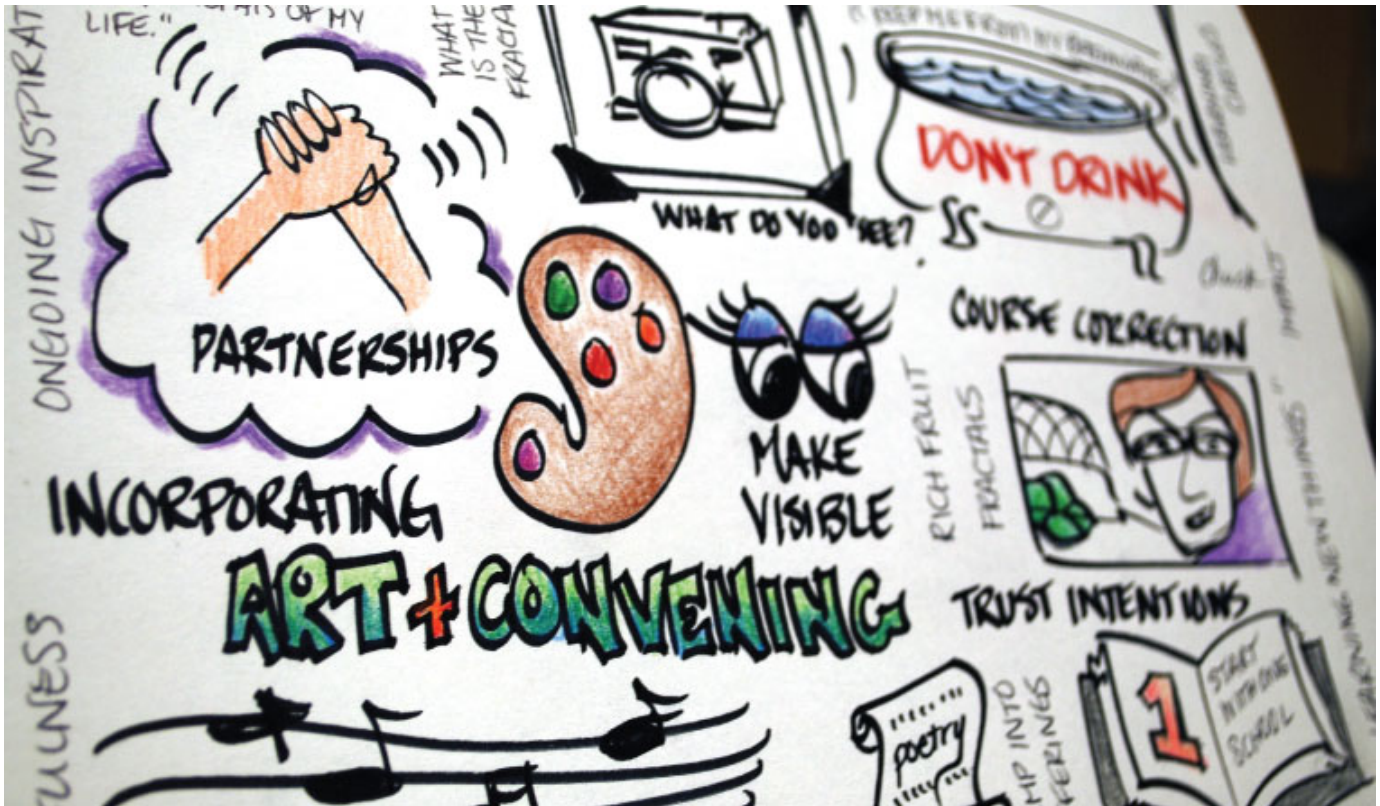


The Next Frontier for Local Media



(Illustration: Yvonne Hollandy)

The Next Frontier for Local Media

The Gazette Company experimenting with possibilities

Tuesday, March 22, 2016 -- Chuck Peters

At The Gazette Company, a mission to foster generative communities is at the core of content and product development.

In my role as the CEO of [The Gazette Company](https://www.thegazettecompany.com), owned by a trust for the benefit of the employees (an ESOP), I am responsible for several businesses, one of which is a newspaper. The Gazette newspaper has its own independent management team, led

by Jim Burke, President and Publisher.

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Jim and his team have seen the changing social, economic, and technological environment and declared their mission to be the trusted provider of context, understanding, and connection so every person, business, and community can create “their best life.”

Their work has inspired some of us in our company and our community to go to a more fundamental level — to convene groups of people to develop “generative communities.” Those of us working on generative communities have been influenced by efforts in helping communities find their own solutions, such as [Solutions Journalism Network](#). Our partner, [Axiom News](#), has also uncovered the power of telling stories that generate hope and ideas for the future as well as hosting transformative conversations in communities.

We took inspiration from these pioneers, as well as from friends working in community building, including [Peter Block](#) in Community and [John McKnight](#) in The Abundant Community. Then we set about our own experiments in redefining the roles needed to actively construct shared helpful narratives in a community, primarily the convener and the narrator.

Generative communities are characterised by five attributes:

The referenced media source is missing and needs to be re-embedded.

Photo courtesy of the Peterborough Dialogues

1. **Connecting:** Community members are connected into active, visible networks around key issues.
2. **Grounding:** They are grounded in the values and identities that are the very reason they care in the first place.
3. **Informing:** They are informed about the full nuance and diversity of knowledge about key issues, making sure that knowledge is not one-off, but cumulative.
4. **Discussing:** They discuss current issues in a constructive, inclusive, and public manner so that next steps emerge from the community as a whole.
5. **Engaging:** Community members know how to get involved in issues they care about and encourage a culture of citizenship and ownership.

It is much easier to show a generative community than to describe one. My best example is a [school in London](#) that has transformed itself from failing and almost being shut down by the government, to one of the top schools in the UK.

Any group of people can be a generative community: a school, a business, a service provider, a family, a social group, etc. Developing generative communities requires much more than simply convening or reporting, it requires a new set of practices to support generative communities. We can learn to actively build networks and connections within and between communities, ground people in their values and identities, build cumulative knowledge, mediate constructive conversations, and encourage engagement.

Many in our regional community can play a role, including those local media companies that project the community's narratives back to the community. And, those in our regional community can connect to the global community so that we can thrive globally by developing sustainable and inclusive local communities.

This blog was originally posted at the [International News Media Association website](#) and appears here with permission.