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Community Operational Research

OR and Systems Thinking for Community Development

Community Operational Research: OR and Systems Thinking for Community Development sets out the current concerns of Community Operational Research (Community OR for short) and explores new possibilities for its continued development. Leading Community OR writers, with international reputations in operational research and systems thinking, have contributed chapters that illuminate different aspects of Community OR theory and practice. There is a focus on the value of systems approaches, and other significant perspectives are also represented. The result is a rich mix of theories, methodologies and case studies that will be a significant resource for both practitioners and academics engaged in community development.

Following an introductory chapter on Community OR by the editors, the book is presented in three sections:

Section One offers 'Early Contributions and Later Reflections on Theory, Methodology and Practice'. Here, the nature of Community OR, its institutional development, and people's motivations for engaging in it are all explored. Some significant theoretical and methodological issues are also a focus of this section.

Section Two covers 'Local Action for Community Development'. This is concerned with how people have translated the theoretical insights of Community OR into practice, and how practice has informed theory. Since the inception of Community OR, the vast majority of projects have dealt with complex, localized community issues using participative methods (mostly in the developed world). This section of the book presents a variety of methodological ideas evolved for Community OR practice, and illustrates them with examples of projects with community groups, voluntary organisations and welfare services.

Section Three is entitled 'Dealing Locally with Global Issues'. The authors represented in this section seek to extend the practice of Community OR in two important new directions. The first takes Community OR into developing countries, and the second takes it into the arena of environmental management. In both these areas, there are significant opportunities for Community OR practitioners to make real contributions to human welfare and environmental sustainability.

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An Introduction to Community Operational Research.

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Section 3: Dealing Locally with Global Issues. *An Interpretive Systemic Exploration of Community Action in Venezuela.- Community and Environmental OR: Towards a New Agenda.- Adaptive Methodology for Ecosystem Sustainability and Health (AMESH): An Introduction.*

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"This is the book I have been waiting for. Community Operational Research has shown that analysis can be used not only for, but also with, community groups, helping them to gain more control of their situations. What Midgley and Ochoa-Arias' volume does is provide not only rich examples of grass-roots practice, but also thought-provoking theoretical explorations. The editors have a point of view, but they allow space for debate with those who interpret Community OR differently."
Jonathan Rosenhead, Emeritus Professor of Operational Research, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK; Ex-President of the Operational Research Society.

"….What the many authors in this book have in common is a commitment to serve the interests of all those affected by a community's behavior – its stakeholders. This is acquiring a new significance as we decreasingly conceptualize corporations and organizations in general as organisms, and begin to think of them, as Charles Handy has, as communities."
Russell Ackoff, Professor Emeritus of the Wharton Business School, University of Pennsylvania, USA; Ex-President of ORSA; Vice President of TIMS.

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Community Operational Research
OR and Systems Thinking for Community Development
Midgley, G.; Ochoa-Arias, A. (Eds.)
2004, VIII, 366 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-0-306-48335-6