

**A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MAP  
FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES**

© 1996 John L. McKnight  
Director of Community Studies  
Institute for Policy Research  
Northwestern University

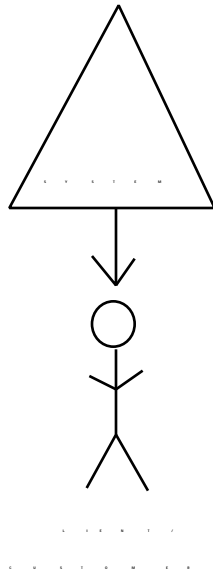
Policies and programs reflect our response to the map we create of the world around us. Our map, like all maps, is not the territory it portrays. And it can be a map that inaccurately portrays the territory that surrounds us. We all know of the European mapmakers who described a flat earth without a western hemisphere. Their inaccurate map shaped the policies, plans and action of mariners, kings, nations and communities.

As we plan to set sail into the twenty-first century, it is appropriate to reexamine the map that is used in most of our current policy making in order to see whether it will show the way to safe, wise and healthful communities.

If one listens carefully to the proposals of our current social policymakers, we can construct a map of the territory where they believe they operate. This territory has two principal areas. The first is a space filled with systems. Policymakers see systems or institutions as the principal tool for the work of society. Therefore, their policies and programs are about "system design," "system planning," "delivery systems" and "system reform."

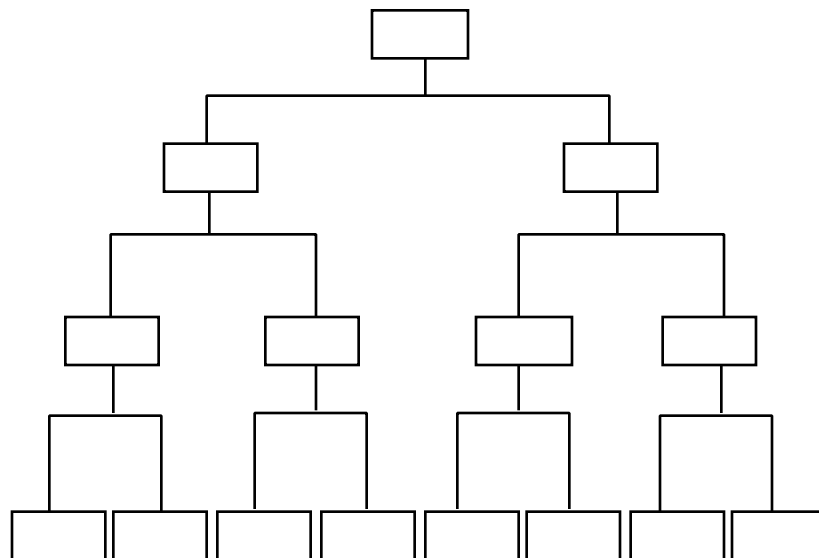
The second area in their map is filled with the individuals who are the object of the systems — clients and consumers.

Graphically, this is the prevailing map of social policymakers:



To understand more clearly the dynamics of the area called a system, it is important to describe its nature and relationship to the client-consumer beneficiaries.

The nature of a system is clarified by a more detailed map of its structure. Most policymakers see systems as tools that organize people in the relationships defined by this graphic representation:



While there are limitless ways of organizing people to perform various tasks, this particular structure has several special features and purposes.

First, it is primarily a structure designed to permit a few people to control many other people. It's hierarchical order is basically a means of creating control.

There are, of course, many advantages of a control system. For example, it allows the few who conceive a new automobile to insure that the thousands who produce it will uniformly manufacture the same vehicle. Similarly, this structure is essential to the effective functioning of a modern airliner where we want one person, the pilot, to be in control with a clearly defined descending order of authority.

A second characteristic of a system is that it's primary utility is its ability to produce a great deal of the same thing, whether goods or services. The hallmark of the hierarchical system is mass production — lots of the same.

The third characteristic of a system flows from the first two. If we are to create structures of control to produce great quantities of the same thing, the very proliferation of the product requires more users or users who purchase more of the goods or services. The current label for system users is client or consumer. It should be noted that the word client is especially appropriate for one who is the object of a system because the Greek root for the word client means "one who is controlled." Therefore, system growth or efficiency necessarily creates more consumption or clienthood and a consumer society emerges as systems grow.

In summary, the prevailing policy map is about the methods of organizational control that will proliferate uniform goods and services and increase the client and consumer activities of individuals.

There are at least two obvious limits of this system tool. The first is its obvious lack of capacity for producing individualized outputs rather than mass standardized products. Therefore, policymakers who try to use this tool to create unique or individualized outputs, programs or services do not understand the nature or function of their own structure. This is why so many systems fail to meet individualized needs and their workers "burn out" in frustration.

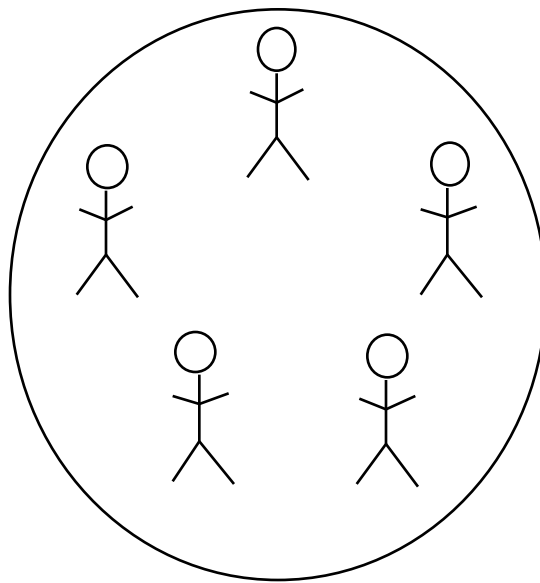
A second limit is the fact that the power of the system is measured by the number of its clients and the amount of their consumption. This necessarily creates a growing relationship of client dependency upon systems. This is the reason that policymakers who attempt to use systems to empower people usually fail. They misunderstand, once again, the nature and function of their own structures.

Now that we have explored the nature of the current policymaking map involving systems and clients/consumers, we can examine its relationship to the territory it purports to describe. While it may not appear to be inaccurate, it is clearly incomplete because a space called "the community" does not appear to be present. It is, in this regard, reminiscent of the early maps that did not have the western hemisphere.

If we were to include the community, where would it be located and what would its functions be? Here, we have a historic explorer to help us answer the question. He was a French count who wrote the classic description of local American communities following his trip throughout the United States in 1831. He was, of course, Alexis de Toqueville and his map of our communities is described in his book, Democracy In America.

He described a unique form of local structures and relationships. In Europe, he noted, decisions were made by elected officials, bureaucrats,

nobility, professors, doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. In the United States, however, he found critical decisions being made by the most common of people — every Tom, Dick and Mary. It was not their individual decision-making that he found unique. Rather, it was that they came together in small self-appointed groups to solve problems, create new approaches to production and celebrate the local society. It was he who named these groups "associations." Graphically, they looked like this:

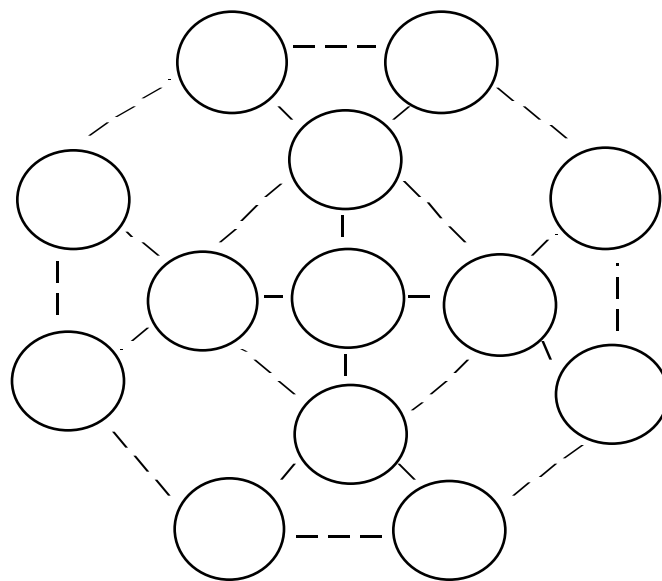


The associations were small scale, face to face groups where the members did the work. The members were not individuals, clients or consumers. Rather, they were citizens. Acting together they were powerful tools of social and economic production. Toqueville noted that they involved citizens in three processes:

- deciding what is a problem
- deciding how to solve the problem

- organizing themselves and others to implement the solution

As citizens engaged in these associational processes they created the power to build their local communities. And it was the social space occupied by these associations that Toqueville first mapped as the center of our communities. Today, this space is frequently called civil society or the domain of mediating structures. Whatever the term, it was the structure and form of relationships that created the New World settlements and cities. Graphically, the community of associations might look like this:



It is an informal network of groups of citizens creating and maintaining the center of society. It is also a tool, like systems, designed to perform vital functions.

In order to understand the nature of the community tool, we can compare it with the system tool.

The system tool is a mechanism of control. The community of associations depends on consent because it has neither money or grades to use to motivate people. Rather, it is the form through which people express their unique gifts, skills and talents in amplifying concert with their neighbors. This act of expression is the manifestation of the choice of a person to give.

The system tool is designed for mass production of goods and services. The community of associations is not designed to produce services. Rather, it is the context where care is manifested. Care, unlike service, cannot be produced. Care is the consenting commitment one has for the other, freely given. Care cannot be mandated, managed or produced as a service can. Indeed, one of the great errors in most policymaking maps is the pretension that systems can "produce care."

Care is the domain of the associational community. Where care is valued or necessary to achieve a societal goal, the appropriate tool is the community.

The system tool demands clients and consumers. The associational community requires citizens. Here, the critical difference is that "citizen" is the word for the most powerful person in a democracy. The contrast is the controlled person, a client. If we seek empowerment, the associational community is the appropriate tool. When we purport to empower clients, we are necessarily caught in a paradox where our best efforts will be no better than dependence on a more responsive system.

Thus, the map of the associational community is about the form of organization that depends upon consent in order to allow choice, care and citizenship. For these ends the community is the necessary, but not always sufficient, tool.

Comparatively, systems provide control, mass production, consumption and clienthood. Associational communities depend upon consent and allow choice, care and citizen power.

There is one other distinction between these two tools that is critical in understanding social policies effecting communities and the families they encompass.

Systems producing services depend upon a basic raw material. This raw material is the deficiency, inadequacy, brokenness or disease of people. When people have these attributes, they become eligible clients or consumers. The general term for these attributes is "need." In order for the system tool to be productive, it needs need. Therefore, systems create incentives and economies that focus people on their potential roles as clients and consumers.

In contrast associational communities are structures that depend upon the capacities, abilities, skills and gifts of people. Therefore, they represent the critical incentive system for manifesting capacity rather than need. This fact is clarified when we recognize that a local person may have a heart ailment and carpentry skills. A needs needing system values his bad heart. The association that is building a community center values his carpentry abilities.

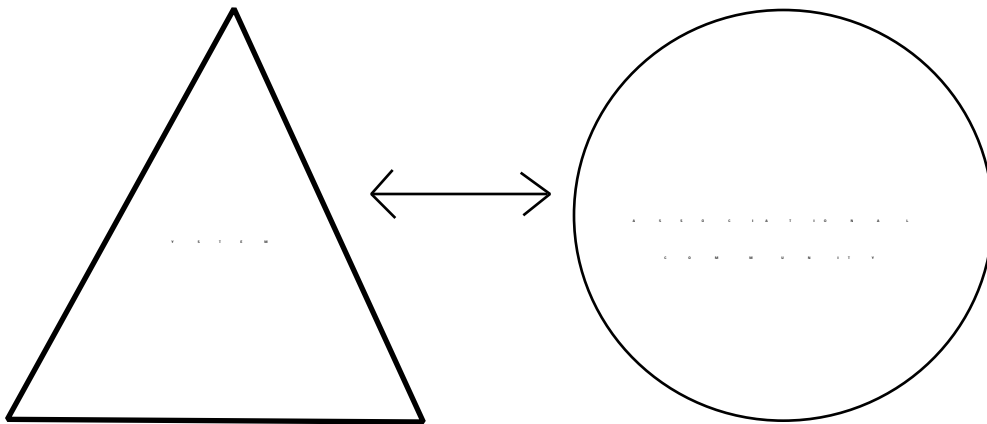
In the symbolic example of the glass filled to the middle with liquid, the system needs the empty half while the community needs the full half. The service system needs a client. The community needs a citizen.

When we recognize this difference, it becomes clear that communities are built through structures that mobilize the gifts and capacities of local citizens. Associational communities are the principal tool that identifies and mobilizes the gifts and capacities of citizens.



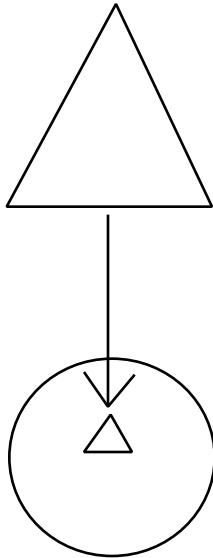
Having understood the distinctive nature and functions of the two tools, we can now map their potential relationships with each other.

Whenever policymakers happen to recognize that there is a community territory, the map they draw usually looks like this:



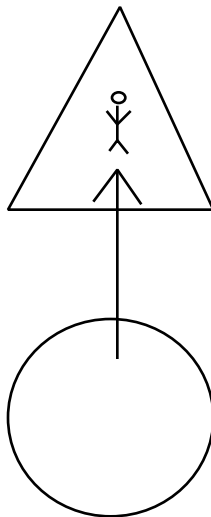
This map is commonly described as a partnership. It suggests that each is an equal owner of or participant in an activity. However, the recent history of the actual system-community relationships suggests that the real territory is quite different. At least three kinds of alternative relationships are actually present in most cases.

The first alternative is a relationship of this form:



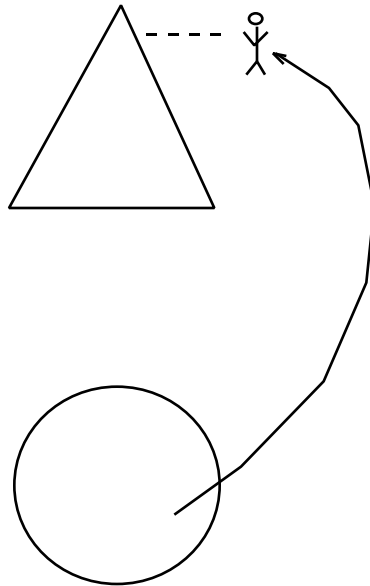
In this relationship a subsidiary of a system is located in the community to assure access to local need. This relationship is most accurately described as system "outreach" rather than partnership.

The second form of relationship is:



In this case the community is used as a source of unpaid workers for systems. The accurate name for this relationship is "volunteering" rather than partnership.

The third common relationship is:

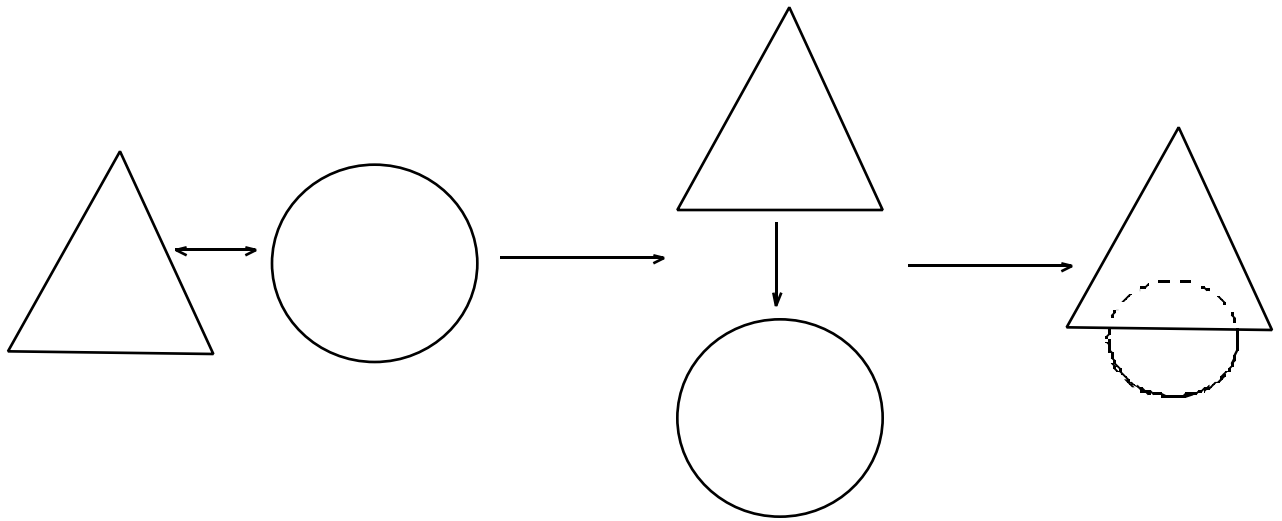


This graphic maps a relationship in which a citizen(s) is chosen by a system to react to a system's plans. The citizen does not have authority or a vote but is advisory. The correct name for this relationship is a "citizen advisory group" rather than a partnership.

A genuine partnership is a relationship of equal power between two parties with distinctive interests. Each preserves its authority, distinct capacity and integrity but gains power through the partnership.

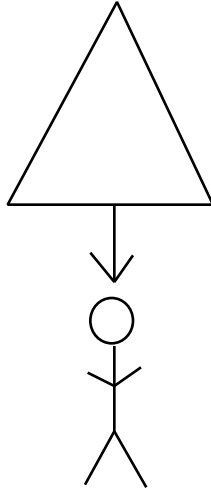
It is difficult to find many examples of authentic partnerships of this nature between systems and associations. Instead, the actual power relationship is most often a system using a community of associations to foster its own ends.

Indeed, the principal history of the twentieth century relationships between systems and associations is the ascent of the system and the decline of the community of associations. The actual map of our era would chart this relationship chronologically in this way:



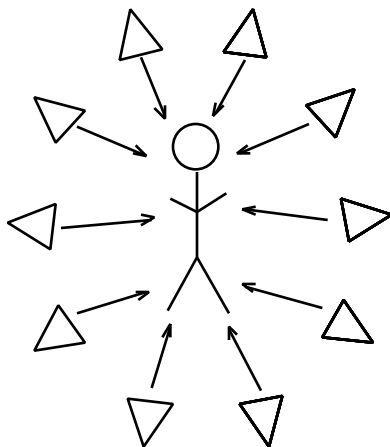
The actual territory is one in which systems have moved from equality to dominance and then have generally eclipsed or pushed out the associations and their functions. This has happened as systems have commanded ever more authority, professional dominance, technology and public and private dollars. Another name for the result of this dominance is a "consumer society." It produces an unprecedented belief system and culture of its own.

Central to this belief system is the proposition that is embodied in the social policymaking map with which we began. That map indicates that



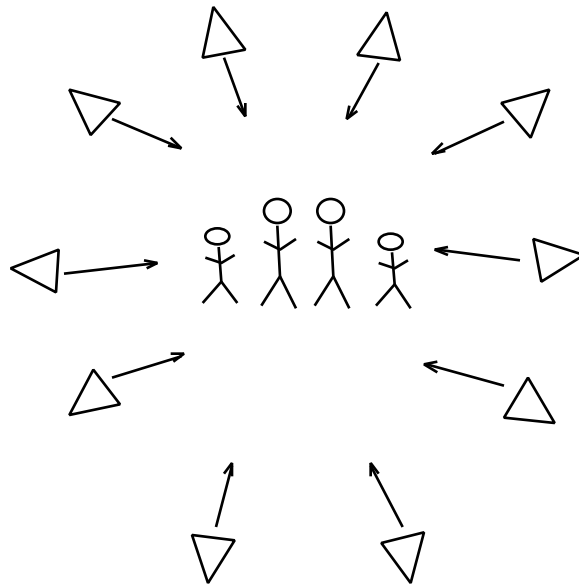
systems produce our well being. We understand that our health is in a medical system. Our safety is in a criminal justice system. Our security is in a pension system. Our learning is in a school system. Our mental stability is in a mental health system. Our justice is in a lawyer. Our family stability is in a family service system. Our home is in the hands of the Allstate system. Our house is produced by the Caldwell Banker system. And our meals are the product of McDonalds.

When this belief system becomes the dominant social construction of a people, their map of a good society is this:



One way of accurately describing this map is that it is a comprehensive, coordinated, wrap-around, inter-professional, multi service system.

Based upon this belief system, the most desirable map for strengthening families is:



Those policymakers who believe in this map urge that its ability to produce evermore well-being for its client families depends upon two changes:

1. More money for the system
2. Better administration of the system

The result of these changes will be "systems reform" that will so effectively and comprehensively target families that our current social problems will be greatly diminished. It is this proposition and the map upon which it is based that we are asked to use in navigating the twenty-first century.

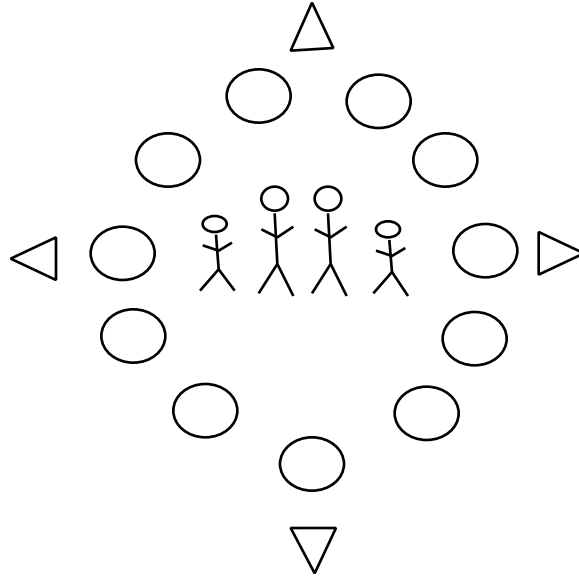
As magnificent as the map is, it has two inaccuracies. The first is a mis-mapping of known territory. The second is a great void like the Terra Incognita in the maps of old.

The mis-mapping is clearly visible now. In this century we have greatly expanded the proportion of our gross national product for services such as medicine, social work, education, mental health, youth services, family therapy, legal services, recreational services, etc. And yet, the measures of social pathology are growing relentlessly. We need not rehearse again the social disarray that our media, professionals and social scientists are documenting and lamenting.

The obvious question is whether even more dollars, resources, professionals, training and technology will finally stem the tide. It is clear that the public has grown dubious of this proposition. Increasingly, research scholars and foundation experimentalists are lending less and less support for the map of a family surrounded by expanding services.

Instead, basic questions are now arising as to whether the systems are actually one cause of the current social disarray rather than its principal solution. The answer to this question may depend upon whether we can draw a more accurate map that would show us a different way to proceed into the century ahead.

We can begin by recalling the associational tools drawn by Toqueville and adding them to the social policymakers map with its great void between systems and individuals. This new map would then have a different appearance:



In this map, we see families at the center. They are further extended by kinship relationships. Then another circle of informal and formal associations provides a context for them to act through consent, care and citizen empowerment. Finally they are able to utilize system services when they will be benefited by control systems of mass production.

The problem with this map is that in many communities it is inaccurate because the system territory is very large while the associational community has been "crowded" into a very small space. As a result, the functions and capacities of associations are often underutilized or dormant. When this occurs we can consistently observe the parallel growth of systems and social disarray.

This apparent paradox is untangled if we examine the special capacities of associations.

First, the associational community provides a network of care and mutual support that enables effective citizens to negotiate everyday life. Of



more importance, however, is the support in times of crisis and stress that these networks provide.

This leads to a second community capacity which is the potential for a rapid response to local problems. Free of the time-consuming limits of bureaucratic regulation and protocol, local citizens are renowned for their ability to act in emergencies.

A third capacity is the individualization that is inherent in associational communities. This occurs when the community responds to the crisis of a particular individual in a particular way. It also occurs when each individual in an association contributes their unique ability or gift to the organization's work. Thus, the associational community is focused on the dilemma or gift of a particular individual and is able to tailor a response that is beyond the capacity of the system.

A fourth capacity of associations is their ability to recognize and utilize the unique gifts of each member. This provides a context for creativity that is critical to innovation in local problem solving. Indeed, most initial social innovation has been generated at the associational level of society and American institutions were uniquely spawned by associations.

The fifth special function of associations is to provide citizens experience in taking responsibility for society. In systems, people are ultimately fulfilling the responsibility of a manager. In communities, people are able to define and fulfill actions of their own design. It is this function that is at the core of the empowering function of associational life.

Related to this function is a sixth opportunity provided by associational life. The associational sector is often labeled civil society because it is the arena where the citizen function can be performed. A secondary aspect of this citizen function is voting. Its primary manifestation, as Toqueville noted, is

the collective problem solving activity of local associations taking responsibility for the common good.

A seventh function of the associational community is the diverse and numerous contexts provided for leadership. While hierarchical systems are designed to provide definitional leadership to a few, the proliferation of associations provides a constant seedbed for multiplying leadership experiences and abilities.

Eighth, the network of local associations has also been the historic seedbed for the growth of local enterprise. We misunderstand economic development if we believe it grows from programs involving the creation of business plans. The soil that has nurtured enterprise and a burgeoning economy is the experiences, relationships and culture of a rich local associational life.

Finally, and most basic, the community association is the powerful engine mobilizing the capacities of local people. It is this "half full glass" that is the basic molecular unit of the structure of an effective society. Paradoxically, this power depends upon ignoring the empty half of the glass. It is a power grown from ignoring needs as resources. It is the power that mobilizes a person with a heart problem to use carpentry skills to build a community center.

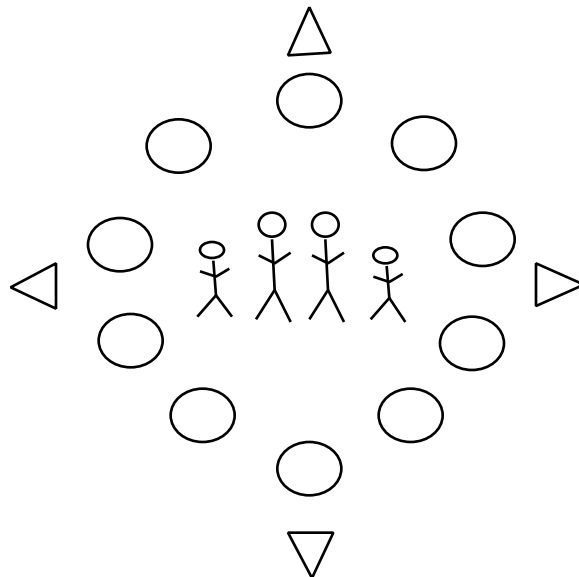
In summary, an associational community provides the context for:

- care and mutual support
- rapid response to local problems
- individualized response and mobilization
- creative social innovation
- empowering responsibility

- citizenship functions
- leadership development
- enterprise development
- capacity mobilization

These functions, in combination, represent the unique role of the community understood as a network of local informal and formal associations. Where these functions atrophy, the resulting social disarray cannot be corrected by systems and their services or interventions. The reasons are those we have already explored, i.e., systems and associations are distinctive tools with unique capacities and neither can substitute for the other. Because the dominant social policy map does not recognize the associational community, it is a fatal guide to the twenty-first century. It will lead us to the shoals of a serviced society surrounded by a sea of social failure.

The map we need to navigate our future will look like this:



It charts the centrality of kinship, association and enterprise and the secondary role of systems and their "inputs."

We are faced, however, with a critical dilemma. Is it possible that we can grow the community while the world of systems continues to expand? Or is it the case that inevitably, growing service systems will crowd out and ineffectively replace the functions of associational communities?

This is a historical question and its most searching exploration has been done by two great social historians. In their primary works, Jacques Ellul's Technological Society and Karl Polanyi's The Great Transformation, each describe from different perspectives how the form we call "modernization" in western society is a manifestation of the contraction of communal relations resulting from the growth of systems and their related tools. Their work suggests that we are in a competition between association and system. For one to win, the other must lose. It is essentially a zero sum game.

If this history is predictive, then the basic shift necessary for an effective twenty-first century map is a contraction of service systems in order to provide the territory and incentives for community structures to expand. Such a change is not really a "system reform." It is a different map, a paradigm shift.

To successfully navigate the next century, policymakers will have to move in different directions. To reach their destination, they will need to enhance community power while diminishing system authority.

As we undertake this journey, there are three basic principles that can guide us into a future where families and communities will flourish and social problems diminish.

First, funding priorities will shift. Over the last 50 years we have increased significantly the dollars committed to the vulnerable and disadvantaged. However, the increase has been largely allocated to service systems so that, for example, more than half of all the funds for the poor now go to systems rather than those with inadequate income.

The navigating principle here is a shift in the economics so that income and enterprise are the primary goals enhancing individuals and communities in the center of the map. Therefore, resources will be diverted from secondary service systems to provide choice making income for individuals who are especially vulnerable. The pre-purchase of services will become a policy investment of last resort.

At the same time, other policy investments will be primarily focused on enhancing and expanding the enterprise capabilities of local associations and individuals. Community economic development, rather than remedial or compensatory services, will receive priority.

The second principle will be to recognize the nature of associational space, remove barriers to its functions and provide incentives for the community structures to assume new economic and social functions.

The emerging associational map will chart the complex, diverse, interrelated array of local informal and formal associations. The purpose of the map will not be to seek associational assistance or advice to systems. Nor will it be in order to create partnerships. Rather the map will be needed to better understand the center of local neighborhoods, civil society and the mediating structures of locality.

From this map will be derived a set of enabling policies that remove barriers and provide support and incentives. While some may be tempted to prescribe these policies, their basic priorities and design will be developed by

the local associations in concert. It cannot be expected that the associational community will assume new authority and power through the powerful directives of systems. Rather, the power must grow as their territory is recognized, barriers removed and appropriate support provided.

The third principle\* will be a legislative and planning focus that sees the community territory as the principle asset for investment. This will require a shift from primarily focusing on needs. We will have a new compass pointing toward the capacities of individuals and families and the resources of local communities and their associations as the primary beneficiary of system authority and resources.

An asset focused family policy will be especially important in the new directions for policymakers. The principal family policy questions will be:

1. What are the necessary economic resources for an effectively productive family?
2. How can the local community of associations support the family's productivity?
3. What uncontributed gifts, capacities, skills and abilities do the family and all its members have to offer the community?
4. How can secondary systems support families so they can make these social and economic contributions?

In regard to young people who are members of families, these new principles will understand youth as assets rather than people in special need

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\* For a detailed guide to local practices and policies that are based upon these three principles, see Building Communities From The Inside Out by John Mcknight and John Kretzmann, ISBN# 0-87946-108-X, ACTA Publications, 4848 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL, 60640, 800-397-2282.

or individuals preparing to be members of society. Rather the twenty-first century practices will assume that:

1. Every young person has a gift, talent, knowledge or skill ready to be given, contributed or marketed now.
2. Every community is in need of these capacities if it is to be a healthful place to live.
3. The primary method to meet this need is for a local community to be organized to seek and use the capacities of youth in the productive center of society.
4. To be in the productive center, youth will be systematically connected to the productive work of adults and the associations at the center of society. In this way they will become the beneficiaries of all of the functions of the associational community described earlier. Most important, they will be at the center of care, capacity and citizenship rather than the artificial and ineffective substitute called service.

In order for these four landmarks to guide us toward a community of productive, useful, empowered young people, we will necessarily change a basic practice of most youth serving systems. We will end the age segregated bias of "youth programs" that isolate young people from the productive adults and associations at society's center. Instead, we will seek continuing local connection of citizens of all ages in common daily experiences of productive social, civic and economic activity.

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We have explored the nature of systems, clients and consumers. We have rediscovered the capacities of individuals and the associations that mobilize their abilities. We have seen the distinctive role that each must play

in an effective community. We have envisioned a new map that incorporates all the known territory of the social universe. And we have charted the new policies necessary to travel the twentieth century territory.

We should proceed, however, with a few cautions.

The associational community, like systems, is a means — a tool. It has no inherent values. Therefore, as we have seen the Nazi's turn systems to their evil purposes, we have seen in Bosnia and Burundi that local communities and their associations can be turned to evil purposes. The critical issue is the continuing struggle for a culture of civility.

Another caution is that our twenty-first century map does not include an explicit space for spirituality. Nonetheless, it is clear that communities with mechanistic or individualistic cultures are missing this foundational resource. The result is still an arid space without the culture of soul that lifts citizens to a higher vision.

Finally, we must emphasize again that the local economic capacity for choice and sustenance is the threshold policy issue. For we have economically abandoned far too many communities and left at sea those citizens who have remained. It is these fellow citizens and their economic dilemma that is the first policy issue of the twentieth century. For it is these fellow citizens who we need to contribute if our communities are to become powerful once again.