The Next Generation Nonprofit: Creating a 4th Sector That Embraces the Sovereignty of Community

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AS NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS FACE UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES IN TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT OF SCARCITY, DIVERSITY AND CHANGE, LOCAL COMMUNITIES ARE FINDING NEW WAYS TO THRIVE. COLLECTIVELY, THEY ARE CREATING A NEW SECTOR, THE 4TH SECTOR, THAT PROMISES A BETTER FUTURE. NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE PROFESSIONALS THEY EMPLOY MUST ADAPT AND EMBRACE THE SOVEREIGNTY OF COMMUNITY

ALMOST EVERY DAY *Rollie comes into Pillsbury House -- a neighborhood center in the settlement house tradition on the south side of Minneapolis. Every day, Rollie pesters the receptionist, tries to bum cigarettes from staff or anyone else around and occasionally sleeps on the over-sized lobby sofa. On many days, Rollie brings his brother along. Together they banter with staff and visitors. Rollie and his brother are two elderly black men in from the neighborhood. They come not to join a program, not to be educated or counseled, not to get service; they just come. They have carved out a niche -- a place -- in their local neighborhood center. They don't ask for much, but they have permission to be present -- to simply be themselves. A large part of the reason they come springs from their need for human contact--for community on a small scale, touchable, without demand or judgment.*

In so many ways we have not fully appreciated or embraced what Rollie and his brother come for, mostly because we are stuck in persistent personal , professional, and organizational patterns that blind us from recognizing and realizing the necessity of human connection and recreating community in the information age. When contemplating the future of individuals and families living without economic means and hope in too many of our nation's neighborhoods, one develops strong feelings of antipathy about the inadequacies of the human service system as well as our collective quest for active, meaningful participation in community life. At the core of this anticipation, this excitement is a growing restlessness about the sub-optimal results of institutional responses to the great issues of our time: racism, persistent poverty, and community disintegration in an era of distrust, discord and polarization. Yet, as troubling as things are, this restlessness is driving an exciting, growing community based movement throughout the country that inspires hope and promise. (The great French general, Napoleon Bonaparte, who, when asked what the secret of good generalship was, replied, "It is very simple, my friend, all you need to do is find out where the troops are headed and then get out in front as soon as possible!")

The last 30 years might be described as an "Age of Professional Sovereignty" as we think about the organizations and institutions that constitute the human service system and other systems as well, e.g. medicine, business, government and education. These organizations and systems have been dominated by a professional class who are the architects of the structure, processes, systems, ideas about quality, performance and outcomes. They are the "operating systems" of their organizations. The age of professional dominance has developed concomitantly with the corporatization of work life in the nonprofit sector. As government, business and nonprofits have steadily converged; erasing once firmly established boundaries, the organizations and institutions that comprise these sectors look increasingly alike, behave alike, and share similar values and approaches. Their architecture and aura are have become the same: cold and stark in appearance, obsessed with security, closed to the general public, mechanical, complex, and harnessed by fear and the avoidance of liability. Where is community in this corporate world? Where do the poor, the new American, or the teen gang-member-wannabe fit?

The professional class has consumed and directed enormous resources and is responsible for the successes and more recently the perceived failures of this country's major organizations and institutions. Consequently, many institutions (education, government, nonprofit, medicine, law, and business) have come under increasing scrutiny and criticism for failing to deliver on the common good. Organizations and systems are under increasing disfavor and attack. (Think, U.S. Congress, "big banks'" recent decision to raise debit card fees; Wall Street's scandalous failure and the "Occupy Wall Street" movement; Bernie Madoff; the bankruptcy of MF Global; local and federal government scandals too numerous to cite here.) Too frequently, media exposes the excesses of senior institutional leadership -- obscenely high compensation and "golden parachutes" when the organizations they lead suffer lay-offs and shrinking pay and benefits-- all this at a time when homelessness, foreclosures and child poverty continues to explode debasing life for countless thousands. Is the system rigged by patterns of thinking and behaving that are passé and unaccountable?

This paper explores the belief that time has come to end the dominance of the professional class, moving toward a new age, "the age of citizen or community sovereignty, wherein the interests, needs and aspirations of local community residents drive organizational and institutional responses to societal problems and conditions, and wherein the skills and qualities of current professionals that were developed to serve the old system are inadequate for effectiveness in an age of community sovereignty.

Human service leadership and the nonprofit organizations through which they work have become enmeshed and entrenched in a professional culture that is increasingly out of step with the broad community of "citizen-clients" they purport to serve. A new wave of creative, grass-roots responses to human need is emerging from within communities, ushering in a new age of **Community Sovereignty.** We will address this belief by 1), identifying the "seeds" producing reform and demanding new solutions; 2), examining the limits and troubling patterns of the non-profit sector; 3), pointing the way that professionals in an age of community sovereignty need to change; 4), exploring the promise of an emerging 4th sector*****and the sovereignty of community.

We are in the midst of an unstoppable march toward development of new local social, political, and economic organizations that have the promise of transforming old, blinding patterns of organizational behavior, of healing the deep divisions in our society, and of creating new, more inclusive communities. Collectively, these organizations represent an emerging "**Fourth Sector** (or, more commonly, the **Community Sector**)" in our

**** U.S. society is often described as having three sectors: government, business and non-profit or voluntary. The concept of a 4th sector is emerging to explain the fact that many non-profit organizations have become extensions of government and business sectors and no longer represent the ideals of community engagement and participation.***

society, clearly different from government, corporate America, and non-profit organizations (the other three sectors). Although not yet clearly defined or studied, this new sector is characterized by organizations that fervently believe in self-determination, eliminating institutional barriers, celebrating culture, focusing on relationships, and that blend economic and social development with accountability and citizenship. Our task is to better understand this new sector, learn from it, and encourage its growth. Fourth sector organizations are the harbingers of the **sovereign community.**

Seeds of Reform

Our concern for community emanates from three sources: first, the troubling reality that we are a society imperiled by deep divisions and "balkanization;" second, that we have transitioned from an industrial society to an information-based or knowledge society; third, that the human service system has adopted and embraced the "corporatization" of practice and the professionals that dominate the system have transformed the client/citizen into a customer/consumer. Together, these "seeds" produce growing restlessness, dissatisfaction, and demand for large-scale reform and impel us to change and embrace the sovereignty of community.

Deep Divisions in Society. The U.S. is a nation deeply divided, where home-owners care little about those without homes and where more is known about the events and issues in Syria and Afghanistan than our own neighborhoods. We are more aware of the details of George Clooney's life than our own extended families and probably know more about the lives, work and deaths of British royalty and "American Idols" than our own grandparents. We are a nation where the gap between upper and lower income families is now wider than at any time since the Census Bureau began collecting these data in 1947 and where one of 4 Americans is directly involved in school systems as student, teacher, or administrator and yet, an estimated 700,000 high school graduates cannot read their diplomas and 23 million more are illiterate at the fourth grade level. (1990 Census).

Even more divisive is our concern with how we will deal with dependency. The struggle over welfare reform crystallized two broad chasms in our country's social policy: one being the split between those who earn wages and those who do not, and the other the split between young and old. The Committee on Economic Development warns that "this nation cannot continue to compete and prosper in the global arena when more than one fifth of our children live in poverty and a third grow up in ignorance." (Shore, 1995)

On the surface these statistics and the behaviors they imply shake our sense of family, our belief in neighborliness and community, and invite feelings of hopelessness. But they also motivate us to question past

and present actions and institutional performance at an unprecedented rate, thereby creating demand for change.

The Knowledge Society. The profound transformation from an industrial to a knowledge society has taken root. The knowledge society significantly alters the nature of our social architecture -- how and where we work, play, and connect with each other are being redefined. Our current social architecture is based on a set of passé blueprints--assumptions reflecting days gone by. It assumes that the two-parent, nuclear family is the norm for transmission of accepted social values, economic and social viability, and individual self-worth; that the "American Dream" is still possible for most citizens; that time-limited, pin-pointed and project oriented social service intervention can alleviate intractable social problems; and that *community is a function of geography*. Today's practical reality challenges these old notions: the traditional nuclear family is being marginalized, economic well-being increasingly depends not on family resources but on acquisition and use of knowledge; the single family home is fast becoming a benefit for an exclusive few; the force driving new community is affinity, not geography. Drucker (1994) suggests that our entire social architecture is being transformed, "...the old communities--family, village, parish, and so on have all but disappeared in the knowledge society. Their place has largely been taken by the new unit of social integration, the organization. Where community was fate, organization is voluntary membership...In fact, the acquisition and distribution of formal knowledge may come to occupy the place in the politics of the knowledge society which the acquisition and distribution of property and income have occupied in our politics over the two or three centuries that we have come to call the Age of Capitalism."

At the community level, the old paradigm of geography relied on the principle of proximity as a driver of social transactions. Family and community relationships were shaped by where one lived. Neighbors could speak over the back fence, the political ward and district had meaning, and one's neighbors were important. Close-by services such as grocery stores, gas stations, schools, churches, and recreation centers were required. But those images no longer reflect the current reality. Reich (1987) describes the changes in community and a new reality, "...by the 1980s...more Americans lived on military bases than lived in what could be called 'neighborhoods' in the traditional sense...The majority lived in suburban subdivisions that extended helter-skelter in every direction...or they lived in condominiums, townhouses, cooperative apartments, and retirement communities that promised privacy and safety in the better urban enclaves; or they inhabited dilapidated houses and apartments in the far less fashionable areas. Many worked at some distance from their homes and socialized with friends selected on some other basis than proximity. The people who happened to inhabit the geographic areas immediately surrounding their home had no special claim on their allegiances or affections. The average

family, moreover, moved every five years or so. These ersatz neighborhoods contained no shared history, no pattern of long-term association."

In today's community, the driver is *affinity.* The knowledge society with its communication and transportation technologies minimize the effect, and thereby the importance, of proximity. How we connect now is based on webs woven by employment networks and personal interest associations, by devices such as the smart phone and iPad, and by programs like Facebook and LinkedIn. The fact that millions of people around the world can communicate practically instantaneously via the Internet dramatically marks the decline of proximity as a viable principle for organizing community. Unfortunately, our local institutions, housing, and community spaces were designed to meet the needs of the old industrial society and have failed to keep pace. Today's challenge is to rebuild community on the principle of affinity by creating innovative organizations that effectively engage people in recognizing their own local abundance and how to leverage their skills and resources to create progress. But, meaningful connection and community in the information age requires more skill, knowledge and resources. Sadly, these are increasingly unavailable to the poor and marginalized citizens of our nation, hence, the "digital divide." Without sufficient access to information and the internet and the skill to use them, an individual cannot hope to compete. As more and more functions of society (communication, banking, buying/selling, education) go "online," people who don't have access fall further behind and the "digital divide" grows.

Corporatization. The boundaries separating the roles and functions of government, business and nonprofits have blurred. In the 1970's and '80's philanthropic foundations and charitable funders like the United Way rarely, if ever, made grants to government units, nor did business provide programs or services to the urban poor. "Poverty work" was understood to be the domain of nonprofit organizations and religious bodies. The 1980's ushered in a rapid erasure of boundaries as two important ideas took hold.

1. Rising public dissatisfaction with nonprofits (lots of money provided over the years, yet community problems persisted). Nonprofits were pressured to operate their organizations like "businesses."
2. The development of a love affair with innovation and entrepreneurialism spawned a plethora of efforts to encourage partnerships between government, business and nonprofits and an infatuation with new organizations that promised new results.

Many nonprofits adopted business practices like "management by objectives," "continuous improvement," and "strategic planning." Programs were commoditized and clients were transformed into customers/consumers. Nonprofits were encouraged and supported in this effort and many "rode the corporatization wave."

This text box and others that follow provide relevant glimpses into Pillsbury United Communities (PUC), a community based nonprofit out of the settlement house tradition. PUC invested heavily into becoming "business-like." So much so that it was the first Minnesota charity to be awarded the Minnesota Council for Quality's Gold Award for excellence in evaluation using the nationally lauded Baldrige criteria and examination. But, as PUC "corporatized," it became increasingly difficult to build and maintain long term, quality relationships with its clients – relationships that are crucial for individual growth and family progress.

By the turn of the 21st century, the sectors had converged so thoroughly that a monoculture was created. This monoculture makes it very difficult for an ordinary citizen to tell the difference between a nonprofit, government unit, or business when walking into a building or receiving services. They look alike, act alike and increasingly use the same financial, human resource, evaluation and technology systems. They even speak the same corporate language. Moreover, professionals in the system are increasingly interchangeable.

The sectors have converged and are "corporatized" and we have transformed client/citizens into consumers and customers. McKnight and Block (2010) note, "a consumer is one who has surrendered to others the power to provide what is essential for a full and satisfied life. This act of surrender goes by many names: client, patient, student, audience, fan, shopper. All consumers, not citizens. Consumerism is not about shopping, but about the transformation of citizens into consumers."

As this corporate monoculture dominates more and more aspects of our lives, McKnight and Block remind us that "systems are designed to create scale. Scale in turn requires consistency, control, and predictability. This is as true for delivering services as it is for distributing products." Like government and business, nonprofits are encouraged and expected to scale up. "Scaling up creates a monoculture that relies on replication, standardization promotion, and compliance. It's easy to make the case for this strategy in the context of consumer culture. Businesses all over the world encourage people to consume their beverages, buy their merchandize, and watch their movies. Despite the fact that community is inherently local, most people engaged in community change nonetheless aspire to follow in the footsteps of big business by scaling up, expanding programs, and rolling out offices in new geographies. They pursue that coveted strategy of disseminating best practices, which holds that what has been invented and perfected in one place can be parachuted or transplanted into another. This view assumes that organizations are machines, and to improve them, we just need to switch out the old parts for new and improved ones or install new software. In other words, conventional wisdom tells us to use the same irrigation, measure out the same slant of hillside, and plonk down our grapes. And then somehow we're surprised when the wine tastes bad." (Wheatley and Frieze, 2011)

Professionals of all stripes thrive in this corporate monoculture, indeed, they are its architects. But, the “wine” produced by this monoculture is increasingly sour for poor and marginalized citizens.

The divisions in our nation, the knowledge society, and the corporate monoculture generate a growing belief that the institutions of our society are increasingly out of touch and ineffective, causing widespread dissatisfaction and growing restlessness. Coupled with a rigged economy this is a recipe for serious trouble. All of us have witnessed the continuing struggle of government, private business, and non-profit sectors as they seek relevancy with today's markets, constituencies, and communities. The limitations and failures of these sectors in their attempts to meet human need, solve community problems, or engage the population in constructive planning and action is well known if not heartfelt. Our collective experience with these sectors generates misgiving that they will lead to resolution of the challenges confronting us. Does anyone really believe anymore that government has the answers? That Apple or Microsoft or Ford Motor Company can contribute much that enriches individuals, families or neighborhoods, especially when it comes to low income, core city residents?

Early in his career, Peter Drucker (1994), the distinguished "guru" of business, prophesied that the corporation would emerge as the hope for meeting the individual's need for survival and growth as well as for citizenship. He has since changed his mind and focuses instead on what he calls the "social sector." In times past, we spent considerable time and energy urging government and business sectors to be more responsive to human need and our desires for community. It is now time to accept the limits of both regarding their ability to provide solutions. Evidence is clear that growing numbers of responsible people harbor serious doubt that the institutions of these sectors are capable of providing solutions or engendering hope. Surely, each has a role to play, but the reality is that solutions lay elsewhere.

Limits and Troubling Aspects of the Non-profit Sector

These considerations apply to the third or non-profit sector. Comprised of arts organizations, churches, hospitals, schools, human service organizations, community centers, and more, this sector requires special attention because it is frequently presented as the beacon for change, for creative social interaction and for building community. It is a large sector often misunderstood by the general public. “Over 1.5 million nonprofits were registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in 2008. The largest single category – 501 (c) (3) public charities – included 950,000 organizations and accounted for three fourths of nonprofit revenue and six tenths of nonprofit assets. In 2009, total private giving was $303.8 billion, down 3.6 per cent from the revised estimate for 2008. In 2009, 26.8 per cent of U.S. adults said they volunteered through an organization. Volunteers

contributed a total of 15 billion hours during the year, worth $279 billion at average wages." (The Nonprofit Sector in Brief, 2010).

Originally, non-profits were collective efforts by impassioned people to deal with specific societal problems and issues. Over time these efforts solidified and persevered, resulting in the establishment of a vast, complex system referred to as the third or nonprofit sector, a sector heavily dependent for funds on government contracts and philanthropy. Its existence and size distinguish the United States from other nations. In the post-industrial era, as work became more separate from family and social life, social service agencies evolved to provide lost connections. In a sense, they became the extended family and community -- particularly for low-income people. While this approach has helped thousands of families and individuals improve their well being, this success has frequently fostered dependency -- the reliance on social services rather than family or community as a support system. As the sectors have converged, this dependency and institutionalization have resulted in a situation where many nonprofit organizations have become simple extensions or monetary "pass-throughs" of the first two sectors. Regrettably, far too many non-profits have acquired the downside characteristics of the other sectors and suffer from the weight of corporatization and consumerism.

This sector is increasingly the subject of disfavor. Kingston (1993) noted that a recent poll by a large corporation indicated that 31% of the respondents disagreed that charities are more effective today than five years ago. Of those that responded that they stopped giving to charities (17%), 41% indicated that they lacked trust in the [*charitable*] organization or thought that the organization misused its funds. Several factors are behind this mistrust and disappointment with the nonprofit sector -- factors that compel us to rethink the direction and vitality of the sector.

Narrowing Engagement in Decision Making. During the 1960's and '70's, many communities and institutions expanded the involvement of citizens in decision making regarding human services. Cities like Minneapolis established remarkably ambitious citizen review panels and structures to enhance engagement and input. Organizations like the United Way took great care to engage large numbers of corporate and community volunteers to make critical decisions about funding nonprofit organizations and programs. Over time, however, this commitment to engagement has waned and decisions are being made by an ever decreasing number of people. This same pattern holds for government funding processes. During the 1980"s and 1990's the city of Minneapolis and Hennepin county often involved relatively large numbers of community residents in decision making about city and county priorities and funding. Today, virtually all decisions are made by county staff, usually just one person. This situation puts tremendous decision making power in the hands of a very small number of professionals who populate these systems.

When I began my career as CEO of PU C, the United Way's decision making process regarding allocation of funds involved large numbers of volunteers. Organized into citizen's review panels, as many as 15-20 business men and women, educators, religious and community leaders, labor union representatives, and so on, would review proposals from agencies trying to obtain resources, conduct site visits to those organizations and generally did their best to understand the proposals and the organizations. This brought large numbers of citizens into the decision making process. In the last few years, the number of citizens involved has diminished to the point where in 2010, only one person reviewed the agency's proposals -- a single staff person or in some cases, an outside consultant. No visits to the organization were made and the "rules" limited contact to 1 hour. No citizen involvement whatever.

Obsession with Risk Avoidance. Nonprofit organizations today are hopelessly bound by "risk aversion." Fear of legal action with its perceived loss of reputation and resources has given lawyers and insurance agents enormous power. Too many nonprofits have surrendered much of their "human-ness" and creative programming to the fear of lawsuit. This risk aversion trumps justice, transparency, innovation and most importantly inhibits the development of human connection and by extension, community.

Architecture of Fear and Isolation. Increasingly, institutions are finding ways to separate clients and residents from professional staff. Why is it that it's become virtually impossible to connect to a real person when dealing with any major institution? Try calling your bank, your insurance company, your wireless vendor, your doctor, your school, or your nonprofit – you name the institution, you are likely to become enmeshed in an endless cycle of prompts, recorded messages, complicated instructions, connection loops leading nowhere. We all know this. Even if one is lucky or patient enough to talk to a human being, usually they are extremely well prompted, appropriately nice, apologetic and trained to manage your enquiry or complaint -- not to solve the problem, but to "manage" your complaint so as to make you go away or at least feel better than when you made contact. Further, why is it that a visit to a doctor's office, a social service agency, or the county welfare department requires gate-keeping and even armed security? Why are we so afraid of the client, our neighbors?

The corporate monoculture creates a pervasive architecture full of barriers. Most facilities look alike and are designed to separate and control clients from workers, doctor from patient, and employee from the public. There are defined and controlled spaces for clients or patients, physical barriers separating clients from staff, systems in place for appointments and special rooms or "cells" for meeting and connecting. There are security cameras, metal detectors, security guards, and so on. Formal, clearly defined procedures for connecting professional and client are in place and rigorously enforced. The message of this architecture is clearly that professionals fear the client and need protection. Unfortunately, this pattern is pervasive in our institutions and organizations.

Benjamin makes the point strongly in his study of gated communities throughout the U.S., "The perverse, pervasive real-estate speak I heard in these communities champions a bunker mentality. Residents often expressed a fear of crime that was exaggerated beyond the actual criminal threat, as documented by their police departments' statistics… Residents' palpable satisfaction with their communities' virtue and their evident readiness to trumpet alarm at any given 'threat' creates a particular atmosphere – an unholy alliance of smugness and insecurity. In their us vs. them mental landscape, 'them' refers to new immigrants, blacks, young people, renters, non-property owners and people perceived to be poor. "(Star Tribune, April 1, 2012)

Sooner or later, we must realize that we can't erect enough barriers, hire enough guards, build enough prisons, and create enough systems and procedures that isolate and protect the professional from the people they purport to serve. Our collective fear is making us irrational. Yet it is the acceptable norm among professionals and institutions today. Wouldn't it be better to understand what we are doing that makes the client, the patient, the community such a threat? Are we standing behind the shield of fear to justify our prejudices?

Frequently in my work at PUC, I was confronted by well-meaning staff who complained that they were afraid to work at some of our neighborhood centers. They expected me and our organization to make them feel safe. Over the years I came to understand that they could not be effective workers if they were afraid of our clients. So I would convey to them that while I respected their feelings and fears about safety, there wasn't much we could do about that and they should consider working elsewhere. I would say the same to all professionals – you cannot work with people if you fear them.

Human Service Vigilantism. Policy and community leaders seemed to have changed their collective minds about who they trust for information and ideas. During the 1990's, foundation and United Way, government, and business leadership began asserting their own agendas and solutions for community problems. They began to rely heavily on academic thinkers, researchers, and programs in other cities to inform their decision making. In times past, these leaders valued and courted nonprofit, grassroots leadership for their knowledge and experience about what was going on in the community – its collective aspiration and need. This knowledge informed their decision making about policy and transmission of resources. The community agenda was set by a broad collection of business, government, nonprofit and community leaders.

Today's' situation is radically different: policy makers decide what the community needs based on their own experience and "expert" knowledge (academic) and then search for a "vendor" to deliver the program, project that gets the outcomes they want. Drawing on their own methods and arrogance, they increasingly search out

and develop the kinds of programs they think are best for the community, and they have the resources to make it happen. In a sense, they are "human service vigilantes," distrusting community and local leadership and determined to make change on their own. Like the western movie where the vigilantes rush off to "nab" the culprit (often without success) because the sheriff is weak or fearful, their human service counterparts have rushed head long into creation of a large number of new initiatives and collaborations that consume lots of time and money, that mostly involve professionals meeting with each other, and have limited, if any, results. Executive Directors of nonprofit agencies are relegated to either accepting the funder's ideas and getting money to implement them, or rejecting them and losing any opportunity for funding. The community agenda has been usurped by the professional class, specifically by those professionals who hold key staff positions in powerful money sources like corporate and community foundations and government.

> ***When I began my work in the 1970's, government, business and foundation leaders frequently asked my advice about vexing conditions in low income neighborhoods (gang violence, achievement gaps, domestic violence, addiction and so on. I was listened to and valued for my closeness and unique understanding of these issues, an understanding gained by experience. The situation today is the polar opposite. People who occupy positions like mine are now seen as part of the problem – not part of the solution. Nonprofits became vendors instead of valued community partners.***

Gardner (2005) writes about the decline of trustees in society. Certain individuals because of their knowledge, experience and wisdom gained stature as trusted advisors to efforts that hoped to solve systemic and societal problems. They had "stature" and were trusted leaders. They most often came from the ranks of education, journalism, business or politics. Gardner suggests that today because of seemingly unending scandal and erosion of fundamental institutions, we no longer identify or use these trustees. In their place we have placed our collective trust in celebrities and sports stars. So too goes the nonprofit system, except that the celebrities and sports stars are key funding professionals.

Absence of Vertical Boundary Crossing/Integration. Discussion about boundary crossing in the nonprofit sector usually focusses on a horizontal plane. Whether it's profession to profession or organization to organization, the concern centers around permeating boundaries to improve coordination and leverage resources. While boundary crossing is likely to remain a "hot" topic, the discussion needs to include another perspective – the vertical plane. In an organizational context, this means connecting top leadership with front-line staff and community residents. In a system setting, it means getting policy makers, foundation leaders and corporate CEO's connected to nonprofit agencies and the people they serve.

When I met with colleagues around the country, they frequently asked me why Minnesota seemed to be so progressive and sympathetic to the plight of poor people. As I formulated my response, it became clear that what distinguished the Minnesota experience from that of my colleagues in other cities and states, was the unusual amount and frequency of connection between senior elected officials, academic leaders, foundation executives, corporate CEO's, and nonprofit and community leaders in discussions about key community problems. My colleagues would exclaim, "You mean you actually were in a lengthy, serious discussion with the mayor, the CEO of General Mills, Hennepin County Commissioners, the President of the McKnight Foundation and leaders in the African American community to talk about gang violence?" "Yes," I replied and they walked away stunned, "that doesn't happen in my city. It did happen in Minneapolis and it happened often, but only because of the existence of special convening organizations like Springhill, the Itasca Project, the United Way and the Minneapolis Foundation. To our great loss, Springhill no longer exists and the others have turned away from a convening role and agenda.

Vertical boundary crossing is rapidly becoming extinct (although social media and the internet hold promise). The emphasis on "silo-ing" has distracted us from the bigger problem of building relationships top to bottom. The importance and disappearance of connective tissue like Springhill has debased the quality and vitality of the Twin Cities' once vaunted human service system.

The Systemic Mezzo. The Twin Cities' human service system has become increasingly enamored with creating new organizations that occupy the space between funding bodies and direct service providers. In that sense, they are in the middle, or using a term from music, they are *mezzo* organizations. Altogether, they form a *systemic mezzo*. Often begun as "initiatives" (like the United Way's *Success by 6*, the McKnight Foundation's new after school youth "mini-foundation," or the *Minnesota Early Learning Foundation*) to address emergent community issues, they quickly evolved into formal, legal structures with paid staff and programs. Because they were created by the funders themselves, they were well resourced. These mezzo structures along with community and corporate foundation staff and key government unit heads comprise a systemic mezzo band of the human service orchestra. They meet together, plan together, and set the tone for how resources will be allocated. They command the attention of the media and they define which problems or issues are important for the community to address. These mezzo organizations, in the name of collaboration, have grown in number and importance and have managed to capture the hearts and minds (and money) of key policy makers and funders. But, as enticing as they are, this mezzo band of coordinating boards, partnerships, and research and study groups or task forces siphon scarce expertise, people, and resources from direct providers and people in need. Other players in this systemic mezzo in the Twin Cities are: The United Way with its well established methods for fund-raising, allocations of community dollars, agency monitoring, and community priority setting;

Nonprofit boards of directors; Corporate and community foundation community affairs professional staff; Consultants. Each of these players fit the bill as part of the systemic mezzo. Each requires money and resources to exist. As the limit of these resources is approached, they compete with or cannibalize direct service organizations for necessary resources. Rather than meeting the needs of poor and marginalized citizens, they focus on policy-makers and other professionals as the target of their work. One is struck by the observation that as the community erases traditional lines of responsibility and authority between government, foundation, corporate and nonprofit sectors, it creates new structures.

Many nonprofit organizations today are faced with downsizing, decentralization, and a reduction of layers and elimination of middle management. It is apparent that many large corporations are reexamining their role in meeting human need. Some have already acted to eliminate or severely cut back the size of their corporate community affairs and foundation staff. They have concluded that other mezzo structures can function without them. These phenomena are easily understood in the context of a single organization or entity. They are not as well understood in the context of broader systems or associations.

What is troubling and at issue for this community is that these mezzo organizations are created without the necessary public debate, debate that needs to address issues of viability, priority, and effectiveness. In an era of belt tightening, to what extent does the support of these mezzo organizations diminish or harm the organizations providing direct service to people in need? Is this what's best for community? Most of these mezzo structures were created in a top-down way. They are fundamentally designed to meet the needs of policy and professional leadership. As a consequence, they are powerful in their ability to set agendas and command resources.

Nonprofits began to understand the potential threat and opportunities that these mezzo organizations present. Acutely aware of their absence from this growing mezzo system, some nonprofits created an exciting alternate response.

Initially called the Metropolitan Alliance of Community Centers (now known as the MACC Alliance), 12 Twin Cities community centers banded together to create a stronger voice for low income communities in the public debate about policy and practice, to seek better, more effective ways of operating their organizations, to develop a network of support and communication between its members. About five years ago, MACC Alliance created a formal support organization, the MACC Commonwealth, to provide financial, human resources and technology services to its members. Today, MACC Alliance has grown to 26 member agencies and the MACC Alliance provides support to some 19 organizations. MACC Alliance has demonstrated that the responsibilities and authorities of individual agency management and board structures can be subordinated to this mezzo structure.

More community based, bottom-up, mezzo structures like MACC Alliance should be encouraged. They could evolve into strong decentralized fund-raising mechanisms, effective planning bodies and allocations vehicles. These community based mezzo structures can perform most if not all the functions of existing Untied Way allocations panels, and corporate and community foundation staffs. What would it be like if we combined the human and fiscal resources of the 26 MACC Alliance agencies with United Way allocations panels reviewing these agencies, and the various corporate and community foundation staffs into a unified consortium and turned over the planning, fund- raising, allocations, priority setting, management, and service delivery methods to it? Would the quest for community be better served?

A mezzo capacity implies the development of effective structures that can not only develop priorities for meeting human needs but also reinvent the kinds of delivery systems the future requires. Community based mezzo structures could be the focus for the development of new technologies for meeting human needs--technologies that reflects the kind of diversity, fluidity, and creativity currently associated with today's community. Using the musical metaphor further, we need to come out of the big band age in human service where the music played followed set patterns, where the roles of the orchestra's sections were understood and accepted, and where clear rules of performance were known. We must move into the jazz age where the "form" is open, where responses to human need are fluid and fast-changing. We need the ability to develop new relationships quickly and with less regard for existing structure. The needs of our time have outpaced the structures we have developed to meet those needs. We need a new "score," a new pattern for creating the music we want to hear.

Mission Polarity. Nonprofits serve two masters: the funder and the client/community. Over time, the interests and methods that characterize each of these masters have diverged. Nonprofits are pressured to orient one way or another and a culture of survival has led most nonprofits to orient to the funder as the primary master. This orientation eventually leads to the selection of leaders who share the values, characteristics and skills that best align with those of the funder. This partially explains why nonprofits are increasingly fascinated with hiring business professionals and why the current in vogue mantra that "nonprofits should operate more like businesses" permeates discussion. It appears that most nonprofits have chosen this route. Could it be that this is the explanation for the achievement gap in our schools or the blame laid on nonprofits for not solving community problems? Arguably, if most nonprofits have become extensions of government or look-like business corporations, it's no wonder that they have been less than effective. They cannot relate well to the clients they serve – there's literally no future in bonding with the clients, in building long term relationships that are the bases for any real meaningful client change and progress.

Compounding the tension inherent with mission polarity is the added reality that **two models** dominate the human Service system: The first is the "service provision" model and the second is the "justice driven" model. Each of these models requires certain professional skills, values, and theoretical bases. Throughout the recent history of human service work, these two views have been part of the learning, professional discussion and practice of social work. Over the past twenty years, social services have become increasingly oriented to individual service while problems grow exponentially. With declining resources, this orientation is a losing proposition for agencies and communities. There will always be a need for remedial services for families and individuals in crisis, but many family and community problems can be dealt with, if not prevented, through informal community responses, and systemic change can be achieved through community action.

The current nonprofit service system is dominated by the "service provision model" that embraces and compensates for specialization, programs as units of analysis and short term projects. As pervasive as the service provision model is, equally vexing has been the history of governmental and other policy makers to provide funding and support in categories or "silos." For example, problems of drug abuse, mental illness, joblessness and homelessness are all highly interrelated, but most programs address these issues separately, in silos, often resulting in complex regulations and bureaucratic processes that hinder coordination and communication with other programs. This proposition re-enforces the notion of narrow, specialized approaches to achieve results that are unclear or unsupported by local communities, strengthening the hold of the problem/program paradigm and its short term, specialized solutions to family and community issues.

Two aspects of the dominant service provision model in the non-profit sector provoke special concern. First, is the widespread **dominance of the program/problem paradigm** with its endorsement of specialization and programmatic responses as units of analysis and funding. The non-profit sector has slowly allowed the fundamental and most significant part of any human service effort -- the relationship between worker and client -- to fade into the background. The persistent habit of cataloging, segmenting and programming human need diminishes results and debases practice. Future success needs to be measured by the outcomes of relationships -- people who are committed to helping people over time, applying resources and skills while building capacity. The helping relationship needs to become the primary unit of analysis, the unit for funding, and the unit for measuring success. Effective strategies for working with people in poverty must encompass capacity building and economic activity. We need more self-help projects, a mind-set of investment with increased networking systems, the identification and exchange of skills and assets and clear expectations for reciprocity. Not to do so trivializes the mission and work of existing third sector organizations.

The second concern is a **culture of survival and maintenance** that prevails in the non-profit sector. Too many social welfare organizations are managed in ways that favor maintenance and survival over client change and social impact. *The* raison d'etre *of social agencies is not to acquire resources, produce services, utilize resources efficiently, satisfy staff or volunteers, or even survive; rather, it is to change people and the circumstances in which they live.* Many human service managers, in their quest for technical competency, have distanced themselves from the mission of the organization and have instead become pre-occupied with the process and technology of management. They know increasingly less about implementing a mission of client success.

Professional Sovereignty

Any critique of the nonprofit system is not complete without addressing the professional workers who comprise it, define it, and benefit from it. As the profession embraces corporatization and behaviors associated with the monoculture, the gap between the professional and the people they serve widens, and professionals are unable to accumulate new knowledge and information essential to making quality decisions, furthering the effectiveness of the organizations that employ them, and minimizing damaging actions. Parker Palmer notes, "I think a lot of leaders become leaders because they have a life-long devotion to eliminating all remnants of chaos from the world. They're trying to order and organize things so thoroughly that the nasty stuff will never bubble up around us (such nasty stuff as dissent, innovation, challenge, change). In an organization, this particular shadow...creates corporate cultures that are imprisoning rather than empowering...Chaos is the precondition to creativity, and any organization (or any individual) that doesn't have an arena of creative chaos is already half dead. When a leader is so fearful of chaos as not to be able to protect and nurture that arena for other people, there is deep trouble."

There is much conversation and agonizing about what needs change in our local communities and society. We continually hear of the negative impact of the economy including federal devolution, state and local government deficits and shifts in local priorities on non-profit, community organizations. We know about the transfer of trillions of dollars from one generation to another over the next 20 years and the necessity to re-engineer, redesign, and shift paradigms. No doubt much does need changing, but a neglected topic in all of the conversations about such change is the role, promise and responsibility of the **professional** worker. No time has been more critical for an examination of the individual professional who is keenly positioned to promote or thwart social change. But, who are these professionals, what do they believe, and are their skills adequate to the task? It is necessary to examine current thinking about what it means to be a social worker in community service and in an emerging context of networked systems and shared power; to challenge traditional views of

professionalism and the skills, knowledge and abilities required of them, especially those in social work; finally, to change our understanding of "professionalism" in community work so that we create and support a cadre of "**new community professionals**."

Characteristics of Professions. Formal professional training in law and engineering originated in ancient times in Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Medieval universities offered instruction in law, medicine, and theology, and, in the 16th century, great impetus was given to advanced technical and medical education as a result of scientific discoveries. Medicine was first taught in the U.S. in 1765 at the University of Pennsylvania, law at the College of William and Mary in 1779 and civil engineering at the Rensselaer School in 1824. The development of professions led naturally to the creation of a professional class replete with its own professional organizations and associations. As professions grew in number and kind, their roles and identities have been the subject of debate and inquiry with no agreed upon definition of "profession." Hopps and Pinderhughes (1987) identified certain characteristics common to all professions:

1. Use of professional organizations as a major reference.
2. Belief in public service.
3. Self-regulation.
4. A sense of calling.
5. Professional autonomy.
6. A specialized knowledge base.

In the U.S. and throughout the world, there are countless numbers of professional associations, societies, and other forms of organization. Each such organization strives to carve out a niche in the professional architecture while expanding; each identifies the attributes, skills and knowledge required of its membership; each struggles to maintain its standing in society and its share of society's resources. But all is not well in the professional house. From exponential increases in malpractice suits, to lawyer jokes and media exposés about human service fraud, worker abuses and incompetent management, there is much public and private "trashing" of professionals, professionalism and the institutions they dominate. Why? Perhaps because professions and professionals have focused too narrowly on their own professional organizations, self-regulation and autonomy, and in so doing have diminished the prominence of belief in public service, a sense of calling, and a specialized knowledge base. It is arguable that this misdirected emphasis with its concomitant training, values, and behaviors now dominates the professional class, and cannot withstand the challenges presented by the

expanding chorus of community critics. How is it that this out-of-focus, dominant view of professionalism misses the mark?

Some recent examples from the media:

1. *One primary election day in Minneapolis, the Star Tribune newspaper erroneously published a picture of a candidate for the state senate within an article on charitable fraud. The candidate lost a close election and sued the newspaper for improperly influencing the election. How could this mistake have occurred given that the candidate was such a well-known local politician? Of all the interesting and controversial reasons given, the most plausible was the Star Tribune's own as it appeared in the "If You Ran the Tribune" column. In it, the columnist gave reasons for the lapse, including poor computer policing practices, and, most tellingly, the inability of the on-duty editor to* ***recognize*** *the candidate. Such failure was attributed to the editor's naivety about the community. How can it be that a news professional can rise to leadership in the system and be naive about who's who in the community?*

2. *Time magazine ran a lengthy story about changes in the airlines industry. The title of a side-bar article "Welcome Aboard--or Pay Up, Sit Up and Shut Up," pointedly made the case that airlines today care little for the flying customer. The article quotes an aviation consultant, "The policies and procedures at the major airlines are geared to produce a system that meets the needs of the airline and not the customer." Anyone who has flown recently would probably agree with that statement.*

3. *Finally, look at the case of the Archer-Daniels-Midland company that once settled a $100 million price-fixing case. Sorrowfully, the reporter writing the story noted that among the executives of ADM -- the professionals -- there was a motto, "the competition is our friend, and the customer is our enemy."*

These examples point to the confounding realization that the gap between professionals and the constituencies they serve is growing and may be unbridgeable. The great American fictional icon, Archie Bunker, once said, "I got nothin' against mankind. It's people I can't stand." In the same way, too many professionals love "consumers or clients." It's just individual "customers or clients" they don't want to deal with.

Professionals have assumed an ever expanding role in all sectors of society especially in government and non-profit sectors where the client often comes to the relationship with little in the way of bargaining chips. Despite the lofty missions, the clever slogans and seductive approaches, too many governmental agencies and non-profit organizations are driven and dominated by the professionals they employ. How else can the proliferation of fortress-like agencies and offices, or 9-5, Monday through Friday hours of operation, or well attended seminars designed to help professionals minimize litigation, build boundaries and otherwise seek relief from clients be explained?

Professional Myopia. To borrow from health care, the system has produced scores of "specialists" while diminishing the role of the general practice doctor. The result is a plethora of agencies and services that are defined by the professionals in them, providing short term fixes, who are increasingly out of touch with family context and community environment. Now, more than ever we need "general practitioners" who can first and foremost gain the confidence of low-income residents and who embrace the reality that outcomes are best achieved when the service or project is co-produced, i.e., the worker and the client mutually and equitably create the pathway for progress. For this, we need a new kind of human service worker who can leverage relationships into effective self-improvement efforts and projects, who value cultural imperatives for behavior and problem-solving and who know how to create and utilize partnerships for community solutions. These new community professionals need organizations that value, train and support them. This is what early settlement houses did and now we need a new generation of nonprofits that embrace the concept of co-production between new community professionals and citizens.

The power of the professional is growing stronger and must be measured against results and impact. This is particularly significant for modern nations as they struggle with the role of family and community. Drucker (1994) noted that, "...there is also society's need for these organizations to take social responsibility--to work on the problems and challenges of the community. Together these organizations are the community. The emergence of a strong, independent, capable social sector--neither public sector nor private sector--is thus a central need of the society of organizations." If, as Drucker suggests, a strong social sector is the key to community, then the key architects and builders of community need special attention. These community builders too often are the professionals who dominate practically all sectors of society. Do they have the right tools and equipment? The right mind-set? A little light hearted story makes the case. *It seems that for a number of years, Andrew Carnegie, whose wife loved classical music, made up the annual deficit of the New York Philharmonic Society. One year, at a committee meeting of the Board of Directors, Mr. Carnegie made the suggestion that the responsibility should not be his alone. "From now on, I think the burden should be shared," he said. "You raise half the deficit from other donors, and I will give you the remaining half." A few days later, the committee informed the philanthropist that his condition had been met. He was pleased by the news. I told you the money could be easily raised," he said. "Where did you get it?" We got it," they told him, "from Mrs. Carnegie!"*

This story suggests three conclusions: 1) when pressed to change, professionals often rely on the same old patterns albeit with clever twists from time to time, 2) even though successful, the fund raising essentially stayed within the established context, and 3) the major beneficiary of the Philharmonic -- the listening public --

had no part in the solution.

The Skyway Metaphor. Imagine for a moment that the non-profit, business, and governmental sectors are a city representing our collective community. The elements of this fictional "city" are skyscrapers or towers and the key people within, the professionals. Pressing this architectural metaphor, the towers are the educational institutions, foundations, corporations, the United Way, government, social agencies, and philanthropic organizations. These downtown buildings each have their own function, character, mission, infrastructure and resources, including professional staff. In this mix of independent-operating "towers," the professionals maintain the status quo and develop ideas or initiatives for change. Since their professional and social milieu primarily consists of their own tower's associates and, occasionally, associates from other towers, implementation of bright ideas requires a pattern of relationships and a method for connecting with other towers, resulting in a "skyway" system* that provides tower to tower access. Because tower connection produces some results (like inter-tower cooperation and access to shared resources), more skyways are developed. The valued individual becomes the professional who knows the "skyway" system, and after a while, a new class of skyway experts is created and the system perseveres. The problem is, the "skyway" system does not extend beyond the limits of downtown and inhibits or prevents the professional from ever getting down to the street level. Over time, the "street" becomes unnecessary.

Consequently, interactions suffer from a narrowness in participation, an over reliance on existing structural towers, an inability to connect with multiple structures outside the core, and a failure to reach the streets. Zehr (1996) quotes Bob Bothwell, Executive Director of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, "The longer you spend in the private foundation environment, the more you rely on your enclave colleagues for truth rather than outsiders because you've learned when the hand reaches out for money; you need to be suspicious of the truth.' He believes staff at private foundations are more likely than those at corporate or government grant making institutions to get out of touch with reality because they don't have to answer as much to a larger organization or the public."

Too often professionals fill their time with other professionals, either within their own organization or within the narrowly defined disciplines of which they are part. Professionals meet with each other, look to each other for support and ultimately establish self-serving systems that ensure their survival. Professionals are enamored

**** The city of Minneapolis often experiences harsh, cold winters. In an effort to make life more comfortable for downtown workers and shoppers, the city has developed an elaborate system of skyways: enclosed walkways that connect downtown buildings so that people can move from building to building without stepping outside onto the streets.***

with lateral thinking and acting and have limited contact with people on the streets or with systems beyond their own network. Shore (1995) suggests a re-commitment to connecting with people in need, "No amount of money can substitute for personal involvement. That's not to say that social programs don't have costs and need financing. They do. But the essential ingredients are not dollars, grants, stipends, or government contracts. The essential ingredients are people who are willing to go to neighborhoods not their own, to work with people not like them and to share the strengths and skills and attitudes that have enabled them to be successful in their own lives."

The gap between professionals and the street life of the community is becoming a gulf that, unless bridged, will lead to further disintegration of systems, continued trashing of professionals and ultimately to the degradation of the professional class, and rightly so. Many professionals have become arrogant, too heavily focused on issues of autonomy, exclusiveness and regulation, pushing aside the important values of servant-hood and calling. John Ralston Saul (1992) puts the situation on edge when he argues that the Age of Reason has produced an unending set of structures (organizations) designed to control access to information, knowledge and resources, "Our reality is dominated by elites who have spent much of the last two centuries, indeed of the last four, organizing society around answers and around structures designed to produce answers. These structures have fed upon expertise and that expertise upon complexity." Saul continues his indictment, "In reality we are today in the midst of a theology of pure power -- power born of structure, not of dynasty or arms. The new holy trinity is organization, technology and information. The new priest is the technocrat -- the man who understands the organization, makes use of the technology and controls access to the information, which is a compendium of 'facts.' It follows that the theology of power, under which the technocracy prospers, marginalizes the whole idea of opposition and therefore that of sensible change. Opposition becomes a refusal to participate in the process. It is irrational. And this trivialization of those who criticize or say no from outside the power structure applies not only to politics but to all organizations." Boyte (2008) shares a similar view, "Power in educational, professional, and service institutions is largely structured around organized knowledge. In practical terms, they have enormous influence over communications, technology, and the creation and dissemination of knowledge."

Clearly we are in the midst of a society that is dominated by the professional class. Programs are designed by professionals often with good intentions but are out of touch with the client's experience. This whole issue of the culture of professionalism is biased toward the educated elite and has developed into a system that is increasing out of touch with the community it purports to serve. As professionals come to understand the

consequences of professional isolation and its effect on the common good, their instincts lead to crossing professional boundaries on a horizontal plane, meeting with each other professionally and socially. Rarely, if ever, is collaboration viewed vertically (rich to poor, educated to uneducated, academy to community and so on). Partnerships with clients, patients, or community residents in the quest for the common good are rare, and effective methods and systems for such vertical integration are practically non-existent.

Professional Dynamics. There are three dynamics associated with the current state of professionalism that bear special attention: the dominance of a pathological perspective, the expert syndrome, and the devaluing of the professional-client relationship.

Professional Ill-Health. Professionals have relied on the development and predominance of a pathological model for viewing human beings and their needs. This sickness model pervades professional jargon, agencies, relationships, and minds. People are viewed as sets of problems needing cures, as collections of pathological components. This model has dehumanized and inappropriately carved up the essence of the human being. It assumes that the identification of a person's problems and creation of matching solutions would result in lasting change. But people are more than the sum of their problems. Future professionals need to understand that human beings, no matter their background or condition, are complex beings full of hopes, strengths, weaknesses, capacities and resources. In other words, they are assets with much to contribute. Professionals need to approach human need from a perspective of strength and wholeness. The job becomes one of building on the strengths of people and expanding their capacities for achievement.

The "Expert" Syndrome. Many professionals have embraced the hierarchical notion that with professionalism comes status and an inherent "intellectual superiority." Dewar (1978) writes about the symbiotic relationship between the professional and the client. He notes that there is a certain push, an implicit requirement, that the client adopt, assume the language, ideals and culture of the professional, thereby becoming the good client. While seemingly a natural process, Dewar maintains that this process of making good clients paradoxically produces poor citizens, dependent people who are unable to solve their own problems and issues, "The power and importance of professionals is not simply that they obtain income or status for their services, or even that they obtain clients, but that they have the ability to transform thought and action. As more and more of us become professionalized, their control and dominance will increase. It will be their definitions of the problems, their definitions of the solutions, and their excuses that will guide us." Moreover, there is the rigid belief that the client needs to be separated from the professional, literally and figuratively. In practice and personal behavior, professionals create a climate of inaccessibility, intellectual superiority and withdrawal. Professionals

have allowed the proliferation of too many barriers, structures and systems which limit client access while preserving their own sanctity. Especially if they are surrounded by sycophants, it's easy for professionals to develop a too-elevated opinion of themselves. During his reign as heavyweight champion, Muhammad Ali was in the first class section of an airliner waiting for takeoff, when a flight attendant asked him to please buckle his seat belt, Ali looked her right in the eye and said, "Superman don't need a seat belt." The attendant looked right back and said, "Superman don't need an airplane, either." And that's what all professionals need -- someone who can bring them gently back to earth when they get too carried away with themselves and their accomplishments.

Devaluing the Professional-Client Relationship. Perhaps most significantly, professionals have drifted away from the basic worker-client relationship, assuming that emphasis on such contrived units of analysis as programs, service levels, objectives and other abstractions would improve effectiveness. This was, and remains, a mistake. Future professionals and other human service workers, volunteers, and interested people need to understand and re-commit to the fundamental importance of building quality relationships with the client. Success is measured in terms of the outcomes of the relationship; professionals, who are committed to helping clients, over time, improve their lives by applying resources, skills and capacities. The helping relationship needs to be the primary unit of analysis for funding and for measuring success.

The New Community Professional. For these reasons, a different kind of professional is needed -- a new "Community Professional." This new professional has a civil religion based on notions of public service and a sense of calling that requires both lateral and vertical participation. The new community professional needs different skills and abilities. Shore (1995) makes the case clearly, "...How will we get a society to think differently and bravely about ending poverty, about not leaving people behind?...The answer lies in the only thing we haven't tried: a massive, nationwide commitment of talented, compassionate, and creative people in our society, a commitment not only to support worthwhile programs and projects financially, but rather to deploy skills and special talents on behalf of people in need, personally. The effort must be focused, sophisticated, organized, and directed toward the toughest tasks, rather than the tasks that are simply the most suitable for untrained but well-meaning volunteers. Just as we can't buy our way out of poverty, we can't volunteer our way out, either. Communities will be transformed only when the people in and around them are transformed. Electoral revolutions will be ephemeral, and in the long term irrelevant, unless the next American Revolution is a revolution of the heart, a revolution within each and every one of us."

Using the city-tower-skyway metaphor again, the new community professional not only engages the downtown towers of the non-profit infrastructure, but also connects with the community's "scattered" sites creating a

system-wide web and messenger service. In place of the usual practice where ideas, needs, and initiatives emanate from the downtown tower professionals, the new community professional creates and encourages transmission of ideas from anywhere within the network. Scattered sites in this metaphor are the rich collection of organizations that form the fabric of our community. These "scattered sites" are the emerging 4th Sector (that combination of myriad grass roots, self-help organizations and associations, many of which are unchartered, and those non-profit organizations whose missions, focus and operations are all about neighborhood interaction and community building). The messengers are those unique people who by way of experience and interest are well connected to the community and have the credibility to speak for its different elements. They are also that rare collection of professionals who have managed to master the intricacies of systemic politics while keeping in touch with neighbors on the block. The new community professional navigates the landscape of class and ethnic diversity.

Shore (1995) challenges professionals to change, "Contrary to conventional wisdom, the fundamental challenge of the day for Americans is not just to make government larger or smaller, make it work better, or reinvent it, though all of those need to be done and we stand to benefit if they are. The challenge instead is to reclaim for ourselves the role in public and civil life we have forfeited. We need to reclaim what we have for too long ignored and neglected: the opportunity for active and meaningful engagement in our own communities. It is the requisite missing ingredient for community-building efforts. Like the dog that didn't bark in the Sherlock Holmes classic, it is the telltale clue to the mystery that has confounded us."

Just as the conventional professional orients toward peers, over-emphasizes the written word to assemble knowledge, uses a medical model for practice, withdraws from the civic life of the community and over-values educational achievement as an indicator of success, the new community professional has unshakeable core values that have been honed in the grist of community experience. The new community professional values listening and understanding, has new technology and skills such as knowing how to mediate conflict and find non-traditional ways of gaining access to people and their ideas, knows that success depends on the client's success, not on some old body of knowledge or the school that one went to and believes that the highest credential is client respect. Authentic, new community professionals share the pains as well as the gains. *Marching his thirsty army across a desert, Alexander the Great was approached by an aide who offered him a helmet full of water. "Is there enough for 10,000 men?" asked Alexander. When the soldier shook his head, Alexander poured the water out on the ground.* Contrast that with CEOs whose pay continually increases, while workers receive pay cuts or are laid off.

When I started in this work, I was under the impression, or belief, that the ideal professional worker was a person who was skilled in the "downtown" skills -- polished, articulate, an excellent writer with a strong theoretical base for practice and high education credentials. I also knew that overall effectiveness called for street work with its special set of skills and knowledge such as familiarity with street language and culture, familiarity with local home grown leadership and community resources, and the ability to translate street language and culture into practical experience and manageable plans. Acting on those beliefs, I hired people who were educated, conventional professionals believing that I could later on, help them become streetwise. I changed my mind. I now know that the best way to proceed is to hire street- wise people and help them understand and learn what it means to be professional in the context of community.

Greenleaf (1991) put it best, "...a new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader. Those who choose to follow this principle will not casually accept the authority of existing institutions. Rather, they will freely respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted as servants. To the extent that this principle prevails in the future, the only truly viable institutions will be those that are predominantly servant-led."

The context of professionalism is changing. The new environment is welcoming, warm and functional, and the new community professional has skills to bridge the major gaps in our society. The new community professional understands that the most important credential is the endorsement of the community, the beneficiary or the client. Almost 2,500 years ago, Lao-tzu, the great Chinese sage and poet had it right when he wrote, "A leader is best when people barely know he exists. Not so good when people obey and acclaim him. Worse when they despise him. But of a good leader who talks little when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, 'We did it ourselves.'" New community professionals will embrace Lao-tzu's powerful message. They will be part of re-creating relationships that lead to stronger performance and better, healthier communities. To remain stuck in old patterns and ideas that devalue the prominence of the client or customer trivializes our work, our missions, and our lives. Our communities cry out for professionals who are committed, accessible, and street-wise. We can do no less than prepare, respond, act, and serve.

The Next Generation Nonprofit: Community Sovereignty and the 4th Sector

> ***sov·er·eign·ty***
>
> ***1.*** *the quality or state of being sovereign.* ***2.*** *the status, dominion, power, or authority of a sovereign; royalty.* ***3.*** *supreme and independent power or authority in government as possessed or claimed by a state or community.* ***4.*** *rightful status, independence, or prerogative.* ***5.*** *a sovereign state, community, or political unit*

The time is ripe for change: the seeds of reform are planted, the limits of current sectors are measured, and the age of professional sovereignty is ending. But there is hope because we are taking action; we are constructing a new social architecture with block-by-block, local grass roots substitutes for the marginalized family, for out-of-touch institutions, and for old community building strategies. As organizations redesign or become extinct, we are certain that those habits and skills that made them successful in the past will not work in the knowledge society. But what will take their place? What new structures are necessary and how will they operate and be governed? How do we reconfigure those social transactions necessary to overcome today's challenges? What does the next generation nonprofit look like?

Elements of a Healthy Community. The next generation non-profit rejects the pathological view of human beings and embraces the notion that people are complex -- full of hopes, strengths, weaknesses, capacities, and resources. Meeting human need from a position of strength and wholeness optimizes individual self-sufficiency and the building of healthy communities. Fully understanding this strengths perspective requires a certain consensus on the meaning of the concepts of *self-sufficiency* and healthy *community,* concepts commonly offered up as admirable goals and frequently appearing in the language of social reform. Emerson and Twersky (1996) identified the elements of healthy communities:

> Income/Assets (sources and level of income; accumulation of savings, other assets; debt and credit).
>
> Education/Skills (academic achievement; job-related skills and experience; other relevant skills, hobbies, etc.).
>
> Housing/Food (stability and security of housing; condition and affordability of housing; nutrition and adequacy of food).
>
> Safety/Environment (crime in surroundings, risk to family; transportation, neighborhood services; personal perception of safety, freedom).
>
> Human Services (health care; child care and teen care; substance abuse; other needs for services).

Relationships (primary or spousal relation; parent and child/teen relations; relations with friends, co-workers; religious/cultural ties, etc.).

Personal Attributes (personal self-esteem, confidence; interpersonal, socialization skills; sense of hope and vision; life management skills).

Self-sufficiency is defined as *the accumulation of a critical mass of strengths in these elements of a healthy community.*

McKnight and Block (2010) address healthy communities as well, "An abundant community is not organized the system way – there is no interest in consistency, uniformity, and replaceable parts. Abundance is about the variety of gifts and what is most personal and idiosyncratic to families and neighborhoods. A competent community, one that takes advantage of it abundance, admits the realities of the human condition and the truth of the decay, restoration, and growth processes that are a part of every living system. Variety, uniqueness, and appreciation for the one-of-a-kind are its essence." They go on, "…a community needs certain *properties.* They are the organizing principles for achieving competence. A competent community has three properties:

Focus on the gifts of its members.

Nurture association life.

Offer hospitality, the welcoming of strangers."

The non-profit sector suffers further from ideas like "more is better than less", "new is better than old," and "complexity is inevitable" -- ideas that dominate decision-making, planning, and operations. The system is frenetic and the professionals in it, stressed. Each new issue or circumstance generates new structures, further straining already limited resources and fraying nerves. We have created scads of agencies, consolidated funding groups, planning bodies, and other forms in the human service system and resources used do not match results. Moreover, the nonprofit system is bound up with regulation and layers of oversight.

We all would do well to adhere to the warning of sociologist Thomas Merton, "The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. More than that, it is cooperation with violence. The frenzy of the activist neutralizes his work for peace. It destroys her own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of his own work because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful."

Embracing the sovereignty of community and creating a **fourth sector** is an alternative strategy resulting in the formation of "bridging organizations" that vertically integrate economic classes, build community, produce citizenship, and provide assurances for strengthening the poor. **Fourth, or Community, Sector** organizations can bring community and family together through a new social architecture. These organizations are "family places" that are the '90s adaptation of the old kitchen table, family room, backyard fence or general store. Great and small ideas are discussed, family and social values are debated and transmitted, problems are solved, and access to resources is gained. **Community sector** organizations are places of interaction, support, and accountability.

*The **Community Sector** can be defined as **an amalgam of emerging non-profit organizations, self-help groups, neighborhood and member-based organizations that create innovative systems and financing mechanisms to address neighborhood concerns. They link three activities: social service, economic development, and capacity building, and create a local vision and renaissance of activity.***

These venture-oriented, multi-purpose, affinity-driven organizations educate, focus resources, share values, create meaning, accrue benefits, and create networks of opportunity for members. Members gain value from the enterprise, contribute to it, offer support and service to each other, and join with others to pursue collective interests in the quest for self-sufficiency and healthy community. **Community sector** organizations develop competence in a cultural mosaic approach to community building.

Community sector organizations hire from within the communities they serve and accept only those professionals who are honed in the grist of neighborhood experience, interculturally competent, and trained in economic development. Through community organization and participation, and by encouraging opportunities for neighborhood economic growth, these organizations represent holistic approaches for addressing the complex and multi-faceted needs of the community. In a review of fourth sector organizations around the country, Halvorson (1991) highlighted five themes:

1. **Community sector** organizations are concerned with a new localism that blends social service with economic activity.
2. They engage in actions that regenerate, renew, and heal broken social relationships by neighborhood stakeholders.
3. **Community sector** organizations use empowering social technologies to create participatory citizenship (issues discussion/focus groups; image shifting workshops whose purpose is to form group consensus; intuitive strategic planning; celebrations).
4. They create social and financial capital.
5. They focus on information gathering and action-research.

Not long ago, in a meeting of key policy and nonprofit leaders trying to figure out how our human system can achieve better outcomes and after arduous, frustrating discussion, someone shouted out, and "What we need are settlement houses!" The group concurred. Curiously, the speaker did not include Pillsbury United Communities (or other agencies that grew out of the settlement house movement) in his concept of an old settlement house, and, more importantly, the ideals and methods behind **the early settlement houses seemed to the group clearly relevant to today's problems.**

The Pillsbury United Communities Example. The last 5 years at Pillsbury United Communities (PUC) focused on trying to transform the organization from a service provider, traditional nonprofit into a justice driven, 4th sector organization fully embracing the sovereignty of community. In 2009, while dealing with painful financial challenges, PUC adopted a new initiative called, the "New Settlement Way." It was a strategy for transforming the Agency from a service provider to a 21st century settlement house that more deeply connects with neighborhood residents, broadly engages residents in defining community solutions and promotes the ideals of the early settlement house movement (dignity and respect, democratic participation of neighbors, importance of culture, and the co-production of services, programs and enterprises).

PUC believed it was imperative that it develop an alternative operating model that brought greater value to the people it serves. The organization flirted with this new model, but did not fully develop or embrace community sovereignty as the basis for its structure, priority setting, and operations.

Over time, PUC moved to community sovereignty by:

- Hiring people from the community who knew the client and the client's culture.
- Promoting from within so that community leadership could provide organizational leadership.
- Believing in staff development and spending time and money on it.
- Being a learning organization.
- Encouraging risk taking and developing an appetite for ambivalence.
- Liking its clients; listening to them and respecting them.
- Changing its appearance and architecture to be welcoming and accessible.
- Developing a vision that was bigger than the organization

The New Settlement Way Vision. *Pillsbury United Communities will be a boldly innovative, nimble and organized partnership network that achieves results valued by the people it serves and positively impact tough individual and community problems through an effective, holistic and inclusive band of "community partners."*

Pillsbury United Communities will be known and respected by the diverse communities it serves, and its community partners, staff and facilities will be the "go to" people and places for service, hope and community strength.

The "New Settlement Way" initiative hastened the transformation of PUC's organizational ethos, culture and operating systems through four major efforts: Implementation of the "21st Century Settlement House Partnership at its Brian Coyle Community Center; development of an "Urban Institute for Service and Learning" that provides leadership and oversight for the New Settlement Way; integrating arts and human services at Pillsbury House by creating a "Cultural Community Hub"; strengthening and growing the MACC Commonwealth.

Three critical actions paved the way for PUC's transformation:

1. Adoption of the idea that the most important **credential** for new employees was their credibility with the community and their ability to build effective relationships with the people served as opposed to academic achievement or degree held. Practically, PUC changed the language of its job descriptions from B.A. or Master's degree required and ability to work with community preferred, to ability to work with community required, degree preferred. Within 5 years, this change dramatically changed the complexion of the organization. PUC became profoundly diverse in its staff. Further, its experience with "clients" or the community was richer and its ability to serve the community exploded.

2. After years of dealing with racism in the community and within PUC, the organization committed to begin the journey of **undoing racism** within the organization and community. PUC made a formal, long term, and public commitment to have everyone (staff, CEO, volunteers, and board of directors) undergo a 3-day "undoing racism" workshop conducted by the People's Institute for Survival out of New Orleans. This workshop and commitment dramatically transformed the organization's culture.

3. PUC **diminished the role of service provider** and developed a new model underpinning its work: relationship building and community organization became the central focus. Rather than being a set of programs designed to provide a service as the basic approach, PUC came to understand that the most powerful tool for individual and community change was the creation of relationships that were intentional in promoting positive growth and community responsibility.

In a system that is essentially racist and biased against the poor and dominated by the service provision paradigm, these actions put PUC at odds with key funders and decision makers (government, foundations, and

the United Way). PUC became a very nimble organization as it navigated the demands of the service provision culture while trying to embrace the sovereignty of community.

Third and fourth sector differences. Making a distinction between the third and fourth sectors -- the non-profit and community sectors is significant because so many non-profits have become government or private sector "clones," orienting to the funder or the dominant society, they are confused about mission and purpose. Drucker (1994) pins hope on the existing non-profit sector when he writes, "The right answer to the question, 'Who takes care of the social challenges of the knowledge society?' is neither the government nor the employing organizations. The answer is a separate and new *social sector*...Social sector institutions aim at changing the human being...The task of social sector organizations is to create human health and well-being. Increasingly, these organizations of the social sector serve a second and equally important purpose; they create citizenship." Unfortunately, Drucker does not fully appreciate the problems with the social sector, previously identified. While some non-profits are in fact fourth sector-like organizations, most are not, and as a consequence will not meet the challenges of the knowledge society. Therefore, a distinction between third and fourth sector organizations needs to be made. The following chart illustrates those differences.

Chart 1. THIRD (NON-PROFIT) AND 4TH (COMMUNITY) SECTOR DIFFERENCES

Area of Concern	3rd Sector	4th Sector
Style of Physical Space	Doctor's Office/Clinic	Living/Family Room
Unit of Analysis	Program/Service	Relationships/Change
Orientation to People	Client/Deficit	Partner/Asset
Operating System	Hierarchical/Compartmentalized/ Exclusive	Web/Flat/Open/Collaborative/ Inclusive
Staff Roles	Gatekeeper/Service Provider/ Expert	Broker/Facilitator/Advocate
Aura	Cool/Distant/Impolite	Warm/Welcoming/Respectful
Power Orientation	Top Down	Bottom Up
Ownership Participation	Funder Representatives	Resident Stakeholders
Product/Outcome	Self-Improvement	Community Good

As third sector non-profit organizations remain entrenched in the battles over survival and adhere to the ineffectiveness of old paradigms, many will simply fail in the quest for relevancy. By orienting to the community sector, non-profit organizations can capture the excitement, viability, and resources that the **community sovereignty** promises.

The **community sector** will emerge in two ways: by the creation of completely new organizations and by the transformation of existing third sector non-profits. Obviously, many organizations will be unwilling or unable to shift to the community sector with its imperative for radically different organizational styles and performance. The hope for meeting individual needs and building community is the extent to which social policy and practice speed the growth of community sector organizations and embrace the sovereignty of community. Just as the third sector responded to twentieth century mass industrial society with all its injustices and inequities, the fourth sector shall respond to the inequities and injustices of the information society.

Two Cautions**.** While the emerging **community sector** is promising because of its ability to provide individual and community fulfillment, it will not flower without care. Unless close attention is paid, the community sector could result in further fragmentation and self-interest, erecting even stronger barriers between people, programs, and institutions. Drucker (1994) notes, "...But in the society of organizations each of the new institutions is concerned only with its own purpose and mission. It does not claim power over anything else. But it also does not assume responsibility for anything else. Who, then, is concerned with the common good? This has always been a central problem of pluralism...The new pluralism has a new problem: how to maintain the performance capacity of the new institutions and yet maintain the cohesion of society."

Given this concern for cohesion and some curious elements of the American psyche, like its propensity for style over substance, new over old, the quick fix, and its susceptibility to "hero worship," caution is in order. Unreservedly, the fourth sector offers hope for empowering individuals, healing the divisions in our society, and building stronger neighborhoods and communities, but only to the extent that it addresses two potentially critical conditions.

The first condition is the "**disease of chronic entrepreneurialism**." The fascinating ease with which we give birth to organizations belies an obsession with newness, innovation, and the belief that the solutions to our problems are "out there" somewhere. We place abnormally high value on the "charismatic social entrepreneur" to pull us out of the quicksand of lost family cohesiveness, urban blight, poverty, crime, and amorality. Time and again the human service "vigilante" arrives on the scene with a "new" idea, acquires the ear and money of community funders, builds expectations within neighborhoods, then disappears without penalty, leaving a trail of dashed

hopes. New does not necessarily mean innovative. Too many resources go into creating small, independent organizations and structures each and every time we see a problem. We need to understand that long-term, often painstakingly slow, hard working responses are required. Inevitably, there will be false starts, fitful growth, organizational discomfort, and inadequate support as non-profit sector organizations try to change. The community sector needs grounding in the knowledge that solutions already exist within the community and its leaders, that the central task is the assembly of knowledge and proven experience, that options are generated and choices made, and that implementation is effectively managed.

In an interesting editorial, Jack Schneider writes, “TFA” (Teach for America) is a juggernaut not because of results, but because it taps into the reform spirit of the age – a spirit neatly summed up in the ubiquitous phrase “excellence for all.” Beyond being a piece of rhetoric, the slogan implies a very particular approach to reform, rooted in identifying successful practices and tying to replicate them.” (Minneapolis Star Tribune Opinion Page, February 1, 2012.) Margaret Wheatley (*Walk Out, Walk On*) exquisitely reminds us that solutions to intractable problems like racism and poverty are solved by local, grassroots action. In an age of community sovereignty, we will reject efforts that attempt to replicate and scale up one communities’ success with another’s problems. Jeffrey Canada’s “Harlem Children’s Zone” is a magnificent enterprise, but trying to replicate it in north Minneapolis is not likely to work. Doing so completely underestimates the uniqueness and power of the local community.

The second cautionary concern is the unspoken **bias against bigness** that exists among funders, service providers, and the general public especially when it comes to meeting human need. While non-profit programs are best delivered in small, manageable packages, effective organizational administration, given the complexities of personnel law, insurance systems benefit plans, and other functions, demand the kind of sophistication and capacity for which larger agencies are capable. Similarly, many small, new organizations by design, neglect, or incompetence oppress and inhibit self-expression and collective action, even though operated by people whose style denotes an entirely benign mission. If we are to have an effective **community sector**, a disciplined focus on results and quality over form and style is necessary. Rather than blindly accepting romantic notions like "small is beautiful," the **community sector** needs to embrace effectiveness and results while taking advantage of bigness and smallness at the same time.

With these cautions in mind, the soundest strategy for expanding the **community sector** while attending to the problems of pluralism is the transformation of certain third sector organizations that have the desire to change and a track record of transcending special interest. These innovative organizations can be the bridges from the industrial paradigm to the knowledge society and have the best hope for assuring that the new American

neighborhood is vibrant, healthy, and relevant. While there are several examples where existing non-profit organizations have become part of the new **community sector**, far too many have lost their way; their moral compasses affected by the magnetism of money and old paradigms. By changing direction, they can revitalize mission and generate hope.

Finally, the next generation nonprofit will promote an investment, community building mentality that produces economic opportunity, strength, and ownership. It will bring on the sovereignty of community. In doing so, the next generation nonprofit provides new solutions to old problems. A lesson from Alfred Einstein, the great mathematician and teacher, illustrates the point.

Albert Einstein had a reputation for being unable to attend to the details associated with daily living--he often overlooked or forgot the simplest tasks. When teaching at the University he was often assigned a talented graduate student to help him remember the small but important daily tasks associated with teaching. The story goes that on one final exam day the graduate student overslept and upon waking was panic stricken, knowing that Dr. Einstein probably forgot to show up for the exam and that the students would be left without direction. In a flash, he rushed to the classroom only to discover that Dr. Einstein was calmly in charge. The graduate student looked at the exams that Dr. Einstein had distributed and noticed, to his great dismay, that the exams were last year's. "Oh no!" the graduate student cried out to Dr. Einstein, "these exams have the same questions as last year, the students know all of the questions." "My boy," Dr. Einstein said calmly, "Don't worry, the questions may be the same, but I've changed all the answers!"

The questions posed today are not new, but surely the answers are changing. The seeds for reform are taking hold so deeply and the movement to a knowledge society so rapidly that we simply cannot afford the distractions of old patterns. The next generation nonprofit offers hope for the new American neighborhood and promises community. Its vision requires serious energy to meet the daily challenges of structure, governance, staffing, resources, and results. Our task now is to help community people create their own future -- a future based on assets, choice, and strength; and a future that invokes a strong sense of community connection, individual power, citizenship, and accountability. We cannot help but be drawn to this future.

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