

NEXUS: The Pittsburgh Dialogues for Volunteers, Philanthropists and Activists

Social Capital, Civic Engagement, Strong Communities

Documenting NEXUS: The Pittsburgh Dialogues
for Volunteers, Philanthropists and Activists

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NEXUS LINKS THE BEST OF NATIONAL THINKING WITH PROMISING WORK IN OUR COMMUNITIES TO BUILD TRUST AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, IN AN EFFORT TO SHAPE A COMPREHENSIVE ACTION AGENDA FOR WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA.

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Foreword

Brian O'Connell, former president of Independent Sector, says that practitioners have an obligation also to be writers. So this practitioner humbly offers this report with the hope that it proves helpful to the thousands of practical idealists and social capitalists in Southwestern Pennsylvania with whom it is my daily pleasure to work.

Special thanks to Abby Sandel, who was instrumental in the development of the NEXUS projects. Without Abby's heart, mind and big Rolodex, this project would have been much the poorer! Also, there's a special place in Heaven for Lew Feldstein, Scott Izzo, Greg Crowley, Luci Dabney, Michelle David, Carrie Richards, Liz Styles, Rick St. John, Tara Covelens, Grant Erwin and Jess King – and 500 others! – who have been sojourners with me and co-creators of this long and winding road.

– Peggy Morrison Outon

Social Capital, Civic Engagement, Strong Communities

Documenting NEXUS: *The Pittsburgh Dialogues for Activists, Philanthropists & Volunteers*

As more and more indicators suggest that public trust in nonprofit organizations hangs at an all-time low, we're concerned about the impact of this distrust on our communities. We know that, if we are to successfully confront the most serious challenges before us, the willingness of individual citizens to engage as volunteers, philanthropists and activists is critical. We believe that strong nonprofits build strong communities, but the reality is that nonprofits can only be as strong as their communities are.

The Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management (BCNM) at Robert Morris University is a comprehensive management support organization working in partnership with an academic center for graduate study and research. In addition to providing high-quality consulting, research and educational services to the region's more than 6,000 nonprofit organizations, BCNM aspires to be a catalytic force for change and an advocate for strengthening not only the daily operations of nonprofits, but the communities we serve.

Why does an exploration of social capital and civic engagement have particular relevance for nonprofit leaders? When you see it in action, there's little question of its power:

“We couldn't get a meeting with Bonnie. Tried everything. And then Lisa called someone from her church, and he knew a close friend of Bonnie's from the golf club. Next thing you know, we're on Bonnie's calendar for Tuesday next.”

“The Council had voted it down twice before, but this time Brad and Susan got involved. Between the two of them, they know everyone – the bank VP, the janitor at the high school, the little old ladies you see at the farmer's market every weekend. It passed 9-2. Can you believe it?”

“Why did this year's event do so well? That's easy. We were honoring Ray. You know Ray, right? Turns out everyone else in town does, too – and thinks he's a great guy. We had people calling us to reserve a table before we'd printed the invitations.”

Social capital has long been a powerful currency in nonprofit America. Our missions require community support in significant and meaningful ways. And community support is often elusive in a society in which apathy reigns and where there's a generally held perception that we've lost our community connections. In his highly regarded book on social capital, *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam states that although only 8% of those surveyed felt that “the honesty and integrity of the average American was improving,”¹ 80% felt that more emphasis on community issues was needed. So there exists an ever-

present tension between the perception of disengaged multitudes and the yearning for closer connections. Many studies show we still have a widely shared belief in civic republicanism – that we still have a common moral purpose and that citizens still have a responsibility for the welfare of their fellows and for the common good. Those of us who work daily with nonprofit organizations see those people every day.

In nonprofit work, social capital comes up constantly. It goes by other names, of course. “She’s really connected.” “He knows everyone.” “She gets it – knows the neighborhood inside and out.” Not only is it critical to our success – in fundraising, in advocacy, in finding talented and committed volunteers and board members – but nonprofits are often the engine for creating social capital in a community. Indeed, it is bedrock for nonprofit success that community is built, that responsibility for “the least of these” is felt and shared, that a strong sense of common destiny is present.

Simply put, social capital is the value stemming from our ordinary relationships with every other individual or group we know, both formally – the pastor at the church down the road – and informally – the people you wait with for the 8:10 train every morning. It refers to the collective value of social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other. Social capital is all about who you know, but it also means that your “who” doesn’t have to be a senator or billionaire to be influential and effective.

While it’s tempting to reduce social capital to a mechanical exchange – we say hello every day, therefore I can ask her to sign a petition – it is actually far more subtle and complex. Properly used, it engenders a community characterized by mutual support, cooperation, trust and institutional effectiveness. As Robert Bellah notes in *Habits of the Heart*, such a community calls us to wider and wider circles of loyalty.²

The materials out of which we build social capital are vulnerable in our hectic, rush-push modern lives. While this is a relatively new area of research, it’s crystal clear that we hold less social capital as a nation than we did fifty, even twenty, years ago.

Harvard’s Saguaro Seminars, a national conversation of thought leaders hosted by Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein, discovered that:

- Every ten minutes of commuting reduces all forms of social capital by 10%. That means a person is 10% less likely to volunteer, to vote, to give to the causes in our communities.
- Although churches remain a primary social-capital-building force in many communities, church attendance has fallen by a third since its peak immediately following World War II.
- Want to reduce crime? Learning the names of ten of your neighbors is more effective than putting X new police officers on the streets.

- Increased time spent in front of the television has come to mean that our best friends are often Dr. McDreamy and Mr. Rogers, as time spent with friends in club work has plummeted over the last three decades. Now, only 8% of people surveyed report that they have served on a committee or as an officer of a club – half the number reported in 1970.
- As more women work outside the home, family dinners and, certainly, dinner parties are an endangered species. Yet those friendships often are the glue that attaches the family to church, school and other community activities.

Just as physical capital and human capital provide tools and training that enhance individual productivity, so social capital invested in the power of social networks enhances the productivity of groups and individuals.³ For nonprofits, this means more people to contribute money to advance its mission, to volunteer to work in its programs and to serve as board members and committee chairs. Strong social networks deeply attached to a nonprofit are one of the most critical success factors for organizations over time.

If our capacity to be engaged and social is a dying art form, nonprofit organizations are feeling the aftershocks. And yet, if we're aware that this is an issue requiring our attention, we may be able to create positive changes both for our missions and the wider communities we serve. Social capital is, without a doubt, a key raw material for nonprofit organizations.

Why NEXUS?

At the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management, we sign up every day to work with nonprofits to see that their efforts yield the maximum value for the people they serve and those who invest their time and money for the greater community. We observe how productive work gets done and partner with our colleagues to create more effective ways of working. In nonprofits, good will, trust and a fundamental hunger for social justice is currency. So is people's willingness to help. Effectiveness is often measured by an organization's ability to work collaboratively.

So we set out to study four key questions:

1. What factors cause people to become engaged citizens?
2. Are there cultural trends that encourage engaged citizenship? Trends that discourage involvement?
3. What practical steps can communities take to strengthen civic engagement?
4. In comparison to other sectors, do nonprofit organizations have a distinctive role to play in facilitating citizen engagement?

If you want to increase the health of a system, increase the connections.

– Meg Wheatley

In this resource-constrained world, we have long known that people, unpaid and paid, are the primary resource for most organizations. Twenty-five years ago, there was a broad and deep national conversation about the power of volunteers. As nonprofits have gained in financial resources and professional staff, has something been lost in the use of total community resources? If individual organizations could be stronger through better use of their people power, how could stronger networks, with responsibilities shared across agencies and neighborhoods, better serve community needs? And, if this is true, how can we best encourage a renewed recognition of the power of shared vision, of shared destiny, that is implicit in communities characterized by strong social capital? *Is not helping our community organizations recognize and deepen their resources of social capital one of the most profoundly helpful means of capacity building the Bayer Center could offer?*

Our Advisors

Beginning in March 2005, the Richard King Mellon Foundation offered to support this extended, multi-stranded conversation. We began by looking at the texts, *Habits of the Heart* by Robert Bellah, et al; *Bowling Alone* by Robert D. Putnam; and *Better Together* by Putnam and Lewis Feldstein. These three books, along with insights gained from the Saguaro Seminars at Harvard provided the intellectual framework for our thinking on the importance of social capital.

In addition to reading, of course, we talked! As good social capitalists, we were seeking to get our arms around this broad and ambiguous topic through engaging a broad and serious group of thinkers. Each conversation deepened our excitement and sense we were onto something. Interviews were conducted with more than forty people, in Pittsburgh and around the country, who ranged in age from 25 to 65. The group was broadly representative: one-third were people of color, equally balanced between men and women; half were nonprofit professionals, with half of those from business and half from the foundation world. We talked to activists, philanthropists and volunteers – sometimes all descriptors fit one person.

While we benefited from the insights offered by people around the country, we have been guided by one key principle: there can be no insight without application! We have been determined to apply the lessons we learned, and not only to nonprofits generally, but specifically to nonprofits in our region.

Challenges for Southwestern Pennsylvania

In “Why Trust Matters to Nonprofits,” a paper commissioned to help frame the issues for NEXUS, Dr. Greg Crowley of the CORO Center for Civic Leadership documents some of the challenges our local nonprofit communities face. The paper identifies an important disconnect between the leaders of nonprofits and the community they seek to serve. It also cites a 2004 Forbes Fund survey, which shows that nonprofit executives ranked increasing funding first among possible solutions to better addressing community needs.

Residents, meanwhile, listed donating money last among ways people like them could make a difference. They thought volunteering was the most likely way they could help! Crowley also notes that there is a pervasive sense of loss in our community, a sense that our best days are behind us. He found that a full 45.3% of Allegheny County residents lacked optimism for the future. Nationally, the number was 29.9%. The recognition of these tensions shaped our thinking.

To some degree, this reverence of the past makes particular sense for our region. Southwestern Pennsylvania has long been a place people loved and served. One of our local heroes, Andrew Carnegie, wrote in his *Gospel of Wealth* that wealth is a sacred trust which its possessor is bound to administer for the good of the community. He lived that truth all over this country and abroad. Furthering the story of leadership in Pittsburgh were David L. Lawrence and Richard King Mellon. More than fifty years ago, both of these men led individual charges to clean up the air and the water and spearheaded a civic renewal praised nationwide. This singular leadership is cherished by many and often told as the emblematic success story for Pittsburgh.

In many communities, the model of singular leadership has been replaced by one of dispersed leadership. In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam states that myths often exaggerate the role of individual heroes and understate the importance of collective effort. So while Southwestern Pennsylvania has benefited enormously from its local heroes, it's now time to give due recognition to the multitude of leaders who built, and are building, our city. One of the goals of NEXUS was to create a forum where all could play and contribute.

We began these dialogues after 9/11, after the Enron debacle, after scandals rocked the Catholic Church, after fraud hit the United Way. We live in a society ever more challenged by issues of trust. We also live in an economic climate that sports a widening income gap. Allegheny County is no exception. A study done by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh show serious disparities, especially between blacks and whites in Allegheny County. For 1999, per capita income of whites was \$21,849, nearly twice that of the \$12,356 for blacks. The white poverty rate of 14.3% was nearly two and a half times less than that of blacks (34.1%), and white home values were 33% higher than black home values.⁴

Fairness is a guiding principle for ethical decisionmaking throughout the world, and the current gap between the rich and the poor in American society – Southwestern Pennsylvania included – does little to show that principle at work. This reality could help to explain the seeming lack of optimism in our community.

Despite these inequities, Southwestern Pennsylvania is more politically active than other communities in this country. Voter turnout for the 2004 Presidential Election in Allegheny County was almost 70%. In Butler County, it was 76%. In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam cites voting participation rates just over 50% throughout the country during the '90s. Pennsylvanians do love their politics and had the fun, and responsibility, of being a swing state fought over by both parties. It's a fact that people who vote make charitable contributions and volunteer more than people who don't.

Southwestern Pennsylvania is also famous for its sprawl and deeply fragmented communities. We struggled for years to get a joint 911 number for the City and County! Sprawl and its unintended consequences of people living in one place, working in another, and attending church or school in yet another, often distant, location means few chances for individuals to repeatedly interact. Repetition breeds familiarity and an increased sense of being at home. Many people would say fragmentation, a strong sense of loss of power and a distrust of strangers were powerful descriptors of Southwestern Pennsylvania. While all of these issues seem intractable, they are also the same ones we read about in *Bowling Alone* and discussed in our national interviews.

We were not deceived about the difficulty of seeming to embrace a “Kumbaya” and nostalgic Mayberry vision in a society of ideological individualism, with its compulsive stress on independence, its contempt for weakness and its adulation of success.⁵ Nonprofit organizations are regularly being exhorted to show their self-sufficiency, clearly document their programmatic success and never show fear! But the more we learned, the more convinced we became that a better understanding of social capital and a determination to apply its principles to nonprofit work was highly relevant and quite modern.

Guiding Principles for NEXUS

So we began a series of six public conversations with nationally and locally recognized activists, philanthropists and volunteers that were informed by these principles:

- Never only one voice, however authoritative! And since we started with Lew Feldstein – who is *the* authority – it was extremely helpful that he was deeply delighted by dialogue and learning what we’re doing in Pittsburgh!
- At every session, we sought to invite as broad an audience as possible. We even advertised on local talk radio. And more than 500 people participated. The vast majority of our audience was nonprofit folks, but they came from throughout the region and from a wide diversity of causes and concerns.
- These sessions were conversations – dialogues between interviewer and guest, audience and everyone. Real time for real questions was central to the design of our time together. So were nametags and table topics, and any other way we could think of to encourage people to meet, greet and engage.
- Celebration of Pittsburgh’s success stories was hard-wired into the discussion. These conversations were meant not to deepen the despair, but to remind us all that people in our community were connecting, making positive change together and fiercely determined to continue!
- The choice of venue and warm hospitality were integral to the design. It is a truism in community organizing that good food often leads to good partnerships. We wanted people to feel truly welcome and valuable. We wanted to attract their

hearts as well as their minds. We intended to signal these desires by the place chosen for the meetings and the gracious hospitality we sought to extend.

- When we brought these smart people to Pittsburgh, we wanted to have a conversation that held the promise of connection and change. The day after their public engagement, they worked with a group of local leaders with broad networks to apply their thinking to our situation.
- These conversations had a strong bias towards illuminating the importance of productive dialogue. Our research partner, Dr. Greg Crowley, has documented the processes we used to encourage deep conversation. We tried a different approach each time – one that we hoped would match the mood of the discussion. Out of this work, Greg was able to show how effective facilitation skill is an important tool for nonprofit leaders. His workbook, distributed at later discussions, has helped readers apply these techniques to their work.

Throughout our development of the NEXUS Dialogues, I was haunted by one statement made by Graham Phaup, Executive Director of the Institute for Global Ethics: “Are our beloved panels of experts just a choir singing in a soundproof room?” We were determined to move beyond that place and produce both a process that was stimulating to people’s thinking and one that would deliver some specific suggestions for our region.

What follows are highlights from the NEXUS Dialogues, conversations that address important aspects of social capital and civic engagement:

- Social Capital: Context, Bonds & Bridges
- The Case of Katrina: Race, Class, Inequity and Mistrust Entrenched Over Generations – Too Few Bridges
- Breaking the Barriers

These powerful conversations taught us life-long lessons about how our nonprofits can better serve our communities, making them stronger places to live, work and play.

Social Capital: Context, Bonds & Bridges

A conversation with journalist Bill Moyers; conversations with Lewis Feldstein, president of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Barbara Mistick of the Carnegie Libraries, Sarah Dieleman Perry of PPNP and the Girlcott Girls from the Women and Girls Foundation with Kristy Trautmann of the FISA Foundation and Jess King of the Union Project.

The NEXUS Dialogues began in December 2005 with nationally recognized radio and television journalist **Bill Moyers** as part of his visit to Robert Morris University's Speakers Series. Over dinner with NEXUS leaders, Mr. Moyers sounded a clear warning about the difficulty of productive conversation because of the deep divisions in America, as well as the challenge of honest dialogue in a country beset by ideological leaders who admit no evidence to the contrary. At the time of Mr. Moyer's visit, David Brooks wrote in the New York Times:

In this atmosphere of exhaustion, the political pendulum swings from engagement to cynicism. When polarized voters lose faith in their own side, they don't switch to the other. They just withdraw. Americans rally for change when they are confident, not when they are weary and insecure. So we may have to endure a cycle of skepticism before we can enjoy another cycle of hope.⁶

Volunteering, philanthropy and "helping" are strongly linked to civic engagement. People who engage in the political process also engage in their communities. Hope and trust are fuel for social capitalists.

Trust: the WD40 of Social Capital

As we pursued our research, both formal and informal, one issue came to the fore time and time again: *trust*. Putnam tells us that trust is the WD40 of social capital. "When economic and political dealing is embedded in dense networks of social interaction, incentives for opportunism and malfeasance are reduced," says Putnam. "Dense social ties facilitate gossip and other valuable ways of cultivating reputation – an essential foundation for trust in a complex society."⁷

In his article, "The Core of Our Work as Capacity Builders," Alan Kaplan discusses how human warmth and integrity foster trust. He asserts that any "practitioner who does not consider the warmth of human relationships as a prerequisite for success [in creating positive social change] is merely a technician, never a development facilitator....[W]armth breaks barriers, dissolves rigidity, and enables people to regain a sense of their own worth."⁸ Once again, it seems that, for nonprofit leaders, social capital building with its deep connection to strong trust is a key strategy for mission success.

Our national interviews reminded us that public distrust was largely relegated to large nonprofits and that people did trust the organizations they personally knew. Nevertheless, this pervasive cynicism and general lack of trust is corrosive. True to its mission to see

that strong nonprofits build a strong community, the Bayer Center needed to better understand how the erosion of trust imperiled the bedrock on which all nonprofit organizations stand.

Many studies over the years have documented the diminution of trust in nonprofits. Paul Light at New York University has charted the downward spiral of public trust in how nonprofit organizations use money. Less than 30% of Americans surveyed now believe charities are efficient in their use of contributed funds. The trust in nonprofits is just ahead of that of organized labor, TV news, big business, HMOs and Congress. Lester Salamon at Johns Hopkins University announced at a recent national conference, “While a substantial majority of respondents agree that charitable organizations play a major role in making our communities better places to live, only 20% strongly agreed with that statement. And only 10% were willing to agree strongly that most charities were honest and ethical in their use of donated funds.” Only 10%!

These dismal statistics are echoed in a locally administered poll, done by Campos Marketing for the Forbes Funds in 2004, which shows that only 14% of survey respondents expressed a “great deal of confidence” in their local nonprofits. While the vast majority expressed a “fair amount,” a full 20% expressed “not too much” or “no” confidence.⁹ Wrote Lester Salamon: “All this suggests that nonprofits are delicately balanced on a knife edge of public support, with most people willing to give them the benefit of the doubt, but with a strong undercurrent of uncertainty and concern.”¹⁰ This suggests that nonprofits are perhaps only one good rainstorm away from ruin.

For those of us working to build a better world, these studies and viewpoints are disheartening. But what does it actually mean?

Trust is both thick and thin. *Thin trust* comes from a sense of belonging to a community, of fair play and norms. Even if you don’t know your new neighbors well, you might feel very comfortable lending them your fancy lawnmower because there’s an expectation that it will be returned. Lending out that lawnmower is an action made possible through generalized trust and a sense of reciprocity. We may not have interacted with this individual before, but other experiences have proven that, when we “pay it forward,” we’ll get back what we gave. Three years later, after the neighbor has returned your lawnmower and you’ve borrowed his ladder and you’ve talked hundreds of times? That’s *thick trust*, forged by personal and individual experience.

In our discussion of social capital, we mentioned the decline in attendance at religious services and community meetings and the drop off in having friends over for dinner. It means that fewer of our relationships are multi-stranded. If we take the same yoga class as Naomi, will we also run into her at our friend Sara’s next cookout? Is she likely to belong to the same church? Will our kids go to the same school? If the answer is “yes,” we’ll have multiple ways to get to know Naomi.

Multi-stranded trust builds boards, encourages donors and creates powerful reputations. Local nonprofits often have opportunities for building many strands of trust. This insight

teaches us that we should intentionally incorporate thick trust into organizational planning.

Lewis Feldstein: Setting the Context for Our Conversation on Social Capital

Lewis Feldstein is president of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. His work life encompasses everything from service on the Independent Sector board and six honorary doctorates to serving seven years as the emcee for the International Zucchini Festival. But he is known throughout the nation as one of the pre-eminent experts on the subject of social capital. With Bob Putnam, Lew co-chaired, the “Saguaro Seminar on Civic Engagement in America” at Harvard University and co-authored the book, *Better Together*. There was literally no one better to help us begin our exploration of social capital and its effect on nonprofit organizations than Lew.

In a warm and witty fashion, Lew brought the specific statistical data that demonstrates the efficacy of greater social capital. He showed us that states with higher measures of social capital (where more people vote, volunteer and give to charities) also have fewer murders and higher birthweight babies. They are healthier and happier places for people to live. In all of Lew’s charts and statistics, Pennsylvania fell into the middle quadrant.

Lew was with us during the week the Steelers were in the Super Bowl. That week, you only needed to wear black and gold to be in the Steeler Nation. The community connectivity exhibited then was awesome! And we pondered how best to extend those feelings of shared destiny, but were hard-pressed to come up with anything that had the cachet of being national football champions.

Lew told us of economists who could assign a dollar value to your Rolodex and asked us to consider this: If you are not a member of a single organization and you join one, your chances of dying that year drop by 50%! If you join a second one, your chances of dying drop another 25%. (Lest you go overboard in joining organizations, know that the escalation of benefits stops after two.)

Further, Lew explained that social capital is more fragile when:

- There is a high rate of transience – many people moving in and out of communities.
- The primacy of work in modern lives leaves little time for other pursuits.
- Communities lack homogeneity; homogenous communities tend to have higher social capital, so the more the differences, the greater the challenges.
- Groups get too big; scale matters – larger communities means less social capital.
- Youth are NOT exposed to volunteering early in their lives; when they are not, they are less likely to engage in community work as adults.
- The push toward privatizing long-held public institutions is at work; tax evasions are lower where social capital is higher.

But one of the most relevant concepts that Lew discussed for our region was the difference between simply “bonding” and actually “bridging” social capital. Pittsburgh

may have more bridges than any city in the world, but like many other places, we struggle with bridging social capital. Sustainable Pittsburgh, the Allegheny Conference and others have been leading a conversation about regionalism and its many economic benefits, but each small gain in cooperation between boroughs, townships and municipalities is hard won. Bridges can prove to be very hard to build.

A Little More About Social Capital – Bonds & Bridges

The easiest kind of social capital – to create and to understand – is usually called *bonding social capital*. This represents the ties between you and people who are like you, at least in some fashion. They live in your neighborhood, attend the same religious services, work in your field. Over time, chances are that you'll come to know each other, or at least to know something about each other. And because you had something in common to begin with, you have more opportunity to interact over time.

At the beginning of this report, we used an example in which Lisa calls someone from her church to help the group get an appointment with a possible influential donor, Bonnie. These bonds are important, but they probably connect people with similar levels of education, wealth and experience.

Bridging is tougher. *Bridging social capital* connects people across conventional dividing lines like race, class and politics. In our examples, Susan and Brad can do just that – reaching out to the bank exec and the janitor alike.

Bridging didn't used to be quite the struggle it is today. Theda Skocpol points out in her book, *Diminished Democracy*, that organizations like the Grange and the Elks used to create bridging opportunities in small towns and big cities alike. It wasn't unusual to have leadership consisting of a banker and a farmer, a cabinetmaker and a landowner. She calls this phenomenon the change from “doing together” versus “doing for.” Today, very often, we put the banker and the landowner on the board of directors and let the cabinetmaker and farmer send their kids to our after-school programs.

Social capital is created not only by formal roles and structures, but also through happy accidents. Brad and Susan, in our example, know everyone. Chances are this means they are engaged in formal leadership roles, but also get to know people in a casual fashion – other people walking their dogs in the park, the neighbors a few blocks over, other commuters sharing the same bus stop or elevator in the morning.

In each of our examples, the social capital all-stars – Ray, Lisa, Brad, Susan – are rich in a necessary resource. But even if we know that our organizations rely on their ability to make the call or have that chat, it takes years of investment to reap the dividends. As Lew quipped during his NEXUS presentation, “You can't call up your neighbor and say, ‘Hey, wanna go build some social capital?’”

But these social capital all-stars are exactly who you want on your board and in your volunteer pool. In *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell extols the value of mavens, connectors and salesmen as means to get ideas to become powerful, dominant and

influential – to cause the world to tip. Connectors is another term for social capital all-stars, and they get their nonprofit on the community’s radar screen – for funding, for media coverage, for more volunteer stars like themselves.

On the other hand, the concept of *instrumental* social capital also matters for nonprofits. We can organize to clean up a park, to raise money to combat a disease, to pass favorable legislation. And in the process of organizing, we can help interested individuals connect. If we allow for leadership roles and lots of interaction between our volunteers and supporters, we can often create more social capital – a resource that may well be channeled back into supporting our shared goals.

Lastly, we discussed the idea of *linking* social capital. “Linking” means just that – being able to reach out to other groups, to the more powerful, to groups the next town over or maybe even across the country. Maybe Brad is so effective because he’s the minister of a local congregation and regularly meets with religious leaders from all faiths in the city. Even though Brad’s church is of modest means, he can call the minister at the most well-heeled church in town. And even though his congregation is suburban and mostly white, he can connect to different racial and ethnic groups throughout the region by talking to his fellow leaders.

As Lew said in conclusion:

Scale matters. This is about building trust. This is an intimate activity; it is not something you do to a stadium of 15,000 people. You do it one by one by one to build trust. At the same time, there is this notion of bonding and bridging. It is easiest to build social capital with people who are like ourselves – that’s bonding, a sort of super glue. The crucial thing, though, is can we build social capital, can we build trust, can we build connections with people who are different from us – different religion, different race, different ethnicity, different economic class?

That’s the test for America. If you don’t find out how to do the bridging, the bonding won’t be enough. So we’ve got to find out how to do that....Investing in building social capital, investing in building trust and connections is a hugely powerful, hugely compelling and hugely valuable way to achieve most of our goals.

After Lew had explained social capital in a broad sense, a group of Pittsburghers explained it Pittsburgh-style. From **Barbara Mistick** of the Carnegie Libraries we learned of her great good places where all kinds of people interact, learn and solve community problems. **Sarah Dieleman** Perry from the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development told of older people in Lawrenceville who took back a drug-riddled block by playing chess outdoors! Girl grantmakers from the Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania gave us all a strong sense of the leaders coming up – and **Jess King** of the Union Project told the inspiring story of stained glass windows restored by activists, philanthropists and volunteers in a neighborhood that’s coming back

and yet still struggles. These leaders showed us all how to bond, bridge and link – across neighborhood, age, class and enthusiasms.

Linking social capital is exactly what is needed to build a regional vision. Our region needs to continue efforts like those of the Forbes Funds and the electronic town hall meeting they sponsored in Spring 2006 with America Speaks, where 1,000 nonprofit leaders came together to discuss our role in building the region. It is challenging to find time and money for these bridging and linking efforts, but the trust and relationships built over time, the deep social capital, could be key to the strategies that propel our region into a much brighter future.

The Case of Katrina: Race, Class, Inequity and Mistrust Entrenched Over Generations – Too Few Bridges

Conversations with Ben Johnson of the Greater New Orleans Foundation and Scott Izzo of the Richard King Mellon Foundation; with Carol Bebel of Ashe Cultural Center and Marlene Gary Hogan of WQED; and with Errol Barron of Barron/Toups Architects and Rob Robinson, Urban Design Associates

This second NEXUS dialogue occurred seven months after Hurricane Katrina laid waste to the Gulf South. In New Orleans, 80% of the city was flooded, more than 500,000 people were displaced, and an area seventeen miles by five miles square was totally devastated.

New Orleans had been incredibly rich in social capital. Said Errol Barron: “If you want a great party, make the room too small – that’s New Orleans.” A slow-brewed culture with a Mediterranean approach to prioritizing work and leisure, New Orleans was characterized by the enormous affection that locals and visitors alike had for good food, great music and regular, broad community celebration – public habitation of the public space. In New Orleans, the streets were not just for driving on!¹¹

In many ways, New Orleans’ store of social capital mitigated or masked its enormous social challenges. The terrible poverty and lack of justice was washed in a glow of jambalaya and hot jazz. Katrina changed all that. New Orleanians had their sustaining networks blown to bits, as residents were flung across the continent to cope. Post-Katrina, neighborhoods that had worked and cared for each other looked like checkerboards, with a FEMA trailer here and a house under renovation there – and no streetlights anywhere. Not surprisingly, nonprofits too suffered enormously from the devastation and loss of connection.

I was asked to be part of a task force convened by Governor Blanco to establish a foundation to receive the monies being raised by former Presidents Bush and Clinton. So I was in Baton Rouge while New Orleans was still under martial law. Post-Katrina, there was concern for the purity of the water. One of my friends said, “Forget the chlorine. Just put the Prozac right into the drinking water.” The gallantry and humor and deep love for their home were saving graces. The nation and its people, especially its churches, also were instrumental in answering the cry for relief, restoration and renewal.

In those days following the storm, if nonprofit directors didn’t know their board chair’s mother-in-law’s name and where she lived, they often lost all contact with their volunteer leadership. In those days, nonprofits had to decide if they could use that designated government contract to pay their people for jobs that were literally underwater. It was a time when they really needed to call on their community – but the community just wasn’t there. Adding to the operational difficulty was the shame and blatant injustice that was constantly in the public eye, the unrelenting anxiety, the unbelievable disruption. The grinding uncertainty could have blasted apart all semblance of social cohesion.

Pittsburghers got it. We had endured the ravages of Hurricane Ivan just one year earlier. Though not on the scale of Katrina, Ivan had nevertheless displaced 6,651 families locally and caused \$264 million of damage. Those affected were still rebuilding their lives. In Pittsburgh, too, we had seen enormous generosity and new leadership emerge to respond to the crisis. The Metropolitan Statistical Areas of both Pittsburgh and New Orleans are almost identical in population – 1.3 million live in both places. People in New Orleans don't leave, just as Pittsburghers don't leave. While some Pittsburghers don't like to cross a bridge, New Orleanians don't like to cross the river. People love their families, their neighborhoods and their communities, and you are sometimes asked in both these communities where you went to high school. Both exhibit high degrees of social bonding.

As part of this NEXUS event, BCNM gathered the stories of local people and organizations that had helped the Gulf South in its recovery efforts. From one e-mail message sent to participants, more than 20 pages of projects were documented. The resulting document, "From Grant Street to Bourbon Street," was eloquent testimony to our region's heart and the power of volunteerism.

What We Learned from Our Speakers

Three guests from New Orleans told us many important things about life post-cataclysm.

Errol Barron of Barron/Toups Architects is a distinguished architect, recognized artist and beloved professor at the Tulane University School of Architecture. Winner of thirty-five design awards, Errol is deeply engaged in rebuilding efforts.

From Errol Barron, we heard conviction that the city will be rebuilt – and in a way that respects its history and culture. While rightly concerned about the actions needed from the Army Corps of Engineers, Errol celebrated a few of the community solutions that had been created, including the Bring New Orleans Back Foundation and the Tulane University City Center that would support young architects designing and building affordable housing. He held up for inspection the New Orleans culture, citing its emphasis on social interaction, of having a real life on the streets and with fellow citizens, and he expressed gratitude for the kindness of strangers who helped New Orleans not spiral out of control in its hour of greatest need.

Silken Bonds

Errol also sounded a note of caution about outside experts:

I said in the paper – and funnily enough got a lot of positive response – that I feared the influx of outside experts....I would say, if anything, they should be taking New Orleans' ideas elsewhere. In New Orleans, there is a belief in the urban world and the importance of the social arts of music, food and architecture. Before air conditioning, the climate got people out of their houses, and they developed a way of communicating beyond this sort of deadly language. You can do things with music you can't do with words. You can do things with food you

can't do with words. So, New Orleans has this very romantic and physically sensory dimension to it that is the essence of a great city.

These bonds are silken, but very real.

Carol Bebel is the founder of Ashe Cultural Arts Center, which combines the intentions of community development and economic development with the awesome creative forces of community, culture and art to revive and reclaim a historically significant corridor of New Orleans Central City. "Ashe" is an Aruban word that translates closely to "Amen," so let it be done.

With Carol and her Pittsburgh interviewer, **Marlene Gary Hogan** of WQED, we considered questions of racial justice and emerging leadership. Carol taught us how people have coped post-cataclysm and, in many cases, have risen to new places of competency and responsibility. "The emergence of leadership is not so much the matter of the bubbling up of people who are going to tell other people what to do," said Carol. "It is an emergence of people understanding that what they think and how they want to operate is important....The leadership issue is finding those leaders who are willing to listen to what it is they want."

I said that evening that New Orleans must surely be the most civically engaged place on the planet post-Katrina. Carol certainly validated that. Although she eloquently painted a picture of exhaustion and constant struggle with daily life, she also told of a rise in literacy, as people sought to record their own experiences and see their lives important enough to be captured on CNN. "They are sitting and talking more about the notions of what would work better for them than other things," said Carol. "They're questioning and they're meeting and becoming part of groups of people that are thinking like them."

On the subject of dealing with the lack of trust between the races and the ugly face of racism that had played over the media for seven months, her counsel to our community was that "these circumstances create tensions, and I think we went far too long trying not to be inside the fight about these tensions. I think conversations about race, class, about differences are really important to take on inside their churches, inside their groups and inside their friendship circles, so that you can manage to chip away at the things that are standing in your way of being able to really honor humanity just because it's humanity."

Carol closed her session by reading her poem, "Things Unsaid":

Unsaid things speak louder than shouts sometimes,
A presence more powerful than words ever could,
Power and suggestion not exact enough to have form or shape, but
Present enough to create walls, distance, sometimes
 Goodbyes,
Unsaid things speak an unspeakable fear,
Taking your peace a little at a time
When you're not looking, unsaid things

Better spoken than not,
Better heard than not,
Better over and done with
Than things being unsaid.

– Carol Bebelle
(1996)

The final conversation was between **Gregory Ben Johnson**, president of the Greater New Orleans Foundation and **Scott Izzo**, president of the Richard King Mellon Foundation. Ben Johnson had served the New Orleans community for many years through his work with the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce, Community Foundations of America, the Southeastern Council of Foundations and the Council for a Better Louisiana. He has lived his values of seeking a more socially just world and calling on others to be generous and capable.

Ben's insights were practical and told from the perspective of being on-the-ground. He spoke to the enormous difficulty that FEMA's slow processes had created for the city. It had taken FEMA five days to provide any real assistance to the people of New Orleans. Even worse was the fact that, seven months later, FEMA still hadn't released their policies with regard to the flood plain and its relationship to property values.

Ben testified to the enormous number of community meetings, but expressed his concern that these meetings were being conducted by wounded people administering to wounded people, a train wreck happening 24/7. While there are more than 80 neighborhood groups meeting every Wednesday evening, public policy failures often increase people's sense of frustration and powerlessness. "On the public policy side," said Ben, "people cannot deal with the intransigence of the officials who are not able to get together and level with people. We need officials who can say, 'Look, it's not over yet. We've got hard decisions. We've got to come to agreement, and here's how we're going to make it right. You're going to have to stick with us because this is a process that takes time.'"

Bridges Abound

Despite these setbacks, however, there have been some real victories of social capital in New Orleans. A number of women from all races and classes were convinced that, if the public officials came and saw the devastation first hand, they would act more quickly and with more compassion. So a group of 160 women, The Women of the Storm, chartered a plane and went to Washington. Two by two, they visited every Congressman or Senator who had not come to the city, demanding that they make time and come to see what God hath wrought. This effort resulted in a number of visits and is a perfect example of social capital at work, though sadly it didn't have as much impact on the immediate efficacy of public policy as was hoped.

Ben also spoke of the drive for nonprofits to be collaborative and completely unselfish in their assessment of the role they could play in rebuilding a decent community. "In the nonprofit world and in the civic world, the real language is: How do you get into a

collaborative relationship?” said Ben. “Stand-alone nonprofits are a thing of the past. We cannot afford them. The great thing – and I’ve seen it all the time – is that they come together and they divide the pie up based on their strengths.”

Nonprofits have their own weekly meeting in New Orleans. Convened by the Greater Protestant Orphan Association Director, they meet every Monday morning to share whatever information they can, to work together on providing critical services and to figure out how to survive, both literally and psychically.

The Blessing and Challenges of Volunteers & Well-meaning People in a Time of Disaster – the Case for “Doing With,” Not “Doing For!”

Without doubt, one of the quintessential stories that will be told about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is one of social capital at work. The activities of the residents of New Orleans seeking common ground and ways to rebuild is a key part of that story, but the enormity of the gifts that came from all across this country and the world is surely another. Building and medical supplies, dog food and, most of all, volunteers created another flood for the Gulf South. More than \$3 billion new dollars of charitable giving flowed into the region. One reputable estimate cited 385,000 people coming into the region over the course of the first year post-Katrina, bringing with them a flood of service, a flood of ideas, a flood of assistance.

In Baton Rouge, virtually every church and school became an emergency shelter. Volunteers housed, fed, clothed and loved thousands of displaced New Orleanians. A women’s business group volunteered to house those of us in town to work on the Governor’s task force. I spent ten nights in a six-year-old’s room, sleeping under a princess tent!

In Houston, there was much the same story. The Houston Mayor exemplified his strong sense of connection and responsibility to the Katrina victims.

The emergency animal shelter on the LSU campus was staffed 100% by volunteers. The shelter had received so many pet supplies that it was begging people to take some home with them when they collected their pets. There were real stress and frustration about the ad hoc nature of all this. Payment for food and other direct costs incurred was slow in coming and compromised the ability of the smaller organizations to continue, but there was an incredibly generous outpouring of help.

Nonprofit organizations reacted, well, like nonprofit organizations. National groups with chapters in the Gulf South did everything from sending office equipment to hosting Web sites and receiving online donations, from facilitating communication between far-flung staff, board and clients to housing or hiring their Gulf Coast colleagues. Communities throughout the U. S., including Pittsburgh, worked with established nonprofit agencies to set up extensive evacuee relief operations and sought to help people in every conceivable way. Errol Barron told a story of being at the Red Cross Evacuee Center in Salt Lake City and finding a man who had been the crossing guard at his son’s school in New Orleans years before. “The kindness shown to all these people was unbelievable,” Errol said.

Now almost two years after the disaster, many church groups are returning to continue to help with rebuilding. The lives changed by their experiences in the Gulf South have not been measured, but for hundreds of thousands of people, Katrina produced human relationships with faces and names of friends. Would that this had translated into political will in the way it engendered human generosity.

While most of this outpouring of assistance was greatly appreciated, we also need to look at what was not.

One of the recognized hallmarks of social capital is “doing with” versus “doing for.” The most successful interventions in New Orleans were those where volunteers asked the people they wanted to help to guide their efforts. There are countless stories of grateful people who received help from a church or civic group that dug through the muddy mess and recovered their grandmother’s wedding ring or carefully cleaned any unbroken china, asking for nothing, leaving only the restored memories.

As Errol’s comments about being spared the wisdom of the expert from “Away” indicate, all was not gratitude and unbroken praise. In New Orleans, anyone not born there is from “Away” and, to some natives, is pitied and held as an object of suspicion. New Orleans became a petri dish for social, architectural and cultural experiments in the aftermath of Katrina. It was the most interesting place in the nation for people deeply interested in social architecture.

Many outsiders came believing they knew what should be done. Many New Orleanians agreed with Errol Barron that it was the outsiders who should be taking New Orleans’ ideas and culture home with them – not the other way around. Many public meetings later, a lot has been learned by everyone.

Bridges Take Time

One of the important lessons of successful social capitalists is that building the capital and reaping the benefits takes time – in many cases, a lot of time. Scholars and commentators will analyze what happened and what we learned from Katrina for years to come. For those of us concerned about the health of our communities, we must continue to pursue a clearer understanding of what worked – and what didn’t – from the enormous influx of volunteers and experts. Disaster planning wears many faces. We know now that to rebuild a healthy community we need to consider a mosaic of supports, and that volunteer energy and human goodwill are certainly key to that.

Breaking the Barriers

A Conversation with Curtis Meadows, Meadows Foundation & Linetta Gilbert, Ford Foundation

“It is far too late and things are far too bad for pessimism. In times such as these, it is no failure to fall short of realizing all that we might dream – the failure is to fall short of dreaming all that we might realize. We must try.”

– Dee Hock, Founder of VISA

Curtis Meadows is an attorney with Thompson & Knight LLP in Dallas. He was president, CEO and director of the Meadows Foundation for eighteen years, one of the largest foundations in the state of Texas, and was the founding director of the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. He was named Distinguished Grantmaker of the Year by the Foundation News.

Linetta Gilbert is now a senior program officer at the Ford Foundation. She was, for ten years, Vice President for Programs at the Greater New Orleans Foundation where she developed a grant portfolio for community initiatives in affordable housing, community development, workforce development, violence prevention, youth development and rural development. She has always been dedicated to seeing possibility in people and fiercely determined to confront injustice and inequity with courage and creative solutions.

This third NEXUS Dialogue was to build on themes explored in the first two. Walter Smith, executive director of Family Resources, served as moderator.

About Trust & Its Intimate Relationship to Respect as We Seek to Build Social Capital

Curtis began the dialogue by laying out several different trusting relationships that are integral to a healthy nonprofit sector. They include:

- Trust between donor and the institution – that money will be used appropriately.
- Trust between client and the organization – that the client will be treated with respect and their interests will be valued.
- Trust between state and regulatory authorities and the organizations they regulate – that the operations will be safe, honest and useful.
- Trust between volunteers and the agencies – that their time will not be wasted.

In all relationships, we seek the common ground beneath us and find the commonly held values. Shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis, John Kennedy made a speech in Europe in which he said, “We start by remembering that we all breathe the same air. We are all cherishing our children, and we all seek for them a future.” From the recognition of these common goals, we see the essential necessity to trust each other and find value in shared vision.

In her opening remarks, Linetta intentionally linked trust to respect. In a story drawn from a book by Sarah Lightfoot entitled *Respect*, Linetta told of a woman running a women's health clinic. The doctor took an unusual amount of time to understand each of her patient's lives, family and culture. She was not just a competent professional. She knew them; and they, her. "So, I really want to emphasize that respect, especially in community situations, comes from very different places and is very important as a foundation for building trust," Linetta said. "I think it is foundational to our communities that we cultivate this ability to become willing to get to know people again. Who they are, what their values are – we rarely have the values conversation with individuals. But I think that is a huge part to our redeveloping trust in communities."

Defining "Community"

In our discussion of social capital building activities and, indeed, throughout nonprofit discourse, the word "community" is widely used but often poorly defined. So it was truly helpful that Curtis and Linetta each provided insights and nuance to this frayed and over-used term.

Linetta's definition included "the real belief that there are places and spaces that create some safety and possibility – for new ideas, for old ideas to have real impact, for people to grow and become something that they haven't been before, for resources to be pooled and to benefit a larger group of people. John Gardner described community as a place where a variety of civic interests are met. Where people can explore hope and demonstrate opportunity....Sometimes, it's a place, sometimes it's a community of interest – but to me, it's always cordoned off or structured around, 'What can happen here?'"

Curtis then built on Linetta's definition by saying, "Community to me is both a feeling and a process – and a place we get to, so to speak. It's the feeling that I belong, the feeling that I'm welcome, that in a sunny, funny sort of way, I'm home. There are people around that I can relate to, and I'm surrounded by folk who aren't going to hurt me. They may challenge me, but somehow or other, the viciousness of the world is left out." Curtis went on to mention another quote from John Gardner, surely one of the godfathers of the nonprofit sector: "A community lives in the minds of its members, in its shared assumptions, beliefs, customs, ideas that give meaning, ideas that motivate."

Who Is My Brother and What Does He Have To Do With a Discussion of Social Capital?

This discussion of how we can define "community" shows the importance of having regular, deep conversations – and all over the place! Defining our communities, and figuring out what needs to be done to improve them, depends on safe places where people speak freely across differences to create a shared vision. As Putnam, Feldstein and Bellah have been documenting, those places and conversations are becoming rare.

As nonprofit leaders and citizens engaged in an effort to be social architects, assuming we accept that building social capital is essential to the health of the nonprofit sector, are we being sufficiently intentional about creating the safe place for all of us to talk? Some

of us talk and talk and talk...but we talk to people who look, think and experience life very much as we do. Are we truly open to the diverse social attributes of each community?

Linetta goes on to challenge the cherished sweetness of these notions of community:

I think right now, in our country, we don't have the faces of the people emblazoned on our hearts and minds – many of us don't. We wonder whose invisible hand is coming in to help. I once said to our organizing group in New Orleans, "Wouldn't it have been smart to ask the people across the street what they thought of these houses you're getting ready to build? Wouldn't it have been nice to see if some of them wanted to move across the street into these new houses? We didn't do that. So what happened to those houses? They were vandalized in a matter of minutes, after the first lock was put on the door. That says to me that we were invasive. We weren't even helpful to the people in that community. The message we sent was: We're going to build these new ones – and we're going to bring some new people in. It was like, we didn't care.

So some of the mistakes we make in trying to understand the communities are that we just don't put faces and voices to those who are there...and I think we're at a point in America right now where we can't do that anymore.

The realities of differences of race, class, nationality, age and many other identifiers cut deeply into the hopes of those who seek to build social capital. We are tribal and seem to be becoming more so with each passing year. "Multicultural" doesn't begin to convey the growing complexity.

Curtis captured this reality when he said: "Melbourne, Australia, is now the second-largest Greek city in the world outside of Athens. Chicago has more Poles and Croats than San Francisco has people. Los Angeles is now the second largest Iranian city in the world after Tehran. Toronto and Amsterdam have the largest concentration of Afghans outside of Afghanistan. California tops the nation with 239 different languages being spoken there. How do you print the election ballots in 239 different languages?"

We're a world and nation of tribes. What *is* the responsibility of community-building, social capitalists – nonprofit people working for the public good to build the mixing bowls that allow the making of some beautiful salads of shared hopes and dreams, mutual benefits and community solutions? If not us, then who?

One way we know for sure is to see not the differences, but the commonalities. Linetta shared a personal story that illustrates that path:

I can remember growing up and my mother made ten dollars a day as a domestic, cleaning houses for people. And when I was seven years old, I said, "Nobody should have to work for that amount of money. That's unconscionable." I didn't know that word then, but I knew it was wrong. When I went to El Paso two years

ago, and I saw women leaving their homes at five a.m. and coming back at six in the evening for a dollar a day, I said, “That’s unconscionable. No one should have to work for that amount of money.”

So I’m saying, as a grantmaker and a full-grown adult, somebody has to help me move across the racial barrier to understand why America hasn’t paid attention to that kind of injustice before this wave of immigration. Why aren’t we paying attention to it now? So we need to learn to be more bridging, to create more bridging institutions and to have leaders who can help us understand what is happening here so we can embrace newcomers.

The Relationship of the Growing Income Gap, the Tax Laws and the Reduction in Trust

In *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah makes many clear references to the connection between the growing gap between the rich and poor and the huge loss in our shared sense of destiny as Americans. Between 1973 and 1993, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew 29%; yet, 80% of American workers either actually lost ground or barely held their own. Both Japan and Germany saw a similar rapid growth in GDP; however, in those countries, the gains were shared across the economic spectrum.

Corporate down-sizing, forced part-timing and loss of benefits has made many American workers extremely insecure. This advanced insecurity has deeply affected their willingness to engage in community work. As Linetta demonstrated in the example of the misplaced houses, in our zeal to do good, nonprofits often send an unintentional but utterly disrespectful message that we don’t understand or care about the circumstances of the very people we’re trying to help. Bellah expresses a concern that it really seems the *only* truly cross-cutting definition of “difference” is the individual responsibility each of us feels for our own economic success or misfortune.

He speaks of a new “anxious class” of citizens who are trapped in the frenzy of effort it takes to preserve their standing. The crisis of civic membership takes the form of disillusion with politics and a sense of uncertainty about the economic future so pervasive that concern for individual survival threatens to replace social solidarity.¹²

This economic anxiety was echoed in a comment from the audience at the Katrina session: “The communities of Western Pennsylvania have, over the last quarter century or so, suffered devastating losses unnoticed and not responded to because their slow bleeding lacked the dramatic impact of a major flood. Nevertheless, thousands of families have lost their livelihoods, pride, communities, retirements and homes, as industry left with no helping hand extended.”

These questions of economic justice underlie the heart of the conversation about rebuilding communities rich in social capital. Curtis has been a national voice in the debate about rescinding the estate tax and the ramifications it would have to charitable giving and the underpinnings of the nonprofit sector:

As I think about the issues surrounding the estate or inheritance tax, I start with the question, “What is the common agenda for us separate and apart from what is my own personal agenda?” The inheritance tax is based in some part on the concept of “What kind of society do we want?” At what point is excess wealth not appropriate within a society that seeks fairness and justice for its people? And you’re only talking about 1-2% of people who will ever have a problem with the estate tax, given the current exemptions that exist.

But there is a sleeper in the equation that no one has really talked about. And that is the fact that for years in this country we’ve had a “Rule Against Perpetuity,” which means you cannot hold property in trust indefinitely. This goes back to English Common Law. Now there is a movement in this country in a number of states led by the banks to repeal the rule against perpetuity. And so I could set up a trust to benefit my family to go on indefinitely. And then I remove from that any ability to tax it as it accumulates except through the income tax. If we allow this to happen, if we repeal the estate tax and allow these “dynasty trusts” as they are called, we have simply created royalty in the United States.

We’ll have families that will be wealthy forever and people that will be poor forever. We’ll also have locked up the wealth in the most conservative management process. We’ve taken away risk capital. We’ve taken away the possibility of taking more chances with it because trustees are held in fiduciary responsibility and cannot engage in risk investments. This is a very dangerous thing, for us to combine these two things....One lawyer stood up against dynasty trusts in Texas and beat the whole Texas legislature, beat the banking establishment. This guy was a volunteer in his community. He stood up and said it was wrong – and he was counted.

For those who are serious about the health of our communities, understanding these issues and mobilizing citizen response is integral to our ability to generate the necessary trust to create a common agenda. It’s a package. We can’t live civilly if we don’t do more to attempt to live justly.

Ubuntu...I Am Because You Are – Deeply Understanding the Norms of Reciprocity
“Ubuntu” is a South African term that encompasses one of the most cherished notions of civil society: *giving back*. But effective social capital is built only when you are also willing to receive. The NEXUS participants had truly received the wisdom of these two thinkers, but through their excellent questions had also advanced the conversation.

We ended as we began this conversation, with Curtis and Linetta discussing what’s at the core of trust and respect. Curtis asked that we each seriously consider how we are going to build the bonds of respect – in the world, with the people we work with, with our donors. “I think we get back to our values when we get back to learning, teaching and expressing respect,” Curtis said.

Linetta responded:

If I were to ask myself a question, it would be, “How can I, as an American citizen, use the resources that are available to me, use my own person to reconnect the work in communities with democracy-building?” I’d ask myself that because I am very, very fearful, as I see new democracies growing in the world, that we are going to lose democracy in this country, that it is ebbing away because we are losing interest in being responsible voices for our country. So I constantly ask myself, “What else can I do to reconnect my work to building and affirming democracy in this country?”

The title of this session was *Breaking Barriers*. This thoughtful conversation identified some huge issues for reweaving the fabric of community. As part of our proposed agenda for Southwestern Pennsylvania’s social capitalists, we needed to address building increased levels of trust and respect, increasing our clarity about community and communities, and figuring out to whom we should extend our helping hands – not to mention continuing to have a profound concern for the lack of economic justice and for the nonprofit timidity we sometimes have in seeking to affect public policy.

Our next session was intended to help us begin to dream of some solutions and simply recognize some that were right before us....

Building Momentum: Technology and the New Social Participation with Allison Fine

“Today, as we enter a new century, fraught with vast demographic and technological challenges,...[w]e need to become civic and social entrepreneurs who create social capital building institutions suiting our times and honoring our values: diversity, tolerance, inclusiveness, quality, fairness, compassion, hope and public spiritedness. We need a civic renaissance.”

– *Better Together*, Putnam & Feldstein

A civic renaissance...is it right in front of our eyes? Allison Fine would have us see that it’s so. Author of *Momentum: Igniting Social Change in the Connected Age*, Allison Fine has appealing energy and a “wake-up-and-smell-the-coffee” voice about what is happening all around us with the new social media and the building of community. Her book was a recommended read by no less than the Wall Street Journal and the San Francisco Chronicle. She is a Senior Fellow at DEMOS: A Network for Thinking and Action, where her work focuses on increasing political participation. Allison is the founder of Innovation Network, Inc. (InnoNet) and the former CEO of E-volve Foundation.

We asked Allison to think with us about the following question:

How do we as nonprofit organizations embrace the use of the new social media (e-mail, Web, blogs, podcasts, Wikis, etc.) to increase participation in social change efforts?

At an Open Space meeting in April 2007, on a sunny day at the Pittsburgh Zoo, fifty social capitalists met to listen, teach and learn. The subject at base was *power* – who has it, how to harness it. Allison reminded us that in the Connected Age, the power is shifting from the institution and organization to the individual. Power is being pushed to the edges. It also holds the promise, although not yet the reality, of involving marginalized people in community decisionmaking. The mobilization of people, materials and money during disasters is concrete testimony to the power of connectivity and the importance of loose networks. All of us have been watching – and many participating in – the growth of the 527 groups and their escalating effects on the political process.

Allison mentioned several examples of creative uses of social media for positive social change. We all explored what's new for political campaigns in the YouTube era, where one-on-one conversation is a relic. No one controls the conversation. No one owns it. With many voices, there is at least a possibility that the truth will out.

The concept of “Ubuntu: I am because you are” is present in many of these exchanges. Elizabeth Edwards credits a support group for mothers who had lost children as being one of her bridges back to sanity after the sudden death of her beloved sixteen-year-old son in 1996. Within twenty-four hours of the recent tainted dog food scandals, numerous Ida Tarbell-type muckrakers were closing in on companies that produced poisoned food and the stores selling the bad lots. People were flashing information to each other and building the case way out in front of the work of the FDA.

This democratization and humanity of the media can offer serious hope for nonprofits, of which more than 85% have ten or fewer employees. Nonprofits have real opportunities to compete in this new world. The price of entry is low and rapidly dropping. Our smaller size makes us nimble. Our public cares deeply about our work.

Though there is reason to be hopeful, there are numerous barriers to confront. E-mail is an infinitely cheaper way for nonprofits to communicate and fundraise than direct “snail mail.” But a recent report on NPR stated that the response rate to e-mail remains shockingly low. Direct e-mailers were counseled to seek lists of a million to produce the results they needed. Nonprofits usually are staffed by generalists – time-stressed, overburdened generalists. Someone has to find the time to do this work. Most organizations lack general marketing savvy and specific technological expertise. And finding a million likely prospects with active e-mail addresses would give any but the most resourceful true pause.

Members of the Open Space group had other concerns. They wondered how civility affected e-mail communications. Especially younger correspondents were concerned about how elders received their brief and sometimes flippant emoticon messages:

:-P

Of course, rather than sticking out your tongue at the reader, you could also lighten the tone with the effective use of an emoticon!

;~)

On a more thoughtful note, there was discussion about whether the ease of tech tools inhibits analysis, reflection and deeper levels of exploration, as well as speculation about whether the definition of plagiarism has changed with the advent of Wikis.

Another group spent time discussing “Isolation, Individualism, and Virtual Relationships.” Their concerns ranged from the impact of the Tower of Babel syndrome – so many voices that none can be heard – to organizations becoming more isolated in a digital age because they won’t share and embrace this new age of openness. For old-school organizations with models of hierarchical leadership, who may have already done the long and difficult work to be considered *the* experts, losing control of the message and the attendant lack of regard for expertise will be a real challenge.

This discussion group also struggled with the caliber of information in a leaderless world. They recognized the several contributions that the porn industry had made to improving the technology of the new social media, now used for political and more conventional social interactions.

“Focused Vision vs. Dilution by Inclusion” was the intriguing title of another group’s discussion. While this group believed that technology has great potential for social capital building, they felt we should be cautious moving forward. They pondered the value of inclusion, a cherished principle of social capital, if all it made was more noise. They discussed issues of access, the need for more comprehensive and higher quality infrastructure. The group suggested technology wasn’t democratic if you couldn’t use it. However, they also expressed their hopes that it could be a great leveler because:

- With technology, you’re judged by the quality of your contribution, not your clothes or haircut.
- Technology could lessen geographic isolation.
- New media, like Web cams, could improve social interaction and increase the personal buy-in of the participant.

But the group also charted the losses they saw:

- The joy of being in the moment with other people you can touch.
- The overload of everyone being “on” 24/7.
- The potential erosion of important quality of life.

These are part of the paradox when social-capital-building desires meet technology and new media.

In their discussion, “Access to Info = POWER,” yet another group dealt with traditional nonprofit concerns of competition for the funder’s attention and money. Transparency sounds good, they thought, but they wondered if it could advance your competitor’s interests over those of your own organization. Donor and volunteers might first consult the Zagat rating of local nonprofits before agreeing to come along.

This group also discussed the rules of engagement in this brave new, open world. Are there any? Can your organization survive a bad review? Although they appreciated the need for nonprofits to get diverse feedback, the group recommended not a consumer model that emphasizes critique and demand, but a citizen model that promotes dialogue in communities.

While these conversations were meant to respond to the stated question, they also informed the other NEXUS conversations. At the very beginning of our explorations, Bill Moyers warned about the “shouting down” effect and the difficulty of dialogue. The groups in these conversations all saw that danger. From Lew’s talk, we learned about the vital importance of increasing connections – and new media definitely present us with many new opportunities to connect with our various audiences, though we should continue to pay attention to tone, method and inclusiveness.

All the experts on social capital highlighted the importance and difficulty of creating more bridges between people and communities. Surely technology provides the most incredible opportunities for bridging. But there remains considerable confusion about what happens after the click. New-media proponents are convinced that technology is an impetus to further action and connection; skeptics are worried that, when technology’s too easy, it may only provide the illusion of doing something.

Beyond those discussions is the issue of people assuming other identities. As a dog says in a famous New Yorker cartoon, “On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog.” It’s difficult to build a sturdy bridge that leads to community improvement without honest identity, however much fun that “second life” might be. More documented knowledge is needed on this debate, but keeping the Internet as democratic as possible is critical for it to fully achieve the desired opportunity for true bridging activities.

In the “doing with, not doing for” debate, there is another opportunity for better use of technology. There’s been some success with the use of virtual volunteers – people whose geography, schedules or physical disability make onsite volunteering impossible. The enormous amount of often very successful on-line education makes this option seem full of potential. But effective volunteering is tricky at best. Too often, too little time is spent preparing volunteers, whose usefulness evolves as they create their own jobs. Nevertheless, the spunky independence of the online community – and the enormous creativity being shown by its practitioners! – suggest good things will continue to develop for online volunteerism.

Remember Linetta’s definition of community as a place informed by the question, “What can happen here?” If we believe that, then Allison’s ebullient optimism is justified. While

issues of access and equity still need to be fully resolved, the Bayer Center's bi-annual survey of the use of technology is testament to an improving situation for access and equipment, giving nonprofits greater capacity to support more activities. That same survey, however, still shows that nonprofits lack structured technological expertise, with the tech champions in any given organization ranging from the receptionist to the executive director. Too many organizations lack budget lines for maintenance and training for us to believe that nonprofits will lead the technological revolution.

But Allison Fine and Malcolm Gladwell share a belief that it's small acts that make the world tip. Allison's position is that nonprofits can build amazing momentum by reaching more individuals, sharing information and dialoging about possible solutions.

After All This Study and Conversation, What Does It Mean for Southwestern Pennsylvania?

Some ideas to incorporate in building an agenda for social capitalists for Southwestern Pennsylvania:

- We build the larger community from the many small ones who all have their own agendas and needs and recognize their rights and responsibilities to the greater good.
- More bridging between generations is needed. Much attention has been paid to young people's lack of access to local power. And there's been a lot of discussion of old white guys holding all the power. While a shift in power should be welcome, attention must also be paid to the many contributions made by the old guard as well.
- We have to continue to work on the challenge of trust that seems to be related to increased diversity in our communities.
- We need a rich conversation about the impact of the increased professionalism of nonprofit staffs versus the role of the passionate amateur/volunteer.
- The region needs to recognize the importance of revitalizing volunteerism and support the necessary infrastructure to do so.
- We must also recognize the importance of dealing with skepticism and a pervasive cynicism. The upcoming Pittsburgh 250 celebrations offer lots of opportunities.
- Education is a strong predictor of altruistic behavior while wealth is not.¹³ This is very important for Southwestern Pennsylvania, where higher education institutions are important contributors and where there are 100,000+ people in school at any given time.
- We've got to keep building the pipeline of younger leaders through support of service learning programs, loan forgiveness for community service and a serious shared discussion of national service for all young people.
- As nonprofits work for sustainability, we need to understand the connection of volunteerism to giving. Individual giving is essential in our community, where increased support from individuals is being posed as one means of lessening dependence on foundation giving.
- And we need to see the "a-ha" moment in class inclusion, too – especially for boards and organization leaders. If everyone looks the same, thinks the same and talks the same, organizations risk having not just stagnant ideas, but weaker networks as well.
- And how do we fully use technology – online, online, online – blog, MySpace, MeetUp, and how we can best use them for mission and increased connection?

We're going to be exploring these ideas locally and building an agenda for social capitalists in Southwestern Pennsylvania. So far, two big ideas emerge:

- It is vitally important for nonprofits to deliberately pursue social capital building activities to achieve their charitable missions.
- The interconnection of these activities are crucial to building truly sustainable organizations.

“[I]f they [nonprofit organizations] are to survive, prosper and help rebuild public confidence in themselves and in the sector as a whole, they must become more robust – that is, able to flex and bend against the great uncertainties ahead.”

– Paul Light, “How to Invest in Nonprofit Futures,”
Stanford Social Innovation Review

So many people are working so hard to re-weave the fabric of our communities. So much good work is being done – and so much remains to be done. Perhaps, we would do well to remember the Italian folk saying once quoted by the famed business thinker, Warren Bennis:

“We should remember that we are all like angels with only one wing.
We can only fly when we embrace each other.”

¹ Robert B. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 25.

² Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, Steven Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (University of California Press, 1996), front matter.

³ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 19.

⁴ Gregory J. Crowley, *Why Trust Matters To Nonprofits* (Coro Center for Civic Leadership, 2006), 10.

⁵ Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart*, xxvi.

⁶ David Brooks (New York Times, December, 2005).

⁷ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 21.

⁸ Alan Kaplan, "The Core of Our Work as Capacity Builders," *Nonprofit Quarterly* (Winter 1999).

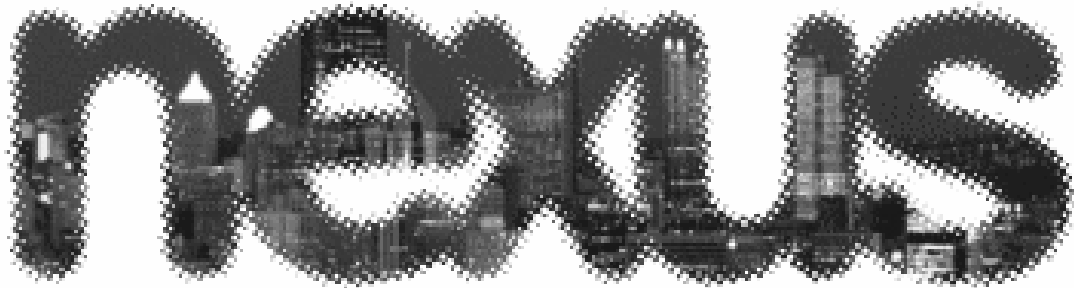
⁹ Crowley, *Why Trust Matters To Nonprofits*, 6.

¹⁰ Lester Salamon, *The Resilient Sector*, (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 31.

¹¹ C.W. Cannon, "Why they hate us (and we don't care)", (The Times-Picayune, February 25, 2006).

¹² Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart*, Introduction.

¹³ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 119.



**The Pittsburgh Dialogues for Volunteers,
Philanthropists and Activists**

Why Trust Matters to Nonprofits

*Written by Gregory J. Crowley, Coro Center for Civic Leadership,
January 2006*

Nonprofits and the future of the Pittsburgh region

A century ago Pittsburgh stood out among the fastest growing industrial regions of the world. Producing 30 percent of the nation's steel, the region attracted thousands of newcomers annually to work in metals, glass, and other industries that multiplied along the banks of the Ohio River and its tributaries. Today, Pittsburgh is a region

transformed - in many ways for better, but in some ways for worse. For better, residents enjoy air that is cleaner, rivers that are reclaimed for public recreation, a relatively low-cost housing stock, and high tech industries that do not destroy the natural environment. For worse, the region is no longer a magnet for newcomers seeking employment, and too many existing residents are ill prepared to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities.

Giving and volunteering ... tie people to others who may be different, which depends upon a belief in a community of shared fate and a generalized faith in people.

While Pittsburgh's future remains uncertain, nonprofit organizations will almost certainly have a major role to play in shaping its future for the better. According to Paul C. Light of NYU's Wagner School of Public Service, the seven-county region's nonprofits "occupy a special niche as the first responders to a host of social and economic problems that impede hopeful progress" and "as the first providers of many of the services that attract and hold the region's workforce."¹ But as Light goes on to say, nonprofits can only play these roles effectively if they are capable of surviving through times of uncertainty and responding quickly to signs of change.

One such impending change is a growing strain on resources for human service and other nonprofits in the

Pittsburgh region. Government funding for human services in Allegheny County fell from one half of total funding in 1980 to one third today. And it is not clear whether other institutions can pick up the slack. Local foundations continue to give at a steady rate, while charitable giving as a share of personal income has been declining across the nation for over 40 years.²

Support for human services has not declined due to a drop in demand. On the contrary, there appears to be a significant need for human services in the Pittsburgh region, which has among the most disadvantaged low-income population in urban America. According to economic benchmarks done by the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR) between 1994 and 2004, Pittsburgh continues to rate near the top among 70 metropolitan areas in the nation in the percentage of female-headed households with children, elderly living alone, youth aged 16 -19 not in school or the labor force, households in poverty, households without a vehicle, as well as other indicators of poor quality of life.³

Even in the best of times, human service agencies in the region are hard pressed to meet the full range of client needs. In 2000, while the dot.com bubble was still expanding (and state government budgets increasing), nearly four in ten human service nonprofits ended the year with a shortfall in their budgets. Operating at very thin margins, human services in Pittsburgh ranked last among six benchmark regions in per capita spending for residents in poverty.⁴ The situation appears to have grown worse since the burst of the economic bubble, at least in Allegheny County. In a survey conducted by the Forbes Funds in 2003, only one third of all nonprofits in the county (human

service and non-human service) reported a high or very high ability to raise sufficient funds to ensure uninterrupted service delivery and just 19 percent reported the same ability to generate unrestricted revenue (revenue not designated to particular uses by the donor).⁵

A 2004 survey of nonprofit executives and residents of Allegheny County, also sponsored by the Forbes Funds, may begin to shed light on why public support for human services has not kept pace with need.⁶ County residents and nonprofit executives, the survey reveals, do not seem to agree on the needs and priorities facing their communities or on the best ways to improve community capacity to meet those needs. Residents rated crime/neighborhood safety as the most important problem in their communities, whereas nonprofit executives gave top priority to quality of education while ranking crime/neighborhood safety fourth of 5 major problems. Similar disparities in perception exist between residents and executives on hunger, illiteracy, and housing issues. For example, 69.2 percent of executives said that the county has very or fairly serious housing problems, whereas only a third as many residents (23.7 percent) recognized housing as a problem. Overall, executives were 2 to 4 times more likely than residents to believe that any of five specific problems in their community (education, crime/safety, hunger, illiteracy, housing) needed serious attention.

Nonprofit executives ranked increasing funding ... first among possible solutions. Residents ... listed donating money to charity last among ways that people like them could help.⁶

On the issue of how best to improve local capacity to address community problems, the study revealed further differences in perception between nonprofits and residents. Executives ranked increased funding and other resources

for nonprofits first among possible solutions. They also tended to agree that charitable giving is the most important thing citizens, governments, and businesses could do to solve the problems. Residents reported opposite views. They listed donating money to charity last among ways that people like them could help, saying instead that volunteering would have the greatest impact (a solution that nonprofit executives ranked sixth among 11 possible solutions).

The research cited above paints a distressing portrait of human services (and possibly other nonprofits) in the Pittsburgh region: They face shrinking resources at a time of growing community need, a problem reflected in a lack of effective communication between nonprofits and the communities they serve. If residents and nonprofits don't see the same community problems, how will they work together to improve local quality of life?

Why trust matters to nonprofits

The 2004 Forbes Fund survey revealed that nonprofits and residents differed dramatically in both their understanding

In 2004 only 36 percent of Americans believed "most people can be trusted," compared to 46 percent in 1972 and 55 percent in 1960.⁸

of community problems and in their preferred solutions. What accounts for this lack of mutual understanding? In part the problem stems from failure to sustain public dialogue on community problems. Dialogue enables people to "find a common will to undertake common tasks."⁷

But trust, which may currently be in short supply, is needed in order to get a broad

dialogue going. Next, I discuss the evidence supporting this contention and explore its potential implications for the Pittsburgh region.

Numerous surveys seem to confirm that over the past 30 to 40 years Americans steadily lost trust in major institutions such as organized religion, education, the media, medicine, television, Congress, and banks. Compared to the early 1970s, far fewer among us today believe that these institutions are managed in an ethical and effective way. During the same period Americans also lost “generalized trust” or faith in people they do not know. In 2004 only 36 percent of Americans believed “most people can be trusted,” compared to 46 percent in 1972 and 55 percent in 1960.⁸ Trust in institutions and generalized trust have different roots. Yet each is necessary to sustain broad dialogue and effective action on community issues.

Trust in institutions underwrites broad participation in collective decisions that call upon institutional leadership and resources. People are not likely to participate in collective decisions unless they are confident that institutions will ethically and effectively implement those decisions.⁹ Many people do not vote, for example, because they don’t trust elected officials to look after their interests. Institutional trust also affects people’s willingness to engage in community improvement efforts, such as charitable giving and volunteering. People donate less of their money and volunteer fewer hours when they don’t believe that nonprofit institutions operate efficiently, spend money wisely, or do a good job helping others.¹⁰

People donate less of their money and volunteer fewer hours when they don’t believe that nonprofit institutions operate efficiently, spend money wisely, or do a good job helping others.¹⁰

It is perhaps telling that personal philanthropy in the United States has fallen alongside trust in institutions. After doubling between 1929 and 1960, charitable giving as a percentage of personal income declined from a high of 2.2 percent of income in 1964 to a low of 1.58 percent in 1994. After recovering to 2.1 percent in 2000, giving fell again to 1.9 percent in 2004.¹¹ Can declining trust in institutions be blamed for the fall in personal philanthropy? Perhaps, but this cannot be confirmed. The General Social Survey, which has measured institutional trust since 1972, does not contain questions specific to nonprofit institutions. Therefore, we do not know the long run trends specific to trust in nonprofits. Since the 1990s, however, data have

After doubling between 1929 and 1960, charitable giving as a percentage of personal income declined from a high of 2.2 percent of income in 1964 to a low of 1.58 percent in 1994.¹¹

become available on trust in nonprofits. And they indicate that in the past five years Americans have become less trusting that nonprofits carry out their missions in an ethical and effective way.¹² Recent survey data from Allegheny County help to sketch out the local landscape of nonprofit trust. Only 14 percent of survey respondents expressed a “great deal of confidence” in their local nonprofits, with the vast majority expressing a “fair amount,” and one in 5 expressing “not too much” or “no” confidence.¹³

Nonprofits pay attention to institutional trust for good reason – it has a clear impact upon giving and volunteering. But trust in people (generalized trust) is less well understood, even though, as I shall argue, it too is an important resource for communities to find their common will and undertake common actions.

Trust in people is a moral value that we learn early in life from parents who instill a sense of belonging to a larger community.¹⁴ Perceiving a common stake with others is the basis for believing that most people are well intentioned, even if strangers occasionally take advantage of us. So people who have a general faith in others will reach out even to people who are different. In contrast, those who trust only members of their own kind - “particularized trusters” - see the world as a hostile place and tend to look upon strangers with suspicion.¹⁵ If the world were populated only with particularized trusters, it would be hard to sustain dialogue among citizens who are not of the same race, socio-economic status, or political party. And this kind of broad dialogue is exactly what is needed to initiate meaningful progress on challenges facing local communities. Generalized trusters believe that it is possible for people to disagree respectfully, and that it is more important to get things done together than to adhere to ideological beliefs. Trusters are therefore more inclined to put aside narrow interests for the purpose of discussing the interests of the broader public.¹⁶

People who trust others are also more likely to come to the aid or work alongside of those who are not of their own kind. Trusters are the ones who will do much of the work implementing collective decisions aimed at addressing community issues. Recent studies indicate that generalized trusters are significantly more likely than particularized trusters to donate time and money to meet the needs of their community.¹⁷ It turns out that people’s willingness to engage in various kinds of civic activities, like joining membership associations, reading newspapers, voting, and protesting, do not depend much upon generalized trust.¹⁸

These activities do not require faith in people who are different from ourselves, and are therefore not contingent on trust. Giving and volunteering are notable exceptions. They tie people to others who may be different, which depends upon a belief in a community of shared fate and a generalized faith in people.

Rebuilding trust and improving communities

Declining trust, I have argued, has stood as a barrier to broad public dialogue and collective action on problems facing local communities. But what explains trust's decline?

... one cause of America's decline in trust is that fewer optimists are among us ... as people at the bottom of the economic distribution have become less connected to the benefits of society, they have grown pessimistic about the future.²²

The answer to this question depends upon which kind of trust is at issue. Levels of institutional trust depend largely upon public perceptions of how ethically and effectively institutions carry out their goals. From this perspective the loss of trust in nonprofits reflects an increasing public scrutiny of how nonprofits are managed. Efforts such as the Independent Sector's initiative to improve nonprofit ethics, accountability, and transparency thus represent clear progress toward rebuilding trust.¹⁹ Rebuilding trust in people is a different kind of problem, one that may require large scale changes that could take years to achieve.

According to one prominent theory, trust in people reflects an optimistic attitude toward the world. And optimism is a product of, among other things, an equitable distribution of economic resources.²⁰ Political scientists Eric Uslaner and Mitchell Brown have sought to test the link between equality and trust as well as the related claim that inequality

depresses civic engagement “either directly or indirectly, through its effects on trust.”²¹ Using cross-sectional data on American states, they found that in states where income disparities were greatest, people were the least trusting of strangers. States with the greatest trust had the most even distribution of economic resources. Residents were more likely to believe that the future will be better than the past, and they helped make the future brighter for others by giving more of their income to charity, volunteering more often, and showing a greater interest in discussing community problems.

If Uslaner and Brown are correct, then one cause of America’s decline in trust is that fewer optimists are among us.²² Economic disparities have steadily gotten worse. As people at the bottom of the income distribution have become less connected to the benefits of society, they have grown pessimistic about the future. Economic inequality has long been greater in the United States than in other advanced industrial nations. But rising living standards that had prevailed in the United States since the end of World War II came to an end in the early 1970s for households in the middle and bottom of the income distribution. Since 1970 the average real income has declined steadily for those in the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution while remaining even for those in the middle 20 percent. Income earners in the top 20 percent, in contrast, have enjoyed robust growth, pulling further and further away from the middle and bottom classes over time.²³

45.3 percent of Allegheny County residents felt the best years were past, compared to 29.9 percent of national respondents.²⁵

Pittsburgh may be among the worst regions in the nation in economic inequalities. UCSUR benchmarks compared the 70

largest cities, 50 largest counties, and 50 largest metropolitan areas on a variety of indicators of economic inequality - e.g., employment, income, poverty, homeownership, and home value - and found that low-income residents in the Pittsburgh region are worse off than their counterparts in the other benchmark regions. Black-white income inequalities in the region are particularly bad. For the year 1999, per capita income for whites (\$21,849) was nearly twice that for blacks (\$12,356), white poverty rates (14.3%) were nearly two and a half times less than black rates (34.1%), and white home values were valued about 33 percent higher than black home values.²⁴

If inequality lowers trust through its effects on optimism, then residents of the Pittsburgh region should have a somewhat more pessimistic outlook on the future than residents of other regions. A comparison of the attitudes of Allegheny County residents with those of people in other parts of the country lends support to this idea. In a 2004 survey, county residents were asked, "When you think about the future of your community, do you feel more optimistic that its best years are ahead, or do you feel that your community's best years might already be behind it?" Fifty percent of Allegheny County residents were optimistic compared to 59.8 percent of national respondents. Another 45.3 percent of Allegheny County residents felt the best years were past, compared to 29.9 percent of national respondents.²⁵

Perhaps trust will be strengthened in the Pittsburgh region when more people begin to benefit from regional economic growth. As more people identify a common stake in the region, they could also develop a deeper commitment to understanding and addressing community problems. Yet

rebuilding trust is not the whole story. The value of a discussion about trust can only be measured in relation to past and existing efforts to improve the capacity of communities to identify and address important issues. Given what we now know about the difference that trust can make to nonprofits, as well as about the uncertainties facing our local communities, now may be the time to give the issue of trust prominent place on the agenda for moving the Pittsburgh region toward a better future.

Notes

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⁵ The Forbes Funds, *Greater Pittsburgh Community Threads*, 3.

⁶ Campos, Inc., "Human Services Poll," (Pittsburgh, PA: The Forbes Funds, August 2004).

⁷ Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), ix.

⁸ The 1960 statistic for trust in others is from a survey in Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963). All other trends reported in this paragraph are derived from the General Social Survey, Cumulative Datafile 1972-2004, <http://sda.berkeley.edu:7502/cgi-bin/hsda?harsda+gss04> (Analysis done by the author, November 15, 2005).

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¹² Paul C. Light, "Trust in Charitable Organizations," "To Give or Not to Give: The Crisis of Confidence in Charities," *Policy Brief 7* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, December 2003), "Fact Sheet on the Continued Crisis in Charitable Confidence" (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, September 13, 2004), "Rebuilding Public Confidence in Charitable Organizations," *Public Service Brief 1* (New York: New York University Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, October 2005).

¹³ Campos, Inc., "Human Services Poll," 5.

¹⁴ Wendy M. Rahn and John E. Transue, "Social Trust and Value Change: The Decline of Social Capital in American Youth, 1976-1995," *Political Psychology* 19, 3 (1998): 545-565.

¹⁵ See Eric M. Uslaner, *The Moral Foundations of Trust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁶ The following sources are useful for identifying the effects of trust discussed in this paragraph: Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 136-137; Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 88-89, 170-171; Piotr Sztompka, *Trust: A Sociological Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 102-107; John Brehm and Wendy Rahn, "Individual Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital," *American Journal of Political Science* 41, 3 (1997): 1003.

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¹⁸ Dietland Stolle and Thomas R. Rochon, "Are All Associations Alike? Member Diversity, Associational Type, and the Creation of Social Capital," *American Behavioral Scientist* 42, 1 (1998): 47-65; Dietland Stolle, "Bowling Together, Bowling Alone: The Development of Generalized Trust in Voluntary Organizations," *Political Psychology* 19, 3 (1998): 497-525.

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²¹ Uslaner and Brown, "Inequality, Trust, and Civic Engagement," 869.

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²³ Gary Burtless, "Growing American Inequality: Sources and Remedies," in *Setting National Priorities: The 2000 Election and Beyond*, edited by Henry J. Aaron and Robert D. Reischauer (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1999), 137-139.

²⁴ Bangs, et al., "Black-White Benchmarks Reports."

²⁵ See Campos, Inc., "Human Services Poll," 42. The question in the poll is not a perfect measure of personal optimism, since it asks about the future of the community rather than that of the individual. Nonetheless, it helps to identify how optimism is affected by people's geographic location.



**The Pittsburgh Dialogues for Volunteers,
Philanthropists and Activists**

Group Facilitation for Nonprofit Leaders

*Written by Gregory J. Crowley, Coro Center for Civic Leadership,
with research assistance by Jeffrey Smith, Carnegie Mellon University
Fall 2007*

Nexus: Pittsburgh Dialogues for Volunteers, Philanthropists, and Activists

Group Facilitation for Nonprofit Leaders*

September 2007

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NONPROFIT LEADERS AS FACILITATORS

More and more nonprofits are adopting a facilitative style of leadership. Nonprofits rely upon a wide array of resources to serve communities effectively. Volunteers, community groups, government agencies and charitable organizations all have important contributions to make in bringing about community change. Yet in most communities no formal system exists for coordinating these resources. Instead nonprofit leaders must draw upon the

“power of inclusion, and the power of language, and the power of shared interests, and the power of coalition.”[†]

Facilitative leadership is the key to unleashing these powers. It is based on the assumption that each person or group holds an important piece of the larger puzzle. Effective facilitators are able to

[†] Jim Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* (Jim Collins, 2005) p. 10.

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bring out the best abilities of each in order to generate creative solutions for all and build the commitment necessary to implement those solutions.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide introduces four methods of group facilitation that can be used by nonprofits to engage volunteers, staff, board, and community members in planning for the future. The Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management at Robert Morris University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, tested each method - The World Café, The Story Circle, Scenario Thinking, and Open Space Meetings – during a rigorous 18 month process called the Nexus Dialogues.

Between January 2006 and April 2007, four Nexus Dialogues were held on critical issues facing nonprofits in southwestern Pennsylvania. Each dialogue involved a public presentation by a national thought leader followed by a workshop utilizing one of the four methods.

NEXUS GUIDING QUESTIONS

WHAT FACTORS CAUSE PEOPLE TO BECOME ENGAGED CITIZENS?

ARE THERE CULTURAL TRENDS THAT ENCOURAGE ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP?

ARE THERE TRENDS THAT DISCOURAGE ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP?

WHAT PRACTICAL STEPS CAN COMMUNITIES TAKE TO STRENGTHEN CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT?

DO NONPROFITS HAVE A SPECIAL ROLE TO PLAY IN FACILITATING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT?

Thirty five to 40 people participated in each workshop. The majority was employed in the nonprofit sector (83 percent) and nearly all (89 percent) identified themselves as regular volunteers.

The Bayer Center and its partner, the Richard King Mellon Foundation, viewed the Dialogues as a vehicle for building confidence in the nonprofit sector and engaging communities in nonprofit work. Research conducted in 2003 in Allegheny County Pennsylvania indicates that residents and nonprofit professionals often do not agree on the needs and priorities facing their communities or on the best ways

to improve community capacity to meet those needs.[‡] Residents are unsure if nonprofits are addressing problems that are important to them and their communities. When people do not have confidence in nonprofits, they give less of their time and money to support nonprofit work.

The Nexus dialogues aimed to identify challenges underlying the issue of confidence. As described in the next section, each method of facilitation structured the dialogue in a different way and brought unique advantages to the engagement. But there are good reasons to use any of the group facilitation methods featured in this guide:

WHY USE GROUP FACILITATION METHODS?

TO ACCELERATE ACTION

TO INCREASE SHARED UNDERSTANDING AND OWNERSHIP OF ACTIONS

TO CREATE EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO OUTCOMES

TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUTCOMES

TO ENHANCE MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS

Included in the guide is a brief definition of each method, a description of the steps involved in putting the method into practice and a summary of the context of its application in the Nexus Dialogues. Additional resources on each method are also listed and should be referred to before selecting a method for an event you are planning.

FOUR FACILITATION METHODS

1. THE WORLD CAFÉ

THE WORLD CAFÉ DEFINED

The World Café format is based on historical evidence that new ideas are developed and refined through informal conversations in cafes, salons, pubs, kitchen tables, and places of workshop. The World Café

[‡] This research is summarized in Gregory J. Crowley, *Why Trust Matters to Nonprofits* (Robert Morris University, January 2006), found at http://www.rmu.edu/SentryHTML/pdf/bcnm_nexus_trust.pdf

brings people together in an informal environment to discuss issues and questions of importance to their communities. The key to Café learning is "idea cross-pollination." Tables are arranged in the event space to create a casual café feeling, with each table hosting a different topic of conversation. Participants move from one table to the next, sharing their ideas about each topic as well as the insights they have gained from discussions on prior topics. In this way, participants discover shared meaning, they gain new perspectives on the things that matter most to them, and they create new possibilities for acting together.

APPLICATIONS

MOVING TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS FORWARD TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN A SCHOOL DISTRICT

PLANNING TO IMPROVE MARKET SHARE OR LAUNCH NEW PRODUCTS IN A CONSUMER PRODUCTS COMPANY

EXPLORING WHAT VALUE PEOPLE DERIVE FROM MEMBERSHIP IN AN ASSOCIATION

WORLD CAFÉ IN PRACTICE

Participants in a World Café are divided into groups of four to five people. Each group is seated at a different table representing a specific topic. Participants write directly on paper tablecloths their ideas, insights and questions relevant to the table's topic.

Table discussions occur over a period of 20-45 minutes. At the end of each discussion, a new round begins. One person

remains with the table as host, while others move to a new table to discuss a new topic. The host shares the essence of the previous group discussion with newcomers, who in turn convey any highlights or themes carried from the previous round.

At the end of the World Café participants have absorbed ideas generated from various groups and have a written record of their work. The method is useful for organizations seeking to identify priorities and concerns in communities they serve. It is also useful for building stronger social networks within the community and between communities and non-profits.

The World Café is a highly open-ended process that is best suited for beginning exploration of issues. Workshop results can then be followed up with more focused planning efforts. It is therefore important to define key topics that can inspire participants to remain engaged over the long term.

NEXUS WORLD CAFÉ, DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH, JAN 31, 2006

The Bayer Center prepared for the Nexus workshop series by publicizing the findings of existing research and hosting open dialogues facilitated by national thought leaders. Invitations were sent to Bayer Center clients and volunteers as well as charitable foundations. Included in the invitations were the session theme and four guiding questions of Nexus.

The goal of the Nexus World Cafe was to stimulate focused discussion on the four guiding questions and to encourage participants to continue the conversation in their organizations. Success was measured in the degree to which relationships developed among participants led to efforts at more focused discussion in the future.

"In selecting participants for the World Café, we looked for connectors, people who would go back and continue the conversation in their organizations and communities."

-Peggy Morrison Outon, Nexus World Cafe facilitator

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Brown, Juanita, D. Isaacs, and the World Café Community, *The World Café* (Berret-Koehler Publishers Inc., 2005)

Brown, Juanita, Ken Homer, and David Isaacs, "The World Café," pp. 179-194 in *The Change Handbook*, 2nd edition, edited by Peggy Holman, Tom Devane, and Steven Cady, San Francisco: Berret-Koehler, 1997.

The World Café, found at <http://www.theworldcafe.com>

2. STORY CIRCLES

STORY CIRCLES DEFINED

Story Circles use the ancient tradition of storytelling to deepen people's understanding of their own communities while strengthening their relationships with others engaged in change efforts. In a Story Circle people gather in small groups to reflect upon and learn from the experiences of others. When people share personal experiences in the

form of a story, listeners anticipate that it will make a larger point, one that is relevant to their own lives. In this way, storytelling enables people to learn about their own communities while at the same time identifying shared concerns and establishing common identity. Storytelling is also an effective way to build trust between people, since the narrative form prepares listeners to listen empathetically.

Story Circles evolved in the 1980s from the work of two community-based organizations in the metro Denver region, Metropolitan Organizations for People (MOP) and Project WISE. MOP consists of 22 congregations, schools and neighborhood associations with a mission of empowering people to strengthen and transform their communities through organizing. Project WISE is a women's initiative that aims to empower low-income women to meet goals for themselves, their families, and their communities. Story Circles have also been used in community arts organizations such as Theresa Holden's Artist and Community Connection. Holden has facilitated Story Circles across the country for local arts organizations seeking to "equalize all partners' voices in the planning, development and outcome of each project."

PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES

SIT IN A CIRCLE AND MOVE AROUND THE CIRCLE IN RESPONSE TO A FOCUS TOPIC CHOSEN FOR THE SESSION

STORIES MUST BE BASED IN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

LISTEN TO OTHER PEOPLE'S STORIES WITHOUT INTERRUPTING

AGREE ON A TIME LIMIT FOR STORIES

IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO SPEAK ON YOUR TURN

RESPECT THE "CONFIDENTIALITY" OF PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

STORY CIRCLES IN PRACTICE

Gather in Small Groups

People are inspired to come together out of shared interest in a problem or issue. The Story Circle is well suited for instances when people who may share problems or opportunities have yet to come together to define their common ground. The narrative format creates an environment that invites and enables equal participation from every person and reveals valuable information held in people's memories. Participants break into groups of 4-6 people.

Story Circle – Focus Topic

Before beginning a session, participants identify a topic to focus the storytelling. The scope of a topic will vary depending upon the purpose it is intended to serve. Participants take turns responding to the focus topic in their small groups.

Story Circle – Reflection

The small groups reflect upon responses to the focus topic, discuss common threads, and summarize lessons learned.

Action Steps

The groups discuss what actions they can take based upon the lessons learned.

NEXUS STORY CIRCLE, EAST END OF PITTSBURGH, APRIL 4, 2006

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, residents of New Orleans became significantly more engaged in their communities. The Bayer Center invited several community leaders from New Orleans to address a Pittsburgh audience on how the Katrina cataclysm transformed local community life. The follow-up Nexus Story Circle workshop was intended to build on this event to promote learning directly from the experiences of nonprofit managers, volunteers, activists, and philanthropists in Pittsburgh.

Focus topic: Talk about a time in your life when you became aware that you were part of a community.

Reflection: What did the stories in your group have in common? How were they different? What have we learned about how to get more people involved?

Action: What can you do to make people feel a part of your organization or community?

*"Stories encourage listening; When we listen we learn."
-Theresa R. Holden, Story Circle facilitator*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Randels, Jim, "After the Storm," *Teacher Magazine*, January 2007, at http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/randels/archives/2005/10/the_story_circl_1.html

Story Circle Model (In Depth) People's Organizing Committee, at <http://www.peoplesorganizing.org/Volunteer/The%20Story%20Circle%20Model.doc>

Story Circle Tool Kit

<http://www.makingconnectionsdenver.org/publications/uploads/66/StoryCircleToolkit.pdf>

3. SCENARIO THINKING

SCENARIO THINKING DEFINED

Scenario Thinking is a powerful way to prepare organizations and communities to respond effectively to potential opportunities and threats. Thinking in scenarios is fundamentally a process of identifying forces of change in the world - such as shifting roles of government or the development of new technologies - and critically analyzing how these forces could combine in different ways to affect the future of an organization or community.

Since the early 1980s, Global Business Network (GBN) has developed and refined the Scenario Thinking process for use in private sector organizations. Beginning in 2001, with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, GBN has been raising awareness of Scenario Thinking in the nonprofit sector.

APPLICATIONS

YOUR SITUATION IS IDEAL FOR SCENARIO THINKING IF:

- THE SOLUTION TO A STRATEGIC ISSUE IS UNCLEAR
- THE ENVIRONMENT IS UNCERTAIN
- THE ORGANIZATION OR COMMUNITY IS OPEN TO CHANGE
- THERE IS LEADERSHIP SUPPORT FOR THE SCENARIO THINKING PROCESS

SCENARIO THINKING IN PRACTICE

Scenario Thinking is organized in five-phases: pre-work, exploration, synthesis, action, and monitoring.

Pre-Work

Interviews are conducted with key stakeholders in order to clarify the purpose for entering into a Scenario Thinking exercise. Among the topics probed in interviews is the timeframe for scenario thinking. For how many years into the future is the organization preparing itself? Other interview topics focus on how internal and external environments of the organization

are changing over time and the implications of these changes for long-term strategic decisions.

Having learned from the interviews about challenges and underlying assumptions, the organization begins to frame the focus topic that will orient the Scenario Thinking process.

Exploration

Exploration is the first phase of Scenario Thinking that is facilitated in a group workshop. The workshop could be conducted in a few hours, but is best done in a one-day retreat or several 2 to 3 hour sessions. This ensures that ample time and consideration will be given to the development of scenarios facing the organization.

In the first part of the workshop, participants break down into small groups of 6 to 10 people to explore and document various forces that could shape the focus topic, such as changing social values, developments in technology, and shifting roles of government.

Synthesis

After identifying and evaluating several forces of change, the next step is to integrate them into plausible scenarios. This process begins by prioritizing forces according to their relevance to the focus topic and the level of uncertainty surrounding the forces. The idea is to arrive at a small handful of driving forces and then to combine them into scenarios that seem most likely to occur.

Action

Articulating several plausible scenarios clarifies the decisions and actions available to an organization. The outcome could be an organizational commitment to a specific course of action or the identification of areas in need of greater research and exploration. Whatever the case may be, stakeholders will be better able to make decisions that yield desirable outcomes.

Monitoring

In this phase mechanisms are created to help the organization or community track changes in the environment to adjust strategy according to the actual scenario that is unfolding.

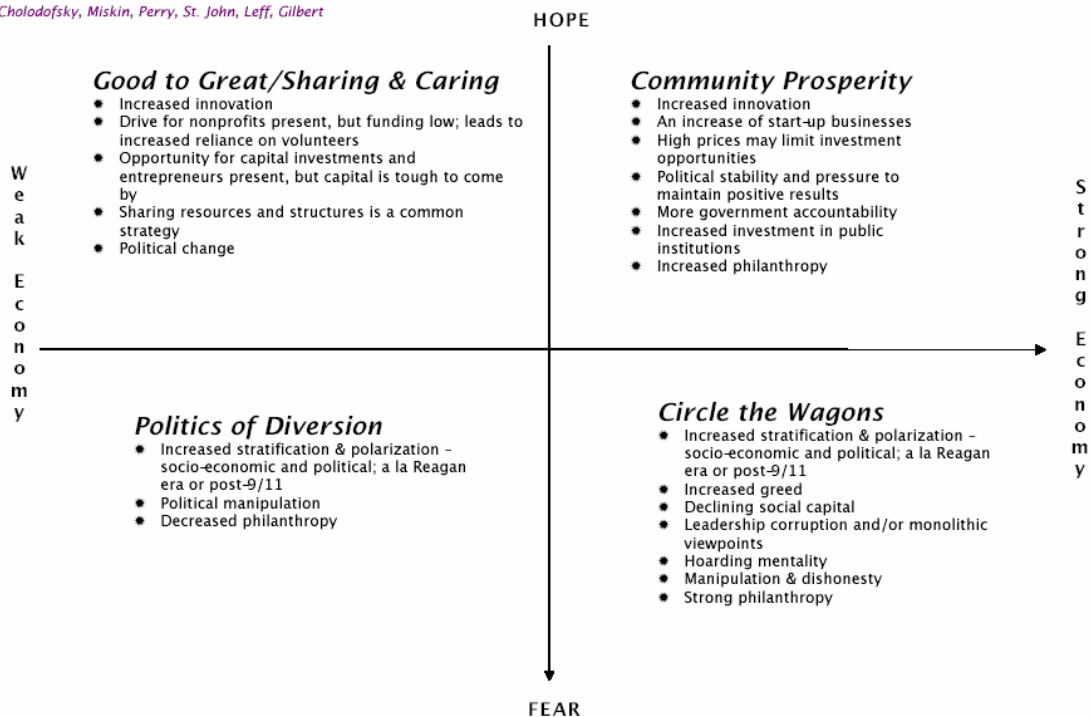
NEXUS SCENARIO THINKING, EAST END OF PITTSBURGH, NOVEMBER 7, 2006

Focus topic: How can nonprofits promote collaboration among themselves and with business and government to achieve common goals?

Driving forces: Groups identified different forces as relevant to the future of cross-sector collaboration in the Pittsburgh region. Below is one group's scenario. It indicates that the future of collaboration depends upon the strength of the economy as well as how hopeful people feel about the future.

EXAMPLE OF SCENARIO MATRIX FROM THE NEXUS WORKSHOP

Cholodofsky, Miskin, Perry, St. John, Leff, Gilbert



"Scenario Thinking is about preparing ourselves to respond proactively to changes in our situation"
-Peggy Morrison Outon, Nexus scenario thinking facilitator

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ertel, Chris, Katherine Fulton, and Diana Searce, "Scenario Thinking," pp. 331-346 in *The Change Handbook*, 2nd edition, edited by Peggy Holman, Tom Devane, and Steven Cady, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1997

Searce, Diana, Katherine Fulton, and the Global Business Network Community, *What If?* (Global Business Network, 2004)

PRINCIPLES

WHOEVER COMES ARE THE RIGHT PEOPLE – IT IS NOT HOW MANY PEOPLE OR THE POSITIONS THEY HOLD THAT COUNTS, BUT PARTICIPANTS' PASSION FOR THE SUBJECT

WHENEVER IT STARTS IS THE RIGHT TIME – MOTIVATION AND CREATIVITY DO NOT HAPPEN ACCORDING TO THE CLOCK.

WHEN IT'S OVER IT'S OVER – THE SESSION ENDS WHEN THE WORK IS FINISHED, WHETHER IN 10 MINUTES OR TWO HOURS

WHATEVER HAPPENS IS THE ONLY THING THAT COULD HAVE – THE GROUP MUST ACT ON WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED, REGARDLESS OF WHAT SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED

4. OPEN SPACE MEETINGS

OPEN SPACE MEETINGS DEFINED

Open Space is a method by which participants determine for themselves the outcomes, agenda, and length of a group discussion. It is useful in facilitating dialogue about highly uncertain issues among people who may not know one another.

In the 1980s management consultant Harrison Owen created Open Space as a "marketplace of inquiry" where people organize discussion on topics that matter to them. Open Space Meetings unfold without restrictions or expectations as to the outcomes.

Owen first used the approach in response to a major shutdown of the Rockport Company. The

company's employees had all gathered in a warehouse, but no agenda had been set and no plans for action had been made. Owen read his four Open Space principles (see box above) and within 30 minutes employees had taken ownership of the meeting and were defining an agenda for themselves.

OPEN SPACE MEETINGS IN PRACTICE

As with the other methods, Open Space is guided by a topic of focus that must grab the attention of participants so as to jumpstart a discussion. The topic for Rockport employees was exemplary – they needed to decide what to do about the plant closing. Once the discussion begins, participants who are truly committed will determine its course and outcomes. Six guidelines are followed:

- Participants sit in a circle and a facilitator invites them to suggest issues on which they would like to take action
- Participants write their issues on paper, announce them to the group, and post them on the wall
- After all issues are on the wall, the facilitator invites participants to sign up for the issues they most want to explore

- Issues are assigned times and meeting locations
- Participants meet in self-managing groups to discuss the issues
- Participants are free to visit other groups to facilitate cross-pollination

After results of the meeting are documented, groups convene again to prioritize issues and set timelines for action.

NEXUS OPEN SPACE MEETING, EAST END OF PITTSBURGH, MARCH 13, 2007

The Nexus Open Space meeting was structured around a visit from Allison Fine, author of *Momentum: Igniting Social Change in the Connected Age* (2006).

Focus topic: How do we embrace the use of new social media (email, web, blogs, pod casts, wikis) to increase participation in social change efforts?

Agenda created by participants:

- Bridging the Digital Divide: Generations, Technology and Gate-keeping
- Access to Info = POWER
- Focused Vision vs. Dilution by Inclusion
- Isolation, Individualism, and Virtual Relationships
- Old World Skills, Brave New Formats
- The Un-meeting Groupthink
- Capturing and using web-based data to market and communicate

"Open Space meetings allow the convener to see where the energy and concern are in their organization or community."

-Luci Dabney, Nexus Open Space facilitator

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Herman, Michael, "Working in Open Space: A guided Tour" at www.openspaceworld.org/cgi/wiki.cgi?WorkinginOpenSpace

Owen, Harrison, *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*, 2d ed. San Francisco: Berret-Koehler, 1997.

_____. "Open Space Technology," pp. 135-148 in *The Change Handbook*, 2nd edition, edited by Peggy Holman, Tom Devane, and Steven Cady San Francisco: Berret-Koehler, 1997.

CONCLUSION

More than 500 people participated in the Nexus exploration of public confidence in the nonprofit sector. They learned that the problem of nonprofit confidence is complex and that solutions must be sought at multiple levels. This guide represents one set of practical strategies that can be implemented relatively easily by nonprofit organizations. It does not take new legislation, more government funding, or widespread changes in public attitudes for an organization to begin facilitating group discussions as a way of building public confidence in its work. As more nonprofits adopt a facilitative style of leadership, confidence in the nonprofit sector as a whole can improve. This is the hope of the Nexus Dialogues.