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# Imbalances in the Social Process

## THE MAP, NOT THE TERRITORY

Social processes do not go on in those geometrical spaces called triangles, but rather in the nitty gritty of everyday life.

The social processes go on in the street, the factory, the workplace, the office, the market, and the home, wherever humans show up in society.

The triangles are the map, not the territory. Social process triangles are simply an effective way to map the real processes and show their relationships.

## 3 POLES IN BALANCE

Each pole in any triangle plays a particular role or function. The left pole is always the foundational of the three. It is the “that without which” in the whole social process. Without access to the means of survival, subsistence and nurture, there is no social process, because everyone is dead.

The right-hand pole plays the ordering or organizational function. It keeps social chaos at bay. In the context of the whole social process without social order people will simply eliminate each other so they can get hold of more resources and products for themselves, as happens in many animal species.

The top pole is the significating or meaning-giver. In the whole social process this is the cultural process, which gives meaning to both the economic and political. The cultural provides the source and context of wisdom, insight, life skills, family values, and answers the questions of who we are, what are we to do, and how are we to be.

Similarly in each triangle, there is a pole that is more foundational (the left), a pole that is more organizational (the right) and a pole that is more about providing meaning (the top).

## OVEREMPHASIZED PROCESS

When all the processes are working well and in tandem, the processes limit, create and sustain each other, and each process is in balance with the other two. But, most often, social processes are out of balance, which means that one process is overemphasized and dominating over the others.

For example, in Britain at the beginning of the industrial revolution, Common Production (the making of textiles) was dominant over resources (cotton came from India), was dominant over Corporate Welfare (consider the young children working in the mills), and dominated over Communal Wisdom (witness the growth of the sciences). It took several generations and revolutions to bring Common

Production back in balance with the cultural processes and the political processes. Some might say it is still imbalanced.

## KEY TO UNDERSTANDING AND INTERVENTIONS

Understanding imbalances in the social processes are key to determining the interventions and actions which are necessary to create lasting social change.

A social system is never completely in balance. A simple broken leg of the bread winner in a family can completely shift the dynamical processes within the family. Natural calamities can shift a social system within a region. The moral authority of one person can sometimes shift the dynamical imbalance of an entire continent.

The rationality and intricacy of the social process triangles can create an image of desired balance within a social system. The tool can also be used to create powerful images of imbalance.

## Imbalances in the Social Process (continued)

### **DOMINANCE OF ECONOMIC POLE**

In our time, especially in the western world, the economic processes dominates over the political and cultural. This is especially evident when the prevalent cultural mantra is to accumulate wealth, and when the main political agenda is to order taxes and create budgets.

In the terminology of the social process:

1. The economic dimension of life has become the **DOMINANT** or tyrant.
2. The political process has allied itself with the economic instead of being independent of it. It is the **ALLY** of the economic.
3. The cultural process is the **COLLAPSED** pole.

Because of the economic tyrant, the cultural cannot do its job of creating meaning, which means that meaning is more and more found in acquiring money and possessions, that economic considerations tend to be the prime factor in making decisions, and that politics becomes devoted too much to fiddling with the economy and games of control and power.

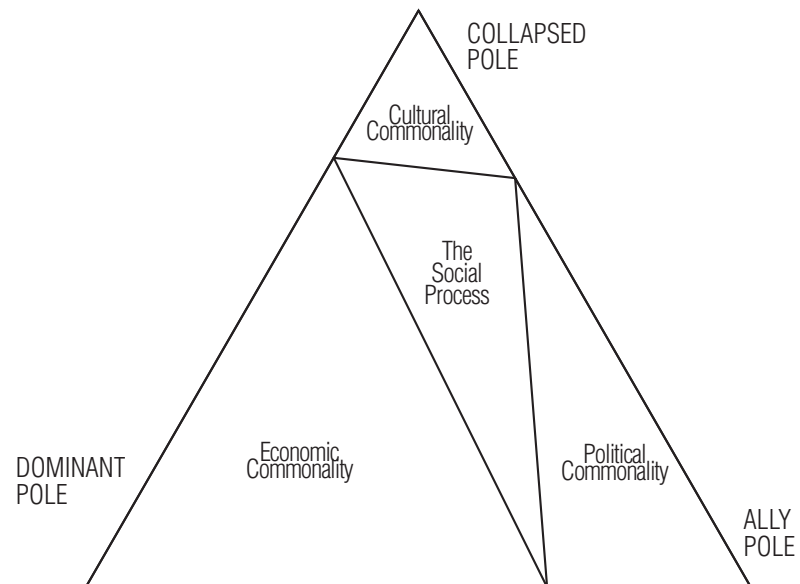
### **EMPOWER THE CULTURAL POLE**

Because the economic is still very much the dominant social process and the political process is in collusion or alliance with it, and the cultural dimension is collapsed, self-conscious social engineers today are placing great emphasis on the cultural.

They do this so that the cultural processes will be strengthened enough to re-energize the political so that the political can put the economic back in its place.

ICA, the Institute of Cultural Affairs, derives its name from a deliberate and conscious institutional decision to reempower the cultural processes in society.

Empowering a collapsed cultural pole is one way to change the dynamics within society. A thorough analysis of all levels of the social process will show many types of imbalance, many of which can be leveraged to create social change.



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# Determining Imbalances

## CONVERSATION ON THE IMBALANCE

ICA's presupposition is that the cultural processes have to be reawakened to put pressure on the political to re-assert itself so that the economic will be put back in its place.

The question may arise, "Why not attack the economic dominant pole directly?"

The answer, from observation and experience, is: 99 times out of 100, indirect action is preferable to direct because you don't get wiped out in the process.

The dominant pole can put considerable pressure on any direct attempt to reduce its influence. Consider the bloody results in the late middle ages when political fiefdoms tried to exert influence on the dominant cultural pole (religion) at that time.

1. What images do you get when you hear the word "dominator"?
2. What emotional overtones does the word have for you?
3. What does it mean for a person who is subject to a dominator?
4. When someone has surrendered to economic domination in their lives, what does it look like?
5. What does it look like at city or town council meetings? at the General Motors Board Meeting?
6. When the political (decision-making, organizing, governing) processes are acting as the ally of the economic dominator, what does that look like:
  - in your own life, when it's time for a celebration
  - in the workplace when employees request a child care structure
  - in the provincial government when Moody's lowers the province's credit rating
  - in the Canadian Government at budget time.
7. When the cultural processes are crushed or collapsed, what is missing from economic and political life at every level?

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# Determining the Dominant Process

## **INTUITIVE PROCESS**

While this may seem scientific, at bottom, this is an intuitive process.

Intuitive responses do not come from thin air, but from the total mass of impressions, sensory data, news, conversations, what we have read, and how we see people responding to life. In other words, there is an objective, empirical dimension to the intuitive process. Intuition simply comes from everything we have come to know about life, even though we are not always conscious at any one moment what we really know.

## **NORMAL STATE OF IMBALANCE**

For any set of triangles at the same level we can assume, (since society is not in a utopian state of perfect balance) that these triangles/processes are in a state of imbalance. One process has become too big for its own good, and is dominating the other two. One process has collapsed. The third process is aiding and abetting the dominator.

A method for determining imbalances is aimed first at getting a fix on the dominator; then at pinning down the collapsed. It can then be assumed that the third triangle is the ally to the dominant.

Consider any set of three triangles at the same level. It may be necessary to go to the set a level lower or higher to get these triangles situated in the whole social process.

## **A. Determining the Dominant Process**

### **OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS**

Which of the three triangles commands more than 60 per cent of the budget?

Which of the three shows up most in the media or in the conversation of the large majority of people?

Which of the three is considered most in making decisions by a large majority of people?

### **REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**

Which of the three gets the large majority of people most worried?

Which bulks largest in people's minds?

### **INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS**

Which is considered of primary significance?

Which one seems to be lording it over the other two?

Which one bulks largest in people's value base?

Which triangle is limiting the operations of the other two without being limited by them?

Which is being sustained by the relative inaction of the other two without sustaining them?

## **DECISIONAL QUESTIONS**

Look over the answers to the questions. Which process/triangle has come up for most mention?

For the time being, the assumption is that this is the dominating process.

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# Determining the Collapsed Process

## **B. Determining the Collapsed Process**

### **OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS**

Which of the three triangles commands less than 20 per cent of the budget?

Which of the three shows up least in the media or in the conversation of the large majority of people?

Which of the three is considered least in making decisions by the large majority of people?

### **REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**

Which of the three worries the large majority of people the least?

Which bulks least in the large majority of people's minds?

### **INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS**

Which of the three is considered as least significant by the large majority of people?

Which one seems to be ignored in the large majority of value bases?

Which triangle is limited by the operations of the other two without limiting them?

Which is not being sustained by the other two while sustaining them?

### **DECISIONAL QUESTIONS**

In the light of the above, which of the three do most of the answers point to as the collapsed process ?

With the dominant and collapsed poles identified, we can assume that the other process is the ally.

Redraw the triangle to show the imbalance, using dominator, ally, and collapsed to label the triangles.

# Finding Imbalances by Plotting Issues

One way to find imbalances in the social process is to engage a group of people in brainstorming a large number of issues and plotting those issues on the triangles.

Analyzing the items and their frequency on the triangles can create understanding about imbalances.

The following is a sample analysis of the economic issues in a small, resource-based logging village, ie, Spruceville.

In a real analysis, a much larger number of issues would be plotted, and plotted over the entire social process, rather than just the economic process shown here.

## SPRUCEVILLE ECONOMIC ISSUES

1. not enough jobs for youth
2. no drug store for elders
3. have to go to mall in next town
4. post office is 5 kilometers away
5. low prices for logs
6. timber rights costs are going up
7. have to get fishing licenses in next town
8. hard to get fresh fruit/vegetables in store
9. seasonal employment for millrights
10. skilled woodworkers are unemployed
11. high amperage power line not available
12. youth leave soon after high school
13. no bus to next town
14. no work in town

## SAMPLE ANALYSIS

### ANALYSIS OF DISTRIBUTION IN SPRUCEVILLE

*1. An Expensive, Family Car Focused, Distribution System*

*In the arena of Common Distribution, the facts of:*

*• difficulty of getting prescriptions and fresh fruits in town, while the mall, fishing licences and post office are in the next town, and with no regular buses travelling there; indicates that:*

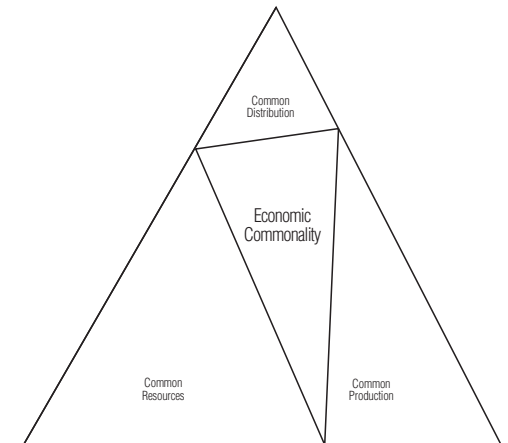
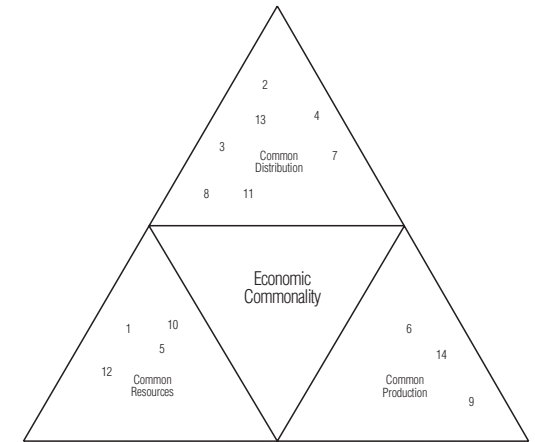
*• our economic distribution system is heavily dependent on families being able to drive outside of town to get what they need.*

*This is illustrated by:*

*Seniors without families having to pay large taxi fares for banking and shopping.*

## PROFESSIONAL PLANNERS

While an experienced or professional social planner might have been able to come to this conclusion by intuition or experience alone without the workshop, the issue-plotting tool allows a group to arrive at a thought-through conclusion without professional help. They can use the tool again and again for other social processes.



# Analysis of Imbalances

## 2ND LEVEL IMBALANCE ANALYSIS

This analysis shows a social system which is very strong in its production systems, perhaps a single industry town with very few of its own resources; where all the raw materials are all shipped in and finished products are shipped out. The distribution system is allied with the production system with lots of trucking activity which makes outside-owned stores easy to keep stocked.

The economic processes have almost completely co-opted the local culture with the townpeople getting their measure of meaning from economically derived preoccupations like awards for accident prevention, having a house in the company vice-president's expensive neighbourhood, and considerations like who gets overtime during 7 day-24 hour shift work. The local cultural institutions and churches have little control over who will attend on any particular Sunday morning.

In the political arena, most people are materially well-cared for with few signs of poverty. There is a mayor, a clerk who handles the water and taxes, and a police officer who ensures that parties after community functions do not get too rowdy. However many functions are sponsored by the company, and as long as a supervisor or manager is present, there is rarely any sort of trouble.

