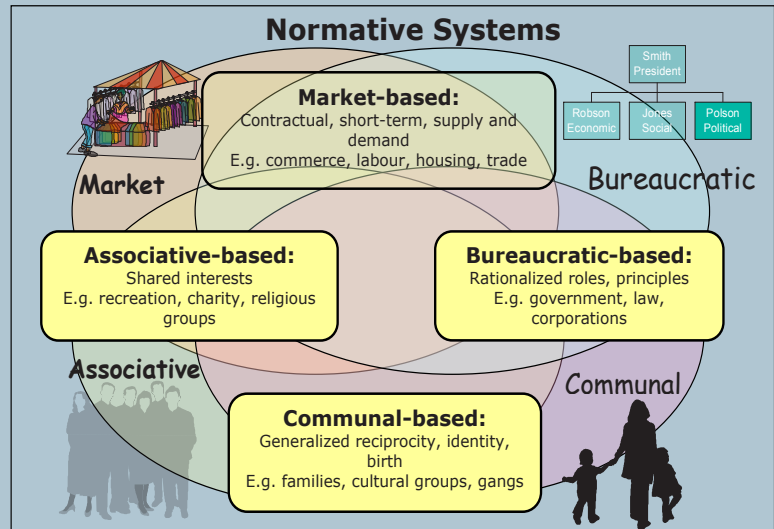


The Connectedness of Community as an Element in Policy

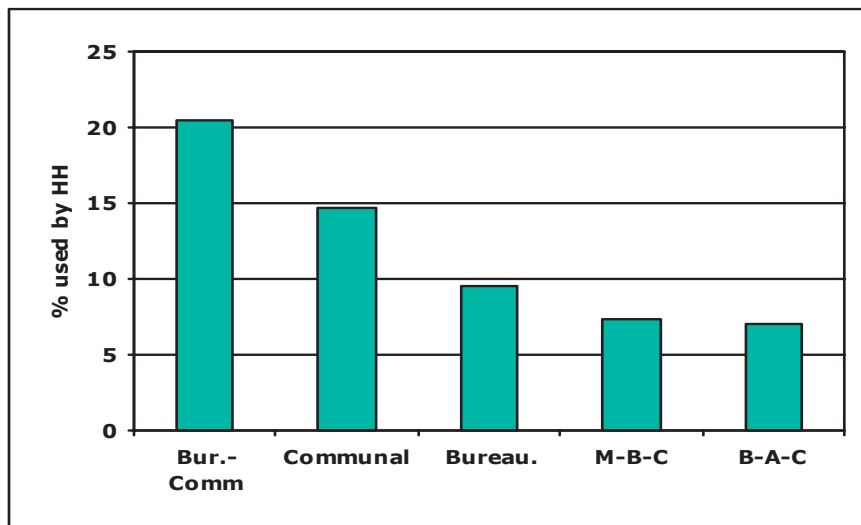
Connections and networks are critical assets for individual and community well-being and resiliency. They provide information about new opportunities and potential crises and serve as the means to act on those opportunities and mitigate the crises. We therefore need to understand how networks are lost or created, weakened or developed, and ignored or utilized.

Connections and networks are typically organized through their structure (With whom are you connected?), content (What brings you together?), and their norms (What guides your relationship?). Each of these features conditions the effectiveness and outcomes of networking activities. Of the three, the normative structures are under-investigated.



Normative systems reflect the expectations, rights, obligations, and justifications that guide our social relations. They refer to the formal and informal rules that govern to some extent the way we conduct ourselves in those relationships and what we expect of others. We have found it useful to think about those systems in terms of the four inter-related types illustrated above.

Types of support used by households (%)



NRE Household survey 2001; 1995 respondents

Normative systems are most often used in combination. Results from our household survey show that for social support:

- Communal and Bureaucratic-based relations are used more than others,
- Bureaucratic-based relations are most often used in combination with Communal ones, and
- Market and Associative-based relations are seldom used on their own.

Continued overleaf...

Bureaucratic Norms and Networks can be particularly challenging for Associative-based groups. Bureaucratic norms require fairness in competition and accountability in use while Associative norms require commitment to the shared interest of the group.

Possible Bureaucratic Accommodations:

- *Use multiple venues and networks for communication*
- *Request a simple letter of intent for projects, then provide funds for proposal development*
- *Provide financial support*
- *Provide long-term core funding for social infrastructure*

Available social capital is not always used. Results from our research show that the level of social capital available in our rural sites is weakly related to the use of social capital in those sites (maximum $r=.35$). We also found that high levels of one type of available social capital is often related more to the use of other types than with itself. For example, available Bureaucratic social capital shows a stronger relationship with the use of Associative or Market-based social capital than with Bureaucratic.

Opportunities for Governments and Co-ops:

- *Available but unused social capital may provide opportunities*
- *Building non-Bureaucratic social capital may serve government objectives more than Bureaucratic social capital*
- *Co-ops provide opportunities for the integration of different normative systems*

The community context matters. We found that many of the relationships examined vary depending on the characteristics of the site considered. For example, the relationship between available and used Bureaucratic-based social capital is stronger in sites that are well-connected to the global economy, have stable economies, are remote from large urban centres, and have relatively low institutional capacity.

Implications for Policy and Programs:

- *Build and facilitate networks within and between communities*
- *Respect and work with partners' norms*
- *Work with and support existing networks*
- *Increase local and regional resources and control over program implementation*
- *Research and explore innovations in inter-normative networks*

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