Trisector Logic: Holistic Aspects

Of great interest for our further explorations is the work of ICA. Among the tools developed by the institute for community and economic development were the so-called social processes triangles, practical diagnostic tools for social change based on the understanding of the three sectors. These triangles can be applied at every level of social reality for transformational purposes. The first-level triangle (Figure 12) quite simply introduces the reality of the three commonalities, but it also brings out something more than the obvious.
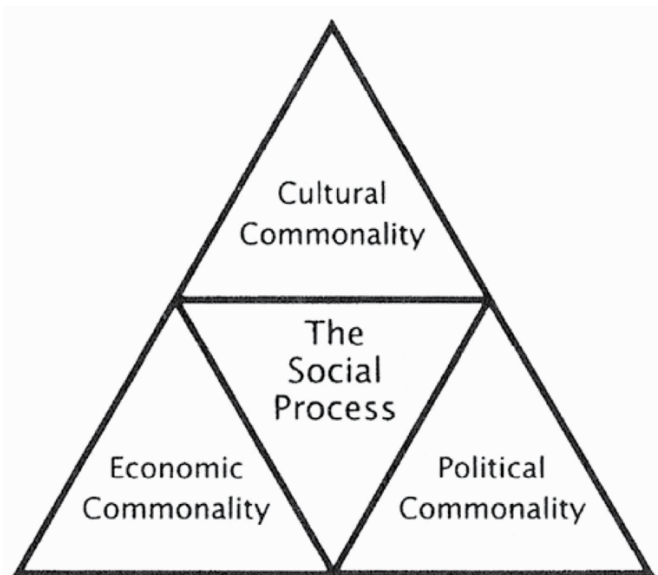

Figure 12: Social process triangles, first level
(Source: Stanfield, *The Courage to Lead*, 149)

In this triangle we can see the relationships of three parts, which are respectively:

- Foundational (bottom left): the economy. Without the economy the other two poles cannot go on.
- Ordering or organizational function (bottom right): politics, "the communal pole, which pertains to the relationship of power and decision-making in the midst of any social group. . . .[it] counteracts people's fundamental tendency to destroy each other by creating a social contract."

- Sustaining, meaning-giver (top): culture. "This is the dynamic which dramatizes the uniquely human in the triangle; it is the spirit which makes participation in the social process worthwhile. This is the arena of the symbols, style, and stories which give significance to the whole."[1]

Placing the cultural pole at the top of the triangle is a statement attesting to the determining place it occupies in relation to the other two areas, at least in this present time in world history. It is not surprising that ICA also offered one of the earliest global conferences on the emergence of civil society, in 1996 in Cairo.

Something else emerges from the triangles. Each of the three processes limits, sustains, and creates the other two. Each of the three processes can be broken into its components at deeper levels, and there one would find again the tension between a foundational process (economic component) at the bottom left, a connecting/ordering process (political component) at the bottom right, and an informing process (cultural component) at the top.

Let us see what a triangle looks like at the second level. The second level (Figure 13) shows how each pole of the triangle repeats the threefold ordering present at the first level. In the economy we have resources (economic component), production (political component), and distribution/consumption (the cultural component). At least in a naturally evolving system, it is consumer demand (cultural) that drives supply and production. Massive advertising is an attempt to condition the system from the supply side, to create new needs.

At the level of the political commonality we meet corporate order (capacity to enforce the law, providing security for a functional culture), corporate justice (upholding individual rights, ensuring equitable structures, providing links between bureaucratic structures and the grassroots), and corporate welfare (assuring that rights and responsibilities serve all citizens, and providing motivation for cooperation). We can look further at just one example of the third-level triangle. At the third level of the political commonality, in what corresponds to the US federal government, we have executive (economic component), legislative (political component), and judicial (cultural component).

The triangles allow us to place any of the smaller processes in society into a comprehensive context, showing how they are connected to the other areas

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[1] Jenkins and Jenkins, *Social Process Triangles*, 24.

of the social organism, enabling one to assess the health or imbalance of any given social unit. They can serve to visualize what patterns are at play in any given situation, thus throwing light on where the leverage points are. If action were taken at these points, positive effects would ripple throughout the system.
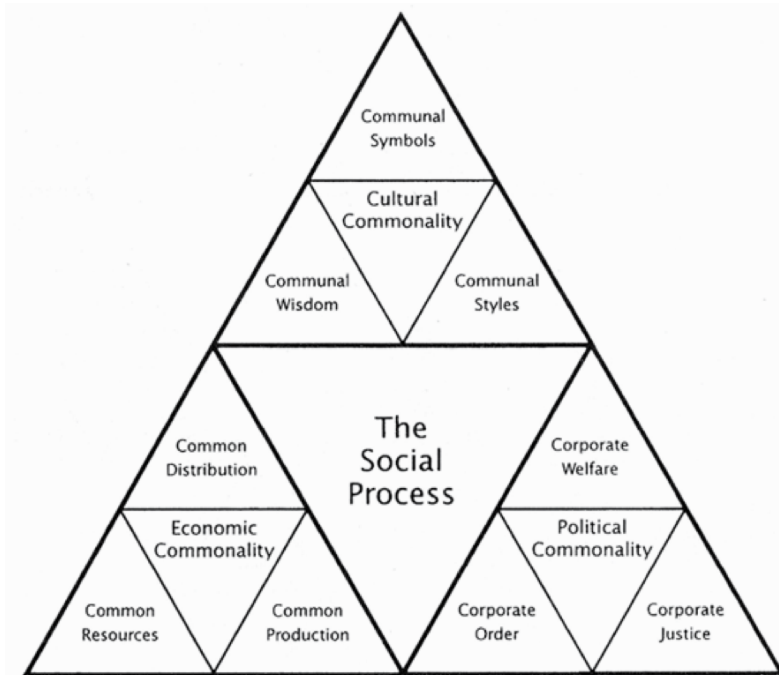

Figure 13: Social process triangles, second level
(Source: Stanfield, *The Courage to Lead*, 149)

Besides helping us look at society in a more organic way, the social process triangles were eminently practical. After 1975 ICA started some 300 projects in 25 nations, bringing together all stakeholders of the community, voluntary consultants from the public and private sector, and ICA staff, and designing a comprehensive four-year plan of local development. The triangles were used in highlighting and acting upon critical leverage points that would produce best or fastest results.

The above underlines the holistic dimension of the tri-articulation of society. There is something foundational about these three aspects. So much so that we can find it at any given place within the smaller units of social reality. It is therefore not surprising that various authors see correspondences between the sectors and the human make-up; between the outer and the inner, as we will see next.

Sectors and Drives

Underlying the forces at work in the social field, the work of ICA defined three human drives.

> The three major processes of society—economic, political, and cultural—are based on three basic drives found in all humans and in all societies. The first is the *drive for survival, for resources, livelihood, and money*—the economic dimension of life—the "that-without-which" there can be no decision-making and no consciousness. . . . The second is the *drive for order*, for the organization of society through law-making, and law-enforcing bodies so that there is security and justice for all—the political dimension of society. . . . Third is the *drive for meaning*, that bleeds significance into both the economic and political dimensions of society. This is the cultural dimension.[2]

Similar correspondences are reported from the literature that Steve Waddell quotes. A number of studies have shown correspondences between sectors and individual learning styles.[3]

- Political systems, corresponding to the mentally centered type of individuals
- Economic systems, corresponding to the physically centered
- Social systems, corresponding to the emotionally centered

Tables 14 and 15 analyze the learning styles and their relationships to the three sectors.

In the three types of individuals—the emotionally, physically, and mentally oriented—Seagal sees parameters that go deeper than age, race, culture, and gender. She calls them "principles". According to her studies 99.9 percent of individuals operate from one predominant principle to which they associate a second one. She concludes, "The competences are organizational manifestations of the basic types of human beings. That is to say, we have produced these three basic types of systems in response to the three basic principles guiding our make-up as humans."[4]

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[2] Jenkins and Jenkins, *Social Process Triangles*, 9.
[3] Jenkins and Jenkins, *Social Process Triangles*, 88–90; Sandra Seagal and David Horne, *Human Dynamics: A New Framework for Understanding People and Realizing the Potential in Our Organizations* (Waltham, MA: Pegasus Communications, 1997).
[4] Waddell, *Societal Learning and Change*, 90, paraphrasing Seagal.

	Mental	Physical	Emotional
Emphases	Concepts, structures, ideas	Actions, operations	Relationships, organization
Process	Linear, logical, sequential	Systemic (by a comprehensive process of gathering, linking and seeing the interconnections among relevant data)	Lateral (by emotional association rather than logical connection)
Functions	· Thinking · Envisioning · Planning · Focusing · Directing · Creating structure · Seeing the overview · Establishing values, principles · Maintaining objectivity · Analyzing	· Doing · Making · Producing · Concretizing · Detailing · Making operational · Utilizing · Ensuring practicality · Cooperating · Synthesizing · Systematizing	· Feeling · Connecting · Communicating · Relating · Personalizing · Empathizing · Organizing · Harmonizing · Processing · Imagining

Table 14: Individual archetypes
(Source: Steve Waddell, *Societal Learning and Change*, 89)

Mental	State		Physical	Market		Emotional	Civil Society
Establishing values, principles	Rules-focused activity		Doing	Efficiency-focused activity		Feeling	Human impact-focused activity
Creating structure	Creating level playing field		Actualizing	Profit generation		Relating	Community thrust
Seeing the overview	Redistribution of benefits		Making	Delivery of goods and services to medium and upper income		Empathizing	Support of the marginalized
Directing	Administering		Producing	Managing		Processing	Developing
Creating structure	Standardized production		System	Commercial production		Creative imagination	Artistic production

Table 15: Individual functions and sectoral competences

(Source: Steve Waddell, *Societal Learning and Change*, 89)

This approach sees individual development integrally connected to social development. Waddell concludes:

> Therefore the SLC [societal learning and change] challenge at the individual level is to develop the ability of individuals to understand the world from the vantage point of distinct logics and work together well. . . . often this requires that individuals move to a higher individual "development stage." The types of people having reached a higher integration are the "strategist" and "magician" level of development according to one description, in contrast to "opportunists," "diplomats" and "technicians," who can only see the world from their own viewpoint.[5]

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[5] Waddell, *Societal Learning and Change*, 90.