Reinventing Community
Steven Windmueller

FACTS, FIGURES, and trends suggest a fundamental reconfiguration of the communal model, resulting in the formation of a new American Jewish paradigm. The challenge ahead involves an understanding of the impact of these external and internal transformational realities on Jewish identity and engagement. Read the full essay on www.shma.com.

Traditional Models of Community (1870-1920)	Emerging Models of Community (1985→)
Crisis-Based Model: Driven by an agreed-upon agenda	**Entrepreneurial Model:** Driven by the marketplace
Collective Responsibility: Demonstrating a significant international focus along with other national, regional, and community-based features	**Selective Engagement:** Primarily individualized responses directed toward local purposes and personal causes, de-emphasizing the broader commitments to collective responsibility
We Are One: Centralized and unified borders and boundaries shaped by those who define themselves as part of "community"	**The Sovereign-Self:** Borders and boundaries are less significant as expressed in trans-denominationalism and Jewish renewal
A highly **integrated** federation-community model functioning with incremental change	New, often highly **diffused** institutional responses, generally initiated on the edge
Focus on continuity and institutional maintenance with a significant emphasis on international Jewish communal concerns	**Driven by innovation and experimentation,** with a specific focus on locally-based interests and activities
Multi-issue institutions	Single-issue constituencies
Jewish identity and continuity as the primary themes, based on the notion of Jews seeking acceptance and recognition	Jewish identity is seen as one of the competing ideas in an age in which Jewish "acceptance" is complete
Generational-Neutral: Serving all age groups	**Generational-Nuanced:** Specialized services to particular constituencies
Generic marketing	Segmented marketing
Fund development is based on traditional campaign models, with some experimentation on the edges	A new group of "funders" have entered the scene and are underwriting a significant number of new initiatives and/or capturing older institutions and reinventing them
Traditional organizational and affiliation patterns are prevalent, including a high **premium on belonging and the value of membership**	The idea of "joining" has given way to **dropping in** and also dropping out. Technology as shaping and reinventing communal practice
Built on peer relationships and shared expectations	Constructed around individuals with shared interests, seeking specific outcomes
Institutions and structures as central images and symbols of "community"	Networks of relationships that form and may even disband once defined goals are explored and achieved
Israel and the Holocaust seen as central organizing and sustaining principles	Themes related to relevance and immediacy dominate
Over time, a Jewish "communal" vocabulary has been created that reflected a particular time period and set of players	A whole new vocabulary is emerging that aligns Jewish ideas with the contemporary culture, i.e. "New Jewish Cool"

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