

### Thinking about "Not Enough Money"

Those of us who work for inclusion hear a lot about "reality" from those looking for good reasons to discourage us. Many such discouragements involve the scarcity of money to pay for necessary assistance or accommodations. Belief in scarcity of money also justifies dominating people's lives in the name of "cost control" and denying the supports people need to participate in community life in the name of "prioritizing scarce funds to assure health and safety."

Few of us actually imagine limitless public resources, though control-seeking policy makers and their allies often accuse us of such fantasies. We know that the costs of honoring people's right to inclusion are both reasonable and offset by many social benefits. But we do need to think clearly about scarcity and act to overcome its negative effects. In doing so, it helps to distinguish between "real" resource limits and scarcities imposed by policy. Both limits matter, but each calls for a different kind of action.

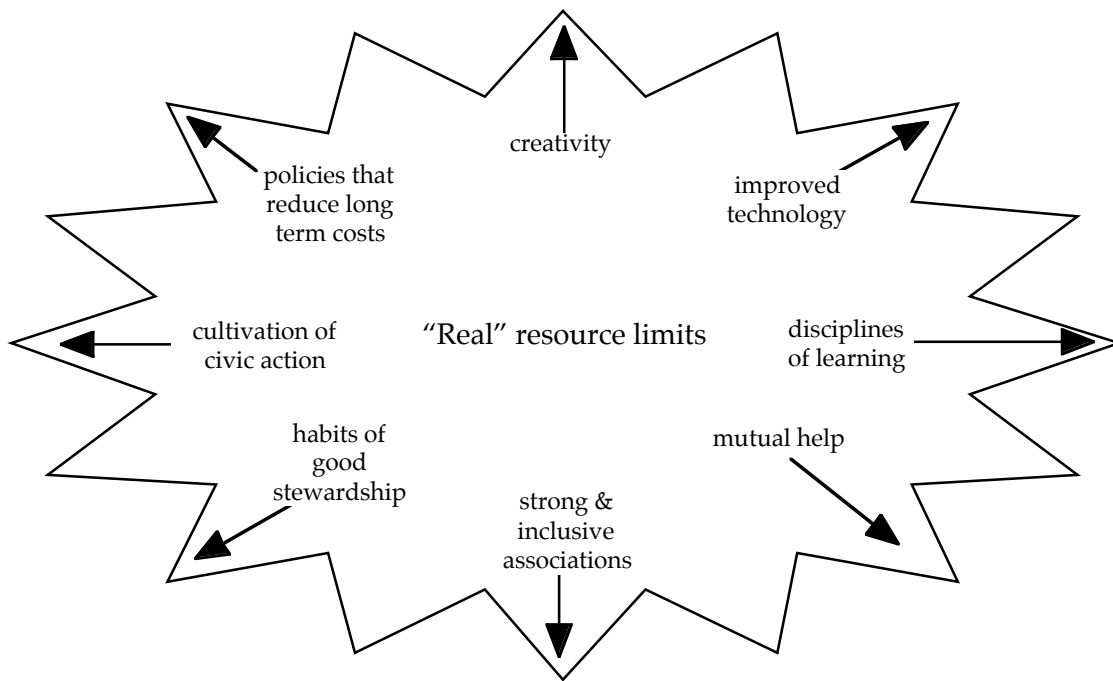


This diagram suggests the difference. The edge of the star represents such limits as the carrying capacity of the earth and the productivity of the local economy given multiple legitimate demands on natural resources, and public funds, and human energy. The edge of the box represents the scarcity created by the decisions of governments and officials in professional bureaucracies like schools and human service agencies. The area

between the edges of the box and the edges of the star represents the resources people can claim to grow in by working “outside the box”.

Because the policies that impose scarcities serve important social and political interests –such as minimizing taxation, or distributing wealth to the wealthy, or returning profit to nursing home investors or protecting the working conditions of union members or reducing contact with socially devalued people– the box will fight strongly and skillfully to protect itself. Change will come through organized political action in conflict with the powers the box serves.

Bracketing the *real* in “real” limits with quotation marks acknowledges the ambiguity suggested by this diagram: limits are *both* real *and* subject to purposeful efforts to push them back, such as the eight forms of action listed next to the arrows.



Most of these limit-expanding forms of action lie outside the power of policy makers to command. They lie within the power of groups of people with disabilities and their families and friends and co-workers and schoolmates and neighbors. Policies can create barriers or provide help to these kinds of actions, but people must engage one another in making the most of what is actually available to imaginative people who have the benefit of strong mutual support and access to necessary knowledge, skills, materials, and funds.