

THE JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS



Networking

III, 3 • 1979

THE JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS

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THE JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS is published four times per year by Village Design, P.O. Box 996, Berkeley, CA 94701. ISSN 0194-2158

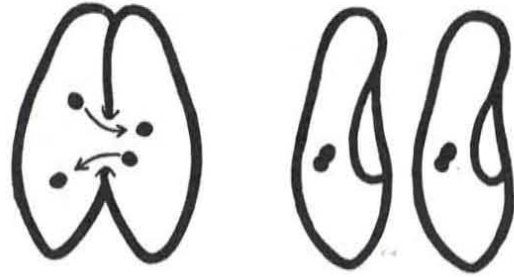
— Letters, articles, art, and poetry are invited.

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Editorial

Networking



"Networking" is becoming a popular term for the familiar human activity of making connections with others to achieve some goal. As Virginia Hine points out in "The Basic Purpose of a Future Socio-Cultural System," making purposeful interconnections in order to attain power is done both by neighborhood groups and by multinational corporations. For big business and big government, such networking has long been an important factor in maintaining their influence in political and economic spheres.

Networking by the powerless is, likewise, nothing new. However, grassroots community organizations and groups such as the anti-nuclear movement are building their networks with increasing self-consciousness, often paying as much attention to the internal process of joining forces as to the overall action strategy for their networks. Some believe that this organization of ordinary people is a significant development by which they are empowering themselves and each other. However, it is still questionable whether this organizational form will lead to a more liberated and humane society, or whether these networks will merely take their places at one end or the other of the current spectrum of power and influence.

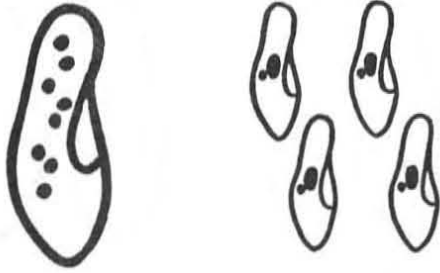
For grassroots organizing, the network structure is seen as important not only for whatever external effects it might have, but also because it can, internally, facilitate decentralized and autonomous activities of its members and non-hierarchical power relationships among them. The anti-authoritarian network model that many community organizers are currently promoting features lateral and equal connections between network members, with no one sector attaining the position of central power broker or 'boss.' Throughout such a network, organizational structures and decision-making processes would tend to be collective and egalitarian.

Obviously, the networks of multinational corporations or within and among governments can be strikingly different from the non-authoritarian model. That is, the network structure in itself does not imply a redistribution of power. Unfortunately, those who promote non-hierarchical networks as the necessary and desirable social form of the future may tend to equate structure with function, feeling that because the network form CAN facilitate redistribution of power that such a form MUST do so. When the non-authoritarian ideal based on the network model is put into practice, it runs into some problems which the theory can't solve.

As Marcy Darnovsky points out in "Is Networking Not Working in the Anti-Nuclear Movement?" the ability of California's Abalone Alliance to take action has at times seemed stymied by its avowed wish to maintain an egalitarian, fully participatory network structure. For example, the recent rapid growth of the Alliance has made its process of consensus decision-making, in which all members must agree before any action can be taken, highly unwieldy.

Success is also a problem. In the context of our image-oriented society, the media can effectively destroy the egalitarian nature of a social change movement by making delegated spokespeople, once accountable to their popular base, into media stars.

The urgency of the situation to which a network responds can also determine how well it works, and how equitably. When there's a "war" on, the issue of survival can make 'everyone a hero,' with people working together bravely and unselfishly for their common good.



For most of us, this is ostensibly a time of peace. Elections and crises (both real and manufactured) come and go, and so do grassroots networks. The struggles which have been going on and will continue on many levels for a long time—such as those against nuclear energy, racism, sexism, capitalism—are suffering from the difficulty of building broad-based organizations which can continue to be effective between crises.

The crucial issue for grassroots networks, then, is how to maintain egalitarian ideals while pursuing an effective strategy for social change. From our point of view, one possible way to release the sword of strategy from the stone of idealism is through the new communications technologies. If equal access to information and an equal chance to participate in decision-making are to be maintained in a large non-authoritarian network, the communications systems are going to have to be appropriate to these needs. As we have pointed out in previous issues, we feel that networks of small computers could be the communications tool which can help hold together a people's network over the long term and support planning and organizing around a variety of issues.

But it's not that simple. The existence of an accessible, community-controlled communications system on a network of small computers will not necessarily change society. A model of a non-hierarchical communications system, like the model of a non-authoritarian network, has only the limited influence of example—and our times have seen the demise of many good examples. A current effort at creating a non-authoritarian network with the help of modern communications technology is the Hexiad, a network linking three futuristic communities (Arcosanti, Findhorn and Auroville) through the exchange of videotapes and, in part, by computer conferencing on the Electronic Information Exchange System. (See "The Hexiad—A Network of Intentional Communities.")

In their discussions of the problems and potentials of networking, the articles in this issue show that there are many definitions for 'network' and 'networking,' and that there are many different views about the importance of the network paradigm for our socio-cultural evolution. Certainly the ideal of the non-authoritarian network as the structural model for the new society will have to fight against both the current bureaucratic structures and the international networks of the powerful. As David Armstrong points out in "Corporations Co-Opt New Age?," we live in a time in which ideas and symbols, however well-intentioned, are continually subject to manipulation by the political and economic marketplace. In "On Some Systems of Language," an analysis of New Age communications, Michael Rossman points out that even the vocabulary and syntax used to describe emerging socio-cultural concepts is crucial to their ultimate impact. The point for developers of grassroots networks is that their theory must be clarified, and their practice must be carried out with continual self-analysis.

Editorial comments for this issue were supplied both by me and by my co-workers, Marcy Darnovsky and Stephanie Klein. It's always exciting when articles provoke debate, and it's quite evident that the debate about the impact of grassroots networks has just begun. As always, we welcome comments and reports (or retorts) from our readers. If anything, these opening salvos in the debate about networking should show that no assumption should go unchallenged.

— Sandy Emerson
Editor

Hardware Imperialism

If I wished to use a public-access computer network such as the projected Community Memory system to become a satrap, I would position myself in control of a centralized Department of Engineering, having as its bailiwick the development of new equipment and the installation and maintenance of all equipment in the system. From this vantage point I would be in a strong position to affect policy, regardless of the "democratic" political structures set up for popular consumption.

My cadre would be highly specialized technicians, trained in our own schools. Like Army specialists, these technicians would be trained in the handling of one model only, and would return to the schools for training on newer versions. All political executives and representatives would have to come to me for the execution of their decisions. I would tell them what was practical or not, and my departmental public relations staff would be constantly maintaining the public's confidence in my "professional abilities" and "impartiality."

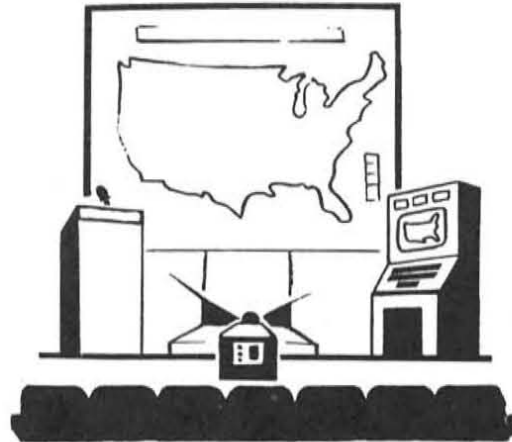
In the case of attempted revolt against my resource-allocating decisions, I would be able -- always in the name of "progress" and "efficiency" -- to make the operation of any portion of the system progressively more difficult and unreliable. In the extreme, my weapon would be the threat to withdraw my department's services and allow the rebels to attempt to run things themselves. It would be no problem to organize a counter-revolution in the name of "efficiency" while the rebels are thus occupied.

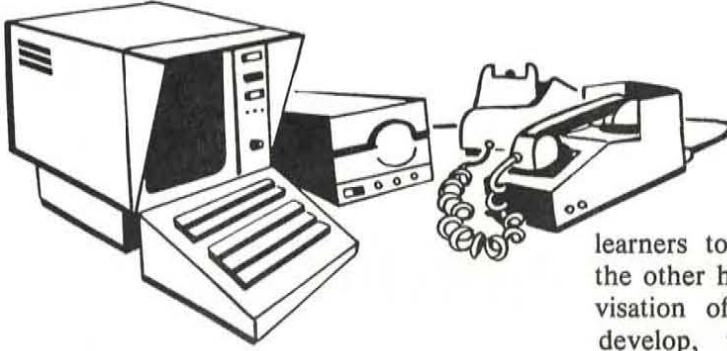
Anyone who believes that this scenario is idle fantasy should wake up and

examine the practices of AT&T, IBM and the career of Robert Moses. It is the generally accepted way of doing things in industry and a primary arena of power struggle. If we wish to develop a truly decentralized, directly democratic societal information system, we must avail ourselves of the opportunity to prevent this form of satrapy.

To do so will require the technical equivalent of arming the populace. This means not just the dispersment of the requisite skills to a lower level, but the establishment and nurture of a structure through which the development of new devices and techniques can proceed in a bottom-up direction.

Fine words, to be sure, but how is it to be done? First, we must move the seat of technical education outwards to the greatest degree possible. This means that each installation of equipment must be expected to serve as the nucleus of a learning group. Instructors and technical literature will circulate, but the members of the group must be drawn from the local area.





For such learning to be at all effective, the students must have the capability to explore the operations of portions of the equipment first hand. Fortunately, the use of program-controlled devices at various levels of the system means that most equipment in the system can be taken off of service and fed programs which make the device "sit up and do tricks" so that exploration of the devices' capabilities is not an abstract effort.

The equipment must be selected and designed so that physical exploration brings the smallest possible penalty. Components used must be, to the greatest degree feasible, those readily available at the local level. Where this is not possible, distribution of the special parts must be arranged.

As a double-edged sword the design of equipment for use in the system must incorporate "handles" to features or capabilities not of use in the specific system configuration. On the one hand, these handles (such as additional data ports into and out of a machine and the extra decoded state signals above those used in the normal device operation) will allow the

learners to experiment more widely. On the other hand, it will allow for the improvisation of equipment as new situations develop, thus reducing the degree of dependence upon the designer as the arbiter of system configuration.

As learners achieve proficiency in certain areas, they must be given the opportunity to participate actively in the system maintenance. This will keep to a minimum the number of salaried maintenance specialists necessary for efficient system operation.

At present we might expect the participants in the learning groups to be primarily males in early adolescence. The tendency of the groups to limit themselves to this constituency must be actively countered.

What is left for central direction is only the establishment and dissemination of technical standards which allow efficient interchange of information and which foster public trust in the robustness of the system. Such standard-setting is an eminently political activity which lends itself well to a participatory public process. Wherever vestiges of central authority are necessary, public exposure and criticism should assure its accountability.

-- Lee Felsenstein, Engineer
The Community Memory Project

Stale Beer

The last issue of the JCC contained my article on the CYBERSYN project, a computerized telecommunications system for the Chilean economy which was partially implemented during the Allende years. Since the publication of "Stafford Beer: The Untechnocrat and His Liberty

Machine," I have come to think that my analysis of the project was altogether too optimistic. The reality of the Allende government and the meaning of the CYBERSYN project seem both to have been less than the idealized versions I described.



'Ops-room' for Stafford Beer's Chilean computer system

The main problem here is that innovative and socially oriented uses of high technology are so rare that when you find one -- well, let's just say you don't want to start off being too critical. Computer technology in particular has remained only implicitly liberatory because the social context within which we could *really* use it to advantage does not exist. It makes me want to point out the potentials whenever I can, which is what I did in my article.

It's not that I'm repudiating the points that I made about omniculturalized computer networks, and in particular about the possibilities of using such networks to coordinate industrial production from the bottom up, without the necessity for, or participation of, a centralized managerial elite. I only want to clarify that this was not the intention of the CYBERSYN project, and indeed it is not a goal that would be actively pursued by state-capitalist bureaucracies such as the Allende administration.

After having spoken to more of the participants of the CYBERSYN project, it has become clear to me that the original purpose of the project was to increase the

central administration's control over CORFU, the nationalized sector of the economy. However, as the political struggle in Chile heated up -- with hundreds of new factories being taken over by the workers and added to the state-managed sector of the economy -- it became impossible for the original, centralized model of the CYBERSYN system to persist. Only then did the official ideology of the project shift, so that CYBERSYN came to be defined as a system for the central "co-ordination" of somewhat autonomous economic units. The coup followed shortly later.

In writing "The Untechnocrat," I had intended to underscore the utopian in technology and counterpose it to the reality of technological development within modern capitalist society. While I may have succeeded in this, it is a shallow accomplishment. The liberatory potential of modern technology will only be realized within a context of conscious, undeluded social revolution, and not by blurring the distinction between the potential new world of the future and the state-oriented, technocratic regimes of the present.

-- Tom Athanasiou

The Basic Paradigm of a Future Socio-Cultural System

by Virginia H. Hine

Virginia Hine is an anthropologist at the University of Miami. She has been collaborating with anthropologist Luther P. Gerlach of the University of Minnesota on studies of "movements" -- political, social, religious, self-help, and others. Hine and Gerlach characterize these structures as "segmented polycephalous networks." In the following paper, Hine draws an analogy between these non-hierarchical groups and multinational corporations.

Futurists of various persuasions extrapolate trends, create scenarios, design global cultures and computerize utopias. Unwilling to accept the apparently haphazard trial-and-error process by which evolutionary changes have occurred in the past, many who were trained in the man-in-control-of-nature myth are now heroically attempting to fill the role of man-in-control-of-evolution. As various schools of futurists compete for funds, influence, and a crack at the global controls, evolution has been bumbling along in its accustomed way, caroming off the walls of resistance to change, picking up a viable mutant here and there, and spawning even more glorious variations. Even the rational plans of the futurists are grist for its multi-faceted mill.

Perhaps the time has come when we can penetrate the mists and see the shape of things to come, not as we might have planned them, but as they are in fact emerging. Piecing together a range of observations by anthropologists, sociologists, economists and political scientists, it is possible to suggest that the basic paradigm of a future socio-cultural system is already born -- mewling and puking in its infantile state, but here.

Most futurists assume the bureaucratic mode to be the only mechanism by

which large numbers of people can be organized. Therefore, in contemplating the emergence of a global society they take it for granted that a global bureaucracy of some sort is inevitable. They argue only about whether it can be democratic in nature or will, of necessity, be a "Leviathan," costing large sums of individual freedoms. Others, often considered impractical idealists, talk of debureaucratization, but offer few ideas as to how this state of affairs could come about. The assumption is made that those in positions of economic and political power are unlikely to voluntarily change their mode of operation because the source of their power is the bureaucratic structure.

In the past fifteen years there has been an intensification of effort by the powerless in nations around the world to organize themselves to effect social structural change. During the last ten of these years, Luther P. Gerlach of the University of Minnesota and I have been doing research in a wide range of these so-called "movements." We have found that no matter what the "cause," the goals, or the beliefs, and no matter what type of movement it is -- political, social, religious -- there is the same basic structural form and mode of functioning. Wherever people organize themselves to change some aspect

of society, a non-bureaucratic but very effective form of organizational structure seems to emerge.

We called the type of structure we were observing a "segmented polycephalous network," a clumsy phrase that led to an acronym SPN, pronounced "spin." For reasons which will become clear as the discussion unfolds, it will henceforth be written as SP(I)N.

What Does a SP(I)N Look Like?

Conventional organization charts usually involve boxes arranged in a hierarchical order with the controlling box either at the top or the bottom. An organization chart of a SP(I)N would look like a badly knotted fishnet with a multitude of nodes or cells of varying sizes, each linked to all the others either directly or indirectly. Some of those cells within the network would, in themselves, be hierarchically organized bureaucracies recognized by the public as regional, national, or even international organizations. Examples from the environmental movement were the Audobon Society or the Sierra Club. Counterparts in Black Liberation would be the NAACP, the Urban League or CORE. Feminism has its NOW and Red Power its National Congress of American Indians. But in all these movement networks, the majority of cells are local groups of varying sizes from a handful of members to several hundreds, some organized according to the conven-

tional mode, many ad hoc, egalitarian, face-to-face groups that are here today and gone or reorganized tomorrow.

The multitude of nodes or cells within a movement structure can be loosely lumped into segments which hang together ideologically or in terms of preferred tactics. This factionalism functions to escalate the speed with which the movement grows and to bring about changed responses from the "establishment" more effectively than any one segment could do alone. In addition, factionalism prevents takeover by any one segment through the mechanism of temporary coalitions between other segments to offset attempted control by one.

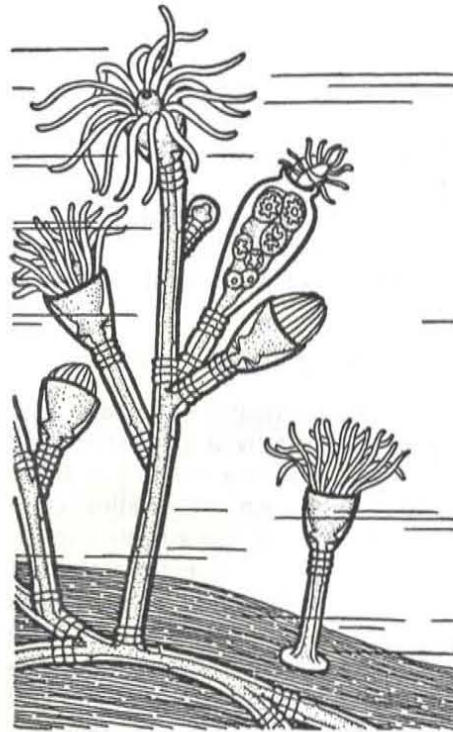
While a bureaucracy is segmented in the sense that it has divisions and departments, it is an organic whole in that its parts are designed to perform specialized tasks necessary to the functioning of the whole. Decapitate it, or destroy a vital organ, and the social organism ceases to function effectively. A SP(I)N, on the other hand, is composed of autonomous segments which are organizationally self-sufficient, any of which could survive the elimination of all of the others. The biological analogy of the bureaucratic mode of organization is the vertebrate, that of a SP(I)N, an earthworm. This is the feature of movement organization that is so frustrating to those who would like to suppress one or gain control of it.



The second characteristic of the SP(I)N mode of organization is decentralization. Movements do not have a single paramount leader who can control or even speak for the entire movement. Each cell or segment has its own leader who may not be recognized as a leader by members of other segments of the movement. Leaders are often charismatic individuals who collect circles of devoted followers. Often, however, as his segment grows, unsung organizational leaders rise to promote the functioning of the local groups identified with him, and the linked segments survive the death or jailing of the charismatic individual very well. Frequently a leader is no more than *primus inter pares*, or first among equals, who speaks for the group only on certain occasions and can influence consensus decision-making rather than make decisions for the group. Those who have tried to suppress a movement by silencing its most visible leaders find that they are coping with a hydra-headed monster where new leadership seems to pop up out of nowhere. In addition, any one leader has influence only within his own cell or segment and may not be known to active participants in other groups identified with the movement.

The real key to understanding the power of a SP(I)N is recognizing the nature of the unifying forces that keep the structure from disintegrating. One of the forces that integrates a SP(I)N is a range of horizontal organizational linkages; the other is ideological.

Non-vertical organizational linkages are of several types. First, there is overlapping membership. When numbers of people mobilize to effect social change, the segmented organizational pattern that emerges involves individual participation in more than one segment. Participants in any movement characteristically belong to, support, or interact with several different nodes in the network -- sometimes nodes that are very differently organized and have apparently conflicting goals and ideological variations. Frequently the schismatic tendencies characteristic of the segmentary mode of organization result in a split within one node, like the well publicized split



Hydra

within the Sierra Club leadership during the height of the environmental movement. This resulted in the formation of another organization, the Friends of the Earth, by the ousted faction. Many Sierra Club members, unscathed by the soul-searing eruption at the core, cheerfully joined FOE while continuing to be active in the Sierra Club, forming linkages between the two groups in spite of their differences.

There is a great deal of interaction between leaders of cells in a movement structure which may link a few local groups into close association or connect hundreds of groups across the country in loose and indirect ways. Frequently the leader of one group will be a follower-member in another. Often the linkage is maintained by periodic visits by the leader of one group who speaks to or works with another's for a time. These types of ties tend to cement groups of similar ideology into larger interacting segments, or may operate across segment lines linking groups with quite disparate forms of organization or ideological approach.

Still another type of linkage is the "ritual activity" -- the rallies, demonstrations, marches, conferences, revival meet-

ings, joint activities of one sort or another. The temporary collaboration between disparate groups within the movement required by these types of activities cut across segment cleavages and bind the autonomous cells in significant, unifying events.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the segmentary mode of organization is the role of the ideological bond. The real glue of a SP(I)N is represented by the I in the parenthesis. The S, the P, and the N represent organizational factors which can be handled at the sociological level of analysis. But the power of a unifying idea adds a qualitatively different element to the equation. The power lies in a deep commitment to a very few basic tenets shared by all. Agreement on all of the ideological variations would be non-functional for the segmentary form of organization. It is the passionate argument about these conflicting variations and about conflicting concepts of how to implement movement goals that keep the segments separate and in enough opposition to prevent an attempted takeover by any one segment.

The segmentary mode of organization is not a recent innovation, nor has it been useful only to those who want change. Many pre-industrial societies in Africa and the Middle East were organized according to the segmentary principle. It provided an efficient mode of organization for groups of several hundreds of thousands of people and tended to remain relatively stable over tens of thousands of years. This is in contrast to the hierarchical, stratified modes of organization which are notable for their inherent instability, in what has come to be known as the rise and fall of civilizations. In those societies structured on the segmentary principle, unifying ideology was usually that of common ancestry. The classic example is the desert tribes in Arabia who were in continual fratricidal conflict but who always surprised their would-be conquerors by an incredible capacity to coalesce, apparently overnight, into a unified fighting force.

It is impossible to explore properly, in this space, why the SP(I)N might be an adaptive pattern of social organization for

the global society of the future. Suffice it to say that it is precisely the sort of pattern consistent with a vision of "the global village," "debureaucratization," "decentralization," and "re-humanization." In very practical terms, our research data suggest that the SP(I)N type of structure does several things: it encourages full utilization of individual and small-group innovation while minimizing the results of failure; it promotes maximum penetration of ideas across socio-economic and cultural barriers while preserving cultural and sub-cultural diversity; it is flexible enough to adapt quickly to changing conditions; and it puts a structural premium on egalitarian, personalistic relationship skills in contrast to the impersonalistic model of interaction suited to the bureaucratic paradigm.

SP(I)Ns on the Top

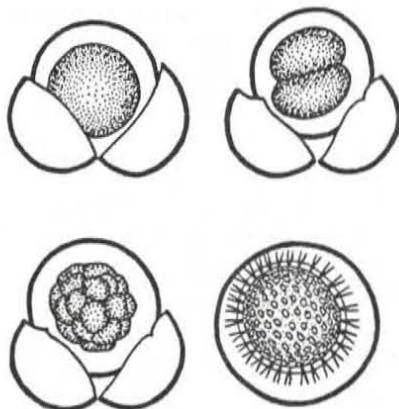
How about the picture seen from the top down? It is suggested that we do indeed now have what "one-worlders" have been demanding for decades -- a supra-national level of organization capable of reducing international conflict and assuming the task of global resource management. Rational attempts to invent such a structure -- the League of Nations and then the United Nations -- have failed, it is said, because they were built upon the very form of social organization they were designed to supersede -- the nation state. I would suggest that these attempts also failed because their creators were unable to break out of the cultural assumption of the inevitability of the bureaucratic mode of organization.

What has in fact emerged is a qualitatively different form of organization, a novel mechanism of global management that is already functioning to make large-scale warfare impractical, therefore obsolete, and is in fact allocating global resources and managing global productivity. Just as participants in grass roots movements often fail to recognize the organizational genius of the SP(I)N within which they are operating, and call for more centralized control, so many individuals who are participants in the global management SP(I)N also fail to recognize it as an organizational structure.

Academicians from a variety of disciplines use a variety of terms to describe the actors in this supra-national network. Many speak of an "oligarchy." Others use terms like "global power elites," "managerial elites," and "global managers." Most of these discussions, of course, center around the phenomenal growth of the multinational corporations since World War II. Many are pointing out that this new level of organization is already beyond the capacity of the nation states to control it, as if the power of the multinational corporation and the authority of the nation state represented opposing forces.

The most penetrating insight into the nature of this emergent, supra-national level of social organization has come from anthropologist Alvin Wolfe who began to catch the outlines of it during his study of the mining industry in South Africa. He suggests that it is a new level of socio-cultural integration, a new system of social control "somewhat independent of the currently troublesome units, the nation states," though these are components. Wolfe calls it an "imperfectly bounded network" which "binds groups that are different both structurally and functionally." The segmentary nature of this global organizational structure becomes clearer as one pieces together the work of scholars like Wolfe, the Center's [for the Study of Democratic Institutions] Neil Jacoby, G. William Domhoff, Richard N. Goodwin in his *The American Condition*, and Richard Barnet and Ronald Muller's *Global Reach*.

The four major segments of the global management network are upper level



decision-makers in the multinational corporations, in international financial institutions, in the governments of both industrialized and underdeveloped "host" countries, and representatives of powerful families in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, South Africa, the Philippines and Asia.

In our analysis of the SP(I)Ns at the grass roots level, we noted that some of the component segments within the network are hierarchically organized and centrally controlled but that the network as a whole was polycentric, no one component able to exert control over the rest. Wolfe and others note the same characteristic of the supra-national network. Multinational corporations are organized according to different modes, some using a decentralized mode of operation transnationally and some maintaining highly centralized control in the international headquarters. Nation states also vary in the degree of centralization. In any case, the internal structure of any one component in a SP(I)N is irrelevant to the structure of the network as a whole. As Wolfe points out, at the global level of operation, even the most bureaucratic segments "lose their hierarchical/centralized/pyramidal structure" and interact with the upper echelons of other corporations, governments, financial institutions and family representatives in an "interlocking/overlapping structure." He stresses the lack of absolute power in the hands of any of the components. Even though this relatively small group of global decision-makers may have absolute power *within* their own segments, the conflicting goals and interests of different segments prevent permanent structural unity, and therefore centralized control by any one group.

Examining the types of linkages that bind the segments of the global network, we find some remarkable parallels with the types of linkages we observed in the grass roots SP(I)Ns. Where we saw patterns of overlapping memberships and personal ties between leaders in a movement, students of the global power structure note such linking mechanisms as interlocking directorships, common shareholdings,

shared subsidiaries (often by a multinational corporation and the government of a "host" country,) and the well-documented phenomenon of interchangeability of personnel.

The rise of a "managerial elite" provides another linking mechanism. Networks of personal ties are formed as corporate executives move from one hierarchy to another in their ascent to positions of global influence.

The temporary coalition of segments in a grass roots movement for a specific activity has parallels in the global power structure in the phenomenon of the "project team." The rise of temporary, special-task organizations leads to what Alvin Toffler calls "adhocracy," sets of horizontal linkages that cut across bureaucratic hierarchies. It involves flexible formation, dissolution and reformation of teams drawn from different levels within a bureaucratic hierarchy and from comparable levels in other corporate or governmental hierarchies, and requires a type of interaction that is more characteristic of network interchange than formal hierarchy.

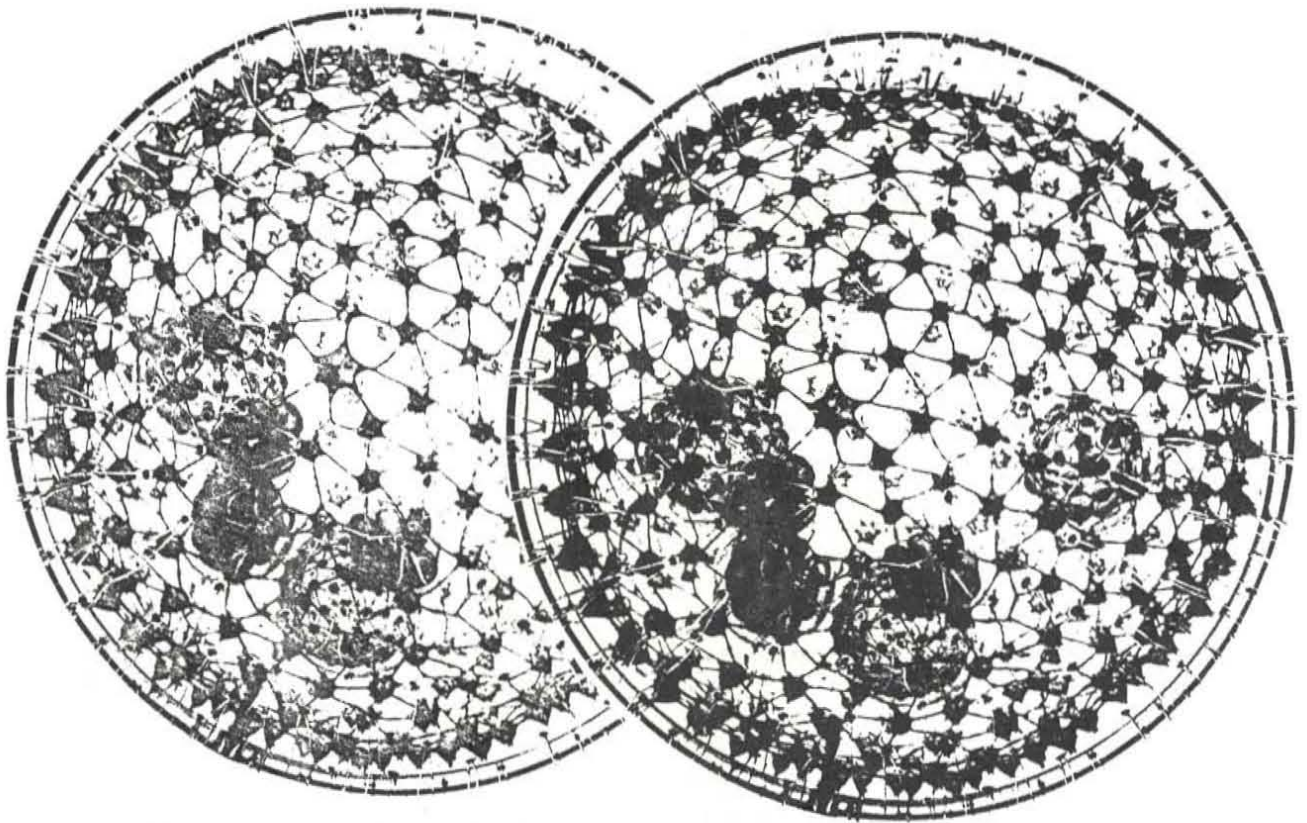
The linking function of the revival meeting, the demonstration, the rally, and the "ritual activities" of the grass roots SP(I)Ns is paralleled in the global managerial network by a variety of overlapping social clubs and policy organizations. G. William Domhoff has documented the role of social clubs in cementing personal ties and creating ideological consensus among corporate executives, financial leaders, high level government officials, and members of powerful families under such irreverent titles as "How the Fat Cats Keep in Touch." The powerful meet not only in exclusive playgrounds among the California redwoods, but in policy-making groups like the Business Council, the Council of Foreign Relations, the Committee for Economic Development which supply personnel for a wide range of special commissions and important government appointments.

Ideology: The Real Glue

The power of ideology to unify an organizationally segmented structure is the key to understanding the emerging

paradigm. This unifying force has very little to do with external "agreement." The outside observer of any SP(I)N sees mostly conflicting ideological stances and divergent goals. The binding force, as noted earlier, is in the commitment to a few basic and shared assumptions. The ideological conflict between *variations* on these basic themes, manifested in the structural diversity, produces what some have called the "fission-fusion" tension. Components within the global SP(I)N shift patterns of alliances -- antagonists on one set of issues or problems -- and "bedfellows" in tackling the next. Individual participants in the global SP(I)N seem to have a remarkable capacity for shifting loyalties. They can function at the upper level of a number of types of organization -- governmental or corporate -- even though the functions of the different organizations may be conflicting. It is the power of a shared conceptual framework that keeps a SP(I)N unified and makes it possible for individuals to shift allegiances within it. It is the conflicting concepts of goals/means that prevent any one segment from taking permanent control over all the others.

The point here is to recognize the power of a few basic assumptions to unify organizationally disparate groups. It is the key to recognizing this qualitatively different mode of organization -- one so alien to the bureaucratically minded that it appears to be either non-existent or is interpreted as a "conspiracy." Many observers of the protest movements during the Sixties fell into both traps. The first trap is now catching people who press for legislation requiring dismantling of large corporations or tighter control over multinationals by nation states. This is to misunderstand the organizational structure binding the upper levels of the corporate giants and the nation states into a network of shared and conflicting interests. The "conspiracy" trap catches many, particularly in discussions of the oil crisis. As Goodwin points out, there is no need for conspiracy. It is only necessary that managers, corporate or governmental, understand and follow the "rules of behavior dictated by the structure that



Volvox—a cooperative protozoan network

binds them” and the “set of stable assumptions,” often unspoken, that inform decision-making. Decisions made by people who share assumptions, even though there has been no discussion between them, will produce actions so similar that there appears to be collusion even though the actors themselves feel they occupy conflicting positions.

We would argue that the SP(I)N mode of organization is not only a viable one for a global society, more functional than the bureaucratic mode of the passing era, but that it is in fact the one that is emerging whether we choose it or not. Both the powerless and the powerful have utilized it as they have tried to meet the changing conditions. The powerless find it functional in fighting inequities. The powerful have found it workable as they expanded their sphere of activity beyond national boundaries to the global scene. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper, there is increasing evidence of many middle-range regional and transnational

networks cutting across traditional vertical lines of power. The principle of “horizontal” integration is emerging at many levels.

None of these SP(I)Ns have emerged as a result of rational planning. Like any other evolutionary novelty, they emerge out of functional necessity. Only after the fact can we bring reason and logic to bear in understanding what is happening and in making rational decisions about what might facilitate or inhibit the changes. If this model of the emerging paradigm has any validity, the organizational structure of the future is already being created by the most as well as the least powerful within the present paradigm. It is very clear, however, that the ideologies which inform SP(I)Ns at the two levels are diametrically opposed. Perhaps one of the crucial tasks in the immediate future is to clarify and expose the underlying assumptions that provide the ideological “glue” for SP(I)Ns emerging at various levels of the global social structure. The key to the future may very well be conceptual rather than organizational.

Networking in San Francisco

A Study of Communications among Selected Community-Based Organizations and Businesses in San Francisco

by Luba Zarsky and Village Design

"Networking" (making connections) is an activity which today is being increasingly discussed and intentionally practiced by community-based organizations and people interested in social change. "Networkers" believe that making and maintaining connections among peers can help people find and attain mutual goals, and that real power can develop from a network's organizational base.

Much networking is carried out by professionals (staff, paid or unpaid) from nonprofit organizations and takes place through conferences and meetings. As always, loose coalitions around current issues form and fade, but the most active and longest-term community workers (some active since the 60's) are finding themselves in more permanent alliances, coalitions, and federations -- which may be considered 'formal' results of networking.

Networking is the linear descendant of the informal connection-making among the counterculture of the 60's. Then, travellers could usually come to a new town and find a place to sleep, a friend, a ride, etc. During the anti-war movement, informal networks were vital elements both in political organizing and in the "underground railroad" of people harboring draft dodgers and helping them out of the country.

Today, when times are relatively peaceful and the left seems to have moved into a state of skepticism about just how (or whether) the movement should move, organizations' reasons for making connections are often more practical than ideological. Funding, for example, is a

common and particularly pressing reason for networking. However, there also is a great deal of current interest in creating forms which support the networking activity *per se*. The Open Network in Denver, for example, tries to connect people both through its newsletter and through its small computer data bank. The Open Network is just one of many skills-exchange or interest-matching services which are now formalizing the grassroots activity of networking.

As discussed in theory, networking is held to be an activity which can actually transfer power to the powerless, not just give them a sense of 'community' within an unalterable social/bureaucratic framework. In practice, the phenomenon of grassroots networking seems to have had only intermittent short-term results.

Networking in San Francisco.

Between June and December of 1978, Village Design conducted a study of information-sharing and networking in San Francisco. Twenty-three groups and individuals, most of whom provide 'alternative' services of some type, were interviewed.

As a Berkeley-based group, Village Design had the advantages and disadvantages of an "outsider's" perspective. Most of us have lived in the Bay Area for many years and are somewhat familiar with who's-who and who-does-what-where in San Francisco. However, we are not intimately involved in the day-to-day life of the City, and this should be taken into account when evaluating our understanding of San Francisco networks.

Starting Point, Parameters.

The limitations of our time and resources (and interests) required that we draw political and geographical boundaries around our inquiry. It might have been useful, for example, to investigate the formal and informal mechanisms by which realtors in San Francisco "network" -- share information and take collective action. However, our interests centered on people at the other end of the power spectrum. In fact, our primary purpose was to look at networking as a mechanism by which powerless and alienated people move toward political power and community. We hoped to gain a better understanding of how informal and formal modes of networking help or hinder that process.

As might be expected, many of the groups and individuals providing 'alternative' services are located in the less affluent neighborhoods of San Francisco. Our interviews took us to the Mission, the Haight, Potrero Hill, Noe Valley and the Tenderloin. We wished to interview people engaged in a fairly broad spectrum of community activity, including services, businesses, and political organizing. Our questions focused on 1) each group's genesis and structure (internal information flow and decision-making); 2) what the group does and what it hopes to accomplish in the short and long term; and 3) how it relates to and works with other individuals and groups in the City.

Rather than a detailed (or quantitative) account of the interviews, we have chosen to synthesize them and present them in narrative form, as comments toward beginning to describe the 'state of the art' of networking in San Francisco.

What is a Network?

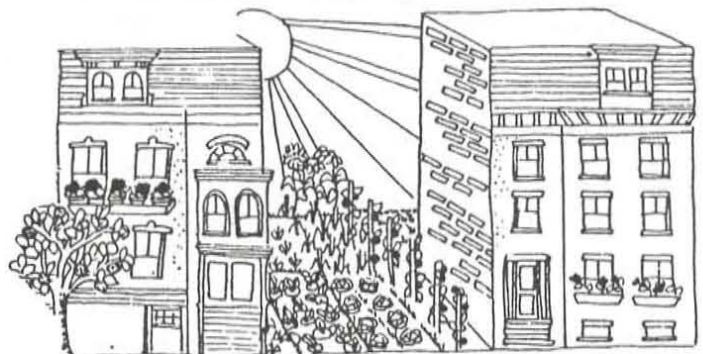
Nineteen of the 22 groups we interviewed responded positively when asked if they were in a network; another thirteen said further that their network was connected to other networks. However, as often as not, an interviewee wanted to know what a network *was* before s/he answered yes or no to being in one. Clearly, there is some difference of perception as to what constitutes a network.

In one definition, the term "network" names the relationships between formal and informal groups, particularly at a grassroots level. It is also commonly understood to mean simple informal associations between individuals as well as groups. Key to the concept of a network is that there is no center or "prime controller". The network partners sustain and coordinate themselves.

Informal networks accomplish information transfer in a haphazard, though often effective, fashion. Typically, such a network depends on the happenstance of time and place, as well as on individual initiative. In essence, an informal network is a grapevine.

Formal networks, on the other hand, regularize the flow of information from person-to-person or group-to-group via meetings, phone calls, newsletters, etc. Sometimes an individual is designated to be a liaison to other members in the network. A formal network can also synchronize action, often in response to a particular issue or event.

A network is distinguished from a coalition by the fact that a coalition sets common policy and develops coordination and accountability mechanisms. In addition, a coalition connotes a diversity of interests and beliefs among groups that have come together to pursue one specific objective. A good coalition is well-networked -- that is, information is transferred rapidly and effectively to all the groups which are part of it and further, to all the individuals who comprise the groups. Unlike networks, coalitions have some kind of mechanism to make group decisions and set policy (e.g a coordinating committee or conference). At its best, a coalition structure maximizes directly democratic partici-



pation and advances the level of political effectiveness and analysis. At its worst, it can take on a bureaucratic and authoritarian life of its own.

The San Francisco Grapevine(s).

Informal networks abound in San Francisco. The major grapevines operate along neighborhood, work or political lines.

The neighborhoods of San Francisco are like small towns. Many residents identify first with the Mission or Potrero Hill or the Haight and secondly with San Francisco as a whole. Cafes, bars and community-service centers are laden with bulletin boards announcing a whole range of community events. Some bars and cafes serve as community centers where one can catch up on the latest gossip as well as find out about a neighborhood meeting, a bargain sale, or a good party. The high level of cafe and street-culture inspires a strong sense of community...and information is passed as much by word-of-mouth as by posted announcements. Judging from the responses of several interviewees in the Haight and the Mission, one of the best ways to "spread a word" in the neighborhood is by making it down to the local bar or cafe at the appropriate time.

Some neighborhoods also have more traditional community centers, like the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House. The House puts out a regular paper, runs programs for children, senior citizens, etc., and facilitates the process of informal neighborhood association. (Groups such as Catholic Social Services have community organizers whose task is to pull people together around specific neighborhood improvements such as installing a street light at a dangerous intersection, or to fight for a service that is being threatened, such as the closing of a childcare center. Once a particular problem has been resolved, this activity typically subsides into a less intense form.)

Political activists in San Francisco have a grapevine of their own, although it overlaps in some cases with the neighborhood networks. The lines are strongest between people involved in similar issues: housing, medical care, safe energy, etc.

Communication between groups often depends on the initiative of particular persons who recognize each other as important or "key" information-holders and organizers. Typically, such people have worked together in the past; their continued contact is based on trust, political pragmatism, and often, friendship. Regular phone contact is the most usual way such people link up to each other, though they may occasionally attend each other's meetings. Often, social circles mirror political-work circles so that a party or dinner becomes a time to catch up on the latest news. These informal ways of linking are often the backbone of more formal attempts to coalesce around a particular issue, such as a piece of local legislation or a threatened cut in funding.

Formal Networks.

The abundance of informal networks is a stark contrast to the paucity of formal networks. While San Francisco houses "nodes" (chapters) of many state, national, and international networks (e.g. the Abalone Alliance, Friends of the Earth) there are few grids which systematically link the many individuals and groups within the City who are working on similar or related issues. As stated, a pressing issue will activate the informal networks and inspire new coalitions and alliances, but these tend to dissipate once the issue has been resolved.

There are, however, a few self-conscious, formal networks in the City whose existence continues beyond (or without) a single issue and which do not so strongly depend on the continued involvement of a few "key" people.

BRIARPATCH.

Briarpatch, according to coordinator Michael Phillips, is a "network of people in business who share common values." In order to be in the network, one must 1) not be in business (primarily) to make money; 2) make books and records open to the public; and 3) be willing to share resources of people and skills.

Formed in 1973, Briarpatch now has approximately 250 businesses in its net, most of which are in San Francisco. Other members are scattered throughout the Bay

Area, the state, and the world. The kinds of businesses involved seem to be primarily of the "New Age" variety -- holistic health, weaving -- although the network also encompasses such basic enterprises as bakeries and delis, political groups like Earthwork and Coyote, and community-service groups, such as the Haight-Ashbury Switchboard.

The primary objective of the network is economic survival in a context that maximizes cooperation and happiness. Michael emphasized that Briarpatch is not a vehicle for any person's gain, any group's politics, or any political direction. Two coordinators are funded by contributions from members and subscriptions to the Briarpatch Review. The coordinators offer marketing, accounting and other business and personal advice to a developing or shaky business. Since network members agree to share what they have, any one member has available to him/her a substantial pool of free or cheap resources.

Internal communication in Briarpatch is done through the Briarpatch Review and through mailings. Occasionally there is a need to make a decision as a network, e.g., where the Christmas party should be (a minor decision), or whether to open a storefront office (a major decision). The mechanism employed is that the coordinators select Briarpatch members at random -- five for a minor decision, 15 for a major one -- who make the decision by consensus. Spokespeople, e.g. for press purposes, are also selected at random on a rotating basis (and by consent), a procedure which seems to discourage media attention. Briarpatch members do not proselytize, reasoning that anyone who doesn't understand the benefits of networking as they do doesn't belong in Briarpatch. Neither does Briarpatch seek publicity, feeling that those who are interested will find it.

Michael stated that the network is operating "excellently". He feels that the vitality of the network can be maintained through "more infrastructure", meaning more day-to-day social interaction, more sense of community. This might mean a skills-sharing weekend for members at the Zen Center (a Briarpatch member) with



The Briarpatch Book

plenty of time left open for people to talk and play.

The interview with Michael concluded with his perception that, to date, Briarpatch has faced no external threat to its existence. He intimated that if such a threat came, the skills, resources, and relationships that Briarpatch members have developed could help them weather an economic or even a political crisis.

THE PEOPLE'S FOOD SYSTEM.

Under the banner "Food for People Not for Profit!" the People's Food System is a network of wholesale and retail food outlets in the Bay Area. Thirteen businesses, including six stores and seven support collectives, constitute a system which is "anti-profit and worker-controlled."

Most of the community stores are small operations, though the Haight Community Food Store, the largest in the System, has 20 full-time workers and about 3000 customers per day. The stores buy much of their food from other groups in the System, such as Red Star Cheese, the People's Bakery, and the San Francisco Common Operating Warehouse. The Warehouse, a primary wholesaler for System stores, serves 50 stores throughout California and beyond (including a large, well-organized coop system in Minneapolis). Another link in the network is Earthwork, a support collective which works with small farmers to distribute food without the middle-men who drive up prices. Earth-

work is committed to the concept of "people gaining control over their lives" with food as a primary focus. They are building a farmer-labor-consumer alliance which would produce and distribute healthy food in a decentralized manner.

Although the individual businesses in the System seem to be at least secure, if not thriving, the status of the network is presently somewhat shaky. Regular monthly meetings (two representatives from each group) have been discontinued since mid-1977. The groups in the System remain in contact with each other, but the pressures of day-to-day work now consume most of the energies and time necessary for closer networking.

The thrust of the Food System, in contrast to Briarpatch, has been explicitly political as well as economic. The shared political understanding and continuing close economic interaction has made this at times a very powerful and effective network.

THE COMMUNITY COALITION.

In early March, 1976, the (Glide Church) Center for Self-Determination sponsored an all-day workshop to inform community groups about the nature and procedures of funding institutions. The result of this workshop was the formation of the Community Coalition.

The Coalition is now a consortium of 65 community-based human service groups. Its functions are, among others, to "support requests for funding by member groups, facilitate the sharing of information and resources among member groups, and foster a climate of coordination among groups active in similar areas." One victory claimed by the Coalition was the allocation of Housing and Community Development Act funds to four member groups. On a related issue, the Coalition supported the International Hotel Tenants Association in its struggle for self-determination.

Glide Church helped form the Coalition and contributed an office for the "No on Proposition 13" campaign. Though Proposition 13 (the Jarvis-Gann bill to reduce property taxes) passed in the state as a whole, it failed in San Francisco, and the

effort to defeat it strengthened the Coalition. However, since the campaign the Coalition has stopped meeting regularly. "The priority of survival obstructs further coalition-building," said Lloyd Wake. Lack of funds and of a clear, unifying issue also hamper the development of solid, city-wide alliances, according to Wake.

Networking is a crucial part of Glide's work, which it defines as "working for the political and economic empowerment of people who are outside the mainstream." Individuals on Glide's staff work with many other coalition efforts, such as the Northern California Ecumenical Council and the (Filipino) Anti-Martial Law Coalition. Glide was also instrumental in the formation of Briarpatch, which until recently used an office in its building. (Michael Phillips, Briarpatch coordinator, is one of the 30 executive staff of the Glide Foundation.) Though the status of the Community Coalition is presently unclear, Glide's commitment to some vision of self-determination insures that networking efforts will continue.

The Mission District: the City's Crossroad.

The area of the most intense concentration of all kinds of social, economic and political interaction in San Francisco is the Mission. Besides housing a settled and an immigrant Hispanic community, the neighborhood attracts low-income people of all colors and ages who are seeking relief from high rents in other parts of the City. A strong sense of community accounts in part for the stability of the neighborhood.

Community service centers of all sorts abound in the Mission, many of them bi- (or tri-) lingual. Some serve only the Latino or Filipino community. The La Raza network, composed of four centers of activity and dozens of other individuals and groups, is dedicated to "the preservation and development of La Raza culture, in a social and economic sense." In the short term, this fight for self-determination translates into fighting housing speculation, rent increases, evictions, etc. In this effort, the La Raza network works with other groups such as the S.F. Housing Coalition.

The Mission Neighborhood Health Center offers ambulatory care for low-income people. The Center uses a sliding fee scale and offers a full range of walk-in medical treatment, including free family planning, medical transportation and emergency care. Close to three hundred people, mostly from the Mission and mostly Latino, use the Center's services every day. The Center also has conference rooms which it makes available to other community groups.

Though not a member of a formal network, the Center's by-laws require that 14 out of 21 members of its Board of Directors be community representatives. Some of these are directors of other community programs. The Board itself, which meets regularly, is a kind of information-sharing network of its own.

People's Law School (PLS) is a community legal education project that provides legal counseling in tenant, immigrant and unemployment law. Workers at PLS are involved in other networks and coalitions as individuals, though the group itself is not a formal member of any network.

The women's movement also has a home in the Mission in the form of the Women's Centers, which provide "information, technical assistance and support for existing and emerging Bay Area women's social change groups," according to coordinator Roma Guy. The Centers is housed in the new Women's Building, which is envisioned as a "spiritual and physical home of the women's movement and a platform from which many organizations and individuals can gain strength." The Centers is comprised of several groups working on different issues and maintains regular contact with other groups such as the S.F. Housing Coalition and the Zimbabwe Medical Drive. Funding comes primarily from pledges from members, which means that the Centers is accountable to its constituency rather than to a state or federal agency.

Conclusion.

The sheer volume of interaction among individuals and groups in San Francisco is impressive. Whether in terms of



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seeking fun and friends, economic survival, or political power, many people in San Francisco devote themselves energetically and enthusiastically to improving the quality of life and bringing about social change.

The most striking similarity among all the groups interviewed -- even the most traditionally organized -- was a stated antipathy toward hierarchical structures. Many groups organize themselves as collectives; others have regular avenues to encourage input and participation from workers and community people. An often-expressed sentiment was that no boss or "central committee" should be permitted to usurp decision-making powers or monopolize access to information.

Many interviewees equated "hierarchy" with "centralization," an equation that reflects a widespread revulsion against the bureaucratic and authoritarian social orders that dominate the world today. It is clear, however, that the art of non-hierarchical organization needs further development and that decentralization must not degenerate into a fetish that precludes effectiveness or simple coordination.

The grassroots networks of San Francisco seem to reflect and express this impulse toward non-hierarchical forms of organization. Networking offers a means to connect and act in concert with wide circles of like-minded people in a democratic fashion. A self-conscious development of the networking model could enrich this participatory ethic, increase its effectiveness, and sharpen our vision of a transformed society.

NETWORKING, or: Don't Get Fazed by the Maze

by Paul Freundlich

Paul Freundlich is an author, educator, and long-term member and organizer of cooperative ventures. This article, which originally appeared in Communities magazine (No. 35, November/December 1978) was written following the June, 1978 meeting of the Consumer Cooperative Alliance in Madison, Wisconsin.

In an environment as complex as ours the choices are between chaos and rigidity, or humane situations; rhetoric and dogma, or intuition backed by information and analysis. Face it, folks, unless we completely remove ourselves from the society, we're going to be, at best, restructuring with the same materials: telephone and sewer lines, highways and buildings, governments and money.

What we do with this technological patrimony is at the edge of our vision. Decentralization and democratization of the automakers, airlines and bureaucracies are better understood through utopian fiction, than understandable from present circumstance. Neighborhoods, rural communities, coops and collectives is about the state of the art. Even there we have a hard time maintaining both trust and competence.

Suddenly we're projected into large-scale food distribution; both challenged and intimidated by the promise of a coop bank. Which brings us to networking. Beginning with what we already know something about -- the communities and coops in which we center our lives, subject to our own rules, expectations and cultural assumptions -- how do we take the next steps into a more complex future? How are we aware of the possibilities for learning, coalition or synergy? How without building empires, can we develop the

linkages (thank you, Robert Theobald) or federations capable of realizing economies of scale sufficient for economic and political survival? How can we preserve a sense of social justice, without becoming rigid and dogmatic as we strike a nervous balance with the values of the society at large?

Finally, understanding that none of these questions admit of total solutions right now, is there a way to describe the informal process which precedes any decision to create ongoing, purposeful structures for social change?

Lately I've been giving some thought to the metaphor of the *rat race*. Thinking of the mazes most people run, so carefully constructed over the generations *for our own good*. What can we do besides muddle through or give up?

The political answer is that we move the walls around; the social planner's that we cut some new doors and close some old ones; the revolutionary's, that we blow the walls out. The schools say the maze is worth learning, and at the end lies happiness; the media that the walls are made of marble and the path is paved with gold. The psychological answer is to be helped to find our way back to the beginning (the Hansel and Gretel solution) and thus to be free; the spiritual that if we can divest ourselves of our egos, our bodies will not be far behind, at which point the maze becomes largely irrelevant. The coopera-

tive answer is that we get together within the maze, and by working together, create our own reality.

Well, here's another: The networker climbs the wall and finds you can walk on it. Further, we find others up there; that we can talk to each other and share a perspective.

But do we stay there?

A self-enclosed system of networkers is of as little interest as pulling an individual disappearing act; as absurd as thinking that blowing out the walls will relieve the need for structure; as limited as forgetting that if we did get back to the beginning we'd still confront the same maze; as helpless as cooperative community building within an uncongenial political, economic and social environment.

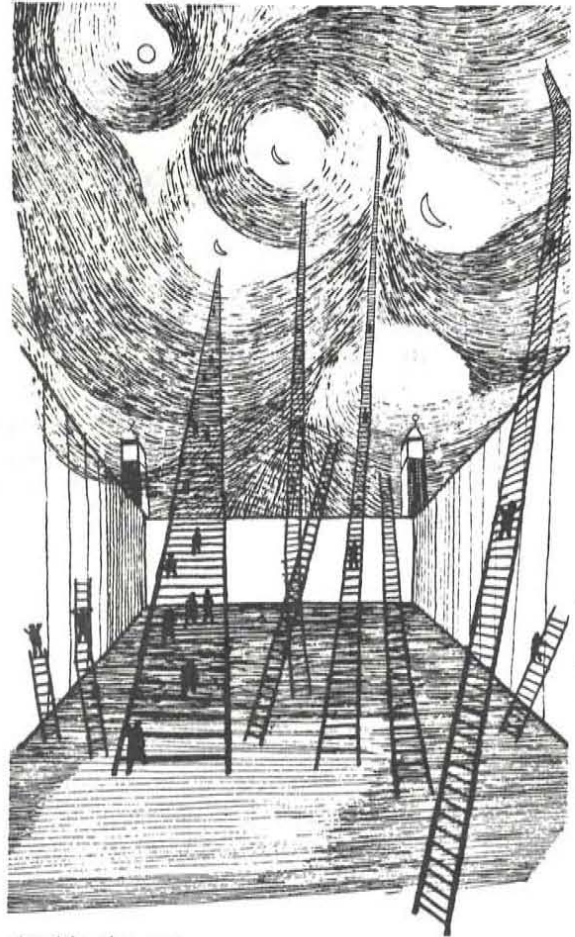
So it comes to networking being one of the functions of an intelligent engagement with the human condition in a complex society. Those of us who do it well spend an inordinate amount of time running back and forth in the maze, climbing up and down walls, shouting and cajoling across apparent divisions. Occasionally our perspective allows us a few short cuts; occasionally we dismantle a few walls; sometimes we get so high we think we're flying; sometimes we fall off a ladder during transitions. Always we try to remember there seemed to be a reason for the walls in the first place -- speculate about what that was, and the extent to which any of us are ready to live without boundaries, in total open communication and exchange.

We can use our learning to educate; to map the maze and define our choices; to say in a final and spiritual sense, we are the maze.

That's all very interesting, but so what?

Networking is an art form, not a science. That's not to say it isn't critical to how-to-get-things-done, or that it doesn't take consistency and hard work.

I could stay on the phone or travel the rest of my life. By the time I reached the end of my circuit, not only would I be back at the beginning with enough fresh material to begin again, but I'd have added enough potentially interesting contacts to



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double the net.

Now what would I be doing besides supporting Ma Bell? I'd be passing information, making good connections and developing projects. A good networker is like a good computer programmer hooked to a point of view. All of which develops over time.

We're operating out of our own context, experience and knowledge. Shifting between being formal and accountable representatives of projects, organizers involved in possible synergies, brokers for good works, and individuals capable of putting our own energy on the line.

At some point, to accomplish something, we need more formal relationships to deal with these possibilities. One limitation is complexity (how much can we keep together without formal understandings and channels?) Another is trust (as power and money become more significant, can we trust and be trusted without formal and structural accountability?) Trust can

succeed formality, but rests on experience: Networking can precede formality because the issues are speculative. Up to a certain point, we're just talkin'.

At various points cheese does need to get wrapped, tax returns filed, magazines typeset; money changes hands, goods are purchased, houses built. . . and shared. Each of these actions requires different levels and kinds of formality.

But the transitions do seem to be happening in a reasonably organic fashion. At some point, [the CCA does appoint an] official representative. . . to the Bank Implementation Commission; relationships which were tentative and personal are considered collectively and organizationally. At a speculative stage it's important to have centers like CCA which coordinate the networking for organizations, and provide a meeting ground for individuals. At a speculative stage it seems critical to exchange visions and get to know each other before building more formal coalitions, organizations and programs.

Mostly we're people dealing with friends we respect. Playing within the boundaries of an economic, political and social system which finds our pretensions mostly irrelevant. But if we're short of the stage of major social intervention, we're well beyond demonstrating in the streets because that's our only option.

Our point of view has to do with being small, and the intuition that that's valuable. How to be small, humane and not powerless? Reach out. Know your friends. Look out for each other. Share possibilities. Serve ourselves, each other, our communities as best we can, taking our turns being grocery clerks, counselors, administrators, editors, cooks and parents.

The particular quality of our networking is that we maintain a core or center of experience which both sustains and legitimizes us as community people. I can bop around the country, or mouth off in *Communities*, because I've put in my time and continue to as a local organizer/participant; I live communally, help put out our community calendar, facilitate cooperative house meetings, do my food coop shifts, be a single parent and try to be a good friend.

So [for example] when I visit Brian Livingston in Eugene, Oregon, the visit is on two levels. One is sharing the excitement of local involvement -- in this case, CAREL, the Northwest regional information and organizing project Brian is part of, is putting on Community Village, a bevy of booths on alternatives, within the Oregon County Fair. For three days I participate as a staff person, learn and share. On that level I'm operating as another conference and event organizer, comparing my experience in New Haven and Another Place Farm. Comparing notes means mutual learning: I get to experience his world, he gets a different perspective.

Second, over a period of several days, we exchange the big and small-time projects we're working on separately; feeling out the possibilities of mutual work, offering direction and feedback. Out comes our long-delayed, traveling alternative circus: a national networking meeting between regional alternative groups; magazine distribution, the bank bill, NCAT update. . . We're building a framework of understandings which will get passed on and developed when I see [like-minded people] in Sacramento or in Washington, D.C. -- when [they] come to the Northwest -- when mutually known third parties meet -- a growing analysis, worldview, set of values and preparation for action shared by a widening network of cooperatively/community-minded human beings.

It's a little like becoming kin. You mix your blood as you've visited each other's home base. You understand each other's language because you've spoken it. Understand the intuitive balance of each other's lives. How loving and working and playing; building and resting; going outward and inward can coexist.

The net is made up of:

- real environments made real by a history of commitment and energy,
- the potential we create for mutually supportive development,
- the people we are and the loving and respectful communication we conduct on the phone, through the mails, as we visit, and at moments of intentional concentration, like CCA, 1978, Madison, Wisconsin.

Ed. Note: I found the previous article somewhat confusing. On one level it's just a self-congratulatory ode to networking. On another it's a statement of allegiance to the way things are.

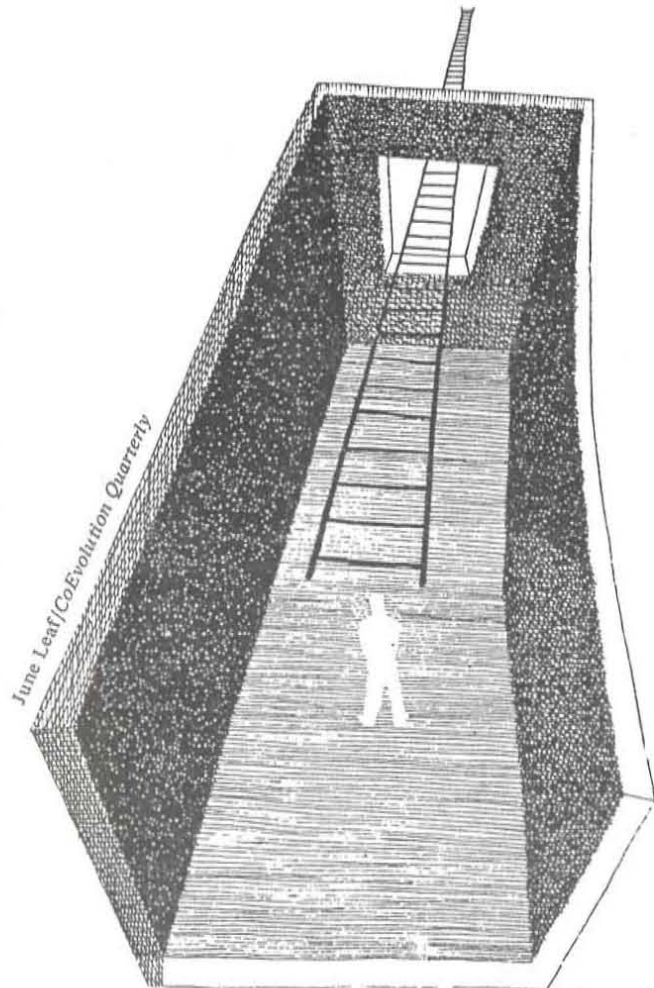
Freundlich acknowledges that the questions he poses about the social "maze" do not "admit of total solutions" though he does feel that they create "structures for change." But he defines that change as "at best. . . restructuring with the same materials: telephone and sewer lines, highways and buildings, governments and money."

Freundlich can't seem to tell the difference between *social* conventions like governments and money and the material manifestations of technology like highways and telephones. Lumping them all together the way he does makes it easy for him to then present them as an immutable social framework.

Freundlich can't seem to visualize a different framework. He even states that a total transformation is somewhere on the murky horizon of his vision. Nor can he see the relationship between his own social group (the networking and cooperative movement) and the rest of society. Indeed he thinks that his social group *is* society ("we are the maze"). He may be on top of the walls, but unfortunately he's near-sighted.

If networkers are not the whole of society, neither is networking the whole social project. Freundlich may be pleased to be "beyond demonstrating in the street," but for many people "talkin' and organizin'" is not always enough. The realities of present social conditions often prompt them to go outside of the framework, even when they do so to defend what they have rather than with an explicit vision of social change in mind. Witness the explosions of the last decade: in the U.S., the wildcat strikes of the miners and other industrial workers, the looting during the New York blackout in 1977, and the recent riot in Levittown over the gas crisis. In Europe -- the Portuguese revolution in '75, the streetfighting in Italy in '77, and the riots in Poland over food shortages in '70 and '76.

These activities, which demonstrate



real conflicts in society, are also part of a movement for social change. But Freundlich can't see these aspects because he confuses what goes on in his comfortable niche with social change in general.

I am not objecting to networking *per se*. It can be an effective way to create non-hierarchical communication channels and get things done. But after describing the networker as someone who "climbs the wall and finds you can walk on it," Freundlich never really answers his own question, "But do we stay there?"

The social transformation that I envision *would* entail blowing out some walls. Yes, we will still need a structure -- but it will be one without the wall of private property, without the wall of wages and alienated labor, without the wall of nation states, without the wall of hierarchy or bureaucracy. In short, the new structure would be a classless society, where decisions are made by everyone concerned on the basis of people's real needs rather than the needs that the market imposes on us.

-- Stephanie Klein

Is Networking Not Working in the Anti-Nuclear Movement?

by Marcy Darnovsky

There are those who think that California's Abalone Alliance and other anti-nuclear groups are networks, those who think they ought to be, and others who believe that the network model is inadequate to the tasks and visions of the anti-nuclear movement. The extent to which the Abalone Alliance is a network, or network-like, is difficult to judge. Though this may be due in part to the vagueness of definitions of "network" and "alliance," it is probably more attributable to the rapid growth and change that the anti-nuclear movement is undergoing and the tremendous external forces being brought to bear on it. The changing context of the nuclear power issue -- in substantial part created by the anti-nuclear movement -- is strongly affecting that movement as it struggles to maintain and create its own identity, in terms of both content and structure.

Of course, it is impossible to analyze questions of form and content in isolation. Theories of networking too often neglect to mention what the networkers talk *about*. In ignoring the goals of the network, both networkers and network analysts are in effect substituting a change in structure for a change in meaning. If the goal of a network is social transformation, they are mistaking questions of formal democracy for the essential question of social relations within the capitalist system and their possible supercession.

In these comments, I intend to look at the evolving structure of the Abalone Alliance, but its changing sense of the issues to be addressed and their meaning will also be a crucial part of the story. I will also try to indicate why blinders that allow a movement to look only at its structure can be its undoing. The implications for "networkers" should be obvious.

Loosely defined, a network is a cluster of groups or individuals joined together by intercommunication and some common interest or ideology. Each node of the network is or can be connected to each other node, and since there is no hierarchy or formal power structure, networks are seen as an alternative to both bureaucratic and bourgeois forms of organization. Networks also seem to be a way of overcoming the centralization-decentralization dichotomy since they make each node a center in its own right.

The Abalone Alliance did emerge out of an informal, unstructured network of anti-nuclear groups and individuals. Ten geographically dispersed groups, drawn together by a frustration with judicial and regulatory channels and a sense of urgency about the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant in San Luis Obispo, joined to form the Alliance in June of 1977.

Each group preserves its own autonomy while communicating and cooperating with the others toward the common goal of stopping nuclear power. There is no center or head to initiate or direct activities of the whole; in fact there is an explicit refusal to tolerate hierarchy.

A high value is placed on the exchange of information and experience, and groups form temporary clusters to plan an activity or action. The network as a whole is held together by its opposition to nuclear technology and its commitment to the tactics of direct action to stop it.

Although the number of member groups in the Abalone Alliance is only one measure of its growth, it is indicative that by the beginning of 1979 the Alliance had expanded to 25 groups. During the four months since the accident at Three Mile

Island, another dozen member groups have formed and the Abalone Alliance has sponsored two rallies which each drew 40,000 people.

These growing pains have put a strain on the network-like aspects of the Abalone Alliance. In a senior thesis written at the University of California at Santa Cruz, Abalone member Elizabeth Paul says, "New groups and new individuals have become involved to the delight of everyone, but the personal friendship network can no longer adequately facilitate communication." The sheer numbers of people have altered the situation which allowed each individual to plug into the network as a whole simply by dropping in on a conference or a Coordinating Committee meeting. A system of rotating delegates has been instituted, with varying degrees of success in maintaining broad participation in decision-making.

Still, most of the *functions* of a network are more apparent than ever. There is a higher level of intercommunication: phone trees, a statewide newsletter, travellers and joint activities strengthen the ties between groups. Local groups now consist of their own networks of affinity groups or (in some cases) neighborhood groups, and there are overlapping task forces and committees, both temporary and permanent. The local groups are also tending to *form* their own networks on a regional basis, responding to the location of the state's nuclear power plants and the service areas of the utility companies as well as to geographical convenience.

The increasing visibility of the nuclear issue, the evident impact of the anti-nuclear movement and the widening constituency of the Alliance have combined with its growth in numbers and structural complexity to make it into something that is not fully described by the concept of network. It now exists as an entity in and of itself and has developed its own dynamic in a way that networks don't.

Internal developments on a statewide level mirror this change. Although there has always been a great reluctance to allow any central bodies or functions, several have developed. This process began in

January of '78, when according to Elizabeth Paul, "it was decided that there needed to be some kind of a central office that would facilitate communication [with outside groups.] People had fears that a central office would take power and control away from local groups. They thought the office might make decisions without the approval of local groups. . . [Still,] it was decided to establish an information 'clearinghouse.' "

Since then, other statewide bodies (in addition to those which come together temporarily to stage a rally, occupation or teach-in) have formed. The Coordinating Committee is composed of delegates mandated by local groups to represent their opinions in making certain kinds of decisions for the Alliance as a whole. A finance committee disburses funds among local groups and activities of the Alliance. A media committee located in San Francisco trains and assists people with media efforts for their local groups, but it also represents the Alliance as a whole to state and national media. A statewide office with two (under)paid staffpeople has been established, also in San Francisco.

Understanding the changing organizational forms of the Abalone Alliance is much more than an academic or journalistic exercise. As I write these words, a couple of hundred Abalone members are enduring a full weekend of meetings in order to hash out the Alliance's structure and restructure.

The statewide bodies were a focus of contention in the proposals submitted for consideration at this conference. The Roses Against a Nuclear Environment proposed abolishing all of them, criticizing "the growing bureaucratic nature of statewide Abalone, the dependence on money-raisers like Tom Campbell [a rock concert producer] and the de facto decision-making by small groups of people in the Abalone." They point out "the inability of the Alliance to adapt quickly to changing events such as Three Mile Island and the gas crisis" and suggest re-establishing the network model: "What is the Abalone Alliance? Rather than think of it as an Organization or even a Coalition, we think it might be better to think of it as a Net; a net linking -- on several levels -- the anti-



nuclear groups in California that believe in the Declaration of Nuclear Resistance and non-violent direct action.”

While I agree with RANE that there has been an increase in Abalone bureaucracy that is amplified by the existence of central bodies, the inflexibility they speak of seems to be due to the growing size of the Abalone and the fact that the central office has *refused* to overstep the functions mandated to them. If the two statewide office staffpeople had taken it on themselves to decide to hold a rally about the gas crisis, for example, the Abalone would apparently have shown an immediate -- but undemocratically determined -- response to this situation. While I sympathize with RANE's motivations in making this proposal, it seems to me that dissolving the statewide bodies and trying to fit the Abalone Alliance into a network model would not be a satisfactory solution.

In my opinion, a network seems to be more a pre-organizational than an organizational form. As a self-conscious process that seeks to facilitate communication between individuals and groups with some common interest, it is ideal. As a preliminary attempt to plan and embark on collec-

tive action, a network format seems to provide sufficient cohesiveness while allaying fears of centralization, manipulation and hierarchy.

These fears are very real ones. They are inherited from examples of both the dominant society and from the Marxist-Leninist sectarian groups that contributed so much to the fiasco that overtook the oppositional movements of the Sixties. Yet those who see in networks the structural form of post-authoritarian society are perhaps too quick to dismiss the complexity of the problem of organization in -- and in opposition to -- the capitalist system.

Networks have the luxury -- and the limitation -- of avoiding the problems of accountability and extensive decision-making by the body as a whole. The informality of a network and the stated commitment to anti-hierarchical process *can* fog the real power relations. In criticizing consensus decision-making (another important mainstay of anti-nuclear self-definition), the Midnight Notes Collective points out that “formal democracy is never a guarantee of real people's power, for it does not answer the basic questions: Who decided to use democracy? Who decided on the tim-

ing? Who poses the questions? The real power in such situations is always based on criteria like: Who has the money? Who has the information? Who has the education? Who has the technical instrument? . . . Who has the social connections? Awareness of these basic elements of power is much more effective in preventing the formation of a ruling clique than consensus-rituals."

When loyalty to the network structure discourages the development of a coherent strategy agreed upon by all of the member groups, it lessens the effectiveness of the group or movement in accomplishing its goals. Obviously, a demand which clearly represents the movement as a whole will have more clout than separate initiatives by several member groups. These pragmatic drawbacks could perhaps be overcome by better communication and coordination within the network.

Aside from these arguments about efficiency in attaining immediate goals, networks are often flawed because they take as their starting point and their focus the individuals of which they are made up and tend to downplay the importance of the social whole. Thus, networking theory tends to blur the social nature of a movement like the anti-nuclear one. The Abalone Alliance is more than the sum of its parts, and its demands are more than the sum of the individual demands of its members. Though all networkers can't be held responsible for the words of some, it is significant that the RANE proposal declares, "it is a process of individual change. . . that will bring about a change in this society." RANE may have unintentionally overstated its concern for the individual here, but in any case this statement ignores the fact that a collective transformation of the totality of social relations will be necessary for a change in society.

However, there is no internal agreement that this transformation is a primary goal -- or a goal at all -- of the Abalone Alliance. Of those who are interested in working toward social transformation, there is no agreement on how to go about doing so. Many others are willing to postpone the

social question in the interests of stopping nukes, which they see as a question of survival. These growing ideological disagreements are themselves making the "network" model even harder to maintain.

Even when networks are self-conscious entities that explicitly take "social change" as one of their goals, their concentration on the formal structures of direct democracy can render them quite harmless and ineffective. It is not only authoritarian relations that we will have to overcome, but the relations whereby our work and activity are made to serve the imperatives of capitalism. It is not just that we need more accountability in our organizations, but that we must end the accountability to profit that binds even capitalists themselves.

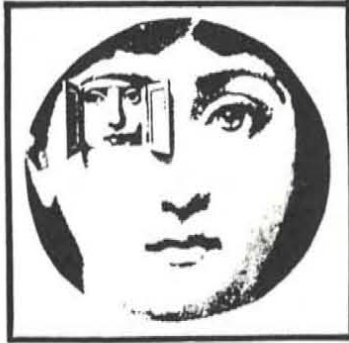
Not only can networks exist in capitalist society, they can be made quite compatible with it. In fact, a society consisting of various networks (each busily tending its non-hierarchical web) seems suspiciously like the *pluralist society* that is a favorite of American bourgeois sociology: a society consisting of many competing interest groups, each supposedly free to pursue its own special interest.

Now that the Abalone Alliance has become a significant and highly visible political force, it must face off with all other such institutions and entities. Whatever its internal structure, it must consider the impact of its actions and "image." The Abalone is being wooed by groups that want to form coalitions; liberal politicians try to juggle it toward their own ends; the media makes it a pawn in the endless interplay of images; the Right rebaits it; the Left analyzes it.

All of these forces, impressed by the strength of the movement and the rapidity of its growth, are seeking to define it -- and circumscribe it -- as a "special interest group." They would like to fit the anti-nuclear movement into their pluralist vision of society, and relegate it to the status of a pressure group or a unit of coalitions. In this way, the anti-nuclear movement is recognized as speaking for a single issue

ON SOME SYSTEMS OF LANGUAGE

by Michael Rossman



Smilese and The Erosion of Meaning

The system of language I hear [in the New Age] has a characteristic style of action -- not structurally-purposive nor playfully self-reflective, . . . or subtle, but rather *incantatory* and *reiterative*, like the thud-thud-thud of the ritual tom-tom. The key words strike me sharply by now, for I have become as sensitive to them, in my own way, as any other American bombarded by the vocabulary of the seventies; and. . . I cannot be sure which ones I hear and which others I supply in instant association:

natural, holistic, positive, organic, authentic, aware, higher (consciousness), human/humanize/humanistic, life-affirming, joyful, supportive, self-evolutionary, transformational, connected(ness), experiential, synerg(ist)-ic, transcendental, psychic, caring, touching, creative, open, ecological, balanced, energy/energetic, communication, reprogram(ming), actualized, healing, growth. . . .

There does not seem to be a precise term in English for words of this sort in their current usage. "(Quasi-)gerundial" is as close as I can come -- for, though almost

all are nominally adjectives (or adverbial forms, as they often appear,) in their use they impact not as normal *modifiers* of nouns and verbs but rather with superior and independent force, permeating and displacing the meaning of the terms they seem to modify, and becoming themselves the primary substances, in effect the nouns, of New Age speech. From holistic dentistry or joyful clam-digging, for example, one expects not so much a pain in the jaw or the hunting and eating of another creature, as to experience a certain sensibility, a cultural quality essentially independent of teeth, clams, etc.

If I seem scornful of such language-use, it's in part because it bewilders and frightens me -- for I have come increasingly to see it as a language *system*, foreign and powerful, which I do not truly understand and endanger myself by using. My feelings were not always this extreme. At first I thought I knew what the words themselves meant, or at least what they referred to; and my irritation and alienation came simply from the apparent familiarity of their misuse. For of course this way with modifiers is familiar -- it is so much the key habit of the advertising industry (which processes perhaps most of the public communication which Americans encounter) that we are scarcely sensible of it as such. Perhaps it developed as more goods were produced than could be sold by notifying people of the direct benefits resulting from their possession -- leading competitive producers to compete also in producing language to convince consumers that they were buying, not so much artifacts, as superior states of being (sexiness, social status, etc.)

In this light the public language of human potential and the New Age is not mysterious at all. Though scarcely a term I cite is new, their present selection and meanings have developed recently as people wrote brochures, catalogues, invitations, mailings, talked on the radio, to church groups, on panels, at introductory workshops -- in contexts, in short, where they were trying to sell (in every sense) their goods of experience and perspective; and in which, moreover, both the variety of goods and the number of producers were multiplying perhaps more rapidly than in any other sector of the economy, necessitating the most vigorous efforts to expand their market.

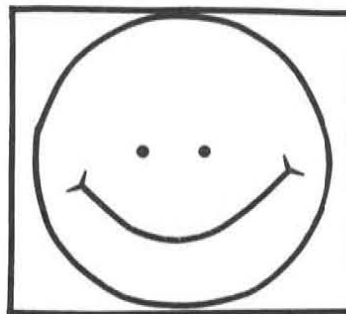
Yet the New Age language has a stranger nature, and perhaps a deeper effect, than such an analysis can indicate. The ordinary language of advertising ties us to the concrete, or at least to what we imagine is known. The qualities of the *faster* car, the *cleaner* wash, are, though relative, objective and even measurable; and the same is true, after a fashion, for social status and sexual attractiveness, which are invoked as *well-defined and social states of being*, complexly and concretely manifested in society.

By contrast the key qualities of New Age ad jargon are almost entirely subjective and insubstantial. They cannot generally be measured nor can their existence be verified by any other person than s/he who experiences them directly. Nor, in general, can even the experiencer be sure of them in any usual way -- for there is no general or precise agreement even about what most of these terms *mean*, let alone any established concretion of social phenomena (other than the New Age conspiracy itself) to reinforce and verify their assumed meanings.

One might grant leave for such terms, evocative of transformation, to refer less to present society than to a new one forming. Even so, there is not generally enough precision of agreement to make them meaningful in a usual sense. Some are simply without ordinary meaning -- e.g., "*authentic* or *meaningful* experience." Others are habitually used in ways which contradict their possible meaning -- e.g., the *holistic* healer

who diagnoses by acupuncture pulse instead of blood tests and prescribes herbs instead of pills. Others involve deeper contradiction, as "*higher* consciousness" uses a gravity-bound spatial metaphor to speak for what is presumably independent of matter and space. Others embody yet more agonizing contradictions, as in the use of *natural* and *ecological* to speak as if humans and their doings were not part of nature and elements of ecological systems.

This is not a language, but a muddle. Yet people *do* use such terms as if they held meaning. As their literal meanings are insubstantial and chaotic, their principal content must be of a different order. In general, I think they are heard to signify nothing more complex than a particular sort of approval. For they are all, without exception, advanced and taken as *positive* terms. Moreover, since they are used not only in concatenation but quite interchangeably with one another, each term invokes the others and the gestalt of approval which they together constitute.



In short, these are scarcely words at all, but rather *emblems*, as if, on the page or in one's mind, the small yellow button of the Smile appeared each time one encountered one, like the Seal of Good [] affixed to the thing or act in question. What "[]" refers to is not clear -- perhaps to the New Age, or to some general inner sense of well-being, of "Self-keeping," quite privately experienced and judged. Like any Good, the one invoked by the Smile, by these word-emblems, is an aspiration -- but one so vague, and so devoid of mutually-verifiable terms in which to judge its accomplishment, that almost anything might actually be happening beneath its benediction.

What *is* happening, I believe, is disastrous. The words of New Age jargon, the incessant, aching incantations of the Positive, are words less of thought than of attitude. They do not carry meaning but substitute for it. Worse, they destroy meaning without replacing it, and so dissolve our connection to each other and the world.

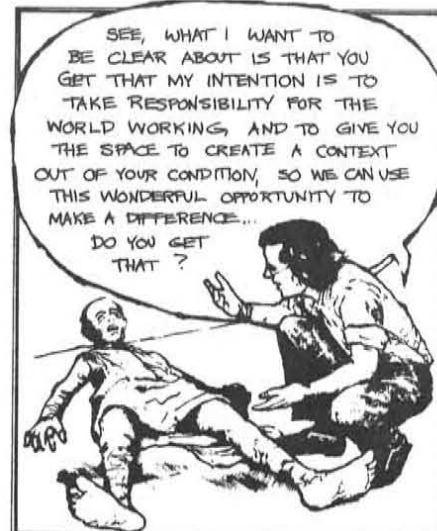
These are not simply abstract propositions. I *experience* them, or at least their consequence, in anger, fear and confusion. For it is *my* language which is being destroyed. Most of these words *had* meanings before the Smile swallowed them. Some were concrete, or if vague at least specific in intent. Others held precise and subtle meanings, among communities who agreed to treat them as such, at times embodying centuries of human effort.

But I can no longer speak of "joy" without remembering and being subject to the social consequence of that day in 1971 when William Schutz, Growth-movement mainstay and author of *Joy*, appeared at the California Institute of the Arts clad in solid black, like a CIA agent prepared to infiltrate the Viet Cong, to lead half the student body in exercises designed to permit us to experience Joy, encouraging (i.e. ordering) us to try to make the noises which would reassure us all that Joy was what we were experiencing, rather than a sales-pitch, an indoctrination and an induction; and sure enough, we did. . .

One can no longer use these words responsibly, without in each instance being an active agent of their redefinition, of the restoration of their meaning -- an act attempted against their continual and accelerating corrosion. Some are important to redeem: I have put much work into making a concept of *holistic* sufficiently coherent to describe what an *holistic* system of health education might actually embody and how to judge it as such; and many people are at work on analogous "linguistic" endeavors. The scope of the social project involved in each restoration is suggested by the case of *natural*, where the meaning of one usage is being pinned down by legislation establishing agencies and laws to require food distributed as "natural" to

contain no "unnatural" (i.e., "man-made") preservatives or enhancements. But such tangible agencies and arenas of definition are rare, and without them it is uphill all the way, or rather a losing struggle.

It was worst in ordinary conversation, where time and again I would use these words and then come to recognize that people had understood something quite different from my intent -- not simply a normal unique personal transposition, as concrete as what it transposed, but a meaning of another order, which I could not quite comprehend but which seemed consistently to undo the essence of the meaning I intended. In such instants, in small but significant ways, one's grasp on reality is undone, part of one's mind and one's capacity for *meaningful* (lit.) interaction is destroyed -- for all these are represented in our words and affirmed by word-sharing. As I gave most of these words up rather than subscribe to their new meaning, as I checked them each time they rose casually to my lips and stuttered as I searched in the empty place for some way to say what I meant, I felt less like a disgruntled literary craftsman than like a wounded animal, with part of my self destroyed. And so it is in general, I believe: though I am hyperconscious about words because I use and love them so, the same damage -- simultaneously private and collective -- is done within us each and every time we participate in the collapse of their meanings.



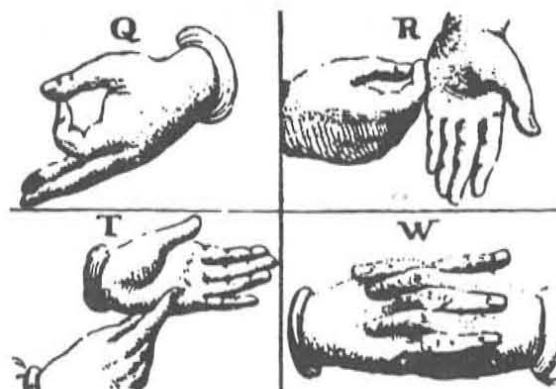
Jeffrey Seaver/Mother Jones

Movementspeak; or, You Can't Say "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" in Smilese

All species of jargon and their consequences are the same in certain ways, I suppose. Still it is useful to compare the dominant Movement jargon of the sixties, as it springs to mind from the collection of political posters under the guest bed at home -- in which current posters from some thirty movements descended from that Movement demonstrate that this jargon and its psychology, not much changed, are as alive in society now as those of the New Age, if less fashionable:

revolution, peace, war, power, anti-rights, march, action, liberation, freedom, black (etc.) struggle, prisoner, trial, women, workers, bomb, justice, democratic, Fascism, organize, movement, benefit, clinic, commemorate, picket, sit-in, demonstrate, equal, resist, vote, oppression. . .

This list, this language, is not simply independent of the New Age language above, but of a radically different nature. Its terms are not derivative but primary. They refer to concrete actions, to (specific kinds of) real persons, to social events and entities. True, many evoke grandiloquent penumbras of meaning -- but in a way which colors rather than obliterates their primary meanings: for because these meanings are *substantial*, are nouns and verbs susceptible to social observation and verification, the words remain *connected* to their basic meanings, which in turn retain a basic content. Even the most abstract of them (*justice, revolution, Fascism*) come to us not as free-floating aspirations or dreads, but rather as collective dreams and nightmares with massive, explicit historical substance -- for the charge in all, as displayed by those who use them seriously, is to make explicit the heritage, the actual events and persons through which their meanings have developed.



Whatever its limitations, its lack perhaps of inward depth, this is a language of connection to the world, and more: of engagement with the world in history to transform it. If its terms are not so crazy-making as the New Age quasi-gerundials are, this may be partly because, though they too are meant to sell (proselytize,) what they advertise has not yet become so fully a *commodity* to be profited from as have the wares of the New Age. Granted, this difference grew vague at times, e.g. when lipservice civil-rightsniks hustled government agencies for jobs; but only when we are exhorted to "Join the Dodge Rebellion" do we experience the kind of violation that is routine with New Age lingo.

The one is a language of social transformation, even as the other is of personal transformation -- but oh, the difference in their character! One connects us to the world, to each other, to history; the other dissolves all connections. In this light, that the second has replaced the first in so many minds and places is not simply a matter of one fad replacing another (as if fashions had no content) but a defeat and a disaster -- involving nothing so parochial as the eclipse and confusion of Left politics, but rather our deep sources of connection and meaning, our grasp on social (human) reality itself.

Michael Rossman, author of *The Wedding Within the War* and *On Learning and Social Change*, has just published *New Age Blues* (E.P. Dutton, 1979), a collection of essays on the politics of consciousness.

Corporations Co-Opt New Age?

by David Armstrong

No part of the American Dream stands clear of the marketplace for long. The latest idea/commodity to set corporate tongues to wagging is voluntary simplicity, a back-to-the-basics, self-reliance ethic that, paradoxically, may spur a new wave of mass consumption.

In pure form, voluntary simplicity is doing more with less. It is rooted in human scale, self-determination, material simplicity, ecological awareness and personal growth. It differs from involuntary simplicity -- poverty -- in that you choose it. You choose to rid yourself of excess baggage, both physical and spiritual, to break the addiction to *things* that marks American life.

Voluntary simplicity (VS) has been around under one name or another for some time. It's only in the past few years, however, that environmentalists, New Age spiritual disciples, natural foods advocates, back-to-the-land homesteaders and post-hippie businesspeople have combined to form a movement of sorts, which has sent corporate trendwatchers scurrying to their flow charts and story boards to figure out how to make a killing on these newly popular lifestyles.

Just how many people actively embrace VS principles is unknown. Estimates vary wildly, from 50,000 to five million. Regardless of numbers, their influence on society has been felt in diet, physical fitness, religion and clothing. In publishing, the late *Whole Earth Catalog* introduced VS values to millions.

Voluntary simplicity became a hot item when the Business Intelligence Program of the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) released an enthusiastic report on it in 1976. The report was the most popular ever done by SRI, a no-nonsense marketing



Radical Technology

outfit with annual sales of over \$100 million, whose ardor for small-is-beautiful blossomed with unseemly haste.

Last year, SRI updated its research with a revised report and reader questionnaire in *CoEvolution Quarterly*, a magazine successor to the *Catalog* used by people in government, science and business to eavesdrop on the bright young technicians of the counterculture.

SRI's assessment of voluntary simplicity for its blue chip clients was reassuring and shrewd. VS, they concluded, is not so much a challenge to the prevailing system as a modification of it, a valuable safety valve used to let off the accumulated steam of discontent. When VS adherents say they don't want to buy much, the report concluded, what they really mean is that they don't want to buy *often*: if products are durable, esthetic and practical, VS people will buy them, and pay top dollar.

SRI's not-to-worry signals to big business are part of a familiar pattern. Innovation in America nearly always goes through a three-step process. It begins when creative people spark new ways of being and doing, passes to small entrepreneurs who develop goods and services to accommodate them, and finally -- if a groundswell develops -- is taken up by large corporations that introduce the innovations (much diluted) to a mass market.

Voluntary simplicity has taken its first two, halting steps in the dance of commerce, and is on the verge of taking the third. According to SRI's research, the "simple" market will reach well into the billions of dollars by the year 2000.

Clearly, there's much about voluntary simplicity that is admirable. It's less wasteful than conventional lifestyles, often imaginative and, in the job-sharing and employee ownership of many businesses that claim VS principles, more democratic. The goods-and-services quality of VS outlets is also unusually high.

Still, there are disturbing notes. Voluntary simplicity is largely restricted to the well-educated, white middle and upper-class people who can afford to make major life changes. It may, with success, provide an unintended cover for the very rich to live in the style to which they have become accustomed, while the rest of us pursue an elusive goal of independence in a vanishing Jeffersonian dreamscape of cottage industries and small farms.

Sherry Thomas, a small farmer and co-editor of *Country Women* magazine, touched on this recently when she wrote: "It's easy to romanticize both self-reliance and material simplicity. . . Taxation policies, subsidies to agribusiness, monopoly control of feed and equipment companies, land speculation, ecological destruction by local corporations -- these are not incidental to our little 'voluntarily simple' farms -- they are part of a careful web to insure that the small and independent farmer won't survive. And, short of major social changes, many of us won't."



Thomas sees VS as a "stop-gap, thumb-in-the-dike tactic," VS enthusiasts see it as The Answer; big business sees it as The Next Big Thing. It's this last factor that means the most for people who haven't yet heard of, let alone adopted, voluntary simplicity. For only corporate America has the power to plant VS offshoots in the local supermarket ad climate-controlled shopping mall.

When McDonald's announces its all new "Tofu'n'Twinkies Combination Plate," you'll know it's arrived.

Ed. Note: The social practice of selling commodities goes back hundreds of years, but the selling of *lifestyles* as commodities is unique to monopoly capitalism. And as Armstrong implies, this accomplishes more than a pretty profit. Social control by means of ideological manipulation is a vital function of the transformation of life into merchandise.

Armstrong has unveiled the ideological cover of voluntary simplicity in some of its guises. But as the details of VS unfold in the context of the current economic crisis, it is becoming clear that voluntary simplicity is being sold by politicians (like Jerry Brown) as well as businesspeople (hip and otherwise.) Austerity and belt-tightening are not usually popular, but the New Age version is being touted as fashionable. If the VS crew can sell us on the idea, we may not notice that our real incomes are declining, that the quality of everything we can afford is worsening, and that our 'lifestyles' are just as bland and boring as before. If we are willing to volunteer to make a virtue out of necessity (and then *like* it) we may help the capitalists crawl out of the crisis their system has created.

The tale of SRI and its embrace of "voluntary simplicity" conjures images of lifestyles being cooked up in bubbling caldrons at think tanks throughout the world. But it is important to point out that, as much as they would like to control every eddy and backwash of social change, the planners usually can't manage much more than reacting to it.

-- Marcy Darnovsky

Reports

Communiversity and the Skills Exchange

Introduction

At Communiversity learning is free. There are no fees, no salaries and no credits. The classes are not a source of money for the Communiversity collective, nor do they fulfill career requirements for the participants. Rather, they are set up for no other reason than the enjoyment of those concerned. They are learning experiences for everyone involved, not least of all the teachers. Anyone who has fantasies and desires and wants to share them with others can organize a class or workshop through Communiversity. In that sense, the classes can be a source of personal power and self-confidence, instead of merely another way to pass the time. Interaction with others is also important. Even the registrations are seen as part of the experience of communicating with others.

Communiversity was one of the first free universities in the country. Like most alternative colleges it was a product of the student movement of the 60s and early 70s. The period was characterized by a critique of education, one element of which was a rejection of the routinization of education and the careers it prepared students for. While situated in that context, the specific circumstances surrounding the creation of Communiversity made it unusual in its emphases and subsequent development.

The student strike at San Francisco State in 1969 resulted in some pretty big rifts between the students and the community. To counteract the bad press and negative attitude toward the strike the Associated Students started several community outreach programs. As one of these programs, Communiversity aimed to involve the community in campus activities

by offering classes to non-students, as well as to provide learning experiences for their own sake. As such it was one of the only alternative colleges that was really free (the classes have never had fees and the teachers have never been paid), and that was also open to people in the community.

Apparently, Communiversity was one of the only successful outreach programs because by 1973 all of the others had been discontinued. People from the community *did* use Communiversity, in fact, in a growing proportion to the number of students that participated. The incongruity of a student funded program that students didn't use, and the related problems of budget, censorship and campus politics motivated some of the staff members to sever its ties with the state university. Thus, in 1975 Communiversity moved into the community.

There were still problems for Communiversity. Moving off campus reduced the budget needs and the work load for the now collectively run project, but simultaneously an attrition process set in. By 1977 the collective had dwindled to about three people. At that time it was handed over to another collective of people (all of whom were involved with Communiversity), who currently run the project.

Presently, decisions are made by a volunteer board of directors. There is a general feeling that the project should remain small. The class brochure is mailed mainly to people in San Francisco and San Mateo counties. People that I spoke to felt that if the collective were to expand indefinitely a bureaucratization and/or centralization process would set in. They of course welcome new people but would also like to see Communiversities spring up in other areas as well. Remaining small also

creates problems. There is a tendency for the number of participants to dwindle, thus overtaxing the resources of those that remain.

Reading through the class brochure gave me a feeling for the unstructured nature of Communiversity. In a very real sense it exists as a framework in which people can realize some of their desires. It seems to lack the self-perpetuating logic that often subordinates people's needs to the tasks of maintaining the structure. I also noticed a healthy amount of self-parody and irony. In one of the brochures there's a picture of a man whose face has been splattered with what looks like the remains of a whip cream pie. The caption below says, "Take us seriously."

Communiversity also compiles a skills exchange directory during every registration. While it is not mandatory, everyone who registers for a class is asked to enter his or her name, along with his or her skills and needs, in the directory. Following is a description of the Skills Exchange put together by the Skills Exchange Collective.

-- Stephanie Klein

The Communiversity Skills Exchange

"I'll Scratch Your Feet if You'll Scratch Mine"

The Communiversity Skills Exchange provides a network for exchanging skills, information and interests, and filling needs. As well as a way of meeting and learning from people with similar interests, it can be a way of getting things done outside of the competitive economic system.

Once we have put people in touch



Horseshoeing a duck.

with each other, they they work out their own exchange arrangements. Some exchanges are made by bartering, while others are made by sharing equal time (such as an hour for an hour). Below are some specific examples:

* A craftsman may need a space for his work, and may be willing to share tools or the fruits of his labor.

* A group of backpackers may want to get together for a trip, or just to swap stories.

* A person may want his or her car fixed, and may be willing to do some other task in exchange, such as cleaning house.

* Someone may want to offer an existing Communiversity class through the Skills Exchange in order to attract more people, or to form a new class through ideas he or she has gotten via the Exchange.

The idea of skills exchanges is not new. Many were set up during the Great Depression, including a large one in L.A. called the People's Clearinghouse. It was quite elaborate and included a "bank" that kept track of individuals' debits and credits based on the hours they had put into exchanges.

In the early 70s many conferences were held on alternative communities and networking, which helped spread the use of skills exchanges. At around the same time Communiversity, a university where the classes are free and the labor donated, was formed. It is rumored that the Communiversity Skills Exchange actually came first, the classes being offered to attract people and get them involved with the organization.

Two other skills exchanges were set up at that time. One was the work of the Black Bart Center in San Francisco and the other was put together by a group of families in Daly City. They originally operated like switchboards, keeping their files on index cards. In an effort to increase participation, coordinators were chosen to organize neighborhood networks. This didn't work as well as was hoped and not many functioning networks were formed.

Eventually both these skills exchanges combined with Communiversity and succeeded in putting out a large directory, listing people by the categories they were interested in. This was distributed to members of the exchanges and the information was made generally available. Unfortunately some people felt that the Black Bart and Daly City members' needs were not being served and soon the Communiversity Skills Exchange dwindled down to the original Communiversity participants. Perhaps the sense of community was no longer there for the smaller groups.

We used to solicit info by having everyone who registered for a class fill out a form stating what they were willing to share through the Skills Exchange. The form was divided into hobbies, skills, interests, information and needs sections. It was very successful in producing lots of listings for lots of people. In fact, the paperwork was usually so overwhelming that it could not be processed before the next registration. Nevertheless, several directories were produced that were organized alphabetically by participants in each neighborhood. The idea was to list individuals so that people could get to know each other. These were interesting but difficult to use. In order to find someone with a specific skill it was necessary to search the whole book.

Last year we initiated a new system. To facilitate exchanges between interested parties, we began using an alphabetized listing of categories. Each category has a notebook page on which you can enter your name, phone number or address, and a comment about your interest in that category, your needs and what you can share or barter. Blank pages are available in the back of the book so that you can create your own new category. By using this method the information is automatically compiled by its users and is immediately available. Skills exchange books are available for sign up and info retrieval at Communiversity registrations in February, June and October. We also have five neighborhood contact people who can be called, and are listed in the Education section of the Haight Ashbury Switchboard Survival Manual.



While we've always found a great deal of interest in the exchange idea, there are some problems in implementing it. Primarily, the problems have to do with making the information available and getting people to use it. It is often difficult to reach contact people at home and people don't like to call strangers. As a result, the Skills Exchange is not presently used very much, and when it is the initial exchanges are usually such that they are completed in one mutually beneficial meeting. Most often it is used to meet people, find bridge partners, or people to go backpacking with.

In order to be widely used, the information needs to be available where people browse or hang out, and especially in situations where some bond already exists between the participants. We would like to encourage groups and organizations to try using skills exchanges for their staffs and members. They are very inexpensive to set up. Lined paper can be used as category forms, with the category heading at the top and column headings for the participant's name, phone number, and information.

Another suggestion for those contemplating setting up a skills exchange is to give them another name. A common response to ours is: "But I don't have any skills." Calling them energy, info, or interest exchanges should be one way to get around this.

If you would like more information on the Communiversity or the Skills Exchange, our mailing address is Communiversity, P.O. Box 42093, San Francisco, Ca., 94101.

-- the Communiversity Skills Exchange Collective

The Hexiad

-- A Network of Intentional Communities

This is a project report on a network formed by Karass (now called Hexiad), which links Arcosanti, Auroville in India, and Findhorn in Scotland. Hexiad has connected these three futuristic communities via an exchange of residents (two at a time), and through video tapes (called "video letters"). Karass, Findhorn, and Arcosanti are now additionally linked through the Electronic Information Exchange System (EIES), over which they can send messages and participate in computer conferences. Although opinions may differ on the ultimate impact of such relatively isolated intentional communities, the connection of these groups with each other is worth exploring, particularly regarding the use of new technologies (video and computers) for network communications.

Karass was founded in 1974 by two former Arcosanti volunteers who wanted to facilitate exchange of ideas and skills among 'evolutionary' communities creating and demonstrating new ways of living. The formal linking work began in 1976. Karass, which serves as the facilitative and administrative node of the network, continues to hold a somewhat central position. Its five members work as a loosely knit collaborative, with several people traveling at any given time. Although Karass is a continuing motive force, the three communities have a strong voice and an increasingly active role in the network. In the future, a communications center and a training center will also join the network, bringing the number in this net to 6 - hence the network's new name, "Hexiad" (from tensegrity modeling, a hexiad is a six-sided figure which can be charted on a sphere and has great structural strength).

-- Sandy Emerson

1. The Video Letters Project

In a recent letter to the *Journal*, Randall Hunt, the Librarian of Arcosanti, describes Arcosanti and the evolution of Karass, and encloses an article on the video letters, as follows:

The Letter.
(received July 6, 1979)

Hello Good People!

For the last 3 1/2 years I've been living on a construction site in central Arizona called Arcosanti. Arcosanti is a prototype city structure called an Arcology (Ecological Architecture). Its physical construction has been underway since 1969 when an 860-acre parcel of land was purchased by the Cosanti Foundation. Dr. Paolo Soleri, an Italian-born American citizen, is the designer and chief architect ...

A few years ago two people came together at Arcosanti who afterwards met in the Boston area to form Karass [as defined by Kurt Vonnegut in his novel *Cat's Cradle*, a karass is a "team that does God's Will without ever discovering what it is doing."]. Karass has been instrumental in linking the Arcosanti Project with the community at Findhorn in Scotland and also with Auroville - the home, spiritual center, and architectural project of a transnational community of persons living together in South India, who have been brought

together by the teachings of Sri Aurobindo - an Indian philosopher and revolutionary, and a woman referred to as the Mother - Aurobindo's spiritual companion for many years. (Neither of the two are alive in the physical sphere).

In February 1978 Arcosanti received a 1/2" videotape portapack set from Karass and began sending "video letters" to Findhorn and later to Auroville. The three communities now exchange half-hour tapes on a semi-regular basis. The psychological impact of these tapes is difficult to ascertain. The video medium puts us in a unique type of communication across the planet with persons whom we come to know as alive and real and as committed to their respective visions of the developing future as we at Arcosanti.

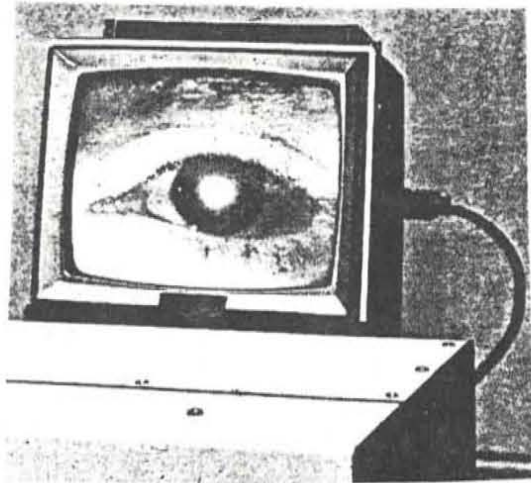
The Article.*

Almost a year has gone by since David Voremburg, representing Karass, brought us the one-half inch black and white portapack video equipment. Arcosanti's use of it has included producing 7 video letters to Findhorn and Auroville, as well as dance, construction, and festival tape footage. Various residents have had their hands, eyes and ears in making the letters under the guidance of the caretakers of the equipment, Cheryl Kasdorf and David Goodwin.

Recently, David and Cheryl encountered the complexities of the wider world of video when they used sophisticated editing equipment at Cre-8 (our Phoenix connection for technical advice and repairs) to produce a statement about the Karass video networking project consisting of self-defining statements by the communities at Findhorn, Auroville and Arcosanti. Sequences were taken from the various video letters and juxtaposed to create a compact statement about the progress of the project. The immediate purpose was to show the tape at the Video Fair celebrated at Cre-8 on 2 December 1978; a gathering of video craftpersons to exchange and share technical information. The contribution

from Arcosanti demonstrated an alternative use of the medium that is opening a global awareness. Peter Calloway, the initiator of Karass, was very excited to have a copy of the tape to show to his sponsor, Interface.

In late spring, Cheryl will be going to Boston, thanks again to Karass, for two to three weeks of video training, along with Marion and Kerry from Findhorn. The training will cover a range of theory, technical knowledge, studio and outdoor shooting experience with criticism, plus integration of the aesthetic approach.



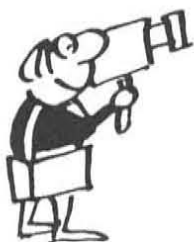
In February 1978 Arcosanti received its equipment and has produced eight letter tapes. Findhorn received its video system in April and has sent out four tapes. Auroville received its equipment in September and has made two tapes.

The tapes have provided a good forum for each community to examine its identity and to respond creatively to that image by putting it into a presentation. Video, being the medium that it is, allows for communication through electronic visual and audio images to bring across a sense of each community. This sense could not come just from written words because the viewer's eye picks up other information: expressions on faces, movements of bodies, the natural and designed environments, and people in daily activity. Since everyone has different sensitivities, each viewer can pick up subtly different information.

*Written by Cheryl Kasdorf, this article appeared in Arcosanti's Library bulletin in January, 1979.

Arcosanti has identified its stress on the physical through its approach to the presentation as well as through the sounds and images of the site. Building is the major priority at Arcosanti with the Foundry, Ceramics Studio, daily tours, and Cafe helping to finance construction. The approach in the tapes is to portray ideas and images of Arcosanti from many different viewpoints by including many individuals in the creative process. There has been little self-evaluation or effort to state questions requiring responses on the tapes; the entire experience has to be taken into consideration to formulate a response. Findhorn has approached their productions as a group process, and at the end of every tape has evaluated their efforts and asked questions, commenting that the most fulfilling experience they have had was to partake in group process at Findhorn.

A pilot tape was made at Arcosanti in September 1977 with an informal passing of the mike around a group seated outside with people elucidating why they came to stay at Arcosanti. This was produced on borrowed equipment and became Arcosanti tape #1. During that first experience, those involved appreciated the potential of video tape as a communication tool.



An explanation of the vision of Arcosanti was presented in a sequence with the 1976 model of Arcosanti and through a partial examination of the buildings on the site in tape #2. Arcosanti tape #3 shows step by step a concrete pour, the serious stuff of our lives as builders, interspersed with commercials by the Centre for Anti-Gravity to evaluate cosmic potentials and used vehicles that are rusting behind the site. That is followed by Jonas Crawford in funny nose glasses reading credits and an Arizona "nature study" series featuring

Richard Johnson's dragon ceramic creatures. In response, Findhorn considered a lighter approach, and "Amy and Antony" presented the newly acquired buildings with lots of background information through farcical sketches. Tape #4 shows good/evil, harsh/mellow, bright/dark; all the dichotomies of earthly existence to prod a reaction from Findhorn, the community that strives for a comfortable harmony.

Made in the middle of summer of 1978, tape #5 covered how nonworking time is spent at Arcosanti. It included shots of people at the newly completed pool, a haircut, informal conversations, a dance class and ended with a song "We are Crazy", showing people relaxing in the Cafe. It seems that Findhorn didn't know what to make of it because the response was a try at a comic routine, ending with the interviewer concluding that he didn't know what he was supposed to be, but he realized that the best way to communicate was to be himself. Arcosanti had no pretensions all along -- *we are crazy*.

The beginning sequence of tape #6 was a response to the marvels and nature spirits of Findhorn's gardens and a guest appearance on Findhorn's previous tape of the wise and respected Sir Richard St. Barr Baker, "the man of the trees" with his message of the trees and answer to the world's population crisis. In an interview, Ivy, our elderly gardener friend, claimed to be working with Joe and Kit and not any spirits. He also presented prize winning produce which is on quite a different scale than the publicized produce from Findhorn's garden.

Arcosanti's tape #6 continues with Festival preparations such as stage setup, T-shirt printing, ticket sales and food preparation. It includes an interview with vexillographer [banner-maker] Anders Holmquist, participating in Festival artworks. It also explains the purpose of the Festival; to create a cultural center and generate a critical mass at Arcosanti. Findhorn parallels this with a tape about the annual general and internal conferences. They

included interviews with Eileen and Peter Caddy, founders of the Findhorn Community, talking about living by guidance, achieving mental clarity, and the purpose of the meetings to look at themselves and current issues, most notably the financial crisis (a problem shared by all three communities).

Arcosanti's tape #7 was produced by the "Women's Group". One scene in the tape consisted of Mel Armijo and the children at Arcosanti - all three. Mel dressed up as a "domestic engineer" contrasts sharply with the nursery and extensive children's programs shown in Findhorn's tape. Cosanti appeared in the women's program when Colly Soleri talked about raising a family in an environment so much in the public eye as Cosanti is.

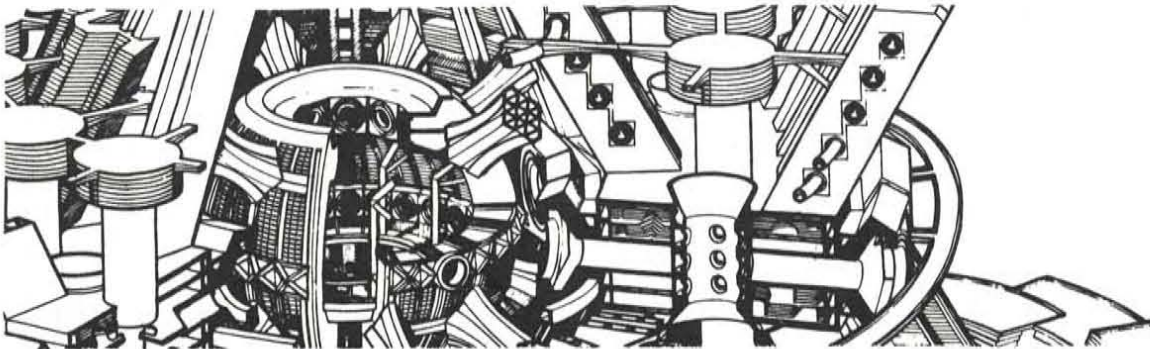
Explanations of the natural environment and urban orientation of the buildings (apse effect, heliocentric society, circles and squares) are brought forth from Richard Johnson in tape #6, demonstrating what form Paolo's theories have taken in concrete.

"The Letter", Arcosanti's most recent tape, focuses on giving a sense of the architectural spaces. Also, individuals are pictured writing a letter which was sent along with the tape. The audio overdub takes a new direction for Arcosanti, being a discussion of what we want to say to Findhorn and Auroville and what information we would like from them. Specific issues like Holistic healing, food preparation and guided fantasy were raised, requesting answers.

Since Auroville received their equipment much later, we haven't had time to develop a dialogue. However, it appeared they were influenced by the tapes from Arcosanti and Findhorn because their style and content paralleled much of what had been done. Auroville's tapes included original music, the agricultural program (ox drawn plows!) recreation (Europeans playing baseball, volleyball, swimming), the surrounding terrain (extensive fields, trees, even the ocean), and the workshops (welding, forging, grinding). There were just islands of spoken explanation, but the music, faces, physiognomy and interaction with Indian villages show what a totally non-European, non-American context the project is in. Just because of the physical unfamiliarity, those tapes are most fascinating.

If Arcosanti identifies itself by its physicality and goal of creating an urban container, then it may be one side of physical-social-spiritual communities. In that light, it would do well to consider how to integrate these concepts when the container we are building is finished enough to fill. Findhorn offers the emotional, social workings through its experiments in group process, family living and emphasis on human relationships. Auroville represents a trans-cultural undertaking which is oriented to spirited matters.

By networking these three communities, we support each other in that we recognize we are working for the same goals, though in different ways. The interaction with, and supplementation of each community provides a richer process and end product as we bring to life the "New Age."



Midsection (cutaway view) of a building at Arcosanti



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