
Building Communities that Feed Your Soul

A Presentation and Guided
Discussion facilitated by
Tony Buff & Derek da Silva



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Introduction: What's this all about?

- Building relationships, extended families & social organizations that fit your needs for community.
- Neither an assumed golden age nor a Utopian future that might never be reached.
- Learning from the past & building the future while creating social constructs to fulfill present needs.
- Identifying personal and community needs and steps you can take to create social units that fulfill those needs.
- Interactive – participants are encouraged to share their own personal experiences.

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Objectives

- Encourage participants to address actual needs rather than their preconceived notions of what should be, based on whatever social constructs already exist.
- Help people conceive of radical new ways of creating organizational units that really match the realities of our lives.
- Examine the forces at play in social institutions so as to find a good balance.

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To do this we will examine and identify

- The Variety of Different Social Units
- How Traditional Social Units Help / Hinder Us
- The Values that Form a Foundation
- Your Needs and the Needs of Your Community
- Rigid and Adaptive Patterns of Social Change
- Belonging, Exclusion & Inclusion
- Factors for Social Cohesion
- Power of Social Memes
- Means to Overcome Blocks of Entitlement Mindset

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Beginnings



“Building the community that feeds my soul is about that indescribable sense of wonder & awe you feel when you are in the presence of a kindred spirit.” – Gene Romaine

- Human Beings are Pack Animals
 - We get many of our needs met from each other.
- We Form Social Units
 - Some help, others work against meeting our needs.
- Feeding Your Soul is a Need
 - Right here, right now.
- Social Units have Power
 - That power can work for or against its members.

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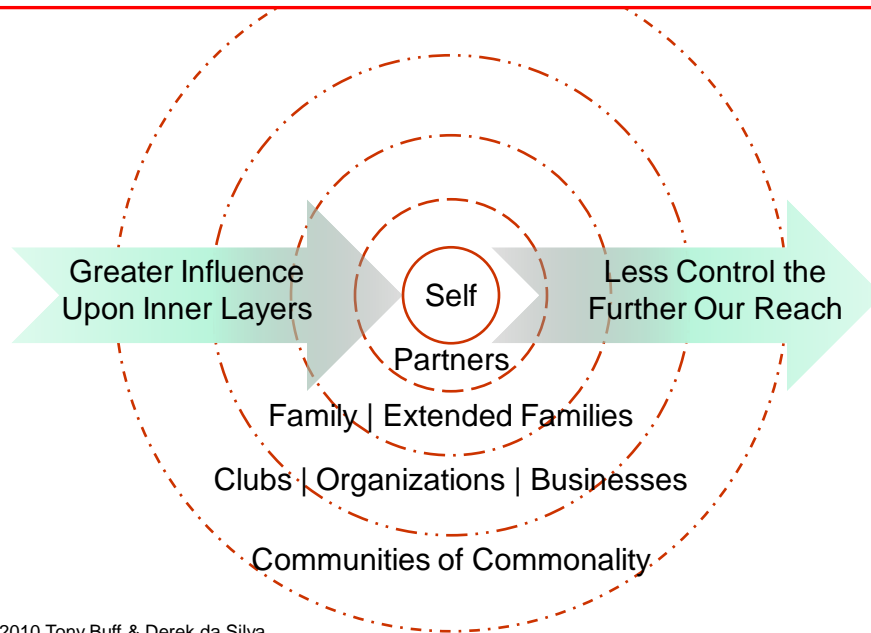
Activity #1 – Identifying Communities

- List the Social Units to which You Belong
- Identify some Needs are Fulfilled by Each
- Describe How Each Might be Limiting and How You are different from your community
- Where do these Social Units Overlap / Cluster
- How are they Segregated



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Levels of Social Organization



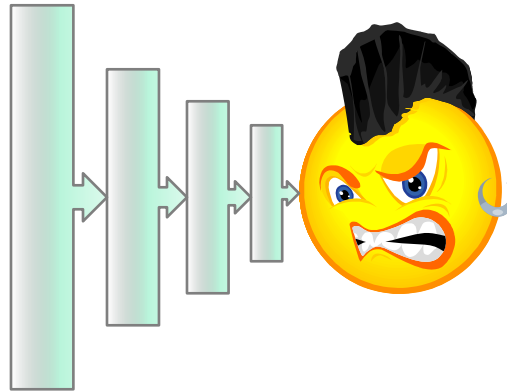
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We Best Influence the Here and Now



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Arboreal model of community evolution

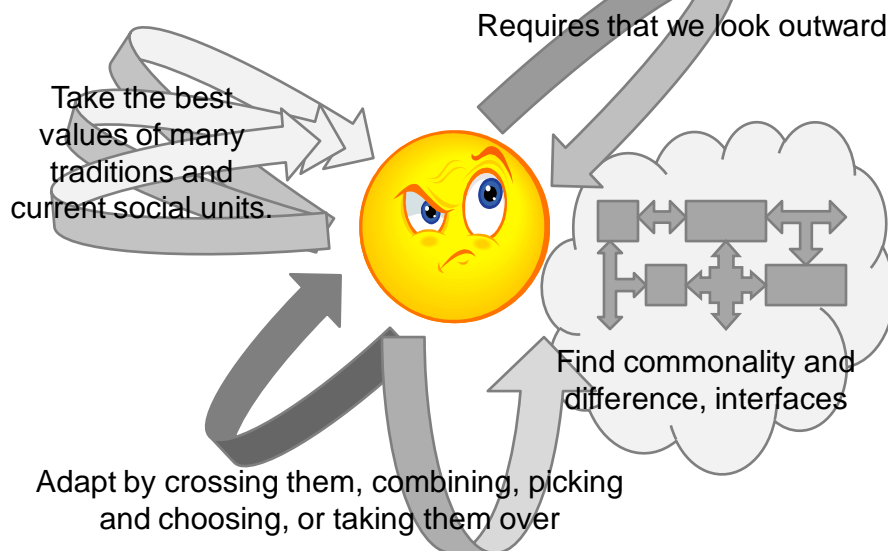


Fixed Root
Predetermined Structure and Direction

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Rhizomatic Model of Community Evolution

Spreads: No Fixed Base, No Beginning or End, Many Connections



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Philosophy: Trees and Rhizomes

“The tree is filiation, the the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb ‘to be,’ but the rhizome is the conjunction, ‘and... and... and...’ This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb ‘to be.’ Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions. Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction , a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other way, a stream without beginning or end.”

--Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus

Activity #2 – Defining Your Community

- Visualize Your Community of Family & Friends
- Write down 5 Characteristics that Describe Your Community
- Categorize under Major Headings and Discuss



Tradition, Symbolism and Myth

- What Social Traditions, Symbols and Myths do You Associate with Your Community of Family & Friends?
- How do they Assist in Creating a Sense of Community and Fulfilling Your Needs?
- How do they limit your community?
- What are the underlying values and shared principles implied in them?

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Utopian Visions

- What Utopian Thoughts or Ideals play into Defining Your Community of Family & Friends?
- How do these Thoughts or Ideals Help Fulfill Your Personal Needs?
- What are the core values these seek to fulfill?
- Which of these are Unlikely to be Met Soon?
- What can you do to bridge that gap?

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What Feeds Your Soul – Getting Started

- Different Souls, Different Diets
- Little Bites – Small Units are Easiest
- Size and Diversity
- Inclusion vs Exclusion
- Communication and Cohesion
- Deterritorialization (and re-territorialization)
- Conflict and Conflict Resolution

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Different Souls, Different Diets

- Invest in what works
- Different needs may be met by belonging to multiple communities

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Little Bites – Small Units are Easiest

- It's easiest to create a almost utopian world in a very bounded time and space. The “Temporary Autonomous Zone.”
- It's also easiest to enact ideals of tradition in a similarly limited space.
- Creating a small moment of idealized social interaction can recharge you. Runs, conferences, etc., all help us regroup and recharge.

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Size and Diversity, Inclusion vs. Exclusion

- Smaller units have advantages but they imply exclusivity on some dimension.
- But with greater size comes vibrancy and evolution.
- “Big Tents” dilute the ability to really feed the soul and reduce cohesion.
- But exclusivity can alienate outsiders, hurt the larger community and cause calcification.

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Communication and Cohesion

- Physical vs Virtual
 - Often vs Occasional
 - Etc.
-
- More communication in closer proximity creates more cohesion.
 - But your reach is limited by requiring close proximity.
 - Sometimes it's better to band on a particular common basis, regardless of distance.

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Deterritorialization

- Existing territories can be claimed and remade to serve other agendas. This can be good, bad or neutral.
- A basic idea can take off and help propagate new identities that take over spaces (queer skin, leather clan, etc)
- A strong meme (viral idea) can gain its own momentum and make major changes with seemingly little effort.

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Conflict & Conflict Resolution

All community identities are artificial since we are really individually defined by our differences. Sometimes the differences become greater than the common basis for organization.

- Resolve
- Evolve
- Split



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No Whining

- No one owes you change or inclusion – or even if they do, fighting in is often less productive.
- Existing institutions can be changed to meet your needs but aren't obliged to.
- Dinosaurs will die on their own if they aren't filling a need – focus your energy on your needs first, even if that means creating something totally new.



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Activity #3 – Homework: Identifying Your Needs

- Look at each level (from self outwards) .
- What is missing at each level ?
- What causes these gaps?
- Look at multiple memberships – What needs are met by each social unit your belong to?
- Look at outside social units – What diff/better ideas can you incorporate?
- Where can you form new alliances?



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Thank You!

- Special Thanks
 - Gene Romaine
- Recommended Reading
 - Todd May, *“Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction”* Cambridge Press, 2005
 - Michel Foucault, *“Sex Power and the Politics of Identity”* from *Ethics*, The New Press 1997
 - Hakim Bey, *“The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism”* Autonomedia 1985, 1991.

*Don't forget to check out
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