

Waves of Collaboration: The Future of Organizing

By D.C. Cummins, UC, Santa Cruz alumni, former organizer and educator

Introduction: The Importance of Collaboration

The future is collaboration. To some, this statement may seem simple, or unrealistic, but in our globalized political economy based on self-interest, competition, and divisive modes of thought, surely if there is to be a bright future it will depend on social justice advocates and environmentalists working together, among various other generalized groups. However, with social organizations, environmental sustainability groups, and academic communities, many in these groups are overworked and narrowly focused on specific objectives central to their diverse understandings of **the work to be done**, and importantly so. In a world with such a vast array of economic, political, and socio-ideological controls and inequities, certainly we need impassioned people to stand up for the restitution of the environment, critical and empowering education, peace at home and abroad, and the cultural reparation of the poor and disenfranchised populations across the globe, most distinctively the African diaspora¹ and indigenous peoples struggling for self-determination in the Americas and abroad. This is to name only a handful of challenges to participating in a peaceful and orderly world.

Tragically, however, when these passionate activists and educators are not connected with each other, or the populations for which they advocate, they risk replicating certain basic elements of the self-interested paradigm of *rugged individualism*² that we should fundamentally be challenging in our resistance movements if we are to make long lasting change. Some social critics³ would certainly argue, however, that through the socialization of this historically Euro-American paradigm, how are culturally, ideologically, geographically and otherwise different people, with diverse understandings of the world we live in and **the work to be done**, supposed to work together despite their differences? This is an argument generally accepted as given for many in academia, politics, and the activist world, precisely because of our collective socialization into the 'master narrative' of dominant 'free market' dogma. But when we begin working

¹ A *diaspora* is any violently uprooted population taken by force to other parts of the world.

² Alexis deToqueville in *Democracy in America*

³ see Hayden White's commentary in *Transcommunality* (Temple,2003), pp. 165-172

together, not in spite of our diversity, but with a liberated respect for all perspectives involved, and the proper coalition-building markers along the way, we can begin to build a “bridge” system through which we can openly exchange knowledge, learn from each other, and build potential for what Childs describes as “shared practical actions”(24) in *Transcommunal: From the Politics of Conversion to the Ethics of Respect* (Temple, 2003). Moreover, in the rich technological environment of our generation, as activists and educators in much of the Western world and beyond well know, we must take advantage of the bridge building tools available to us, through the Internet primarily, that provide the initial channels of communication from which further collaborations, “constructive disputing”(60) and ‘face to face’ interactions grow. In my undergraduate experience at University of California, Santa Cruz studying *Transcommunal* as a student, activist, and educator working with Professor Childs, I have built these bridges, I’ve walked them, and I know the practicality of this type of networking based on respect, mutual learning, and shared practical actions.

This article, therefore, is not only my story of the different methods and processes of inter-organizational collaboration based at least in part on *Transcommunal*, it is my experience initializing a structure through which this type of collaboration would be most effective and empowering. After all, at its most basic level, Childs book *Transcommunal* (or ‘the Bible’ as I like to call it), is a guide outlining a process for collaborative coalition-building amongst diverse worldviews, fields of study, and organizational affiliations; at the same time it holds a vision of global community based on these principles of cooperation and respect. *Transcommunal* manifests a vision of how the relationships created and sustained through these types of coalitions cause a transformation in the participants and the organization itself, and eventually the educational, political, and social systems we live in. Childs writes of the “creation of transcommunal associations” (66) that through this process “[s]hared practical actions, leading to interpersonal relationships, coalesces into associations that give these individuals a strong sense of group cohesiveness. Such groups may achieve formal status or may remain informal”(66-67).

The network of ‘bridges’ that follow, I argue, will benefit from a more ‘formal’ organizational status within and among the participating communities. Just as the image

of a real bridge provokes, to remain functional the bridges we build must be held up by structural support beams to make people feel safe traveling across them, creating comfortable, well-known pathways to meet new organizers, share projects and actions, and learn from the others in a process of personal and organizational transformation. Such support beams, I argue, must be maintained by *transcommunal bridge builders* whose specific organizational role is to innovate methods, tactics, events, outreach materials, and other strategies of collaboration that tangibly connect people across cultures, organizations, and academic disciplines. It is my hope that the story outlined in this article becomes one rip curl in a massive wave of transcommunal energy that will define these organizational roles. Through the constructive interaction of the multiple perspectives involved locally and across the globe, a bright future for social justice, the environment, and an emerging global community built “from below,”⁴ will surface based on respect and cooperation.

The ‘Collaboration Network’: First Encounter

The vision of ‘transcommunal’ global community I have suggested necessarily must begin with local community building and networking, in which my experience at U.C., Santa Cruz is grounded. My experience has been a progression of social experiments in organizing that culminated in my involvement bringing a ‘transcommunal’ approach to the “Collaboration Network” of a collectively student/alumni organized undergraduate course entitled the “Education for Sustainable Living Program.” This 2- and 5-unit course is structured as a student organization whose yearly objective is to organize a speaker series and several Action Research Team (ART) community projects based on *social* and environmental *sustainability*. As stated in the course’s mission statement, “the Education for Sustainable Living Program is a *collaborative interdisciplinary effort* to realize *sustainable community* throughout the University of California...” (www.eslp.net, emphasis added). Upon entering the organization, my critical perspective brought two basic questions based on my background with *Transcommunality*, to be discussed below. First, what is exactly entailed by a ‘collaborative effort’? Who exactly is collaborating with whom? Is it a

⁴ Childs in *Global Visions* (Childs, et al, _____ Press, 1994), pg. _____

collaborative effort only among the environmentalists? Which brings up the second important question: What is ‘sustainable community,’ and again, for whom? What does ‘sustainability’ mean for different organizers and educators? These questions became central to the organizing of the course for Spring 2006, not only in speaker and Action Research Team *topics*, but in the *processes, strategies, and tactics* that the Collaboration Network developed to invite and involve participation from a wide range of students, faculty, campus organizations, and organizations from the greater Santa Cruz community such as the Brown Berets and Barrios Unidos. The Brown Berets is a Latino community empowerment group based in Watsonville, and the Barrios Unidos is a social justice and educational empowerment organization whose national headquarters are in Santa Cruz. Hence, not only is the course collectively organized and coordinated by students at four other UC campuses besides Santa Cruz (Los Angeles, Davis, Santa Barbara, Berkeley) and Santa Barbara City College, the newly emerging concept of *social sustainability* was explored by attempting to join forces with representatives from the social justice organizations with whom we were connecting. These initial lines of communication laid the foundation for the bridges which were constructed, opening the pathways for these organizers to integrate their understanding of **the work to be done** within a newly conceived and all-inclusive “sustainability movement” that their groups, our students and faculty, and other participants were, *and are*, actively involved in defining through the multi-dimensional understandings of ‘sustainability’ and knowledge that were, and continue to be, collectively explored in this student-directed course.

A Brief Background with Transcommunal

Upon entering the organization of the Education for Sustainable Living Program, I brought with me a brief experience with Professor Childs’ concepts of “coordinated autonomy” (49, 51), “constructive disputing”(60-63), and the “engaged/disengaged flexibility of transcommunal associations” (66-69) that had been impacting the campus environment intriguing student organizers and faculty alike. As an academic assistant for the Kresge College Core Course in the Fall of 2003 with W. Stewart Cooper, I led discussions and workshops with First Year students about how *Transcommunal*, the closing text for the course, could make up a framework for the reconciliation of the

various *Culture War* themes we explored, from Japanese-American discrimination during WWII to the struggles of impoverished and working class Americans today from all backgrounds, building on our study of 'Third World citizens' struggle for survival. In our weekly discussions, we explored *transcommunal* not only as a concept in respect for all people, diverse in their variously rooted "emplacements"(26) and outlooks, and as a guide for constructive social interactions among them, but as to how this concept could be put into practice through the educational *process* that we attempted to employ, in which disagreement and diverse outlooks were welcomed as a way to gain a deeper understanding of the material we explored through open, non-domineering small group discussions.

The following Quarter, in Winter of the 2003-04 academic year, Professor Childs worked with the Student Union Assembly of UCSC to launch the 'Connect the Dots' series of inter-organizational networking dinners at College 9/10, at which he spoke about *transcommunal* and the importance of "coordinated autonomy" in the presence of over 50 student organizers. This, and our experience in the Core Course, propelled myself and other Kresge Academic Assistants and our students to organize ourselves in a call to our local Kresge community to branch out to the many ethnic, social and environmental organizations on campus, many of which were represented at the first 'Connect the Dots' dinner. Our new group, called "the People" or "the People's Community Movement at Kresge" developed as a networking hub from which our core members became what we called 'spiders,' creating webs to connect our small community with the larger causes and actions on campus and further into the Santa Cruz community. John Brown Childs came to speak to our group of initially 25 students from the Kresge community, giving the background of his work with Transcommunal and his support for what we were attempting to accomplish. Hence, we became the original 'bridge builders' in our local community, whose purpose was to become liasons to the organizations which we were individually interested in, be they the Student Environmental Center, Students Against War, the Santa Cruz based 'Action for Political Engagement and Empowerment Project (APEEP), or the Student Worker Coalition for Justice, in which my liasonship was based. We attended meetings to meet people and make new contacts and alliances, offered support from our end (such as hanging banners

at Kresge College announcing an upcoming action and spreading flyers and word of mouth to our friends and the Kresge faculty), and most importantly brought continuous updates back to the “People’s” regular meetings to heighten awareness and inspire participation in **the work being done**. Through this process we compiled what would become *The Inter-Org Contact List*, with contact information for initially over 30 campus and community organizations and growing, which was collected from campus publications, online resources, and the Student Union Office. *The Inter-Org Contact List* was an integral tool for establishing the first communication with these organizers through email and/or telephone contact, introducing ourselves and our purpose, and attempting to visit meetings to learn more about the organization and its people. Although establishing ourselves as this new type of networking organization based on flexible alliances and liasonships was a long process in meeting new people, gaining their trust, and maintaining consistent relationships, overall the ‘experiment’ was a success for the time that our organization survived. We created bridges with many causes while maintaining our own identity based on a group of students interested in various causes for justice, working together to stay connected with a broad range of diverse people, communities, and organizations that surrounded us at U.C., Santa Cruz.

Probably the single most significant attribute to our success was our continued involvement in the ‘Inter-Org community’ coordinated by the elected officers of the Student Union Assembly in the following academic year (2004-2005). Our organization was especially interesting to the Inter-Org community, as our mutual objectives were essentially the same: connect, participate, and learn from each other’s educational and organizational work. Moreover, at one Quarterly meeting we could speak with and get updates from the work of various diverse organizers, and make connections with ethnic organizations, environmental campaigns, anti-war and workers’ justice organizations, and educational organizations, such as the Education for Sustainable Living Program. This student-directed class introduced above was hosting an Action Research Team topic in that Spring sponsored by APEEP (also mentioned above) on *Transcommunality* and *Participatory Democracy*. I took this class for 5-units in which my community project, in collaboration with a fellow Kresge organizer Kaycee Paller and others, was to create a workshop for the incoming Kresge Academic Assistants on Transcommunality, including

a brief background on what we organized with ‘the People’s Community Movement,’ and how they could potentially bring a ‘transcommunal’ approach to their class discussions, both in the content of the material *and* the process by which they chose to frame discussions. Our participation in the *Transcommunality and Participatory Democracy* Action Research Team of ESLP was a transformative experience that opened our eyes to the visionary possibilities that Childs’ practice holds, inspiring Ms. Paller and myself to proliferate the 5-unit project-based course in the next spring as the *Socially Sustainable Communities and Coalition Building* ART, working closely in our objectives with the evolved *Collaboration Network* of the Education for Sustainable Living Program.

The Obstacles to University Organizing

University organizing, as with greater community organizing, brings with it many struggles in creating trusting relationships that are sustained year after year, as older organizers graduate and/or move on, and new organizers need to be recruited, their trust gained, and their relationships and alliances solidified. This can be especially difficult for transcommunal activists, as Childs warns of “the dangers of transcommunal success” (72) that effective *bridge builders* “may appear as traitor or at least as suspect” (72) because of their diversely rooted ‘emplacements’ that form the foundation for their bridge building. As *bridge builders*, we are in a space between, coming from a grounded organization, philosophy, and worldview, but filling a void of communication and constructive interaction that will eventually give our movements the cohesive strength of a global community network. These obstacles do not inhibit transcommunal organizing, as I see it, but rather provide further impetus to persist in cross-cultural communication, mutual learning experiences, and transformative interactions on the personal and community level.

Through my experience, I had found that the greatest obstacle to keeping the *People’s Community Movement at Kresge* alive was sustaining the relationships created as older organizers graduated and new organizers needed to be recruited. Upon my graduation from U.C., Santa Cruz with a major in Sociology and a minor in transcommunal organizing, the People’s Community movement was not able to sustain a

large base, and while the previous organizers did continue with their work in the outside organizations they joined, the bridges that were built between the local Kresge community and those organizations all but deteriorated in the formal sense. This is a pitfall, as I see it, with many university-based organizations that fail to create a strong foundational structure from which new organizers can easily engage in **the work to be done**. As I returned to the *Education for Sustainable Living Program*, this time as an alumnus organizer rather than an Action Research Team student, I recognized the importance of initializing a structure within the Collaboration Network that was flexible enough to be inclusive to many people, organizers, and community groups, but with enough support to maintain the bridges we would build over time. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, we needed to sustain the bridges with *bridge builders* that possessed their own understanding of *transcommunality* and its important guiding principles. Hence, a foundation was built.

The Collaboration Network Evolved

In building a foundation for collaboration within ESLP, our organization focused on organizational roles first, from which the two of us grounded in ‘the Collaboration Network’ as the Co-Chairs (myself and fellow organizer Cara Sundell) developed the tools and the strategies that would keep us in contact with the most organizers and in the most effective methods possible. We began our approach in developing what Childs calls “face to face contacts” around campus and in the greater community, through successive meetings of the Inter-Org community and repeated attendance at weekly or bi-weekly meetings of campus organizations contacted through *The Inter-Org Contact List*, such as my continued work with the Student-Worker Coalition for Justice. The goal of these continued interactions, which were successful in some instances more than others depending on the reception we received, was to build “interpersonal relations” among ourselves and the diverse organizers who we were attempting to connect with, support in their actions, and learn from, a relationship “within which the participants build an increasing sense of trust and predictability with each other...”(63). As mentioned earlier, the *bridge builders* and the communication we initiate and sustain through face-to-face, personal contact do create the support beams upon which greater bridges are built, and

further tools are developed and used to expand the potential network we create.

Moreover, while Ms. Sundell and I were charged with coordinating these liasonships, in no way were we able to personally reach all the groups with whom we attempted to connect, which were potentially all student and community organizations that were organizing around social justice and/or the environment who could expand our understanding of ‘sustainability.’ Hence, the tools and strategies of collaboration that we developed flowed from initial face-to-face contact, to electronic bridges of communication through e-mail and an online Newsletter to sustain the contact, and eventually to “open agenda” and collaboratively organized events that culminated our efforts in transcommunal organizing with transformative and mutually enriching actions.

In addition to trying to attend various meetings and bringing updates back to our ‘Core’ group, we held a weekly breakout session at the Student Environmental Center General Gatherings on Wednesday nights, which was valuable for initiating face-to-face contact and building initial trust in our collaborative mission. This was a space where the various Student Environmental Center campaigns could connect with the Collaboration Network of ESLP, as well as potentially connect with representatives of other student organizations who we continually invited in person and through mass e-mail call-outs, to discuss possibilities for incorporating their campaigns into the ESLP course. These environmental and other social justice oriented campaigns could potentially enrich our course by either bringing a speaker to our Lecture Series based on their topic, or by sponsoring and leading an Action Research Team on ‘Waste Reduction,’ ‘Biofuels,’ or developing ‘Sustainable Food Systems’ on campus, to name a few of the environmental campaigns. The dynamic was multiplied by the visits, however few and far between in our first year, by representatives of Students Against War, announcements from the Student Worker Coalition, and interested organizers from STAND (Students Taking Action Now – Darfur) all coming to collaborate on how their concepts of **the work to be done** fits into the work of *sustainability activists and educators* and the multi-dimensional framework of participation and knowledge we were constructing from the bottom-up in our course based on the student-organizers’ perspectives. Through organizational connections maintained by ESLP core organizer Tawn Kennedy, we coordinated a class lecture from Jacob Abrahams who was representing the Ella Baker

Center of Oakland's campaign to "Reclaim the Future," which combines an effort to give inner-city and impoverished residents meaningful jobs in their communities while improving the environmental and health conditions of those communities at the same time⁵. We also met organizers through side-by-side tabling and flyering efforts with other organizations on Wednesdays in the Student Union Assembly Quad at Baytree Bookstore, U.C., Santa Cruz's most central organizing location. Further, we not only met with and coordinated contact with outside organizations, especially through tabling and the bi-Quarterly SUA "Inter-Org" dinners, but we developed *inter-organizational tools of collaboration* that would prolong this initial contact with the various organizations we connected with, and potentially transform these contacts into relationships that would keep the lines of communication open, and the potential for shared practical actions flowing. Through this contact, the course itself became a 'shared practical action' exploring multiple interpretations of *sustainability*, as the Students Against War, STAND (Darfur genocide awareness group), and a local homeless rights group sponsored and facilitated Action Research Team community projects for 5-units of undergraduate credit, among other non-traditional 'sustainability' projects as defined in the 'traditional' environmental sense. These included an Action Research Team on using media effectively, creating "sustainable artwork," and transcommunal organizing and coalition building, whose community project will be detailed below as one newly emerging form of 'shared practical action.'

One of the most important tools we developed, besides the continuously updated "Inter-Org Contact List" that was born with 'The People's Community Movement at Kresge,' was the ESLP-Community Newsletter. This electronic newsletter was distributed through the e-mail listserve and reached more than 40 organizational contacts, in addition to more than 500 students and community members who had attended at least one of the ESLP Spring Lectures or other networking events. The objective of the online newsletter was to have sections for updates from ESLP, but have equal space dedicated to submissions from outside organizational contacts we had met and spoken with. The purpose of this newsletter was summarized in the Mission Statement of the Collaboration Network that we created to introduce organizers to the ESLP-Community Newsletter,

⁵ see "Green-Collar Jobs" Campaign (formerly "Reclaim the Future") @ ellabakercenter.org/index

which read, “The fundamental mission of the ESLP Collaboration Network is to build transcommunal coalition-based relationships with a broad diversity of campus and community organizations, student campaigns, faculty and staff committees, and sustainable local businesses. Our goal is to collaborate with their diverse range of perspectives on the interconnected local and global range of issues dealing with social justice, human rights, and global sustainability as explored in the ESLP Lecture Series and Action Research Teams” (*March 15, 2006 Community Newsletter*). Hence, in order to accomplish these goals with maximum success given our time and resources as *bridge builders*, the online ESLP-Community Newsletter served as an electronic bridge-building tool that updated nearly 1,000 people, through a click of their email or a report from their organizational contacts, of actions and campaigns happening across campus and in the town of Santa Cruz, to massive actions taking place in San Francisco and beyond. Furthermore, in some cases such as with the SUA Inter-Org dinners or the Student Worker Coalition for Justice, Ms. Sundell or myself were able to share our own experiences working with these organizations and their actions. We created and sustained a bi-weekly Community Calendar of events for all organizations with whom we were in contact to increase face-to-face contact among campus and community organizers. By creating a mass awareness of the multiple and varied campaigns among those students and organizers we reached, we created opportunities for short and long-term alliances to form and greater potential for future and larger-scale *shared practical actions* to flourish. Moreover, through the contact information we provided in each newsletter, both our own and that of the organizers who sent in submissions, the newsletter itself actively connected its readers, who were comprised primarily of student organizers, while spreading awareness of their events and actions.

Continued personal outreach through tabling and flyering, electronic communication through *The Inter-Org Contact List* and the *ESLP-Community Newsletter*, and face-to-face contact at Wednesday General Gatherings and the bi-Quarterly SUA Inter-Org networking dinners all culminated in two major “shared practical actions” collaboratively organized by the ESLP Collaboration Network and our allies. The first collaboratively planned event was in line with the ESLP’s partnership with the American Indian Resource Center (AIRC) and the Student Alliance of North

American Indians (SANAI) of UCSC. As main organizer of the Collaboration Network, myself and ESLP Core organizer Leah Walsh met weekly with Dennis Tibbett of AIRC and Irene Vasquez of SANAI to organize the “Gathering of the Orgs BBQ.” This collaboration-based event focused on eating great food (Don Williams’ famous BBQ) and bringing SUA and other student organizers together to discuss and join forces on a newly emerging theme of the U.C., Santa Cruz and greater activist community: bridging the issues of environmental destruction, environmental racism and restorative justice for people of color, most notably those in the deteriorating inner city and on environmentally degraded Native American reservations. The framework of this event was open and flexible; there were tables available for any organization to share their campaign, including representation from community re-building projects among Native American groups based in Montana and elsewhere. Each group that was represented on this May 16, 2006 event was given time to introduce their organization and table, present their groups’ project, and invite participation and/or alliance with other organizational contacts present at the event. Don Williams, master BBQer but also founder of the multi-culturally based Rainbow Theater at UCSC, spoke to the beauty he saw in this type of collaboration where multiple perspectives come together over a specific socio-environmental conundrum, with the purpose of connecting and learning from our diverse backgrounds and experience. With guidance from Professor Childs and ESLP guest speaker Evon Peter of Native Movement working with Southwestern Navajo communities, the May 16 “Gathering of the Orgs BBQ” provided an example of “open agenda” organizing that would frame the second ESLP “shared practical action” among organizers, Action Research Team students, and representatives from outside organizations that came to share their projects, knowledge, and potential for future alliances with all participating organizers at the June 11 ESLP- Community “Sun and Food Festival.”

The idea of an “open agenda” event is very important for transcommunal organizing. As the *Socially Sustainable Communities and Coalition Building* Action Research Team, we based our event, the ESLP-Community “Sun and Food Festival,” in the central park of Santa Cruz to be accessible to as many students *and* community members as possible. We used many of the tools developed by the Collaboration

Network to contact and outreach to the students, campus and community organizers, and anybody with constructive knowledge to share, to design and facilitate a workshop open to all at the event, with three separate break-out times so people could visit multiple workshops and learn from multiple bases of knowledge. Hence, in the Newsletter, through specific e-mail invites, and flyers posted throughout campus and in town, we invited impassioned people to share their passions, meet new people doing interesting and important work, and create connections that would potentially lead to further involvement, collaborative projects, and flexible alliances among environmentally, socially, and/or educationally oriented community organizers. Besides our ART's two workshops on transcommunality and nonviolent communication, participants could choose from a workshop on permaculture, spoken word poetry, local tactics to challenge nuclear proliferation, and other topics completely dependent on what was offered by the participants. Professor Childs volunteered to introduce the event, speaking to the importance of challenging top-down style organizing and coalition building, as was his experience with SNCC and other Civil Rights era organizations, and creating alliances based on respect and cooperation as he saw was happening at "open-agenda" conferences and events like ours. Concluding his talk by expressing hope in the types of collaboration that our Action Research Team initiated through our community event and the year-long tactics of the Collaboration Network, Childs raised his hand and exclaimed, "Right on to social justice for the next 20 years!" It is to this end that social justice organizers must create *collaboration networks* among environmentally- and educationally-rooted organizers seeking justice, and vice versa to create a broad circular paradigm of coalition politics and transcommunal networking.

"Right on to [Collaboration] for the Next 20 Years!": The Future **Work to Be Done**

The next twenty years will certainly see many radical changes, with a new generation rising to power and falling into rank and file, drastic environmental changes engulfing entire populations, global economies growing side by side with global poverty rates, and ever richer and diverse forms of resistance emerging from university, nonprofit and community organizations. Over the bridges I've walked in my local networking efforts at U.C., Santa Cruz and the greater community, I've listened and learned from

organizers who all feel the need to make their communities a better place, but who are in conflict with others about how to do so. The dominant linear mode of thought that directs their focus inward from one angle shields the multiple angles of approach that surround them, as well as the potential for alliance on various *shared practical actions* with these “other” approaches that would not only strengthen their movement but give them the shared knowledge and tools to diversify their tactics, their relationships, and eventually their communities. Such transformations on local levels, multiplied exponentially as the networks expand, are the building blocks for transformations in global politics and global community that will build a society ‘from below’ based on respect and cooperation. Where we are today, in a global political economy driven by ‘market forces’ and special interest groups who buy power, and founded on fundamentally *One-Dimensional*⁶ and white privileged ideologies that persist in our global social systems today, presents many obstacles to *transcommunal organizing*. This is even more reason, however, for our various resistance movements to form alliances with multiply rooted causes for justice and reparation across the globe, riding atop a growing rip curl of collaborative synergy that defines a new world as it drowns out the flames of global economic domination that are destroying cultures and their environments simultaneously in a routine of profit and power.

Inter-organizational networking, face-to-face communication and the interpersonal relationships that follow, as well as shared practical actions such as the ‘open agenda’ events described herein, are all sites of such collaborative synergy. When diverse organizers come together, with their defenses down but their roots firmly grounded, the wave of transcommunal energy that is created is a force beyond the power of any individual rip curl created by any individual, community, or organization. It is a wave of transcommunality that washes over all without uprooting any. It is a wave that flows at different colors, temperatures, and speeds at different times, that merges with other waves then diverges with ease. This wave produces working groups of activists and educators that actively define **the work to be done** through their flexible alliances, formal and informal processes of collaboration, and mutual growth through such *trans-communal* interaction. This wave, hence, is not the answer in itself, but propels a vision and invokes

⁶ Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man*, 1964

a message. The message for the next 20 years must become clear, to activists, educators, and political and economic leaders alike: the global economic system of material, social, and environmental exploitation is no longer able to divide us with tired ideologies, material inequalities, and environmental disparities; we have learned to stand up together to solve fundamentally common dilemmas, each on our own ground, but as a connected global community.

The formal and informal modes of collaboration that sustain such connections and build bridges between diverse communities across the globe, however, must begin with *transcommunal bridge building* at local levels. The potential for transformation on a global community scale, from a fragmented and socio-economically stratified global population to an empowered and collectively self-determining global community network, depends on the creation of local *collaboration networks* within each social, environmental, and educational organization or community, each innovating tools and methods of collaboration as described by the limited experience contained herein. Hence, the *bridge-builders'* new role within the organization or community, or classroom for that matter, becomes fundamental to the success of the *collaboration networks*. The *bridge builder's* evolved role involves facilitating an ongoing exploration of tactics and strategies for collaboration, developing their unique understanding of Childs' practical vision, and investing in this vision through the relationships and alliances they form. The *Collaboration Network* of ESLP described herein is but one example of structured and intentional networking that is at once flexible and effective. If we follow these pathways in the next twenty years they will lead us to inter-continental bridges, with technology making possible the instantaneous contact between peoples in all corners of the globe, and the knowledge, cultural literacy, and respect to communicate constructively by creating the space, both ideological and geographical, for the interaction of multiple diverse peoples in harmony with their environment. The global community that is thus born must sustain the diverse roots that conceived it, through heightened respect and appreciation for the value, beauty, and richness of the diverse understandings of the world we share and the work we must do together. The enduring question to ask of the next 20 years is critical: Who, among you reading this article, will be the bridge builders of the future?

Afterword

D.C. Cummins (Dan Curtis-Cummins) plans to return to the university setting to study multi-cultural and international education, and apply his experience and future Masters' studies to further collaborative projects involving *global learning networks* and cross-cultural communication from students at the primary to secondary grade levels. Through public and private schools, he envisions promoting multicultural literacy and creating 'global classrooms' through Internet and face-face contact where available, to initiate global community connections from a young age, and increase understanding and cultural sensitivity for a future of global citizenship, and propensity to become the *bridge builders* of the next 20 years.