

Inside

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FYI

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

Networks initiator de Laet



Networks Confab Draws Multidisciplinary Participants

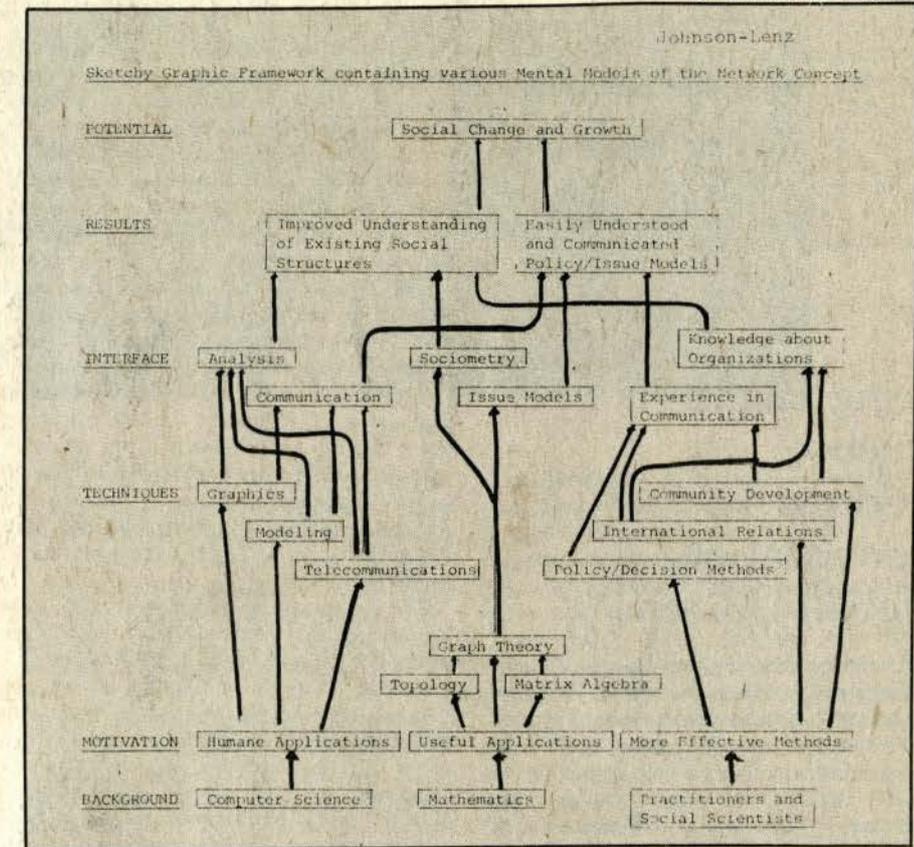
Engineers, filmmakers, sociologists, designers, social scientists and a host of others from government, academia and industry convened at Concordia last week to investigate a new way of looking at the world.

Networks is the name of the concept and Christian de Laet, adjunct professor in Concordia's Science and Human Affairs is one of its chief proponents. Rector John O'Brien opened the session on Thursday morning, and Engineering Dean Callaghan joined him in welcoming participants.

One of the goals of the three-day workshop was to start honing down definitions and since that in itself seemed a tricky process, perhaps Prof. de Laet's introductory comments serve best: "The term 'network' is encountered more and more frequently in the social sciences, in administrative documents and in public debate as reflected in the news media. In each case use of the term seems to be associated with new perceptions of the complex and subtle patterns of relationships between social structures characteristic of society today.

"It becomes increasingly clear that social scientists and practitioners are seeking a new vocabulary, one that would provide a means for objectifying and demystifying the complexity of the organizational, problem, and other networks by which we are surrounded and within which our activity is embedded... While the term 'network' may be currently doing some service to contain the complexity with which social scientists and practitioners are confronted, there is a strong possibility that both groups could benefit from each others' insights and from exposure to the more sophisticated forms of representation already developed by the small group of mathematicians concerned with networks (e.g. in the case of topology, graph theory and related disciplines)."

The main purpose of the workshop was investigating that "strong possibility" and according to its organizers participants



succeeded in having "extremely fruitful exchanges". Theoreticians (mathematicians, engineers) were confronted with "practitioners" (people who deal with some kind of network, be it communications or international agencies, in their daily work) in hopes that network theory might be applied to social problem-solving. The accompanying chart gives an idea of some of the elements involved in the application of network (read from bottom).

Proceedings of the three working groups set up at the meeting are now being prepared and FYI hopes to provide a fuller account when they are available. A larger symposium, for which these sessions were seen as preparatory, will be held next spring. Anyone interested in the idea of networks or the proceedings of last week's meeting should contact Professor de Laet at 879-7328.

Christmas Dance

Concordia will hold its first university-wide Christmas Dance on Saturday, December 11 in order to allow faculty and staff from both campuses to get together in a festive, relaxed atmosphere.

The fun will get underway at 9 p.m. in Loyola's Hingston Hall with music by the Flipside Orchestra. There will also be a midnight buffet and a draw for a trip for two to Ireland via Aer Lingus.

Tickets, at \$5 per person, will not be available at the door but can be obtained from any of the following: SGW Campus - Shelley Blick (8027), Raphael McKenzie (4332) or Jackie Plamondon (4336); Loyola Campus - Ken Corrigan (373), Cathy Hughes (552), Barbara Blattman (351), Ron Allan (680) or Larry Talbot (289). There will be room for only 150 couples, so get your tickets early!