

THE ASSOCIATIVE SOCIETY OF THE FUTURE

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Possible future environments for associative activity are briefly discussed to show that, irrespective of the conditions, it will continue to have a noteworthy function. Current influences on its quantitative significance are examined in terms of: constraints, technology, problem complexity, human and social development needs, and innovation. Trends determining the nature of associative activity in the future are then noted. The problems of current research approaches in apprehending such activity are considered and possible alternative emphases are discussed under the headings: « conceptual surface », integrative perspectives, facilitation and design of alternatives, and the role of actors (including the research communities).

It is argued here that, whatever the official institutional future, associative activity will continue to play an important role. It is possible to move beyond the sterile IGO/NGO dichotomy and develop a new image of society consistent with the changing image of man (5). Expanding on McLuhan's classic phrase, the image is determined by the research method: the method is the image. We need a new method which will respect variety and interrelate its elements in a meaningful whole.

Possible future environments for associative activity

Before considering the nature of associative activity in the future, it is appropriate to consider briefly some of the possible conditions of society. These have been discussed on many occasions in the futures literature. Three factors will be considered here: order, technology and resources (non-technological).

In the case of order, societies can be envisaged in which the predominating influence is any of the following:

- government/military
- business
- media
- ideological/religious
- scientific/technical.

This influence could be relatively centralized or decentralized. It could be effective in ordering society (even to the « big brother » limit of the « brave new world ») or it could be so ineffectual that society is primarily characterized by disorder and chaos (after the « holocaust »).

In the case of technology, high, low and intermediate technologies may be characteristic of the society. And of course the same may be true of resources.

Clearly it is unlikely that the world society as a whole would be characterized by any particular form, or that an extreme form would persist for any great length of time in one area. A mix is more probable, particularly the co-existence and alliance between extreme forms as discussed below.

These points are made in order to show that, whatever the social environment, the associative form of activity will play a role which merits attention. The major reason for the increasing importance of associative activity is that countries, and even large institutions, are rapidly reaching a point of being ungovernable (1). By this is meant that it becomes increasingly difficult for the governors to formulate any decisions or plans which are: (a) comprehensible to those whose interests they supposedly serve, (b) implementable without compromising their value, and (c) relevant to the condition of society.

Society is becoming too complex for existing institutional formulas. Those with power must obviously attempt to proceed as though this was not the case. The predominating ordering influence, or mix of influences, will generate a social environment ordered in some respects, however crudely. And this is the point. The extent to which the governing capacity can control society will always leave a « vacuum » of uncontrolled conditions:

- (a) to which its reach cannot be extended - except arbitrarily or temporarily;
- (b) which it considers irrelevant to its preoccupations; or
- (c) which it recognizes as necessary in its uncontrolled state, whether as a safety valve, or as an arena through which certain things can be handled which could not be handled otherwise.

People have shared interests which lie beyond the perceptual horizon of governing bodies. Responses are required to problems to which the predominating ordering influence is insensitive or to which it cannot be made sensitive in time. It is this « vacuum » which is filled by associative activity.

The governing body may attempt to reduce the size of the vacuum, if it is perceived as destabilizing. Such activity may be regulated, administered or even suppressed. Alternatively development of such attention absorbants as the media may be encouraged to the point of saturation. The more pessimistic foresee applications of mind-control drugs (« soma ») or extremely low frequency electromagnetic waves to achieve similar ends. It is doubtful whether such measures can be totally successful for any length of time, as the information on the

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inmates of concentration camps and slave societies has shown. Whilst the quantity of associative activity may be reduced, its significance does not decrease even if it is perceived as subversive of « good » order or « criminal ».

Furthermore, whatever measure is applied, sufficient individuals will adapt in terms of it so that its effectiveness is gradually eroded. On the other hand, rather than move to reduce associative activity, efforts may be made to harness or manipulate it to the ends of the predominating system of order. This may be done through cooperatives particularly at the rural level, through labour unions, sporting and cultural clubs, etc. Efforts to politicize such activity, for example, are evident in many countries, at all levels (2).

The United Nations makes considerable efforts to use association networks as media through which to mobilize public opinion in support of the U.N. (3).

But whether or not associative activity can be temporarily contained at the grass-roots level, it is found to be necessary between the individuals of the dominant establishment in order to compensate for the coordinative and liaison inadequacies via official channels. There are many examples of elite networks and clubs through which necessary contacts are maintained amongst the leadership, whether national or international. It does not seem that the interstitial significance of associative activity would be diminished by technological extremes or extremes of resources. Its nature is changed but it continues to play an important role. The point is clarified by a delightful description of the classic example of a highly technologized programme : the development of Polaris using the sophisticated management tool called PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique). A recent study of the Polaris activity find: that though PERT was « as effective technically as rain dancing, it was nevertheless quite effective politically » (4 p. 246). The chief utility of the system was not control of the organization, but the appearance of formal rationality which could be presented to outside agencies. The real management of the programme was carried out in an intensely personal fashion, through small, informal meetings and frequent telephone calls. « The existence of an integrated, uniquely effective management system was a myth originated by the Special Projects Office. The further removed it was from the source, the more embossed the myth tended to become » (4 p. 106). One may ask how true this is of many formal organizations in a highly technologized environment.

Current influences on associative activity

This section discusses some of the factors which change the nature of associa-

tive activity and increase or decrease its significance in quantitative terms.

1. Constraints: Clearly the legislation in different countries may be more or less favourable to associative activity. The questions of freedom of association, and the freedom of associations to hold meetings and disseminate information are an aspect of more general human rights issues under debate. Non-legislative influences such as postal tariffs for printed matter are less well recognized. But such restrictions merely oblige the initiators of associative activity to use other forms and procedures.

2. Technology : In quantitative terms, the development of associative activity may be related to that of communication systems (e.g. the stages : pre-postal, postal, postal and telephone, postal and telephone and computer). The current developments in computer conferencing already require a reassessment of the distinctions between organization, meeting, journal and information system. On the other hand, the movement in favour of alternative technology is supported by a multitude of associative activities.

3. Problem complexity : The current rapid growth in the number and complexity of the problems recognized in society has strongly encouraged association amongst those who recognize a particular problem. The problem « territory » has not only grown considerably but it has been fragmented into smaller « lots » (There is plenty of unworked ground for anyone with initiative who wants to « set up shop »). Denial of this complexity by a new system of order would be difficult to render credible.

4. Human and social development needs : The relationship between associative activity and development is not fully understood. It is well recognized that people associate to fulfil needs for « sociability », friendship, etc. In developing areas these needs may be partially met by tribal and related processes; in industrialized countries they are partially met by associations. It has certainly not been accepted that the greater the degree of industrialization the greater the pressure (or need) for associative activity - if this is in fact the case. But even if sociability needs are considered trivial compared to those of development as conventionally conceived, much is made (possibly for public relations purposes) of the importance of the « participation » of associations in support of development programmes (of UN Agencies, UN Years, etc). The fact that much associative activity takes place in response to development problems and needs not recognized by such programmes tends to be considered irrelevant at best, and subversive in other cases. Yet it is the increasing sensitivity to new values, needs, and the changing image of man (5) which is both

stimulated by associative activity and in turn engenders new associative activity whether in response to establishment initiatives or to correct for their inadequacies and blindspots for those of other associations). Such activity constitutes a vehicle for individual and collective fulfillment and provides an important arena for the socialization so necessary for community development at any level. The rise in associative activity is driven by human and social development needs and provides a partial fulfillment of them.

5. Innovation : Although formal establishment structures operate according to a traditional hierarchical groundplan their inadequacies have stimulated a considerable amount of experiment in organization design particularly of an associative variety. The recent rapid rise in the creation of « networks » of all kinds is an example. In many ways the innovative and self-renewing orientation is the essence of associative activity at its best - for, of course, at its worst it engages in sycophantic imitation of formal establishment structures. Such innovation leads to many « hybrid » organizational forms which increase the difficulties of analysis.

Trends and the associative future

Because of space limitations, and since many of these trends have been discussed elsewhere (6, 7, 8, 9) in one form or another, they are listed here with only brief comments :

1. Quantity :

A continuing explosion in the number of associations of all types, whether active, inactive, or « letterhead ». This will be matched by increases in other associative activity which does not result in the formation of (readily countable) associations.

2. Variety :

A proliferation of new varieties of association and associative activity, whether of the grass-roots, self-help or elitist kind. A burgeoning of ideology, culture, sector and technology specific varieties.

3. Rapid evolution :

Rapid response to new issues whether generated by associative processes or external to them. This implies formation of new associative complexes, whether ad hoc or with characteristic life cycles (e.g. south sea bubble, rapidly moribund, etc). The life cycles and communications will be much speeded up (e.g. expansion or defection of members, reorganization, fund reallocation, etc).

4. Intertwining :

The degree of meshing with non-associative structures will increase to the point that the healthy complementarity between the two modes will be openly

accepted (rather than a matter of corridor gossip). Determining where one mode starts and the other ends will be increasingly difficult.

5. Elusiveness:

The above points will together contribute to the elusiveness of associative activity. Vitaly significant linkage patterns will be formed and dissolved within days or even hours leaving little trace. The patterns themselves may be very subtle, particularly if they are designed to metamorphose over time.

6. Technological facilitation :

Developments in the communication and computer fields will facilitate the changes noted above and will provide them with a discipline and precision which has hitherto been lacking in associative activity. This is beautifully illustrated by the current NSF-supported field test of the Electronic Information Exchange System to link some 600 people involved in a rapidly changing mix of groups (10). It constitutes an admirable illustration of the challenge of associative activity to future research. Characteristically, all « secretariat » functions are based on computer files. To what extent do groups « exist » in the coming « paper free » environment ?

7. Alternative forms :

With or without technological support, the proliferation of varieties noted above will be accompanied by the emergence of entirely new forms. As intersect organizations or hybrids, these may be especially disruptive of conventional organization categories.

8. Integrative designs:

To match the explosive divergence of forms and interests, new techniques for interlinkage will be found to formulate common causes for whatever period is necessary. In contrast with conventional approaches, these may well counterbalance a variety of « incompatible » perspectives in structures in which the configurative element is vital (11, 37).

9. Resource sharing :

Aside from, and possibly irrespective of, any of the policy linkages noted above, new methods will be found for sharing resources and reducing general overheads (e.g. office space, staff, professional services, pension funds, equipment, etc.). Much more flexible funding and accounting procedures will be developed to match the rapid changes.

10. New associative roles :

The linkage problems noted above will lead, for example, to the multiplication of « network brokers » and related roles. Advice on participation in networks of associative activity will be professionalized.

11. Human and social development :

The wealth of opportunities to participate in or to initiate associative activities will

be seen as essential to human and social development (rather than incidental to them, as at present). They become an essential vehicle of expression and action in both a leisure society and in one whose conventional institutions are faced with rapidly diminishing credibility in a complex problem environment. Associative activity will be seen as generative of the new values by which society is guided. The special « look-out » role for problem-solving diagnosis, solution, experimentation and innovation will be developed.

12. Challenge and identity:

The opportunities discussed above will be seen as a new environment for personal challenge. (Johan Galtung refers to transnational relations as constituting a « sixth continent » for non-territorial activity; its possibilities are largely unexplored and may open up a new frontier). Activity there may become as significant for self-identity as « work ».

13. Polarization and constraints :

It is to be expected that pressures to contain, oppose or eliminate associative activity will be applied wherever possible, and with much more precision and force than at present. This will be justified by demands for proof of effectiveness, such as in relation to currently favoured programmes (e.g. development, etc). Such political pressures will be partly matched by a recognized need for «intermediate organizations » between the individual and any level of government. Efforts at cooptation of associative activity will increase.

Research and evaluation ⁽¹²⁾

Given the evolution of associative activity to the present day, and in the light of the trends suggested above, it is appropriate to examine briefly some aspects of the research approaches to date which are relevant to « international relations » broadly conceived :

1. Descriptive:

The first approach was of course purely descriptive and historical whether prior to 1914-18(13) to 1939-45(14), or up to the late 1960s (14). The latter was stimulated by the legal implications of the United Nations recognition of «international nongovernmental organizations » under its « consultative status » arrangements (Article 71 of the Charter). This avenue has been largely abandoned. Following the creation of the EEC an emphasis was placed on « international pressure groups »(15). This approach has since been developed by specific issue area only.

2. Quantitative :

Under the initiative of Johan Galtung and Paul Smoker, the international Peace Research Institute (Oslo) collected data in 1968-1970 on international NGOs and

their secretaries general, partly as a cross-check on data being published in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (16) or based-upon it. This data was mainly analyzed by Kjell Skjelsbaek (17). Subsequently, under the initiative of Chad Alger, a data set of international NGOs based on the Yearbook was established at Ohio State University and re-surveyed in further analyses (18). A few similar data sets of this type have given rise to a limited number of papers. A major concern of those cited was to determine the extent to which the international NGOs reflected, and consequently reinforced any imbalance in the nation-state system. Imbalance was deduced from the predominance of North-West memberships and secretariat locations. This approach appears to have been largely abandoned except as a student exercise in data manipulation. The unresolved question is whether such patterns are equivalent to those from analysis of the spread of other artefacts linked to the industrialization process (e.g. telephones, libraries, cinemas) whether between countries or within a country - and, if so, to what extent the value of such artefacts should be criticized.

3. Evaluation and impact :

Despite the above conclusion the number and variety of international NGOs, has continued to increase in both industrialized and developing regions during the 1970s. They became a special focus of newsmedia attention in relation to the UN System as a result of the « NGO Forums » held in parallel with the UN environment, food, woman, habitat and population conferences. This has led to renewed interest in evaluating NGOs and assessing their impact on such occasions, with regard to a specific issue areas or at the field level. There is concern on the part of UN Agencies that with the proliferating variety of associative activities, the number to which they accord attention should be limited (mainly for administrative reasons). The investigations are partly stimulated by interest in the use of NGOs conceived by UN Agency information programmes primarily as a vehicle for the « mobilization of public opinion » (3). The limits of this impact assessment approach have been noted elsewhere (19).

4. Issue areas and classes of organization :

There are continuing attempts to get a conceptual grasp of the maze of associations concerned with particular issues or preoccupations : peace/disarmament, human rights, religious organizations, youth organizations, environment, children, scientific and professional associations, etc. For the purposes of a quick survey, these are « do-able chunks » of associative activity. The research is usually stimulated by current UN interest (e.g. a UN conference or year) and the consequent availability of funding. A specially favoured area is that of labour unions which have been the subject of



extensive (and official) study under the stimulus of the ILO.

5 Networks:

Due to the difficulty of building up an overall picture from associations viewed in isolation, there has been some interest in inter-organizational network analysis as offering a more fertile approach suitable to the quantitative information obtainable on the large amount of associative activity (38). However the emphasis to date has been mainly on interpersonal networks amongst people who may be in organizations. At one level this is stimulated by grass-roots » networking », at another by the need to improve inter-institutional coordination through low-key network building and innovation. Regrettably, the most sophisticated analyses have only been applied to elite networks linking governmental and (multi) national enterprises (20).

6. Grass-roots perspective :

The concern and enthusiasm of individuals have traditionally given rise to voluntary activity which in the 1960s, became significantly oriented to developing country community development programmes, and in the 1970s to community needs in industrialized countries as well. This was partly stimulated by government (e.g. Peace Corps, UN Volunteers) and international volunteer programmes, and partly by a rising sense of the ineffectiveness of organizations (whether governmental or nongovernmental) and the inappropriateness of their action in the light of the need for real people-alternatives. Research on voluntary action has been stimulated by the initiatives of David Norton Smith through the Association of Voluntary Action Scholars (USA), which recently linked with national volunteer centres in a number of countries to form the International Voluntary Action and Voluntary Association Research Organization (21). The socio-anthropological emphasis on « voluntary » has not yet however been related to the other approaches above. On the other hand, Chad Alger has initiated a unique and comprehensive approach to the individual's relationship, through his community, to communities elsewhere, independently of national bottlenecks and filters characteristic of the nation-state model. Johan Galtung, through the UN University project on Goals, Processes and Indicators of Development, is stressing the association, through « dialogue », between people in communities - but de-emphasizing the organizational structure as a distorting factor : association without associations (23).

7. Comment:

(a) Categories and units of analysis:

The proliferation of a rich variety of organizations and quasi-organization s has progressively eroded the value of research based on the conventional catego-

ries (« nongovernmental », « international », etc). And the range of structures has eroded research with, for example, a narrow concept of » membership ». These problems are discussed in the recently, reorganized editions of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (24).-It is not clear what can be usefully counted and how to make the distinctions necessary to match the variety which is now evident.

This problem has been discussed elsewhere (24). It is also clear that elite networks (possibly with an associative function of significance equal to, if not greater than, many formal bodies) escape attention. The tip of the iceberg is signalled, for example, by the Bilderberg Group, the Club of Rome, the Club of Dakar, etc. The problem of associative networks within and between intergovernmental bodies has not received attention. To what extent is the associative activity behind the « Inter-Agency Games » (Vienna, 1979) merely of anecdotal significance, given the problems of inter-agency coordination ? Why has the « good » associative activity received all the attention and never been related to the « bad » : trade associations-cum-cartels, intelligence networks, subversive-cum-revolutionary « organizations », international crime « rings » and networks, etc ?

Other kinds of elite and semi-elite net works also escape consideration within some larger common framework; for example, those associated with the : international social « jet set », diplomatic corps, « entertainment world », reciprocal membership clubs, press corps, military services, «development set», religious orders, international foundations, secret societies, and various specialized business and professional communities (e.g. banking, oil, diamond trade, commodity markets, foreign exchange dealers). Their associative activity is usually greater than is evident from any body which claims to represent them or through which it is implied that they act. But their function within the global community is unclear, if not severely criticized. Although their activities may be impeded or facilitated by governmental or intergovernmental action, it is of relatively little significance to them. Their networks adapt very successfully to changing circumstances.

A greater sense of the « reality » of global community action can often be obtained from unpublisable anecdotal material concerning the interrelationships of the persons involved rather than from the formal structures and decisions which are the primary concern of research. For example an unprecedented ECOSOC debate and vote to admit an observer from a particular kind of intergovernmental organization is said to have been pushed through solely because the person concerned was rich and agreed to finance a lengthy air excursion for ECOSOC participants on the following day.

To what extent does the current approach to international relations bear a resemblance to the research done on tribal culture (the Maoris, I believe) much admired because of its formal debating and decisionmaking procedure ? Only after much research, which treated the procedure as a reality, was it discovered that the visible procedure had a purely ritual function to dramatize for all concerned how the decision had been reached (having been agreed upon prior to the debate by other processes). If this is to some extent true of formal international organizations, what of the associative activity within which they are embedded ? How to reconcile the fact that much of what is held to be important to understanding by those within governmental and intergovernmental organizations is classified for in restricted circulation only), with the fact that the majority of research is necessarily based on publicly available material of the kind deliberately designed to reinforce a desirable public image ?

(b) Policy implications and purpose :

Given the range of disciplines concerned with the above approaches, and given the variety of institutional and funding opportunities which have oriented the research done, it is not surprising that the overall picture appears very fragmented. In fact it is not clear that there is any trend towards a common framework or a desire for one. Whilst the immediate stimulus for such research is clear (a conference paper, a new international problem topic, etc), the longer term purpose of it is not. Aside from the immediate stimulus, it is not clear why we are trying to ask the questions we ask and who is expected to be affected by any answers. It is not clear that positive or negative conclusions have any policy relevance (beyond legitimating the institutional or disciplinary perspective which occasioned the research). One would be hard put to find any single piece of research on associative activity which had been of significance to intergovernmental thinking on the question, or even, for that matter, on governmental thinking in the vast majority of countries. It is unfortunate that the research that is done is strongly influenced by the priorities of the disciplines used (political science, powerful organizations; sociology, community organizations, etc.). Combined with the simplistic categories, this leads to a narrow focus which disregards other organized activity and relationships as irrelevant, if not suspect. John Galtung, for example, asks whether the legal perspective (so influential in international relations studies) is not in fact « structure blind » ? He concludes :

« so let us hope that some of the new forces emerging in the world can lay the ground for a new paradigm combining the actor and structure-oriented perspectives and promoting an international law that

would be human law and not stop at the gates of the state, but bridge the gap between collective and individual actors better than is done today » (25).

To the extent that the future trends identified above are correct, it is questionable whether research as it is currently oriented is capable of apprehending the future usefully. The tendency is to comment upon those elements in the present or the past which have achieved an acceptable degree of visibility and have already necessitated organized responses the relevant disciplines are then called upon to legitimate. Those who would argue that the main contribution of such research is educational should recall that, as in the case of the recently announced failure of UNESCO'S : long-term programme against illiteracy, the percentage of people uninfluenced by such research insights is increasing.

Possible alternative emphases

In the light of the remarks of the previous section, some possible alternative or complementary emphases may be put forward :

1. « Conceptual surface » : A basic problem would seem to be the tendency to focus on some aspects of associative activity only, and to reduce them to a simplistic set of matrix pigeon-holes which are then meaningless both to those involved with the bodies so encoded and to those who otherwise might find it useful to comprehend their interactions with them (1). The matrix also distorts and conceals the pattern of functional relationships between such activities. The terrestrial globe may be used as an analogy for brevity's sake. For what seems to be required is a shift from (a) a focus on fitting, organized activity systematically into the abstract latitude/longitude grid pattern (the matrix) conceived as flat, to (b) a focus on identifying and delineating the unsystematic - land and water masses » which distinguish the different kinds of organized activity disposed around a spherical surface (**). The second focus has « functional roundness » built into it, whereas the first has a crude - flat earth - quality which privileges the central position or orientation perceived by whoever formulates it and lacks functional transition and continuity. The second has the merit of portraying more clearly the functional territory (including the « extra-conceptual » variety) in terms of which different organized activities take place, in a manner which provides those involved with a meaningful map. This should be both integrated into a larger picture and susceptible of elaboration at a more detailed level. The absence of such a representation is currently as damaging to global community at the psycho-social level as would be the absence of the terrestrial maps and

globe to physical communications or to trade and travel to unexplored territory. It both anchors an understanding of integration and explains the futility of certain attempts at communication in the absence of a context which clarifies « distances » (e.g. between preoccupations of the Esquimo and the Congo pygmies). An alternative explanation is that the need at this time is for « road maps » which people can use to travel (according to their perceived needs) and not « traffic models » only meaningful to the few designers of alternative road systems. In any case the designers need the maps in order to communicate effectively rather than arbitrarily, with the road users about their problems, if democratic processes are to be favoured. The problem of producing such a representation is one of design and « goodness of fit » of the concepts with respect to the map elements selected. This is explored elsewhere (30).

2. Integrative perspectives : Much remains to be learnt from the biologists ability to identify and handle conceptually the relationships, synchronically and diachronically, between the multitude of animal and plant species. The concept of an ecosystem has not been used to integrate the relationships of species of organized activity, of which the associative is one « order » perhaps. It would be convenient if this could be related to the conceptual surface discussed in the previous section. Much could also be learnt from the biochemists tolerance of a multitude of enzymes each catalyzing a reaction in a complex pattern of reactions which characterizes life processes. Whether social network analysis will ever develop to the point of being able to map out the equivalent of « food webs » in ecosystems remains to be seen; the techniques are available but neither the interest nor the orientation (1). Somehow the natural sciences have a greater tolerance of variety than the social sciences, which are swamped by it in practice but avoid it in theory, or else respond to it with arguments for the need for a case-by-case approach. This ensures absence of any convergence on a useful overview and facilitates emergence of questionable conclusions.

3. Facilitation and design of alternatives : The major research emphasis touching on associative activity has been concerned to analyse it critically, to evaluate it, or to assess its impact. Very little is concerned with the inherent value of such activity, the necessity for it and the problems of improving or facilitating it (31) particularly in the light of changing communications technology (10). That it may play a part in organized activity analogous to that of the developing « third world » in the global community has not been considered. In the latter case the challenge is to find ways of overcoming current inadequacies, not to multiply self-satisfied studies attesting to such weak-

nesses. Current Investigations, somewhat beyond the pale of the social sciences, on the role of associations in the new (anticipatory) democracies of the future (32), need to be related to present preoccupations, particularly in the light of the rapidly eroding credibility of the existing institutions which have received so much research attention in the past. There is also a need for research to clarify possibilities for design of alternative styles of organization (33), organizational hybrids (34), tensed networks (35) tensegrity organizations (33), etc. It is noteworthy that it is questionable whether any organizational innovation touching on international relations has emerged from research, rather than from the insights of practitioners.

4. Role of actors : There is a strange tendency in international relations to treat organizations solely from an instrumental point of view in terms of their significance in acting on the problems formally defined as falling within their (possibly self-selected) mandate. This is particularly unfortunate in the case of associative activity which may well offer one of the few means for people or groups to express their attitudes, irrespective of whether this leads to « significant » action. The effectiveness of associations cannot then be measured in terms of impact, but requires a new kind of attention to the inherent value of their existence in relation to social development. It needs to be demonstrated that they do not have to engage in development programmes to prove their significance to external observers. The continuing creation of such bodies constitutes (and is an indicator of) social development for those who participate in them or instigate new ones. Whether they are instrumentally productive or counter-productive is another matter, often of secondary importance.

Naturally each organization type has a vested interest in generating information (and promoting research) to demonstrate its unique role. This is often achieved by denigrating organizations of other types and emphasizing (scycophantic) links to organizations perceived as higher in the pecking order. The resulting pattern of information and research reinforces the blocked situation with which many are familiar. It would be useful to experiment with confrontations between the varieties of organizational perspectives using an adaptation of techniques for small group

(*) Chad Algar argues that - people need maps that facilitate wider participation, and has made an interesting effort to move in this direction (see:

« The organizational context of development: illuminating paths for wider participation », Transnational Associations, 31, 1979, 4, pp 130-138). His use of the matrix, comprehensive though it aims to be, still suffers from the basic difficulties discussed here.

(**) This analogy is explored in much greater detail elsewhere (see: A. J. N. Judge « The territory construed as a map », unpublished paper, 1979).

sensitivity training (36). The pre-logical, temperamental biases need to be played through supportively as is done in psychodrama and role reversal techniques, for example. Only in this way could the limitations of the current sterile dynamics be recognized and overcome. Perspectives which could be so represented include : UN agency, regional IGO, high status INGO, low status INGO, multinational corporation, political scientist, sociologist, developing country delegate, etc. The method needs to be developed and the need to incorporate sub-perspectives explored (e.g. from within a complex UN agency).

Further effort is required to explode the myth of « disinterested objective research ». Researchers cannot assume a

status of » invisible conceptual Martians ». They are not non-participants as the exercise above would quickly show. It is incredible that international relations researchers can ignore or deny the significance of associative activity, and yet be quite capable of being highly committed to a programme of action (reflecting this same attitude) through some international association or network.

Conclusions

This paper suffers from having dealt too briefly with points which merit more lengthy supporting arguments. The basic concern is with the generation of research which will lead to an understanding of associative activity which would be

meaningful and useful outside the individual schools of thought of the international relations community. The imbalanced focus on one half of the dichotomy formal/governmental versus informal/nongovernmental has had its day.

The questions are larger than the framework we provide. The fact that it is possible to get locked into such patterns of thought, whether in research or practice, indicates that the roles of researchers and practitioners need to be considered in relation to one another. It is we who generate and maintain the patterns of sterile blockages to change; we are the problem. The problems we perceive « out there » are a consequence of our action, inaction or way of thinking (1).

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