

Talking Paper

PRIMAL COMMUNITY

The concern for articulating anew an understanding of primal community has arisen as we face the last two decades of the 20th century. We are not articulating a static ideal or a goal but an emerging, indicative process that is happening today. This does not excuse us from creating temporal models or from articulating clearly an operating vision. We have been deeply engaged in the creation or re-creation of primal community; and now we need to step back and look at the creation that is all around us.

I. THE IMPINGEMENT OF THE FUTURE - Before us lies the whole of planet earth as it is being rebuilt in our day. Global relationships are forming in all aspects of the social process: economic; political, and cultural. The basic building block is primal community--where people are sustained in their work, their family patterns; their symbolic life, their friendships, and their social decisions. Community is primal when the depths of people's lives are being cared for as well as their mundane everyday living. It includes the social process; and it deals with time, space, care, purpose and self-consciousness.

This century is a gold mine of opportunities: technology, mobility and cultural interaction. But there is a gap between people's need for primal community and their ability to create adequate structures and patterns to cope with the world about them. TV news events illustrate people's lack of heroes or exemplars. The accelerating rate of development in every culture has torn apart the social fabric that once held human community in being. Family life has either been virtually eliminated for a large portion of the population or so insulated and protected that it is disrelated from the realities of the time. Unemployment figures soar; Youth rebel in physical violence. People becoming elders live longer contribute less than ever before in history.

Ten years ago we could see this gap in our midst and could only see the gap widening. Today we are in that widened gap. While here and there community structures are available, very few people experience them all the time throughout their whole life. Even where work and home patterns exist, seldom do these patterns, as they are, sustain and relate people to the actual world they are living in. The patterns are out of step with the times. African villages^{exist} but provide few and fragile connections to the larger urban community or to the nation, on whom nonetheless they depend. You only need test the bus services in Kenya to find the fragility of these connections. Large urban areas are increasingly experiencing the dismantling of the very social patterns we once knew as sustaining communities.

New social patterns have appeared. Toffler's "Third Wave" organizations and customs are exciting.

...the forces of the third Wave favor a democracy of shared minority power, they are prepared to experiment with more direct democracy; they favor both transnationalism and a fundamental devolution of power. They call for a crack-up of the giant bureaucracies. They demand a renewable and less centralized energy system. They want to legitimate options to

the nuclear family. They fight for less standardization, more individualization in the schools. They place a high priority on environmental problems. They recognize the necessity to restructure the world economy a more balanced, just basis. (page 454)

Most of us, however, find these efforts hazy and even impractical. They feel phony or perhaps de-humanizing. So we stand back and ~~wait~~ ^{watch} waiting for something tried and true to rely upon. The new patterns that do come, piecemeal rather than all together -- at work or at home, at school or in government, or in downtown city plazas. Complexity reigns and increases its scope, itself pulling people's lives apart thereby increasing the need for primal community.

The world is a ~~pluriform~~ world. Cultures intermix in all the major cities and even into the countryside. Communications bear images to people from all parts of the world. What we once romantically dreamed of in terms of one world has come to pass but has all too often become a cultural war rather than an ideal community. 30 to 40 languages spoken in one neighborhood separately rather than enrich or unite peoples. Haziness is spread over space and what it means, what care is, how one's roots are kept alive, what cause may be taken up, or what your current identity is.

II. THE CORPORATE MEMORY - Throughout our particular history we have three major phases in our participation in the creation of primal community.

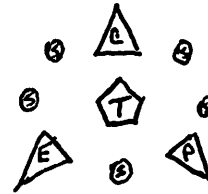
I. Phase I was a time in the 1950's when we explored and researched forms of primal community. We visited the lay centers and academics of North America and Europe to observe the work of other concerned people. Some approached the issue through psychology to restore people's sense of selfhood or personhood. Some addressed one particular social ill or another. Others dealt with the issue people faced on the job or in the factory.

We concluded from these that none of them dealt with the whole human being or with all the people in the society especially those who have fallen out of the structures of society. What was needed, was a way of dealing with the total person and the total community. We began by working through a full understanding of selfhood- psychological, sociological, spiritual and intellectual. We taught courses to involve people in deciding and molding their humanness. We also perceived what a sustaining community or congregation involves. Where primal community is emerging there is a way for the people to continually study and think through who they are and what the world requires. There is a symbolic life in which they rehearse this understanding. There are ways to order their time, goods, decisions and relations -- that is, to lead a disciplined life. And they have a significant individual and corporate task, cause or mission that they give their lives for, witnessing to their life understanding, performing deeds of justice for other people and being a life-giving presence in the whole society.



IIa. The first part of Phase II was in the 1960's when realized we had been able to communicate images of full humannes that in fact gave a new life to people, but they also needed to see thés acted out in a local community. The research phase had ended--it was time for a pilot local community. Fifth City became that pilot. We delimited a geographical community in Chicago's urban ghetto. We engaged all the people regardless of age, sex, income or status. We dealt with all the human problems at once. We discovered the one underlying human problem was the victim image. And we found that symbols are key for addressing that issue.

The earliest model for Fifth City had guilds that dealt with the economic, political and cultural issues. The stakes saw that every family was cared for within specific geographical units. And a temple dynamic provided an inclusive symbolic life through community festivals and quarterly congresses.



IIb. As a bridge between Part a and Part c of Phase II in the late 1960's and the early 1970's we experimented with a second type of pilot which was known as the Local Church Experiment. One of the oldest focal points in our history had been the local church and the training being focused on what the 20th century form of the core in the congregation needs to be. In order to serve the needs of its total parish.

Basically we were able to catalyze cadres within the historical congregation of the church to renew its study, worship, planning and its role the local community. Following Summer '70 when the basic model was built most of the regions in North America had four or more local congregations involved in this experiment.

These galaxies of churches generally were composed of four different denominations which were in the same geo-social community or city. All the galaxies used a common tactical system adapting it locally in weekly meetings. Also the galaxies were interrelated through a Basic Training School and an interchange program of galaxy consults across North America. Ministers and laity alike were involved in these local cadres and held one another in being through a common discipline.

In the July research assembly in 1973 work was done on the formation of guilds, i.e., getting local people from various fields of expertise and various perspectives to engage themselves in their local communities. In that assembly and the Council following we also decided that every Religious House would work with the community in which they resided. Each house set out to "Do 5th City" so to speak in their surrounding neighborhood as a way demonstrate to local churches how a local parish might be done, /We hoped they would eventually be connected with their local church galaxies. It was this engagement that showed us that project initiation required a formal beginning and framing to enable the work to be done effectively with the local people. This led to local community colloquys or town meetings and eventually HDP consults.

IIc. The third part of Phase II was a time of testing out the Fifth City model in a diverse spectrum of social settings around the globe--rural and urban communities in developed and developing nations. Fifth City became a global symbol of primal community. Town meetings became awakening events for people to see how they could renew their own communities. Human Development Projects were launched in which we work in communities with the people to create economic, social and human patterns. Locating the projects "every hour on the hour" around the globe demonstrated social methods that work. We found we were "at the right time, in the right place, with the right thing". Our task exploded us beyond testing into a new phase.

III. Phase III began during 1977 as we began to articulate our learnings as to what the key elements of primal community are: Significant space, historical time

corporate care, futuric cause and dramatized profundity.

Significant Space. The land and the people comprise primal community. The space a people occupies is not only influential because of geographic features. The way a people care for and respect its space communicates a story of self-respect or self-contempt. Desecrated property is a clue to the absence of primal community. The land has a history of its own, quite apart from the particular people who occupy it at a given time, and in a sense, their participation in history of the place links them with the primordial. The land is also a direct link with the rest of the world.

Historical Time. A Primal community reveres its roots. The history of both the land and the people gives primordial identity and significance to a group. This history takes on life in the form of festivals, seasons and celebrations which further provide a rhythm to life. The absence of festivals and the insulations of elders from the mainstream of society are clues to the lack of primal community.

Corporate Care. A primal community respects its members structurally. Frictions are present, but they are "within the family" and are not the business of outsiders. The sense of being a "chosen people" with a specific historical destiny encourages structural respect for one's colleagues. Those structures ensure adequate sustenance, both physical and otherwise, among the people and prevent a paralyzing individualistic competitiveness. The presence of radical deprivation alongside affluence is a clue to the absence of primal community.

Futuric Cause. A major unifying factor in primal community is its sense of a task to fulfill or a contribution to make to history. This factor draws the attention of members away from the internal tension always present in a group towards that which moves beyond them. And working on the external task, the longed-for fraternal sense emerges as a by-product. This is probably the least understood factor in primal community; a land and a people who lack a destiny are not capable of being a primal community, however close-knit they appear to be.

Dramatized Profundity. A Primal community has ways to dramatize and rehearse its identity. This "Liturgical" factor maintains a self-consciousness among the community and thus dependent on the presence of the other four factors. Without them there is nothing to rehearse-- which is why so many church services and national holidays are so devoid of contact with "Real life". But without this factor identity is lost in the barrage of experiences and purposes that beset one in the multiplicity of demands he confronts daily. (Estimates III).

The phase we are now in is a time to put ^{these} elements into community prototypes or substantial structural patterns that will shape the total social fabric itself. In the 1980's we are taking our learnings in local communities into government structures, volunteer agencies, corporations and all other structures that care for people today. Four sector coalitions are becoming vehicles through which primal community may be built.

Our work is based on the last 30 years of experimentation. For 10 years we launched our research and it continues to deepen and broaden through the other two phases. For 20 years we have been doing pilots and demonstrations around the world. Exponentially, it will take the next 40 years to bring about structural revolution to deepen the spirit grounding and sustenance needed in primal community and to revitalize the larger social structures so they will serve primal community.

We take into Phase III five basic revolutionary principles which have emerged from applying our methods in local communities:

1. The Primacy of Geography. By working with geo-social units we have been able to deal with the whole person and the whole community. The geo-social contradiction is the size and extent of the planet. Only if basic structural changes can happen, will we be able to reach the last village. This is a foundational revolutionary principle.

2. Structural Revolution. As we worked with local communities we were also in through that work and in LENS seminars and consultations engaging the broader social structures in planning and motivity methods. We have learned that private, public voluntary and local sectors engage in serving primal communities. The structures themselves are repositories for human, natural and technical resources as well as significant support and inter-change with the whole society. Unless they are transformed to deal with our actual world and all the people, total revolution cannot happen. This has enlarged and magnified our grasp of ourselves as structural revolutionaries.

3. The Poorest of the Poor. Effective change agents delimit themselves to the major contradiction for the sake of impacting the whole society. Any society must somehow deal with those who fall out or are left out of their structures. These are most in evidence by the poor. In our day the literal poor are more acutely than ever before in history the lodestone for significant global changes. Whether it be the relative poor in the first world or the people in the 30 poorest-of the poor nations. Dealing with these overt social ills such as economic poverty catalyzes and transforms the whole society. Being outside the structure of care the poor require the resources of the total society -- especially the infrastructures that provide the most local level of services. Also, since they are outside the structures, new creative solutions and structures are built with fresh solutions. This is not acting from guilt nor expecting magic. This is simply the way total change happens. New methods unrelated to the poor and their contradictions are patch up jobs and may even stave off significant social, structural change. Symbolically, the care for the poor demonstrates a fully human versus being only of, by and for the more fortunate. When new methods are forged among the poor, these methods have transforming power in all levels of the society.

4. The perpetual On-behalf-of. Calling the local community outside itself is a major element in primal community. One village to other villages, the individuals going out to other communities and other nations, this itself revitalizes the local community itself. This process never ends-- no community ever arrives at its ideal. Leadership goes on to new tasks and assignments; new leadership rises up to fill the gap.

5. Being the Transestablishment. Being revolutionary means changing the existing patterns. It is therefore disestablishment. However, it is not anti-establishment for us, It is getting the established structures of society to function. It is renewing them. It is insisting on social order even while the demand to change is radical. The frame for an HDE is an essential part of that project. We work with the given structures and we require that they change. We are both establishment and disestablishment--therefore, transestablishment. Maintaining this creative tension is a crucial revolutionary principle.

III. THE FUTURIC DIRECTION -- Every mark of humanness bears with it its own negation. Life is not ideal but real. Understanding and living selfhood also carries with it escapes from the way life is. Becoming a corporate human being includes a great drive to withdraw, to isolate oneself, to collapse as a social participant. Being spiritually motivated leads to burn out. Living through these ups and downs requires a vigorous spirit life that is denied to most people today.

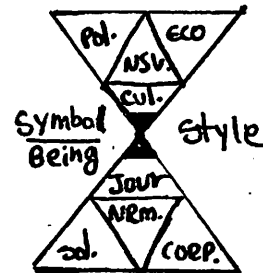
We have known all of these, and yet we are sustained, alive and well. The new direction laid upon us is to find the way to share our wisdom and to create sustain-

ning patterns like this in the world as well as among ourselves. Sustenance is basically self-generating symbolization. This, too, will have its negation. In the next phase we will find ourselves and others refusing the role, stepping back or being "laid back" rather than being or creating the symbolization that is needed. This, too, will require solitary and corporate spirit care.

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We are moving toward a renewed emphasis on the significating or cultural pole of the social process. We have called it the Communal Symbol process that exists in every society: it is corporate language, it is social art, and it is common religion. The need in the emerging primal community of our day is to empower anew the significating and nurturing dynamics of humanness. It has to do with transposing the language and symbols of the past, both recent and archaic into transparent forms that sustain profound consciousness. New forms of prayer-ful gatheredness are essential to the bodies in which people congregate. The task is complicated by fact that the primal community that is emerging is pluriform, made up of people from many cultures and classes.

The New Religious Mode ^{is forming} itself simultaneously with the New Social Vehicle. No HDP has come off save the people have found a new sense of selfhood, new corporateness, new motivity and new symbols. And yet, the task of the next 40 years is to bring practical concretion to the Solitaries, the Corporates and the journeys of the NRM. Particularly the Journeys of Knowing, Doing and Being need practical forms today.



When both these modes or vehicles coincide in primal communities extended or missional families are empowered, all four life phases are engaged, a comprehensive cradle-to-grave curriculum is being practiced, the community has an alive, equitable polity structure and a new economic paradigm is born.

The practical construct of primal community has focused on the Land, the Structures and the Drama. The Land is foundational. Nothing mystical or esoteric about this.... Nothing on the surface of life about this.... The land is the bearer of the history of which the people have become a part. It shapes the life images of whatever peoples occupy it or cross over it. We have held this construct primarily by having stakes in project communities.

The Structures are social givens that are present wherever humanness is. They are not optional nor are they de-humanizing in-and-of themselves. Without structure there is no life, no care and no future. Working within the structures is the way to radical and foundational change and revolution. The "new" takes on substance when it takes root in revitalized structures. Structures get water to run and milk to arrive on the doorstep. We have held this construct by setting up guilds in Project communities.

The third construct is the weakest in the emerging form that primal community is taking. Where primal community is, there is Drama. Primal community requires intentionality, and intentionality takes indirection as well as direction. It takes story as well as resources and production. The symbols, the celebrations, and the liturgies build on the community's history and focus its future externally. This construct is emerging or present wherever the temple dynamic is strong, continual and real--village meetings and singing are most powerful expressions of this dynamic in the projects.

The direction therefore includes creating constructs that awaken changed individual lives, renewed communities and a transformed social fabric. None of these exist without the other. There are no changed individual lives without renewing communities. Also there are no renewing communities without new individuals. The social fabric cannot come alive and serviceable unless renewed communities exist within it. The direction especially focuses on the larger social fabric beyond local communities. However, this focus is an abstraction and unreal unless renewed local communities are in being.

IV. THE CURRENT IMPLICATIONS:

1. Regionalis. While it is true today a primal community cannot exist without the social services of the larger society, this does not mean a region become a primal community. It simply means that postmodern society requires a larger superstructure which would be a carrier of myths and spirit foundations than say, a farming community did 100 years ago. The present danger here is underplaying the dynamical function of the Area and particularly the continent in our current emphasis on the Region.
2. Human Development Zones. - Size is a critical issue in urban and rural society. Chances are that the largest a primal community can, possibly be is a cluster of rural villages in bicycle distance of each other. It may also be that technology and communications have enabled primal communities to be larger than the old city neighborhood but in no way can a primal community be non-geographical. Psychological or vocational communities have generally proven inadequate and reduced. Friendships are spread across national and global lines preventing every day symbolization. Professional association or clubs seem to deal with a person's occupation or economic work but not their total concerns and social responsibilities. While the work place is being revitalized, it deals only with a portion of people's lives, and only at certain periods of one's total life. The trend away from geography tends to be a trend away from people and must be countervailed. A larger, politically cohesive area, such as the Midcrest Area in Iowa (8 counties), may be a HDZ or it carry out the regionalis function, or might even, being highly typical of the rural mid-west, be the catalyst for a Zone touches or impacts 3 regions, but surely many primal communities exist within the area. The present danger here ^{seems} to be thinking either too large, i.e., failing ^{to} ground realistically every primal community in the HDZ, or too small, i.e., dealing with too small a geo-social hunk to effectively engage all 4 sectors.
3. Religious House. - Another key question for us is what form the presence of the religious needs to be in each primal community and in each HDZ. Until now we have not produced even the semblance of primal community save where we are in residence. Can a regional team or a metro core be the religious presence required? The whole role and function of a religious house is going through a major transformation. It is becoming the hub of the HDZ, with the role of ^{the} commoning the stylistic mode of a people who have decided to be a sign of hope for those care in the 4 sectors. It has become the temple dynamic for the regional teams and even communities where there are projects. In the future will it continue to enlarge its boundaries to involve a whole community or ^{is} it the core to the temple that is needed? And the temple serves an even wider scope of sustaining forms. The presence of the 'blue' seems to be needed in every community--if so, how could that be across the globe? The present danger is getting trapped in old images of the Religious House as an insular community or a liberal undisciplined body without self-determination.
4. Training - New dimensions are going to be required to deal with Common Symbol outside or ourselves and in the world. The "Profound Commitment Course"

and
The Depth Leadership Laboratory may be the first steps in that direction.
The present danger is to create so much diversity without a clear focus.
We also may neglect mapping the various ways it is possible to raise up
and nurture the Regional Teams like holding vocational retreats .

5. Ritual Experiment - The daily or weekly rituals needed by the world have
thrown our ritual experiment into a new dimension beyond ourselves. We
are beginning a long range task on behalf of all people everywhere-- 40
years is not too long a timeline: We will do nothing solid in this arena until
we have done the Region and the Zone. Common useable rituals will come
out of the intensification of the action mode and the Myth factor.
The present danger is trying to do the disembodied Ritual Experimentation
from the Region, the Zone and the local community.