

What's Next?

Clearly, the "message" of the Occupy movement is not a sound bite for news reporters, nor does it seem to be some specific legislation or candidate to serve in Washington D.C.

Perhaps, the message is more about how occupy organizations work, rather than the slogans on the signs people carry. It is how occupiers do what we do, as a model for society, beyond the specific issues that we stand for today.

I am convinced that we are making a transition from a hierarchically organized culture to a network organized one, world wide. The idea that there is no single message, and no spokesperson or leader makes perfect sense to me. When I say 'network,' I don't just mean the internet, but all the ways that people communicate with and support each other.

So, what does the occupy movement do now? Public attention wavers if there is no "news" from the movement. The commercial 'news' organizations focus on police action and arrests and problems, not so much on success.

I think of Clayton Christiansen, who pioneered the concept of 'disruptive innovation' in his series of books. This means that a small, seemingly insignificant, perhaps inefficient or incomplete organization starts to build itself in the shadows of giant established ones. The established organizations pay little attention to the new effort because it doesn't seem to have any real significance to their current operations.

But, the new movement keeps working away. People solve problems, get better at what they're doing, and over time, grow into a significant new organization or network. The older, previously established organizations, who weren't paying all that much attention, suddenly one day find themselves failing. With their power dissipated, they are unable to prevent their own decline.

In the late 1970s, Apple Computer was derided by the big established industries as a maker of 'toy' computers. Now, by fostering tablet devices and media, it has not only grown to become the most valuable company on the planet, but its innovations have had a huge impact on the music, newspaper, book publishing, and a whole host of other 'non tech' industries.

OK, that's an example from the business world, but how does this apply to the occupy movement? Well, at the moment, the challenges seem to be how to continue to resolve conflict, prevent crime, work with mentally ill folks and others 'dumped' by the rest of society, stay in touch with the land and nature, and persist in the face of private and public land rights and policy, etc.

But I see the future as no less than building an entirely new culture to eventually replace most of the existing hierarchically organized one. Moving from tents to "real" buildings, eventually of new designs which not only conserve open land, energy, and resources, but are designed to help support a new "networked village" oriented culture now being practiced by the Occupy encampments.

The idea is to continue to operate in groups small enough to have face to face meetings, continue to know and support each other as genuine people instead of statistics and averages, but at the same time, network extensively, world wide.

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