Making Networks Work

Preliminary observations from NAFFE's structured advocacy network

Summary

How can organizations representing Microsoft programmers, Los Angeles day laborers, UC Berkeley lecturers, New York cab drivers, union construction workers and Milwaukee office temps advance common interests? In this report on a network embracing this diversity, the staff of the North American Alliance for Fair Employment (NAFFE) reflects on the organizational development of the network and on its recent activities. Its general conclusion is that a structured network can encompass great diversity *while* (1) aggregating member power and (2) achieving the scale and scope needed to positively impact labor markets that are normally shaped by global corporations and processes and the many livelihoods that derive from them.

Foundations & Networks

The network form creates a special relationship with the foundations that may fund both network members and the network itself. Networks represent a way for effective local and regional organizations to achieve the "scale and scope" that many foundations felt was necessary to impact the social problems addressed by the organizations. Networks also play an important role in identifying and signaling to foundations promising strategies and courses of action. For member organizations, the network is an important way to communicate concerns to foundations. Currently, for example, NAFFE members are coming up with suggestions for funders in response to significant cutbacks in support.

North American Alliance for Fair Employment

History

NAFFE was founded in 1997 by organizations concerned about the rise of contingent work relationships and this trend's impact on workers as a whole. By 1999, the network was launched as a formal organization, and by 2002, it had evolved into a formal non-profit organization, with a three-person secretariat, a coordinating committee, and several policy-making action groups. Sixty-five organizations—ranging from a day laborer organizing network to the AFL-CIO, and including coalitions of contingent adjunct professors, union locals representing high-tech workers, and advocacy organizations—are now members of the network. Throughout its development, the network has engaged in careful deliberations about the organizational form of the network, drawing on the experiences of members, as well as that of a consultant, and existing theory on network structure. For NAFFE members, the network serves as both a nexus of communication, and a vehicle for joint action.

Theory

NAFFE members are heterogeneous with respect not only to constituency, but also to organizational form. For this reason, NAFFE could not structure itself as a "command-and-control"-type organization. Rather, "transnational advocacy networks" and European public policy networks offered models for NAFFE in which organizations participate on a voluntary basis, opting in and out of activities and the network itself according to their own calculations.

In recognizing that the framing of social problems is a vital task in the building of networks, NAFFE has successfully taken on the challenge of generating collective responses by hitherto fragmented groups, all addressing the problem of contingent work in their own ways. Using "contingent work" and economic restructuring as a frame, NAFFE has united Canadian and US-based organizations to address the broad range of relationships—from temporary work to part-time work to "independent" contractors—and to build a multi-class organization.

Practices

Ten key features and practices contribute to efficacy and power of the network and assist in its framing of social problems:

1. They are accountable to their members and mission;
2. Their structure provides a variety of ways for members to participate;
3. They pool local and expert knowledge;
4. They respond rapidly and flexibly to events;
5. They use members' time efficiently;

6. They serve as a forum for positive dialogue among diverse groups;

7. Their members internalize the resources of the network;

8. They grow strategically;

9. They aid movement-building by spawning new networks;

10. They have multiple vibrant and vital communication channels.

These are explained further and discussed individually in the body of the paper.

Does it work?

NAFFE's experience in organizing national weeks of action and its negotiations with a major transnational temporary staffing agency have demonstrated key features of a network. These have contributed to the success of both the actions and the negotiations. NAFFE's diversity, manifold membership specializations, and framing of issues make the network a viable social partner for organizations wishing to raise the standards of "non-standard" employment.

Making Networks Work

Preliminary observations from NAFFE's structured advocacy network[1]

Part I: Introduction

Activists in many fields face a similar problem: how to bring together the elements and fragments of an emerging social movement.

The problem of fragmentation was severe for the varied groups of activists concerned with contributing to the contingent work social movement that developed in the 1990s. These groups addressed different issues, ranging from job security provisions in union contracts to street corner hiring conditions for day laborers. Their constituencies ranged from unionized construction workers, to high-tech professionals, to undocumented immigrants. Some were local organizations, some national. Their organizational forms were diverse. Most had organizational planning processes that could not possibly be subordinated to a higher decision-making body. All had their own structures and agendas.

These groups felt that, despite their diversity, they had concerns in common, and that they could be more effective if they could find some way to band together. They created an organization now known as the North American Alliance for Fair Employment (NAFFE).[2] This paper is an account of how NAFFE has tried to address the problem of bringing together the fragments of an emerging social movement by means of an organizational form known as a "structured network."

A structured network differs from both conventional organizations and "smart-mob"-style informal networks.[3] It is also different from typical multi-group collaborations, like coalitions.[4] NAFFE's experience with the organizational form may be helpful to people organizing around other

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[1] Draft for discussion prepared by NAFFE staff members (Tim Costello, Kim Foltz, and Suren Moodliar) and Jeremy Brecher, who regularly works with NAFFE.

[2] The network was originally named the *National* Alliance, but changed to the *North American* Alliance to better reflect its broadening scope; for convenience, the network retained "NAFFE" as its original acronym.

[3] See Howard Rheingold's *Smart Mobs: the Next Social Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2002) for both positive and negative examples of how technological change enables rapid, indeed instant, information sharing that in turn facilitates the emergence of informal and very transient networking.

[4] These differences are explored below, see Part III, page 15.

issues, but who face similar challenges to those encountered by the network.

Advocates claim that networks provide a way that diverse and fragmented groups can cooperate across gaps in constituency, culture, tradition, and geography. They maintain that networks allow specific interests and "local knowledge" to be pooled into something greater, without losing its specificity. They portray networks as the way to establish cooperation over a large scale, without succumbing to the centralization of power.

But skeptics doubt that networks can function effectively under real-world conditions or that they can serve as vigorous agents of social change. They point to networks' typically vague structure, their lack of organizational control, their ambiguity of leadership, and their absence of conventional structures of accountability. It is fair to say that several foundations and funders fall into the ranks of skeptics.

To understand networks and to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, it is necessary to examine how networks actually function and how they can be managed in ways that maximize their effectiveness. Networks can become immobile or collapse because they adopt structures and practices more appropriate to stand-alone organizations. The result is that networks often become simply coalitions with huge paper memberships but a narrow focus on a few issues. These may be valuable in themselves, but the alleged benefits of the *network* form, such as the possibility of real cross-fertilization and deepened understanding of the issues at hand, is often lost.

To achieve the claims made for them, structured networks need to be more than simply loose arrays of organizations that communicate from time-to-time. They require at least as much thoughtful planning and management as more conventional organizations.

In other papers and to degree below, we discuss the context behind NAFFE, what its members shared in their critique of the contemporary organization of work. Nevertheless, from its inception in 1997, NAFFE also explicitly set out to serve as a social laboratory, self-consciously experimenting to find the best ways to organize and manage itself as a structured network. In 1999, members launched NAFFE as a formal network with part-time administrative staff (after having relied on volunteers in the initial stages). Since 2002, the network has operated with a three-person secretariat. Additional project-based staff participate as needed, and member organizations continue to volunteer staff time for particular functions. As a networking "laboratory," NAFFE now consists of more than 65 organizations spanning the United States and Canada.[5]

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[5] A complete list of NAFFE members is available on the organization's website at http://www.fairjobs.org/fairjobs/profiles.

In this paper we examine (1) the theory informing NAFFE's structure and management, (2) the network's historical development and (3) its actual practices and challenges, in order to see how the network structure has and has not been fruitful. In doing so, we show that NAFFE has been able to realize many of the benefits of the network form, while not succumbing to the very real dangers identified above. We suggest that the network can aggregate member organization power while it retains the individual identities of its members and potentially shapes the labor markets that affect members' constituencies.

Foundations and networks

Foundations play a critical role in shaping and sustaining social movement organizations in the US. Like many organizations, NAFFE would not have been started, nor could it survive in its present form, without foundation support. The French American Charitable Trust provided funds to launch NAFFE, and has been steadfast in its support ever since. Important grants from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations have been critical to NAFFE's survival and evolution. In addition, foundations have promoted networks as effective social actors.[6]

Throughout the 1990s, many funders promoted the idea that organizations had to reach the "scale and scope" necessary to impact the large-scale social problems they addressed. But this proved to be a perplexing objective for many organizations. For local groups and groups with narrow, well-defined missions, the demand for growth could disrupt their activities as well as expand them. With the current downturn in funding, this is a more critical issue than ever. Some foundations are now forced to pull back funding from the very groups they encouraged to expand, with serious organizational consequences.

At the same time, funders encouraged groups to form coalitions with others rather than acting in isolation. Sometimes the resulting coalition was effective, and sometimes it helped groups reach scale and scope, but too often the result was a "mixed message" in which groups were simultaneously told to concentrate on their own growth while devoting resources to wider cooperation.

Networks provide an alternative road to achieving both "scale and scope" and cooperation. NAFFE, for example, includes many groups that are local, focused on a specific, well-defined constituency, and/or devoted to one or a

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[6] See for example Rip Rapson, "Network Strategies and Social Change" (Address to the Council of Nonprofits' Annual Conference, October 11, 2002). Héctor Cordero-Guzmán's 2001 piece, "Interorganizational Networks Among Community-Based Organizations" notes that foundations, together with governments, are among the "external reasons" for CBOs opting to join networks.

small number of issues. For them, the structured network form has facilitated their involvement in the larger effort to confront contingent work without drawing them away from their own localities, concerns, and constituencies.

NAFFE decided not to become a fiscal intermediary between foundations and individual organizations, at least not during its formative years. Serving as a pass-through organization could undermine the trust, solidarity, and peer standing needed to build a strong network.[7]

But networks like NAFFE can serve as intermediaries in other ways. NAFFE brings together a critical mass of organizations needed to shape and define issues, and helps foundations identify promising strategies, tactics, and prospective grantees.[8]

While foundations can benefit from networks' knowledge, they need to have an arms-length relationship with emerging organizations. As one foundation representative observed, foundations are in a good position to help launch networks, but they should not "be like parents trying to film a teenager's birthday party."[9]

Indeed, one of the important functions networks play for members is to serve as "free space" for discussions of important questions such as funding. NAFFE members regularly compare notes about funding and funding strategies, especially as foundations have been cutting back on support.

New ideas are hatched in these discussions. For instance, there is currently widespread criticism and concern among many social movement activists working on many issues that foundations are cutting back their grant making at the very moment when it is most needed. Funding in the 1990's helped create an infrastructure that could make a difference in today's economy, but which is unsustainable because of the current lack of funding.

One response has been to ask foundations to do *counter-cyclical* grant making. If cutbacks are needed for funders' sustainability, they should be made during flush times, not during economic crisis when social movement

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[7] NAFFE has, however, provided some funding to help other networks like the National Day Labor Organizing Network and the Coalition on Contingent Academic Labor.

[8] For a lively discussion of potential roles for foundations, see Mark R. Kramer, "Philanthropy's New Agenda: Creating Value," *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 121-132 (November/December 1999). One important function that they identify for foundations, that of *signaling* to other foundations where to invest resources, is often played by networks.

[9] Rapson (2002), cited above.

organizations are most needed. For NAFFE members, this observation is grounded in the recognition that many social movement organizations, like those addressing contingent work, are *fragile* entities, serving a transient, rapidly changing community. As organizations, they accumulate much experience, and develop novel and innovative responses to problems, but are often susceptible to economic crisis, risking their missions, staff livelihoods, and also their accumulated experience and organizational memory.

Part II: Theoretical Background

The theory of networks

The era of globalization has generated a wave of social movement experimentation with new forms of organization, and the beginnings of theoretical reflection on them. The trendy term for describing these new forms is "network." NAFFE founders tried to bring the emerging theoretical perspectives on networks to bear on their own concrete challenges.[10]

Political scientists Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, in their book *Activists beyond Borders,* develop the concept of "advocacy networks." They define networks as "forms of organization characterized by voluntary, reciprocal and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange."[11] These networks could include NGOs, local social movements, foundations, the media, churches, trade unions, consumer organizations, intellectuals, parts of regional and international inter-governmental organizations, and parts of the executive and/or parliamentary branches of governments.

Such networks, they argue, exchange information, and support a dense nexus of communication among participants. They also develop a common language and frame issues for participants and the public.

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[10] See Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith, *Globalization from Below: The Power of Solidarity*, Chapter 6, "Self-Organization from Below," especially 83-4 and 86-90. Brecher and Costello, *Common Sense for Hard Times* (Second Edition), (Boston/New York: South End Press/Two Continents Publishing Group, 1977). Brecher and Costello, *Building Bridges: The Emerging Grassroots Alliance of Labor and Community* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), especially pp. 332-334, "What Makes These Coalitions Different?" Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). Hilary Wainwright, *Arguments for a New Left: Answering the Free Market Right* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Diane Elson, "Market Socialism or Socializing the Market," *New Left Review*, 172, pp. 3-44. Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Walter W. Powell, "Neither Market nor Hierarchy: Network Forms of Organization," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 12 (1990).

[11] Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 8.

Keck and Sikkink describe "framing" as particularly central for advocacy networks. They define framing as "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action."[12] Indeed, they portrayed networks as defined primarily by their frames. Individuals and groups generally participate in a network to the extent that they accept its central frame.

Advocacy networks perform two functions. They provide a structure through which members can communicate, exchange information, learn from each others' experiences, and inform each other of plans and intentions. But they also themselves serve as vehicles for action, as agents that initiate and conduct campaigns.

Advocacy networks function differently in campaigns than either conventional organizations or coalitions. There may be a lead organization and perhaps a formal coalition of supporters, but in practice, most transnational campaigns emerge from planning within networks, and are conducted by them, often across formal organizational lines.

Such campaigns are marked by what might be called cross-organizational team leadership. They reflect the comment of John Gardner that in "a tumultuous, swiftly changing environment, in a world of multiple, colliding systems, the hierarchical position of leaders within their own system is of limited value, because some of the most critically important tasks require lateral leadership—boundary-crossing leadership—involving groups over whom they have no control."[13]

Network participants can be highly diverse and may disagree on many matters, as long as they accept the network's defining frame of the issues. Individuals can participate in a network directly, whether or not they are formally affiliated through organizations. Segments of organizations can participate in them, and in the actions they launch while other segments remain apart.

The network form allows a coordinated social movement composed of relatively autonomous groupings.[14] It eschews a sharp distinction between organizers and the rank and file. It is difficult to monopolize the flow of communication within networks, or to block its flow across organizational boundaries. Networks resist leadership domination; their leaders largely depend on persuasion, rather than on control of scarce organizational

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[12] Keck and Sikkink, p. 3.

[13] John Gardner, *On Leadership* (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 98.

[14] Member organizations may retain more or less hierarchical internal governance models appropriate to their missions, histories, and constituencies.

resources, or some form of muscle. When authority is delegated, it quickly expires, and is only renewed in the presence of active trust. Such a decentralized form also allows experimentation, which means that failures are less likely to be catastrophic for the movement as a whole.

Paul Vandeventer of Community Partners, a consultant retained by NAFFE during its planning phase, brought additional theoretical perspectives to the structuring and managing of networks. Based on work done with other emerging networks and organization-theory literature, these were important in shaping the NAFFE governance structure (described below). Particularly useful was the emerging school of European scholarship on "policy networks" that link public-sector institutions which need to cooperate but whose relationships are not shaped by strict hierarchies.[15]

Vandeventer emphasized the different approach to management that a structured network requires. Rather than develop one strategy or set of tactics, networks promote a *strategic alignment* among network participants. Early on in NAFFE's existence, for example, temporary-work organizations in Seattle, Boston, Silicon Valley, and New Jersey recognized that they shared a set of goals about improvements they sought in working conditions for temporary workers, yet each had developed specific strategies, tactics, and campaigns to achieve those goals. As a network, NAFFE could align these local efforts through a common frame and language, and perhaps, but not necessarily, through some joint actions. Actions growing out of local conditions could thereby put pressure on the temporary-help industry as a whole.

Constructing an interpretive frame

Networks are ideal social venues for developing effective interpretive frames because they bring together a range of social actors from a variety of vantage points. Frames—*pace* Keck & Sikkink (see above)—are ways that individuals and organizations define a problem, organize their assumptions about the causes of a problem, and develop ideas that inform action to respond (or not to respond) to a problem. Frames help build and sustain collective identities.

During the later decades of the 20th century, the US economy underwent major structural changes. These are reflected in such catchwords as *globalization, deindustrialization, regional decentralization,* and *corporate restructuring.*

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[15] Much of the work of this school is gathered in Walter J.M. Kickert, Erik-Hans Klijn, and Joop F.M. Koppenjan's *Managing Complex Networks: Strategies for the Public Sector* (London: Sage, 1997). Much of the material on the management of networks, such as issues of boundaries, perceptions, strategies, norms, and accountability are relevant to advocacy as well as public-sector networks.

In response, diverse agendas developed in both established and new organizations. The organizations drawn into the fight around contingent work issues cut across the divides of race, class, gender, occupation, and geography. Most had a local, regional, statewide, industrial, or occupational focus.

The organizations that came to compose NAFFE started with varied interpretations of the meaning of contingent work, and of the struggle to affect it. Through an on-going dialogue, these divergences were gradually integrated into a common frame. The process included research into the history of contingent work, many face-to-face meetings, as well as regular conference calls, e-mails, etc.

NAFFE needed a frame that would work on at least two levels. First, it had to frame the issue of contingent work in a way that was effective for the public. The dominant business frame about contingent work is that it is good, offering choice to workers and flexibility to employers. NAFFE developed a counter-frame that portrays contingent work as primarily a way for business to suppress wages and hire and fire workers quickly. But NAFFE also had to develop a deeper frame to unite organizations and activists, such as unions and community groups, who approach the problem from differing perspectives. The resulting interpretive frame is an essential part of the glue that holds NAFFE together.

Some NAFFE initiators saw the problem of contingent work as fundamentally one of discrimination. A group of workers (a high proportion of them women and minorities) were denied the basic workplace protections of mainstream workers. Other NAFFE initiators saw the growth of contingent work as an aspect of corporate restructuring, and the consequent reorganization of labor markets. These very different frames gradually accommodated to each other to produce a synthesis. That common frame was expressed in NAFFE's founding report, *Contingent Workers Fight for Fairness*:

> The 'downsizing' of standard employment and its replacement by contingent jobs are a core feature of the new economy... Whether they are temps, contract workers, day laborers, or part-timers, most workers in nonstandard jobs face a lack of equity in pay, benefits, security, and basic labor rights. They may be treated differently from other workers even if they do the same work for the same company. This disparity violates the basic fairness principle of equal pay for equal work. (16)

A similar process occurred around differences over whether contingent work should be framed as a problem for contingent workers, for other workers, and for society. NAFFE was fed by two streams. One stream consisted of established worker organizations—mostly unions—seeking to protect hard-

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[16] See p. 2. Available from NAFFE's website, http://www.fairjobs.org.

won standards and attract new members, and the other consisted of scrappy, community-based organizations and their allies seeking to organize contingent workers. Initially, there was often tension between labor organizations and community groups. But NAFFE developed a common frame based on a set of strategies designed to meet the objectives of both labor and community. That strategy can be summed up as: protect existing jobs by raising standards for everyone, thereby reducing cost cutting as an incentive for firms to shift to contingent staffing. The common frame was articulated in the statement of "Common Purpose" that opens NAFFE's Charter:

> Nearly one-third of the US workforce is engaged in nonstandard work, such as part-time, temporary and contract employment. Many of these workers fail to enjoy the pay, benefits, and legal protections associated with more traditional jobs. The existence of this growing nonstandard workforce is a social concern that affects all workers since regular workers now face the threat that their employers may lay them off and replace them with contingent workers. This threat lessens workers' bargaining power, contributing to the weakness of unions, the persistence of low wages, and the increasing polarization of society into haves and have-nots. The North American Alliance for Fair Employment (NAFFE) is a network of organizations across a wide range of constituencies affected by problems of nonstandard work. We stand for equal treatment with respect to pay, benefits, and protection under the law, regardless of employment status. Our work is part of the broader fight to ensure that working people have the right and opportunity to provide for themselves, their families, and their communities in a humane and dignified fashion.

NAFFE members may still differ on subjects outside the common frame. But these differences do not in general disturb the network's effective functioning.

The process of constructing a shared frame helped build relationships among NAFFE members. It continues to do so as old frames are adapted and new issues are framed.

Part III: NAFFE's Organization and History

Developing an interpretive frame into an operational reality is an ongoing process. For NAFFE, this began by defining the functions of the network, understanding the challenges to effective operation, determining the structure of the organization, and creating a system of governance.

Delineating organizational functions

In the spring of 1999, NAFFE's members began addressing the problem of creating an organizational structure that would best enable NAFFE to meet its goals. An 18-month planning process was funded by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, and assisted by Paul Vandeventer (as noted above).

The NAFFE Steering Committee began with in-depth interviews of NAFFE members to identify what they would like the network to do. What emerged was not a fixed set of goals typical of organizational strategic plans, but rather key functions that would help members better achieve their goals and expand the goals they could consider. These key functions were:

1. To maintain the flow of useful information about contingent work issues to NAFFE members by:

- Producing properly packaged information tracking economic, political, and legal trends and events;

- Documenting new strategies and tactics;

- Serving as a nexus for the communication and exchange of information directly among members, especially those working in similar sectors.

2. To help shape both a local and a national discourse on contingent work through:

- Media advocacy and framing strategies on an industrial, sectoral, local, and national level;

- Encouraging relevant research by scholars;

- Intervening in the political process when appropriate;

- Sponsoring national and local conferences and events;

- Creating a widely shared public-policy and action program on contingent work.

3. To link organizations working on contingent work issues across the divides of geography, structure, program, and constituency:

- To offer mutual support on existing campaigns and activities;

- To launch new joint actions involving all or part of NAFFE's membership;

- To forge links with other social movements fighting for economic justice.[17]

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[17] NAFFE: "Surveying the membership"

Acknowledging real-world barriers to effective organization

During planning, NAFFE identified a number of issues that made it difficult to find an effective organizational form that fulfills these functions:

- A diverse membership, encompassing a wide variety of organizations each with its own perspective, agenda, constituency, and decision-making process;

- A membership that participates solely voluntarily;

- A large geographic spread among members;

- A complex issue—contingent work—that presents itself in many different forms to many different constituencies.

NAFFE saw these problems as characteristic of those faced by social movements in today's decentralized global economy. It defined the problem of organizational form as one of developing a structure that would allow it to perform the desired functions under these challenging conditions.

Evaluating organizational alternatives

NAFFE planners identified and evaluated four possible organizational models:

- **A unified national organization**

  The typical characteristics of this structure were identified as a strong executive board, a centralized decision-making structure located in a national office, and a clearly defined national program. Most such organizations have individual memberships. Local groups function as branches of the national organization, with some autonomy to carry out local campaigns, but with the expectation that they will devote considerable energy to the agreed-upon national program.

  This model was rejected by NAFFE's planners. NAFFE had no individual membership. It was an organization of organizations, none of which was likely to cede any significant decision-making power about campaigns or strategies to NAFFE's governing board.

- **A lobbying or trade association**

  These organizations generally produce useful information for members, hold annual conventions, handle the press, and conduct lobbying on behalf of the groups' general interest. They are often based in Washington and tend to be public-policy focused. While many of these functions are essential, NAFFE preferred a less centralized model, better suited to promoting grassroots activity and

contributing to the kind of movement building NAFFE members identified as important.

- **A coalition**

Coalitions generally bring representatives of organizations together to develop a joint program around a limited set of mutually agreed-upon objectives. This structure was rejected because NAFFE members felt it was impossible to boil down a complex issue like contingent work to a few specific campaigns. Coalitions tend not to be inclusive, since those organizations whose issues/strategies/tactics are not adopted quickly become inactive. Thus the kind of horizontal cross-fertilization and strategic flexibility needed to construct a vibrant social movement are usually missing. NAFFE members agreed that NAFFE should help form coalitions around specific issues, but NAFFE should not see itself as a coalition.

- **A structured network**

A structured network is a permanent organization of organizations based on voluntary, reciprocal and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange. Because networks are both structures and social actors, they perform the two sets of functions that NAFFE members identified as important. First, as structures, they are a place for members to share ideas, get mutual support, and develop a common language and frame. Second, as social actors they engage in campaigns that involve all or part of the membership. The NAFFE network was envisioned as a seedbed for many forms of concerted action.

Ultimately, NAFFE opted for a network structure. As the NAFFE Charter puts it,

> The network structure promotes broad member participation in decision making, coordinates the strategies and actions of member organizations in common projects, locates the resources necessary to sustain those projects, and attempts to shape public discourse through media advocacy, scholarly research, public events, and other suitable activities.[18]

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[18] Note: The original consultant's report argued against NAFFE becoming an IRS-recognized 501c(3) nonprofit organization, primarily because of the effect of legal requirements for a traditional board/officer authority structure. Below we show how NAFFE Coordinating Committee/Action Group structure addresses this concern.

Designing the governance structure

At its loosest, a network may be nothing more than a communications node with which anyone is free to connect. But NAFFE's idea of a "structured network" entailed far more than this.

The structure embodied in the NAFFE Charter established a Membership Meeting of representatives of NAFFE member organizations as the governing body. It meets regularly, and develops basic organizational strategy, approves an annual budget, constitutes Action Groups, and elects a Coordinating Committee.[19]

As the organization structure was being established, there was concern that a network would be too loose a structure. Consideration was given to whether NAFFE should have a conventional Board of Directors with the ultimate authority to govern the organization. This was, after all, the usual way to establish accountability for an organization and its staff. But such an approach might also tend to centralize authority in the Board and tend to reduce involvement of member organizations.

After much discussion and some compromise, NAFFE decided on a Coordinating Committee rather than a conventional Board of Directors. The Membership Meetings elect the Coordinating Committee, which is required to reflect the geographic, racial, and gender diversity of NAFFE, and to include at least one member from each Action Group. Emphasizing the difference from a conventional Board of Directors, the Charter states, "The Coordinating Committee does not act as a governing body, but assists with the political and administrative functions of the NAFFE network between Annual Meetings." Its responsibilities are largely administrative, including drafting a budget, planning the Annual Convention, hiring and supervising staff, conferring with Action Groups, authorizing designated members to sign checks and employment agreements, reaching out to other organizations, and coordinating NAFFE's response on breaking issues.

Action Groups are the foundation of the NAFFE network. Each Action Group must be convened by at least two member organizations on the basis of a community of interest around a particular sector or issue. Action Groups are responsible for planning and implementing strategies in their sectors, consistent with the Charter. They create an annual action plan, report to the NAFFE membership as a whole, and confer with the Coordinating Committee and National Office about their activities. Any two NAFFE members can also convene an Ad Hoc Committee to pursue specific tasks.

NAFFE has a Central Office, but instead of an Executive Director directing the work of the organization, the office is essentially a secretariat with

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[19] The functions of these bodies are described below.

Network Coordinators and support staff. The main functions of the Central Office are to support the Action Groups, provide information, and help the Coordinating Committee with administration and fundraising.

The number of Central Office staff reflects a balance between two considerations: (1) the staff has to be small enough so as not to dictate the network's agenda; and (2) it has to be sufficient to effectively perform the mandates of the network members.[20]

Decision making in NAFFE is based on the principle of subsidiarity: decisions are made at a level as close as possible to those they affect. For instance, the Annual Meeting makes decisions that affect all of NAFFE; the Action Groups make decisions that affect their various sectors, consistent with NAFFE's basic strategy and frame, as agreed on by the Annual Meeting. The Coordinating Committee makes NAFFE-wide decisions between Membership Meetings. This helps decision making be both fast and democratic.

Any organization that meets NAFFE's standards for membership may join. To prevent a barrier to groups' participation, no dues have been required during NAFFE's formative stage, though voluntary payments have been encouraged. Guidelines for a dues structure are currently being developed.

Part IV: NAFFE in Action

Since its conception in 1997, NAFFE has evolved into a functioning network.[21] Ten practices stand out, with each addressing perennial social movement concerns: accountability, participation, knowledge, responsiveness, efficiency, dialogue, resources, growth, movement building, and communication. Following a review of those practices, we provide two relatively detailed examples of NAFFE activities that demonstrate their efficacy. The experience of its planners, members, and staff suggests that the following features of networks can make them effective social movement organizations:

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[20] The current staffing level of three full-time staff with additional part-time/contract workers approximates this balance, but also reflects the need to work within resource limitations.

[21] While this part of the paper draws heavily on NAFFE experience, and particularly the last year which marks the first in which the network office was fully staffed, it is a partial and very selective account of NAFFE activities. For a fuller account, see the 2002 Annual Review of Activities, available from the NAFFE "Members-Only" section of the network website (http://www.fairjobs.org) or upon request.

1. A decentralized network can remain accountable to its members and mission, and also avoid domination by the network's staff

Paul Vandeventer's initial report laid out some of the considerations that have guided the management of the NAFFE network.[22]

It contrasted the role of manager in "classical management approaches" with that in a structured network. In traditional organizations, the manager serves as the "system controller." The manager plans, designs, and leads the organization to achieve some pre-defined objective.

The *network* manager, however, serves as "a mediator, process manager and network builder." The manager facilitates the work of the members. The key management activities involve "selecting actors and resources, influencing network conditions and handling strategic complexity." It involves not so much "strategic planning" with clear goals and precise problem definitions, as "strategic *alignment*" of the various plans, resources, and actors involved in the network.[23]

NAFFE's founders were initially concerned that, in the absence of a tight executive structure, the staff might take over the organization. NAFFE has very self-consciously sought to ensure that the organizing initiative remains with the network's member organizations, not with its staff. The staff's role is not to run or represent the organization but to serve as a secretariat for the action groups. The staff has direct accountability to the action groups, who meet regularly and chart out their own plans. NAFFE staff has adopted a working style to promote member-to-member contact and joint projects.[24] This is the way the issue of accountability without a central executive structure has been solved in practice.

The staff also plays a role in encouraging constructive discussion within the network. As a secretariat rather than an executive, the staff does not push a position, let alone seek to impose a position, on the organization. The staff role is instead to help structure good discussions in which all viewpoints within the organization's general frame can be expressed, and a diversity of views be treated with respect.

The staff does play some gatekeeping and fundraising roles that can shape the network, but strong voluntary member organizations provide a

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[22] "Structuring the NAFFE Network." See in particular "Recommended Approach," pp. 4-6.

[23] "Structuring..." p. 5.

[24] Each of NAFFE's full-time staff members has experience in the labor movement, in CBOs, and in national and/or international networks. They have been able to bring their experience to NAFFE, reducing the learning curve of how to staff a network.

mechanism to ensure accountability. Also, because members can easily opt in and out of the network and particular projects, important checks are in place to prevent NAFFE from becoming a staff-driven organization. The presence of action group representatives on the Coordinating Committee, which is charged with supervising staff, also reduces the chances that NAFFE will become staff driven.

A members-only section of the website, currently in development, will house all financial and budgetary information to promote transparency. Minutes of all meetings and conference calls are also distributed to members, and will be archived on the members-only website.

Both networks and their members are organizations, and as such, have their own organizational interests. This creates a possibility for conflict and competition in areas such as the allocation of credit for successful activities, and relations with funders. In general, NAFFE features the activities of member groups in all its promotion, and treats its own contribution as secondary. For instance, when the central office gets press calls, the staff refers the caller to member organizations whenever possible.

2. The network structure provides a variety of ways for members to participate

By 2002, NAFFE had four Action Groups: Temp and Day Labor, Welfare/Workfare, Campus Organizing, and Public Policy. Each group meets in person once a year to develop an action plan. Updates and revisions to the plans are made throughout the year during monthly conference calls.

The Action Group structure allows those groups most intensely concerned with an issue or an action to manage their own operations while pooling their resources. It also permits a flexible division of labor that allows members to contribute based on their strengths.

In a typical example, members of the Public Policy Action Group identified the need to monitor state-based contingent work legislation. One research-based organization volunteered to bi-weekly search for and identify pending bills which could affect contingent workers. A second member, focused on legal advocacy, then analyzes and provides a summary of the significant legislation.

In another example, a Temp and Day Labor Action Group meeting called for the production of a basic worker rights flyer called "Temp Worker Rights." Two groups volunteered to create the flyer with the support of NAFFE staff. The flyer was drafted, circulated for comment within the network, produced, and thousands were distributed. A Spanish version was translated by locals of two different unions in Texas and Washington, DC. The flyer—in English and Spanish—was designed so that it can be customized by any NAFFE member organization and claimed as the member's own.

3. Networks pool local and expert knowledge

One of the main advantages of the network form is its ability to cultivate the "local knowledge" of participants in concrete situations, while also sharing it among those in different situations, and integrating different local knowledges into a broader picture. In many cases, NAFFE gathers knowledge from member groups, organizes it, and makes the results available to the network. This is often accomplished not by the Central Office but by Action Groups or selected member groups.

For instance, NAFFE has recently compiled a directory of community-based hiring halls throughout the US. It is the first complete directory of its kind. A large sample of these halls has been contacted by NAFFE researchers, and a set of strategic questions has been developed about hiring hall strategies and tactics. These questions can help local groups make hiring halls more worker-friendly and effective.

Knowledge pooling may take the form of publications and web databases. For example, NAFFE's Public Policy/Welfare-Workfare Action Group has produced a working paper on planning legislative campaigns, and is compiling a directory of model legislation to develop a uniform set of model public policies on contingent work.[25] It has already established a legislative tracking system for state-based contingent-work legislation.

An important function of networks like NAFFE is to scrutinize and build broad backing for proposed legislation. This can help save groups from developing legislation that affects many people on the basis of a narrow constituency without adequately examining its broader consequences or drawing in other affected constituencies.

Knowledge sharing may also take the form of consultation with local groups by other groups or by staff. For example, NAFFE's Public Policy/Welfare-Workfare Action Group helps local NAFFE groups prepare state-based and municipal public policy campaigns, on issues from transportation costs for day laborers to unemployment compensation insurance reforms. And it has helped public-employee unions draft model legislation to provide protection to existing public employees and to workers in publicly contracted jobs by requiring equal pay and benefits to all workers, regardless of their employment status. NAFFE is also creating an online, interactive "Virtual Worker Center," informed by compiling local expertise to provide resources for workers, advocates, and organizers across the US.

The network allows local groups to know what is happening nationally and even globally; conversely, it gives national organization a way to understand what is happening at the local level.

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[25] In 2002, the Public Policy and Welfare/Workfare Action Groups merged to form one group.

4. A structured network can respond rapidly and flexibly to events

When something calls for a coordinated response, NAFFE, with its action groups and ad-hoc committees, can get the word out rapidly to those who are likely to want to participate in a response. It can also quickly facilitate a discussion of what that response should be and what is necessary to initiate it.

One example illustrates this particularly well. When NAFFE was approached by representatives of the International Labor Organization (ILO), an affiliate of the UN, to submit proposals for an ILO report on informal work in North America, NAFFE was able to quickly respond by drawing on expertise within the network. In addition, NAFFE was able to select a knowledgeable delegate to attend the ILO meeting in 2002 in Geneva to argue in support of proposals that improve the conditions for contingent workers.

The flexibility of networks in responding rapidly to emerging conditions is also illustrated by NAFFE's Campus Organizing Action Group.

Contingent work is transforming education throughout North America. A majority of full-time faculty are now non-tenure track employees. In 2002, organizing on college campuses by part-time faculty and other non-permanent staff soared. NAFFE's Campus Organizing Action Group— which includes representatives of major US and Canadian higher-education unions, CWA, SEIU, independent union locals, and local community-union coalitions – became a national center for contingent faculty organizing.

5. Networks use their members' time efficiently

As voluntary members of the network, NAFFE organizations are able to opt-in to activities and meetings as they choose. Encouraging multiple forums for participation, discussion, and communication allows groups to keep up with developments easily. The principle of subsidiarity streamlines discussions to policy-oriented issues, with groups assuming wide latitude in the execution of tasks.

The Campus Organizing Action Group, for example, commissioned a NAFFE Strategic Working Paper on organizing adjunct faculty. After outlining the broad parameters of the paper and selecting the author during a monthly conference call, subsequent decisions regarding the paper, its outline, editing decisions, choice of commentators, etc. took place democratically, but over an action group-specific e-mail listserv. Only that action group's members and not all NAFFE members had to deal with the additional e-mail traffic, and those who received the messages could decide individually whether or not they wanted to engage in those discussions.

Similarly, once the campus group decided that it would co-sponsor the bi-annual Campus Equity Week in 2003, discussion of the topic now takes

place in monthly calls devoted to that topic and, though hosted by NAFFE, involves a range of organizations wider than the network's membership. Again, members not interested need not sit through those calls.

Voluntary participation in the network also means that there are no reporting requirements for members, and no monitoring of their compliance with agreements, terms of association, etc. Where reporting occurs, it is because organizations find it in their interest, or that of the broader movement, to do so.[26] At the same time, members who have not opted-in to a particular activity remain a part of the broader channels communication, and will become active on a project more appropriate

6. The network is a forum for positive dialogue among diverse groups

Groups coming from different constituencies, experiences, and traditions often have very different initial takes on things. A network structure allows groups to cooperate where they see eye-to-eye, without exacerbating conflict where they don't. Initial engagement may begin simply with the exchange of information. This may be followed by some mutual support on matters of common concern. Such exchange and cooperation create a positive atmosphere for dialogue, in which differences can be explored and often reframed in ways that emphasize common meanings and interests.

For example, many different kinds of groups are engaged with worker centers, hiring halls, and other forms of non-conventional organizing. More traditional organizations, notably trade unions, have at times been critical of these ventures. The NAFFE Temp and Day Labor Action Group has facilitated an ongoing exchange of views among these groups, including scheduled monthly calls that include both labor and community-based representatives. This dialogue has reached sufficient consensus to permit the crafting and adoption of a set of standards for worker-friendly hiring halls.

Networks allow a safe place for discussion, a demilitarized zone where issues can be hashed out constructively. Groups representing the interests of high- and low-skilled immigrant workers often have different takes on immigrant labor regulation. They might easily find themselves on different sides of a question like H1B immigrant worker programs. However, NAFFE has been able to actively promote a constructive discussion of this subject. It has also been able to link representatives of high-skilled contingent workers in North America with people in supplier countries like India.

An on-going process of participatory framing and reframing makes a structured network fundamentally different from a "smart mob." While smart mobs may utilize cell phones, the Internet, and other high-tech

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[26] See however the discussion of network norms, Appendix I: Netiquette, below.

means of communication to organize and coordinate demonstrations, structured networks provide the basis for much more profound iterative dialogue through which different people can learn from each other and change accordingly.

7. Network members internalize the resources of the network

Organizations consider as internal those resources to which they have routine, regular, unfettered and predictable access. Increasingly, member organizations are considering NAFFE and its member groups as part of their internal resources that they can draw on for their own activities. NAFFE members know they can tap into the knowledge and resources of the network. This, in turn, affects their planning processes, and their own calculations of the resources at their disposal.

In one example, a NAFFE member has tailored its state-based negotiating strategy with a corporation to leverage gains that it believes will reasonably result from negotiations that NAFFE is conducting with another transnational corporation.

The experience of other NAFFE members, made available through the network, has helped make it possible for local groups to develop state and municipal ordinances on day labor issues and create alternative hiring halls and worker centers.

8. Strategic growth of the network is more important than adding members

Networks can utilize resources efficiently by opting for targeted rather than exponential expansion. NAFFE could grow radically if it adopted an aggressive outreach strategy. But NAFFE has chosen instead to grow in a more strategic way with action groups determining which, if any additional members are required.[27] At 65 members, NAFFE is small enough to ensure regular contact among members through meetings and conference calls. At the same time, its complement of members from across different sectors and constituencies make the network an effective social actor. If it were grow to a few hundred organizations, NAFFE would have to re-tool its organizational structure, and resources would become more of a problem.

Much of NAFFE's growth has been organic, with local groups joining of their own initiative. No group that meets NAFFE's standard of membership is turned away. Through this process, NAFFE has grown to 65 members without a major recruitment drive. This includes an expansion of groups in

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[27] For example, the Campus Organizing Action Group has opted to proactively expand its membership, and is actively, but strategically, recruiting new members from the graduate employees and clerical worker segments of the campus workforce.

Canada. Several Mexican organizations are exploring joining NAFFE as well. The commitment of energy and resources to organizing has therefore been minimized, though it is not insignificant. Similarly, the costs of servicing new members on a day-to-day basis are not a major concern.

9. Networks can aid movement-building by spawning new networks

To avoid overextension, another way NAFFE has tried to grow strategically is by encouraging the development of other networks, and seeking to affiliate those networks where appropriate. NAFFE has supported with modest financial help and staff time the growth of the National Day Laborers Organizing Network as well as regional campus-based networks, like the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL), which are affiliated with NAFFE.

While conventional organizations often seek monopoly and are concerned with turf, boundaries, and competition, networks thrive on overlap and nesting. NAFFE has been active in bringing together groups that include both members and non-members.

For example, NAFFE does not see itself as becoming the coordinating body for worker center hiring halls around the country. But in April 2002 it brought together NAFFE members and others from around the country to develop a set of standards for worker-friendly hiring halls, and is now compiling the first directory of day labor hiring halls in the US.

10. The network has multiple vibrant and vital communication channels

Structured networks allow the sharing of information to be rapid and efficient. They provide a broad dissemination of information of general interest. At the same time, through repeated experience, the network can improve the targeting of information so that the right information can get to the right people at the right time.

The great majority of staff work is essentially opening and maintaining the channels of communication among members and to the wider public. Direct horizontal communication between members also flourishes, and is constantly encouraged within the network by staff and members.

Channels of communication NAFFE has developed for the organization as a whole include:

- A contingent-work newsletter distributed in hard copy and electronically;
- A website that is updated daily, with a members-only section featuring key archives and discussion forums;
- An e-mail listserv for member organizations;

- Monthly conference calls for each action group, as well as regular calls for specific projects.

Action Groups also have additional means of communication. For example, the Campus Organizing Action Group established its own internal e-mail listserv with daily news bulletins and alerts.

Finally, there is an active program of communications with the outside world. For example, NAFFE has established a Press Center, with a database of journalists concerned with contingent-work issues, and the capacity to provide press releases and lists of "experts"—workers and academics with relevant knowledge—to serve as sources for the press.

The Network Comes Together

How do these ten features/practices come together to conduct actions and campaigns? The following examples clearly demonstrate the network's dynamics.

(I) Temp Worker Justice Week 2002

In June 2002, the Temp and Day Labor Action Group considered responding to the annual "National Staffing Employee Appreciation Week" organized by the American Staffing Association (ASA), the US trade association of the temporary help industry.[28] Traditionally the ASA "honors" an exemplary temporary worker and uses the associated publicity to tout the alleged benefits of temp work. NAFFE members, however, wanted to use the event to match the publicity of the ASA with stories of "real" temp workers—people who were more representative of temp workers—to engage the association.

Many NAFFE members volunteered to recruit temp workers who would be available to the media. In seven cities, organizations planned small-scale actions. Trade union members of the Action Group were the original proponents of organizing a counter-week, Temp Worker Justice Week (TWJW); however, since the week was close to the November 2002 mid-term elections, they ended up participating in the planning, but opted-out of organizing actions.

An advocacy and policy organization had been planning to release a regional study on temp workers to coincide with the ASA's activities.[29] After learning

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[28] See http://www.staffingtoday.net. The association has state-based chapters in most states, and all the major temp agencies (including Manpower, Adecco, and Kelly) are members.

[29] See the Center for Policy Initiatives, *Just Getting By: The Experience of Temporary Workers in San Diego's Economy* (2002).

about the planned TWJW, they chose to frame their event as part of a *national* week of action. In another case, a previously planned institute on day labor (organized by NAFFE-affiliated organizations including a community-based organization, a department of the AFL-CIO, a national advocacy group, and a network) also framed itself as part of the national week.

The NAFFE Office coordinated the planning calls and brought together materials produced by member organizations. It organized a website devoted to the week, and did action-related support work.[30] In addition, it dropped a national press release and provided action kits, including fact sheets, sample press releases, etc. for member organizations.

While TWJW produced little wide-circulation media, it resulted in significant engagement with the industry.[31] Key trade publications covered the week's activities.[32] A senior ASA vice-president contacted the NAFFE office directly to learn more about the week. At two actions, ASA-affiliated groups offered to begin a dialogue over industry practices. One state affiliate of ASA distanced itself from its national counterpart and offered to work with the two NAFFE member organizations on day labor industry practices that they felt gave the entire staffing industry a bad name.

In this example, the network's modest investment in strategically aligning and supporting the activities of member organizations brought about offers of negotiation that the network may yet take up. In the following example, NAFFE *has* seized an opportunity to negotiate with a temp agency.

(II) How Does a Network Negotiate?

One of the challenges facing social movements that don't take conventional organizational forms is how to negotiate both with adversaries and with other organizations, since there is no Board or Executive Director or union president authorized to speak on behalf of the organization.[33] Over the

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[30] See http://www.fairjobs.org/fairjobs/news/week.php

[31] Actions took place in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Greenville (SC), Milwaukee, Phoenix, and San Diego. Organizations in Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto, and Washington DC were available to respond to the ASA publicity in their regions.

[32] See *Staffing Industry Report* (11/12/02) and *ASA Staffing Week (*10/28/02). The Bureau of National Affairs' *Union Labor Report* and *Daily Labor Report* covered the activities as did the AFL-CIO's *Work in Progress.*

[33] For background on this question, see Jeremy Brecher, "Afterword: Lessons of the Tobacco Wars," in Michael Pertschuk's*, Smoke in Their Eyes: Lessons in Movement Leadership from the Tobacco Wars* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2001).

course of 2002, NAFFE had to face this question as it engaged in ongoing negotiations with Manpower, Inc. [34]

The offer to negotiate was brought to NAFFE by Milwaukee-headquartered 9 to 5, the National Association of Working Women, which had been engaging the Milwaukee-based multi-national temp agency. Manpower was interested in negotiating with NAFFE for several reasons:

- It is interested in setting minimum standards for their industry to avoid a competitive "race-to-the-bottom," and the associated pressures on profitability;

- Unlike Europe, where business interests have "social partners" across the class divide, there is no national representative for the workers in the temporary work sector in the US. NAFFE, as a national network of organizations concerned about contingent work, is the closest equivalent;

- NAFFE's Code of Conduct for the Temporary Help industry is compatible with several of Manpower's existing practices.

Over the previous two years, laborious consultation among NAFFE groups and temp workers throughout the US and Canada had developed a "Code of Conduct for the Staffing Industry." This code provided the basis of NAFFE's discussion with Manpower over employment standards in the temp industry.

The Temporary and Day Labor Action Group elected a bargaining team consisting of one NAFFE Network Coordinator, a leader of a national organization which advocates for low income workers, an organizer and former temp worker, and an academic expert. The NAFFE staff member coordinated the team, prepared memos, and oversaw research. NAFFE member groups outside the team provided additional research. Each member of the team devoted significant time to the talks. Positions were arrived at by consensus. The network as a whole was regularly consulted for input.

As a result, the committee was fully prepared when it sat down to talk with Manpower and was able to respond quickly and professionally, confident of network support for its positions. The groundwork and trust that exists within NAFFE meant that as the negotiations progressed, the NAFFE committee was able to adapt the Code and develop innovative approaches to such questions as implementation and enforcement issues that often plague efforts to set standards where there is no enforceable collective bargaining

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[34] Manpower, Inc. is a transnational corporation, with $11 billion in revenues in 2002, that earns a majority of its income in Europe. It is the world's and the US' second largest temp agency (after Swiss-based Adecco). At several points during the 1990s, it was the largest private employer in the United States.

agreement. Manpower's express commitment to these standards will provide the normative basis for advocacy and community groups, and even to individual temp workers themselves to hold the corporation accountable.

Part V: Conclusions – Aggregating Power & Emerging Challenges

Challenges

Like many social movement organizations in North America today, NAFFE is facing important challenges. These will test the network structure in a variety of ways.

Some of these challenges lie in the external environment. NAFFE and many of the groups that compose it were conceived during a long economic boom. Unemployment was low and labor markets were tight, making some strategies to improve wages and working conditions more viable. Today the economy is depressed, and it shows little sign of recovery, especially for workers in low-wage jobs.

The current political climate is hostile to government intervention and change designed to solve social problems. The crisis in the public sector is being met by cutting services that poor, contingent workers relied upon, including access to health care. A new round of privatization and outsourcing of public services is leading to more jobs becoming contingent. Immigrant workers face increased pressure from the "war on terror."

In this difficult environment, social movement organizations in the US also face reductions in funding, as foundations cut back.

Other challenges are internal to social movement organizations and may specifically impact structured networks.

NAFFE members face increased demands, even while they are trying to cope in today's resource-short climate. This puts pressure on their ability to participate in wider networks. NAFFE has specifically, and so far successfully, tried to ensure that member groups continue to find involvement with the network worth their while.

In an era of resource contraction, groups must demonstrate concrete results to ensure the flow of resources on which they depend. It is often easier to show concrete, measurable results locally than through the more diffuse activities of a network. The result is a widespread tendency toward localism in organizational focus, even as broader arenas become more critical.

As NAFFE has matured, it has faced substantial turnover in the staff people that are appointed to represent their organizations. Sometimes member groups' institutional memory regarding NAFFE gets lost. NAFFE has learned that it must pay particular attention to this problem and put in the effort to bring new people up to speed, while working to build deep relationships within organizations.

A particular problem with structured networks is that they are made up of organizations that are involved with many issues. Their internal planning processes may produce shifts in priorities which in turn lead them to be more or less involved with an external network. Building trades unions, for example, were highly involved with NAFFE during the Labor Ready campaign, but became less involved afterwards, not because of any dissatisfaction with NAFFE, but simply because their own emphasis had shifted.

Aggregating power

These and other emerging challenges must be part of an ongoing process of organizational development. As NAFFE matures, its success at adapting to and accommodating these concerns may determine the extent of its ultimate effectiveness as a social movement organization. While these early experiences suggest success, NAFFE looks forward to continued self-reflection to determine the longer-term efficacy of the structured network form.

In the practices identified and through the examples provided, however, it is clear that the aggregation of different kinds of organizations and constituencies has leveraged power in a way that would not be possible for a less diverse group. Manpower would have been unlikely to spend eighteen months discussing standards in the temp industry either with a network of small community groups, or with representatives strictly of the labor movement. The network provides a balance of focused and diffuse power.

Contingent work affects people from many different sectors, and from up and down the economic ladder. Because the network form facilitates alliances that cross conventional class boundaries, they allow the kind of social movement building necessary to meet the scope of the problem of contingent work. As long as the organization devotes sufficient attention to the needs of its various constituencies, their diversity is generally not in itself divisive, and indeed can enhance the network's power.

NAFFE's organizational form has allowed it to give collective voice to a diverse array of organizations concerned with contingent work, while not drowning out their individual voices. At the same time, arranging the voices via common frames and strategic alignment has empowered the members to engage well-organized, powerful corporate interests, addressing the complex problems of contingent work.

Note: Netiquette

One set of norms is central to more conventional organizations but largely absent in a well-functioning network: a requirement for obedience to authority. Like other ongoing human interactions however, networks require norms of how people should and can be expected to act. While norms can be laid out as proscriptive rules, more frequently they emerge from the interaction process itself. They express a network's sense of and learning about what works and what is fair. They are often thought of as little more than "good etiquette" for network participation.

In networks, there is little formal authority that is able to impose legitimate sanctions for the violation of norms. But because it is so easy for members to opt-out of particular activities without losing the benefits of participation in the network as a whole, the threat of boycott provides an easy and relatively low-cost sanction for unacceptable behavior.

Many of the norms that evolved within NAFFE and other networks involve communication. A primary rule is to provide other people information that may affect them. At the same time, because people are faced with such an overwhelming flow of information, there is a complementary responsibility not to provide others so much information that it wastes their time and jams the channels of communication.

A second set of norms involves respect for each other's autonomy. This is embodied in NAFFE's seeking strategic alignment of existing member activities rather than pressuring members to join entirely new collective projects.

A third set of norms involves limiting claims on scarce network resources. Each action group understands that staff time and resources are limited and acts accordingly.

A fourth set of norms involves reciprocity. If one member engages in activities that benefit another or others, some kind of balance can be expected in return. For instance, the Central Office has compiled a directory of hiring halls—the most complete listing of its kind. It shares this directory with NAFFE groups that in turn help to update it when they hear of new hiring halls being opened or existing ones closing. Similarly, members are willing to share strategy and tactics with other members.

A fifth set of norms concerns negotiation, dialogue, and conflict resolution. Where there are difficulties and conflicts, network participants are generally expected to engage in processes designed to address them, rather than either concealing them or acting to the detriment of other members. Whenever possible, NAFFE tries to develop its responses over time, so that conflicts can be worked out. For example, NAFFE's proposed codes of conduct, the public policies it promotes, and the organizing strategies it

supports were each developed through a year or more of dialogue, and continued to be revised through further communication.