future news

a newsletter from the *futures* foundation

Vol 9 No 8 September 2004

Can ancient keys unlock the future?

Networks are all abuzz with all the buzz about networks. Whether it's finding out how to improve the learning of organisations, or mobilising 'smart mobs' of activists with SMS and webcast technologies, leading thinkers in science, government, management, education and elsewhere are busy exploring the nature and behaviour of networks. To understand networks, they say, will be to understand the future.

In all the excitement, it would be easy to overlook the fact that many of the lessons we are learning today are not really new. But as evolution biologist Elisabet Sahtouris told Futures Foundation members in Sydney in June (see *Future News* July), we still have much to learn.

Like Dr Sahtouris, Fritjof Capra points out that studying the metabolism of living networks can help us understand the "metabolism" of organisations, of communities, of nations and other human systems. In characteristically lucid style, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist draws parallels between these and other networks, like living cells. He gives examples of the way key insights can be transferred from the study of living systems to offer a better understanding of human society and its institutions. And at the same time, he reminds us of the limitations of the mechanistic, reductionist approach to learning and calls for more scientists to cross the boundaries of disciplines in search of holistic understandings.

A key theme in the study of all networks is recognition of the importance of knowledge and the way it is shared in relationships. Googling published material on these topics will take the inquiring mind deep into fundamental issues of structure and process, of language and meaning, of living systems and the nature of life itself. But nothing can equal the experience of making this learning journey in person, through the work of physicists, biologists and the theorists of chaos and complexity. Just for starters, we offer some ideas from people working in the field, in our special feature starting on page 3.

INSIDE

WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NETWORKS

Howard Rheingold *(See Smart Mobs p3)* says key questions are:

- **What do we know now about the emergent properties of ad hoc mobile computing networks, and what do we need to know in the future?**
- **What are the central issues for individuals in a world pervaded by surveillance devices – in terms of what we can do about it?**
- **What are the long-term consequences of near-term political decisions on the way we'll use and be affected by mobile, pervasive, always-on media?**

More at www.demos.co.uk/catalogue/networks

The Typhoon Summit
(on the unpredictability of the future)

When Tim Longhurst of the Futures Foundation in Sydney went to a futures course in Taipei this month, the experience wasn't quite what he expected. For a start, Super-Typhoon Aere decided to visit at the same time. This changed the formal plan of events for the week-long course, and an unanticipated outcome was that Tim found himself trapped in his quarters at the univer - sity with a small crowd of local and interna - tional professors and the heads of the world's top futures organisations. He managed to go with the flow....

Uprooted trees, overturned scooters, shattered glass. Super-Typhoon Aere shook Tamkang University's Tamsui Campus. At the very same time -- perhaps a little less predictable, definitely more constructive -- another type of energy hit Tamkang in the form of the Asia Pacific Course in Futures Studies and Policy Making.

Eighty participants from the region took part in the conference. Students and professors of Tamkang's Masters course in Futures Studies were joined by students and professors from Australia, China, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines and the United States. Leaders of the world's major futures organisations also attended: Timothy Mack, president of the World Future Society; Richard Slaughter, chair of the World Futures Studies Federation; and Sesh Velamoor, president of the Foundation for the Future.

The Calm Before the Storm (Monday)

University Founder, Clement Chang, set the scene by espousing the virtues of futuring, with course director, Professor Sohail Inayatullah, explaining the link between policy and futures. Policy, he said, is a key tool in shaping how organizations operate. Environmental policy affects the air we all breathe; furniture policy dictates the chairs in which we sit.

Dr Richard Slaughter's interactive session applied the T-Cycle (a futures process in which T stands for transformation) to Taiwan's transport problems. Ideas from students included dodgem cars and underground commuter tunnels, but if this participant's innovative thinking comes to fruition, keep an eye out for a 'Venice inspired' Tamsui, with commuter boats replacing cars and scooters.

> **"Policy is a key tool in shaping how organizations operate."**

Other speakers on day one included Monica Merkes from Darebin City Council (Australia) on women's working futures, Cesar Villanueva (Phillippines) on peace and futures, Ryota Ono (Japan) on aspects of chaos theory, and Jennifer Coote (New Zealand) on future-watching. Reports of some of these presentations will be included in future issues of *Future News*.

The Typhoon (Tuesday and Wed a.m.)

Taiwan's government decided that the ferocity of Typhoon Aere, gradually approaching Taipei, required the nation to go into 'lockdown'. Policy had shut down a course on policy.

Contingency planning by course directors resulted in a 'Typhoon Summit', an impromptu seminar where those participants marooned in the Faculty Apartments (the three presidents and visiting professors) joined local professors to discuss aspects of the global futures community. The development of an International Masters in Future Studies was canvassed by Richard Slaughter, with that discussion followed by a conversation on understandings and perceptions of futures within the community.

The Post-Typhoon Re-Group

When the course got back on schedule, Shun-Jie Ji from Tamkang explored the future of Taiwan, and discussed the challenges facing the island, while Zhizhou Chen, Chenggang Yang and Gongnan Liu from People's Republic of China led a mainland exploration of futures thinking. The youngest presenter was Jake Dunegan, a PhD student attending the University of Hawaii, who rounded out the formal sessions with his presentation on the future of human-computer technology. The topic of cyborgs clearly enthralled the enthusiastic audience of Masters students, who responded to Dunegan's discussion of coming ethical and legal issues with strong images of alternative futures.

A Cultural Exchange

For me, as an Australian in a majority-Taiwanese conference, one of the big lessons of the conference was not content, but cultural. At the conclusion of each presentation, the audience of attentive students was invited to ask a question. Not a hand would rise. In the West, Q and A is considered an important part of the education process: an opportunity for evaluation of the success (or otherwise!) of the communication. So as a dutiful member of the audience, I made an effort each time to have a question, so the presenter would see that the message had been communicated effectively. Imagine how I felt on the last day of the conference, when I learned that in Taiwan, asking questions in class is a great way to alienate your peers! Apparently, asking a question is seen as a way to make your fellow students appear inferior to your enlightened self. Luckily one of the professors reassured me, commenting on the value of having a westerner show how things are done back home. "Don't worry, they will benefit from being a little more Western." My discoveries over the five days of the conference revealed the charm and good nature of the Taiwanese people. If I did happen to bring out some of the West in them, they certainly brought out some of the East in me.

Tim Longhurst

Can understanding networks help us understand the future?

"To understand the nature of life, it is not enough to understand DNA, genes, proteins, and the other molecular structures that are the building blocks of living organisms," writes Fritjof Capra, "because these structures also exist in dead organisms, for instance in a dead piece of wood or bone. The difference between a living organism and a dead organism lies in the basic process of life -- metabolism. It is the ceaseless flow of energy and matter through a network of chemical reactions which enables a living organism to continually generate, repair and perpetuate itself....

"There are two basic aspects to the understanding of metabolism. One is the continuous flow of energy and matter. All living systems need energy and food to sustain themselves; and all living systems produce waste. But life has evolved in such a way that organisms form ecological communities, or ecosystems, in which the waste of one species is food for the next, so matter cycles continually through the ecosystem's food webs.

"The second aspect of metabolism is the network of chemical reactions that process the food and form the biochemical basis of all biological structures, functions and behaviour. The emphasis here is on 'network'. One of the most important insights of the new understanding of life that is now emerging at the forefront of science is the recognition that the network is a pattern that is common to all life. Wherever we see life, we see networks."

Like Dr Sahtouris, Capra cautions against oversimplifying the application of living system metaphors.

"While insights into the organisation of biological networks may help us understand social networks, we should not expect to transfer our understanding of the networks' material structures from the biological to the social domain. Social networks are first and foremost networks of communications involving symbolic language, cultural constraints, relationships of power, and so on. To understand the structures of such networks we need to use insights from social theory, philosophy, cognitive science, anthropology and other disciplines.

"Social networks, then, are not networks of chemical reactions, but networks of communications. Like biological networks, they are self-generating, but what they generate is mostly non-material. Each communication creates thoughts and meaning, which give rise to further communications, and thus the entire network generates itself.

"The dimension of meaning is crucial to understand social networks.

"As communications continue in a social network, they form multiple feedback loops, which eventually produce a shared system of beliefs, explanations and values – a common context of meaning, also known as culture, which is continually sustained by further communications. Through this culture individuals acquire identities as members of the social network, and in this way the network generates its own boundary. It is not a physical boundary but a boundary of expectations, of confidentiality and loyalty, which is continually maintained and renegotiated by the network of communications.

"Culture, then, arises from a network of communications among individuals; and as it emerges, it produces constraints on their actions. The social network also produces a shared body of knowledge – including information, ideas and skills – that shapes the culture's distinctive way of life in addition to its values and beliefs. Moreover, the culture's values and beliefs also affect its body of knowledge. They are part of the lens through which we see the world.

"Living social systems are self-generating networks of communications. This means that a human organisation will be a living system only if it is organised as a network or contains smaller networks within its boundaries, and only if these networks are self-generating."

FRITJOF CAPRA **www.fritjofcapra.net**

RELATIONSHIPS AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

"Together, knowledge and relationships are the only true sources of sustainable competitive advantage. Moreover, knowledge itself is all about relationships—between people and organizations," wrote Ross Dawson in the introduction to his latest book, *Living Networks.*

"It is now widely acknowledged in the business community that knowledge is the most valuable resource of organizations....

"There has been much talk of the 'extended enterprise,' which includes not only clients, but suppliers, partners, and alliance members. Yet organizations still often do not act in ways that reflect a belief that the flow of knowledge and interaction should freely include their clients and other stakeholders. Knowledge is not just an internal issue; every facet of it is deeply tied to external relationships....

"Knowledge and relationships are about people. Only people hold knowledge, and all relationships are ultimately about individuals interacting. As such, greater effectiveness in developing knowledge-based client relationships must be based on understanding the nature of knowledge, how people acquire and develop their understanding of the world, and how people can learn to interact more effectively. Rich interaction among people is at the heart of knowledge sharing. This is certainly not to imply that technology is not a critical factor in the effective delivery of professional services. Technology issues will be fundamental to the future of professional services in three ways: in helping to bring people together in more effective ways, in developing ways of interactively developing people's knowledge rather than simply dumping information, and in contributing to the commoditization of many offerings."

ROSS DAWSON **www.ahtgroup.com**

Smart mobs: the power of the mobile many

On 20 January 2001, President Joseph Estrada of the Philippines became the first head of state in history to lose power to a smart mob.

"Following the abrupt ending of his impeachment trial by sympathetic senators, Manila residents began to assemble on Epifanio de los Santas Avenue (known as 'Edsa'). Within 75 minutes, 20,000 people had converged on Edsa, mobilised and coordinated by waves of text messages initiated by opposition leaders: 'Go 2EDSA, Wear blck'. Over four days, more than a million people showed up, mostly dressed in black. The military withdrew support from the regime; the Estrada government fell.

"The rapid assembly of the anti-Estrada crowd was a hallmark of early smart mob technology, and the millions of text messages exchanged by the demonstrators in 2001 were, by all accounts, a key to the crowd's esprit de corps," says Howard Rheingold. "The legend of 'Generation Txt' was born."

Rheingold highlights this example in his book, *Smart Mobs: the next social revolution*, as a "momentous early eruption of smart mob behaviour." It wasn't, however, the only one.

"On 30 November 1999, autonomous but internet-worked squads of demonstrators protesting at the meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) used swarming tactics, mobile phones, websites, laptops and PDAs to win The Battle of Seattle. In September 2000, thousands of citizens in Britain, outraged by a sudden rise in gasoline prices, used mobile phones, SMS, email from laptop PCs and CB radios in taxicabs to coordinate dispersed groups that blocked fuel delivery at selected service stations in a wildcat political protest."

Rheingold also explores the concept of "netwar" – a whole new form of engagement for those seeking to achieve specific results.

"Smart mobs engaging in either violent or non-violent netwar represent only a few of the many possible varieties of smart mob. Netwars do share a similar technical infrastructure with other smart mobs. More importantly, however, they are both animated by a new form of social organisation, the network. Networks include nodes and links, use many possible paths to distribute information from any link to any other, and are self-regulated through flat governance hierarchies and distributed power."

These are not merely superficial signs of changing fashions or social trends, says Rheingold, but something much more fundamental. Like others, he believes networks constitute the newest major social organisational form, after tribes, hierarchies and markets. "Although network-structured communications hold real potential for enabling democratic forms of decision-making and beneficial instances of collective action, that doesn't mean that the transition to networked forms of social organisation will be a pleasant one with uniformly benevolent outcomes. Arquilla and Ronfeldt note the potential for cooperation in examples like the non-governmental organisations that use netwar tactics for public benefit, but they also articulated a strong caution, worth keeping in mind when contemplating the future of smart mobs: 'Most people might hope for the emergence of a new form of organisation to be led by 'good guys' who do 'the right thing' and grow stronger because of it. But history does not support this contention."

About the boids* & the bees

Rheingold is also interested in a possible connection between computer-wearing social networks of thinking, communicating humans and the swarm intelligence of unthinking (but also communicating) ants, bees, fish, and birds. "Individual fish and birds ... school and flock simply by paying attention to what their nearest neighbours do. The coordinated movement of schools and flocks is a dynamically shifting aggregation of individual decisions. Even if there were a central tuna or pigeon who could issue orders, no system of propagating orders from a central source can operate swiftly enough to avoid being eaten by sharks or slamming into trees. When it comes to hives and swarms, the emergent capabilities of decentralised self-organisation can be surprisingly intelligent."

How do humans exhibit emergent behaviour? Kevin Kelly traced back the new theories regarding emergent properties to William Morton Wheeler, an expert in the behaviour of ants. Wheeler called insect colonies 'superorganisms' and defined the ability of the hive to accomplish tasks that no individual ant or bee is intelligent enough to do on its own as 'emergent properties' of the superorganism. Kelly drew parallels between the ways both biological and artificial 'vivisystems' exhibit the same four characteristics of what he called 'swarm systems':

- the absence of imposed centralised control
- the autonomous nature of sub-units
- the high connectivity between the sub-units
- the webby non-linear causality of peers influencing peers.

***A famous study by Craig Reynolds at the Sante Fe Institute replicated the flocking behaviour of birds with three programmed instructions. For more information, Google 'Santa Fe boids'.**

NETWORKS ARE THE MATRIX

If networks are the organising form of life, including social life, why is it only in recent years that networks have come to the forefront of social practice?, asks Manuel Castells of UCLA. "Why the network society now?" He believes the answer is in the development of micro-electronics and software-based communication technologies.

"Of course, we know that technology does not determine society. But we also know that without specific technologies some social structures could not develop. For example, the industrial society could not have emerged without electricity and the electrical engine.

Thus only under the conditions of the recent wave of information and communication technologies could networks (an old form of social organisation) address their fundamental shortcoming: their inability to manage coordination functions beyond a certain threshold of size, complexity and velocity. Only under the electronics-based technological paradigm can networks reconfigure themselves in real time, on a global–local scale, and permeate all domains of social life. This is why we live in a network society, not in an information society or a knowledge society."

In an article at www.demos.org, he argues that in this network society, power continues to be the fundamental structuring force of its shape and direction. "But power does not reside in institutions, not even in the state or in large corporations. It is located in the networks that structure society. Or, rather, in what I propose to call the 'switchers'; that is, the mechanisms connecting or disconnecting networks on the basis of certain programmes or strategies. For instance, in the connection between the media and the political system. Or between the financial markets and the regulatory agencies. Or between the criminal economy and the same financial markets. Or between religious apparatuses and government leaders. Or any multi-pronged combination of any of the previous combinations.

Power elite? Precisely not. Elites change with each reconfiguration of networks. Power is exercised by specific configurations of these networks that express dominant interests and values, but whose actors and forms can change. This is why to challenge a certain group in government or in business does not alter the structural logic of domination. This is why to counter networks of power and their connections, alternative networks need to be introduced: networks that disrupt certain connections and establish new ones, such as disconnecting political institutions from the business-dominated media and re-anchoring them in civil society through horizontal communication networks. Networks versus networks. Domination can hardly be exercised against self-configuring networks. And democratic control is lost in a global network of multidimensional domination hidden in the complexity of switches.

Networks matter because they are the underlying structure of our lives. And without understanding their logic we cannot change their programmes to harness their flexibility to our hopes, instead of relentlessly adapting ourselves to the instructions received from their unseen codes. Networks are the Matrix.

RU LINKED IN?

Social networking programs like LinkedIn are also creating a buzz in the world of work. Yahoo, however, doesn't think much of the concept, according to the newsletter of Holtz Communication and Technology in Canada.
"At least, Yahoo hasn't discerned a business model around social networking," it says. "Terry Semel, Yahoo's CEO, says the company is keeping a close watch on social networking sites like Friendster and, if they generate revenue, Yahoo may be interested in starting one of its own (or acquiring an existing network). On the flip side, CEO Networking Partner Mitchell Levy, in his top 10 business trends for 2004, wrote, 'A couple of large corporations will deploy one of the social business networking software (tools) within the firewall as a productivity tool.' LinkedIn on your intranet? Could be..."
To discuss these and related issues about communication, log on at *http://webinar.holtz.com*.

BUT NO GAMBLING OR DIVORCE BY SMS

Fierce competition for SMS business in Asia is leading mobile phone carriers to use creative marketing, like user competitions for SMS slogans. But a backlash from the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia says these competitions are a form of gambling that should be banned under Islamic law. Divorces by SMS under Muslim law are also under scrutiny.

Of leadership, cooperation and government

Governments don't move; they morph, according to Karen Stephenson, professor of management at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. "Built on the skeletal remains of past policies they grow incrementally like a coral reef, changing the ecosystem around them. And, like coral reefs, they are vast structures, difficult to chart thoroughly." In an essay that explores past and future ideas about structures including markets, hierarchies and networks, she notes that "whether the jungles are green and leafy or concrete, they are brimming with intricate webs of relationships, which when viewed from afar reveal elementary structures". Networks comprise the core DNA within any governance structure and that reciprocity is key to the power of networks: "the alchemy of mutual give and take over time turning to a golden trust".

In a hierarchy, one person can perform the work of one. In a network shared collective intelligence is exponential: two people can perform the work of four. "This multiplier effect is a result of the leveraging of individual efforts through bonds of mutual trust and reciprocity, as evidenced by sturdy hunter-gatherers who daily survived overwhelming ecological odds through cooperation.

"Primordially, trust was determined through face-to-face interactions, and to a large extent is still today. Therefore one needs to appreciate the profound truth that the face of trust is still a human face, a face that can mask a fundamental fear of differences. The stark truth about trust is that if you don't look like me, or dress like me, walk or talk like I do, then I am not likely to know or understand you.... A network of trust is the real invisible hand behind every act of deceit, fraud and betrayal."

Stephenson's description of current structures in organisations and government offers an approach to a common problem: how to win shared commitment to common goals rather than wasting organisational energy on conflict and competition.

"Human networks have evolved from bands, tribes, 'segmentary lineages' and chiefdoms right up to the modern state. Government operations betray the signs of this evolutionary heritage.... when policies change or new needs arise, teams are created not from the ground up, but as sub-units of existing segments. As layers of hierarchy proliferate, units at each layer compete against one another... So within a government department, one team jockeys for position with another, one directorate attacks another to protect its budget, and the department as a whole fights other departments to defend its turf. In these systems there is no internal structure or infrastructure to join the system as a whole; it is simply a network of hierarchies.... Competition, not collaboration, is the watchword."

Anew technique combining process mapping and modelling with social network analysis, or 'people mapping' is now being used to try to improve partnership working. Trials under way in the UK have revealed, for example, that "four different agencies all carrying out multi-agency training to different standards were unaware of each other's work in this area". But, she asks, while processes may be mapped and aligned, who is looking after the leaders? "Where does the leadership reside and what does it look like?" And she warns that there is more work to be done: having the networks mapped does not tell you about the cultural terrain you have to cross in order to lead effectively: "the map is most certainly not the territory. Rather it is the lack of a coordinated leadership network within a network of hierarchies that produces the lurches, lunging and sputtering we frequently experience in government."

Lurching from one mess to the next

"We humans have never excelled in planning the path of progress," says the *New Scientist* in a futures-oriented editorial this week (11 09 04). 'We tend to adopt new technology as soon as it comes along, then wait to discover the consequences." But the journal is seeing something new with growing public concern about issues such as BSE and genetically modified crops forcing governments and companies to explore the risks before ploughing ahead with the technology. It quotes a report from the Royal Society into nanotechnology, commissioned by the government, that insists more research is needed and advises the British government to start a discussion with the public before views about nano tech become polarised and entrenched. "We cannot carry on ignorantly lurching from one mess to the next," says the journal.

THE EVOLUTION OF COOPERATION

A new book on economics from Paul Seabright at the University of Toulouse discusses the evolution of human trust and argues that "our everyday life is much stranger than we imagine, and rests on fragile foundations". It was only 10,000 years ago that "one of the most aggressive and elusive bandit species in the entire animal kingdom" settled down to grow food. In no more than the blink of an eye, in evolutionary time, these "shy, murderous apes" developed cooperative networks of staggering scope and complexity, networks that relied on trust between strangers. He explores cooperation between humans and other species, and its role in the modern global economy. But he warns that cooperation is a two-edged sword: "it also makes possible the most successful acts of aggression between one group and another." *(The Economist 14 08 04)*

The Company of Strangers **Princeton University Press**

MOMENTS OF TRUTH

Issues of truth and meaning are regular features of *Future News*. Now they are becoming regular features in other media, too, and with good cause. Current examples include:

- a growing debate about the use of paid "professional experts" and others such as "no-win-no-fee" witnesses who have a financial stake in the outcomes of court cases. Courts are responding by appointing their own expert witnesses *(Financial Review 06 09 04);*
- the discussion about truth in politics in Australia, that won't go away before the election. Peter Hartcher writes that "as a nation we demand honesty in politics, but only when it suits us" *(SMH 21-22 08 04);*
- the discussion about truth in politics in the USA that won't go away before the election. Marianne Hanson examines the US president's conflicting comments on winning the "war on terrorism" *(Courier-Mail 02 09 04);*
- the discussion about truth in science that won't go away. Umberto Eco argues that science avoids fundamentalism by embracing fallibility as its tool of progress. *(SMH 23 08 04)*

An even more troubling example was reported in US media this week.

"On August 11, John Kerry criticized the Bush Administration for blocking a bipartisan plan to give seniors access to lower-priced prescription drugs from Canada. With almost 80 percent of Medicare recipients supporting Kerry's position, the Bush campaign was faced with the prospect of defending a politically unpopular position," says a story in *The Nation (27 09 04)*.

"That same day, in an interview with the Associated Press, FDA Acting Commissioner Lester Crawford said terrorist 'cues from chatter' led him to believe Al Qaeda may try to attack Americans by contaminating imported prescription drugs. Crawford refused to provide any details to substantiate his claims.

"Asked about Crawford's comments, a spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security was forced to concede, 'We have no specific information now about any Al Qaeda threats to our food or drug supply.' The Administration had brazenly used Americans' justifiable fears of a future terrorist attack to parry a routine criticism of its policies."

Perhaps not surprising, then, that very few people had applied for the new Medicare offer.

" Far from the expected deluge, relatively few patients with cancer and other serious illnesses have applied for generous early Medicare prescription drug coverage," said Associated Press. *(12 09 04)*

Instead of holding a planned lottery to find the lucky 50,000 patients, the new coverage has been granted to all of the few thousand who applied.

All of this is adding energy to the burgeoning movements for social change. Latest to appear in Australia is a new political party called People Power *(http://www.peoplepower.org.au*).

How long does it take to beat denial?

On top of all that has gone before, we now hear from the green front that hydrologists have completely miscalculated how much water will be available for growing crops around the world and that "permanent hydrological drought is close to becoming a global fact of life". *(New Scientist 21 08 04)*. **At the same time, several sources report that there is much less oil available than we had thought** *(Williams Inference June 04)*; **the World Business Council for Sustainable Development says global carbon dioxide emissions could double by 2050 if energy-saving measures are not universally introduced** *(World Energy Congress 09 04)* **and another report from CSIRO warns that NSW will face the risk of bigger and more frequent floods and will struggle to maintain the quality of its water supplies as temperatures rise. The report predicts temperature increases up to 6.4 degrees by 2070, with the greatest rises in the west and north.**

No wonder the insurers are ducking for cover: things have become so bad in the US home insurance market that the insurer of the uninsurable, Lloyd's of London, has stepped in, writes Christopher Oster *(AFR 08 09 04)*. **The almost-good news is that the chorus of voices pointing the way is growing harder to deny. Even the Bush administration now "accepts what thousands of scientists and politicians claim to have known all along -- that human activity has caused the increase in global temperatures seen over the past 30 years"** *(New Scientist 04 09 04)*.

Truth-tellers arise!

Daniel Ellsberg, with ten former employees of the FBI, CIA, State and Defense Departments, has issued a call to current government officials to disclose classified information that contradicts government lies. Ellsberg says: "If you have documentary evidence that our country has been lied into an unnecessary, wrongful, endless war—as I had during Vietnam—I urge you to consider doing right now what I wish I had done years earlier than I did: give the truth to Congress and the press, with copies of those documents. The personal costs you risk are great, but you may save many Americans from being lied to death." The group released a list of existing documents wrongly withheld within the government as examples of the kind that the public has a right to see. These include background on Army Staff estimates before the war that the Iraq effort would require several hundred thousand troops. Former CIA analyst Ray McGovern adds: "Truth. Never in the past 50 years has it been in such short supply in the US defense/intelligence community. Yet it is the truth -- once known -- that will keep us free. Truth-tellers, arise!"

Signals in the noise

"Honest John" under siege

John Howard's response to the 43 former defence and diplomatic chiefs who attacked his "deception" of the Australian people is not enough, says *The Economist*. The PM said his critics had passed their best-by dates. "But they cannot be so easily dismissed," said the prestigious journal, adding that "the murkiness surrounding Australia's involvement [in Iraq] suggests the issue is likely to damage the government in the election campaign".

The Economist UK *14-20 08 04* *1212*

Lost in translation

One minute, he's being dubbed the "Sheik of Hate" by the tabloids, the next, Taj El-Din Al Hilaly is inviting friends over for a barbie. So is our top-ranking Muslim an extremist, a misunderstood moderate or a menace to his own faithful? Richard Guilliatt investigates...

Good Weekend *21 08 04* *1213*

A new world view struggles to emerge

Are we seeing the emergence of a new view of what makes life worth living? Richard Eckersley asks if we can develop "a morality that is autonomous but also institutionalises social responsibility and engagement" and suggests we are seeing the centre of moral gravity shift from social institutions to individuals. He quotes Australian and US research showing key value shifts including the lifestyle "downshifting" of at least 23% of Australians, and connects with positive stories from history that suggest deep and positive social change is possible.

The Futurist Sept-October 2004 *1214*

Trust at work

A new study from Accenture says more than half the people who do business online ended their relationships with a company because they didn't trust the organisation to keep their personal information private. At about the same time, Towers Perrin released a study focusing on trust between employees and employers. Only about half of employees believe companies tell them the truth. The same number thinks their companies work hard to spin the truth. Some 60% believe their companies communicate more openly with shareholders and customers than they do with employees.

www.holtz.com *September 2004* *1215*

God's billion-dollar particle

International experts have agreed on a blueprint for a gigantic atom-smashing machine to help them find the God particle, otherwise known as the Higgs boson. Scientists have been searching for the particle since it was first proposed by Peter Higgs in the 1960s. They have already spent billions of dollars on a succession of more powerful accelerators to hunt down the particle, thought to interact with all other forms of matter to give them their mass.

Sydney Morning Herald *23 08 04* *1216*

No future?

Former Victorian premier, Jeff Kennett, is reported to be despondent about the televised election debate between John Howard and Mark Latham, which left him feeling frustrated at the lack of political vision. "There was nothing about the future," he said.

The Australian *13 09 04* *1217*

A harvest of inequality

CEOs of America's largest companies received a 9% raise last year, bringing home $8.1 million, 301 times as much as the average non-supervisory employee who got a 2% raise in 2003, according to "Executive Excess", a study by United for a Fair Economy and the Institute for Policy Studies. Worse, the study found that CEOs of the companies that have outsourced most jobs receive pay that is 24% higher than the average large company CEO. Last month, the US Census Department reported that the poverty rate increased for the third year in a row to 12.5%, with 35m Americans now living beneath the poverty line, six million more than in 2000. Seven million of those in poverty are employed. Another million Americans lost their health insurance cover last year, bringing the number of Americans without insurance to 45m, 6m more than in 2000.

www.commondreams.org *10 09 04* *1218*

Super surveillance

Recent leaps in technology have paired highly sophisticated software with street surveillance cameras to create digital security guards with intelligence-gathering skills, Miron Varouhakis reported from Athens. A huge system monitored Athens during the Olympic Games, including spoken words collected by more than 1000 high-resolution infrared cameras with speech-recognition software. Meanwhile, RFID tags on products are worrying privacy advocates worldwide, with "smart tags" beaming data back to marketers. On the positive side, the same technology can be used to report personal health data and track patients with dementia. A wristwatch with tracking capability was used to monitor body temperatures during the SARS crisis.

New Scientist, SMH, AFR *August 2004* *1220*