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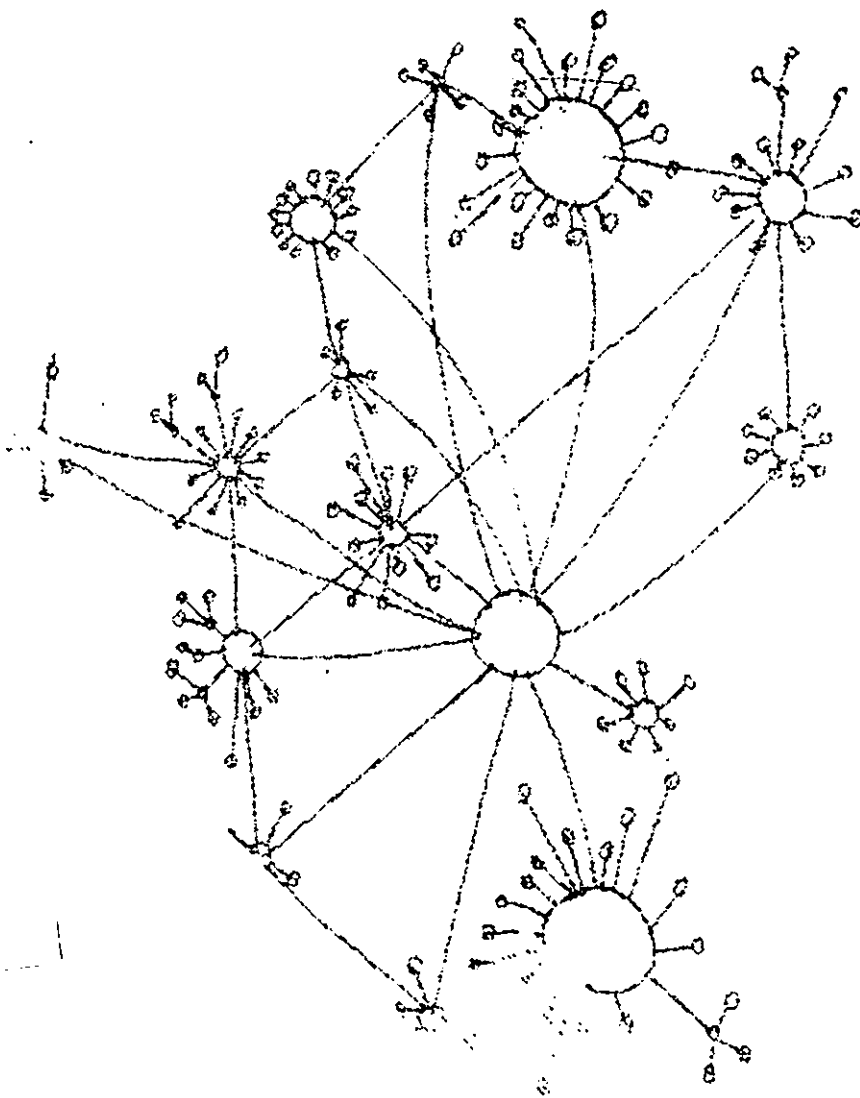


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A Network for the Transparent Conspiracy

# NETWORK OF NETWORKS

*Civici Ed  
Venezuela*



Elías Santana  
Caracas, Venezuela  
1994

Translation of "Una red para la conspiracion transparente"

## Elías Santana



Shaped by the neighborhood association movement, he now acts as Director of the Escuela de Vecinos de Venezuela (School of Neighbors of Venezuela) and is host of the television spot "Buenas Noticias" (Good News), dedicated to presenting positive community experiences.

He participates in the Asociación Civil Queremos Elegir (Civil Association "We want to Choose") and from this experience he has proposed the Network of Networks as an option for the organization, encounter, and coordinated action of Venezuela citizens.

He teaches the class "Gerente, Empresa y Comunidad" (Manager, Company and Community) at the Universidad Metropolitana (Metropolitan University) and works as an announcer for Radio Capital in Caracas. He is also the author of the book *El Poder de los Vecinos* (The Power of the Neighbors).

He is affiliated with civic groups such as Pro Calidad de Vida, Bioma, Sociedad Conservacionista Audubon de Venezuela, Acide, Cedice, Pro Vita, Fundanimal, Fudena, Asoboulevard and Asohorizonte.

# A Network for the Transparent Conspiracy

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### A Network for the Transparent Conspiracy

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- An option for the modernization of Venezuela

**Elías Santana**

First Edition July 1992. 2000 copies

Second Edition April 1993. 2000 copies

Third Edition June 1994. 2000 copies

Caracas, Venezuela

# 1. THE OTHER COUNTRY

There exists a Venezuela which is always on the front page of the newspapers and on the news casts of radio and television.

It is the country of corruption, of the party, business, and labor elites that represent nothing but their own interests. It is the country of violence, legal or illegal, of injustice and of the people who parade their impunity.

It is the country of dynamic interaction between opposition and government, between party line and personal conscience, of elections by ballot and of the secretariats or bureaus from which the civil society is controlled, of the permits and regulations for control of the economy under the auspices of the party.

But there is another country. One in which the citizens don't wait for the government or the party, or the current civil or military messiahs, or for the next elections to resolve their problems or guarantee their rights.

This is the country of citizen and community groups that are not the initiative of the government, but that are private and belong to the civil society.

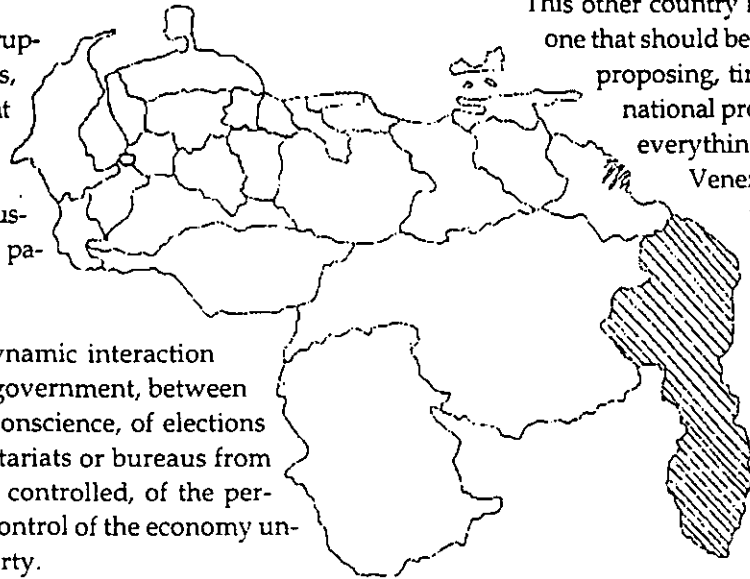
This country deserves to express itself, to be recognized, and to win its own space in public opinion. This is the country where the transparent conspiracy can be

forged, where a network of networks can be designed, where one can talk about making the other country a reality.

This other country follows its own rhythm, one that should be respected. Meeting and proposing, timidly, local solutions to national problems. It discovers that everything can be different, that Venezuela can develop itself, in accord with its history, its reality and the interests of its inhabitants. It can modernize itself.

The other country signals, with its own existence, solutions for health, transportation, security, education or productivity and consumption. It requires that the State concentrates on its central functions, that all resources be administered for and under the control of everyone.

This other country has been energized by the crisis that, with deep roots in plans and actions of the past, has expressed itself in the previous months. The crisis has catalyzed the process. Resulting from this process is the proposal of a means of encounter, interchange, and coordinated action among the new protagonists who, belonging to the other country, appear as a motivating option for the necessary process of the modernization on Venezuela: **The Network of Networks.**



## 2. NETWORK OF NETWORKS

Recent events in our country have facilitated a series of encounters between people, groups, and social sectors that, under normal conditions, had been delayed for years in discovering their common interests.

The encounter has been among those of us who feel that we have been robbed of our country; among those of us who lament that millions of Venezuelan associate the concept of "Democracy" with the government branches that act in accord with their particular interests, that which we have named "corruptocracy"; among those that feel that a military solution, or extreme violence that drives a visionary to power, is not an option for the solution of the real problems of the country.

Thus, the encounter is summed up by the emblematic phrase of the group that solicited a Constitutional Assembly last April, in the middle of the suspension of guarantees: Neither corruptocracy nor dictatorship. We want a true Democracy.

Each one of the groups and sectors of citizens has come developing solutions and practical options of participation from the civil society, with autonomy in the face of the parties and with forms of organization that are horizontal and participatory. Each one, according to its speciality, has offered from its own experience, has promoted and achieved changes in the political system, in the economy, or in the organization or community conduct of the citizen.

In these groups, words like ethics, participation, work, equal opportunity, liberty and responsibility, coordination and cooperation, competency, efficiency and creativity are part of the everyday language. Perhaps because of this, the encounter has been relatively simple. In spite of belonging to sectors that in another epoch had been portrayed as enemies, they possess a common culture and values. They also possess peculiarities that, fortunately, differentiate them and make them faithful representatives of their social sectors.

Each group, each sector, has reacted after the coup attempt and after the sluggish response of the political elite, with the intention of looking for ways out, of radically correcting the vices of the corruptocracy, and of avoiding a spiral of violence that leaves the citizen in the middle of a confrontation between extremes.

In the entire process of encounters and reactions we have discovered that each of the sectors conceives of itself as a network. As a horizontal organization in which access to information is fundamental for cooperation, consultation and coordination of efforts. Some, more than others, are already functioning as networks, based on their will and technology. "The network" is an important definition that brings us together in form and in our sectorial and group proposals.

In the process of meeting we also discover that each sector or group has the will to continue concentrating on its mission, on its particular area of action and representation, but in the interest of a global vision, with a project for the country and the society. But with a specialization in daily activity, to guarantee that the contribution to society will be of quality, efficient and meaningful.

An option allowing each group to specialize and continue being efficient in its area, but with the security of participating in or of being interconnected with a global project. This has to be guaranteed for each group, but it must be guaranteed in a special form for each participant of the group or sector. We should not forget that for the new groups, the free and responsible individual is the subject of the process.

### An Option: The Network of Networks

If we already possess an internal culture that functions as a network, perhaps the option will be that of creating a network of networks. A system that treats each group with the same care and attention with which each member treats his associates, that guarantees them information, consultation, channels of participation, opportunities with others.

A network of networks has the advantage of not being a federation of groups, with a board of directors that represents everyone, or that concentrates on the leaders of each group to the point of paralyzing the dynamic of each one, in the pursuit of a "superior interest". The network facilitates and empowers the action of each sector, multiplying its effects on the society and public opinion. It constitutes a visible force in its constituent parts and as a whole, but is not so rigid that it generates friction or invites shocks.

This scheme permits the sharing of human or material resources. It accepts individual participation in various groups simultaneously, as a part, not as a compact whole, but as a dynamic process of clear goals, both global and partial, but plural.

Each network grows and multiplies, but it has to guarantee that the inputs received by the network of networks circulate among its members or representatives. This is perhaps the most important service, in addition to a small contribution to defray the costs of a streamlined structure in order to make it function. A structure that certainly does not represent anyone and does not have the ability to decide for others or much less to make agreements or negotiate in the name of anyone.

Preferably, this structure should be the responsibility of some sector and be managed day to day by a streamlined team and a representative of each node of the network in meetings well-spaced from one another.

The rest has to be left to the network of networks to generate its own dynamic of agreements and encounters, of interchange and polemics, of specialization, of competence and cooperation.

## **The Thread of the Network**

The permanent link in a network of networks is a bulletin, a publication that flows from fax to fax, from hand to hand, from computer to computer. It is designed to present information in a clear and accessible form that invites one to use it, that makes it accessible and easy to distribute through the networks of each civic group.

The bulletin is created at one point in the network. It can be produced by a team created for this purpose, or it can be a service offered through one of the groups, financed and evaluated by each recipient in special meetings or through the bulletin itself. It can also be decided that some of the groups specialize in specific bulletins that circulate through the entire network. The system, as it appears, can have the features that are decided upon by its owners and clients, who are one in the same.

The content of the bulletin is the result of the voluntary contributions of each component of the network. It is the sum of the contributions and of the descriptions of experiences, agenda of activities, promotion of initiatives, and recounting of useful information and opinions. Its vivacity depends on its own users who, from each particular experience, produce it. It is the thread that gives coherence and regularity to the network

Whether the bulletin is produced through a specific group or through an association that assumes this responsibility, it remains at the same level as the rest, without a special hierarchy. It is there to offer and facilitate information, not to "impose" it.

Those groups that assume special responsibilities for the creation of the general bulletin of the network, or a particular one for circulation throughout the entire network, do not acquire a worth other than that which would be the result of their own effort, of their capacity to bring together or of the relevancy of their information or organizational proposals. In this sense, there is a competition between the producers and the recipients of the bulletin, and there is a collaboration among them as well, to the benefit of the bulletin and the network of networks.

If each group has, in its turn, its own network, the work, the process and the resulting potential are as efficient as we can make them.

The network of networks has an enormous power that offers rapid access to information and coordination with quality.

## The Network of Networks for the Modernization of Venezuela

In a network of networks, there are probably some clues to the type and the quality of organizations in Venezuelan society faced with challenges such as international competition, the renovation of leadership and the culture of political representation, the opening of the economy and the redefinition of the State, and the strengthening and autonomy of public opinion and of civil society; all of which are, in their turn, the keys to the modernization of the country.

Within each specialization, one can have groups with very different aims. Being in the same network does not make the link obligatory, does not create dependency, does not obligate one to share other things that would not be in the interest of the network and in its effect as a promoter of modernization.

Each group offers its information and its possibilities. They do not exist as a function of one another, nor are they in any way unified in their initiatives, unless they decide to be.

## The Network for the Conspiracy: The Transparent Conspiracy

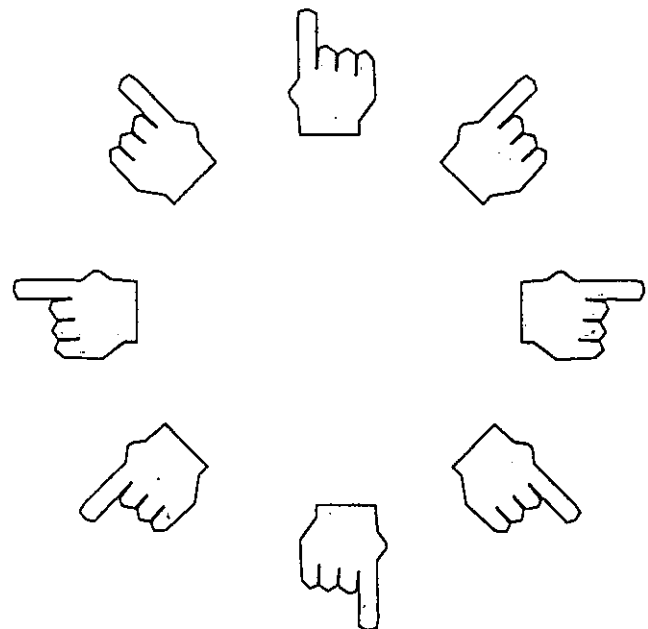
A network of networks implies the possibility of citizen action on behalf of a national project, generating and coordinating initiatives in the style of a conspiracy, of a transparent conspiracy. A conspiracy that does not have anything to hide nor is secret, but which slowly carries out its aims, in accord with the rhythm of each process, and that places its ideas on the public agenda, generating personal, group and institutional changes belonging to each stage of the process of modernization.

It is an option of collective action originating from the civil society, from political options and representation and from the individual action of each citizen. It is, possibly, an experience that will nourish the search for new forms of organization and the exercise of the political rights of citizens in this century and in the country of the future.

In the network (and, therefore, in the transparent conspiracy) the fundamental component is daily individual action. Each person makes a reality of the proposal modernization, the planning of radical change from his quarter, from the company where he works, from the corner that he frequents, or from his group of friends and his own house or family core.

The sum of all the personal changes and commitments yields, as a result, a multiplying of the community and social impact. The space of daily life of the family, of the community, of the municipality and of work, is the appropriate space within which to make a reality of the experiences that later form themselves into a network, empowering themselves and growing anew, until they return to the beginning with great force, from a more complex reality.

More than a model of articulation, which it is, a network of networks signifies a culture of relations for encounter and action. It is perhaps the organizational symbol of modernization, the key word that has made us find ourselves.





# 3. GUIDE FOR STARTING YOUR NETWORK

That which follows is none other than the systematization of the experiences we have had in civic associations and community organizations with few material resources and a minimum of technical knowledge. It is the result of our desire to convey our organizational model and system of relations and participation.

We believe that we have not discovered anything new, that we have only ordered our experience to make the road for others more pleasant and productive.

The start of a network is the conviction that we want to have regular communication among all of the members of a civic group. A regular flow of information that is generated from a center, that is the property of everyone. For this, someone responsible is designated to give form to, produce, send and evaluate the bulletin. But also to collect and promote the mailings of each associate, to respond to their interests and to make the network a rapid channel for the processing of information, opinion, recommendations and invitations.

The great advantage of this is that, even though we agree upon a center of service or production, each member has the opportunity to become a productive center, periodically or regularly. This succeeds in circulating among all of the associates the membership list.

The access of each member can be through mail or by fax, including by modem, but the spirit of the network is not associated with any particular channel. Nowadays, a good means is via fax. The following are some initial experiences.

## The Network of "Queremos Elegir" (We Want to Choose): The Bulletin "Informe" (Information)



The experience of the Asociación Civil Queremos Elegir is simple. It had so much information, notices for events or activities, reports of opinions or published news, and so much need to motivate the members to offer their

opinions, in brief, about some theme, that it was decided to pool resources to acquire a computer and a modem-fax, and to hire one of the members for the daily execution of the network.

The network began with a weekly edition of a bulletin, which they called "informe".

They started by deciding that the commentaries and weekly reports would be brief, presenting the information in a form as pleasant and most in accord with their style of work as possible.

They set the goal of producing the bulletin weekly, mailing it to the members on Wednesdays, one day before their weekly meetings.

The features always present would be:

- Review of press information.
- Report of activities held the previous week.
- Invitations to events of interest to the members.
- Notices with information regarding the day, place, time and agenda of each meeting of committees, engagements, meetings with other groups, or visits to the media.
- Previous announcement of appearances by members in opinion spots or public events.
- Follow-ups on initiatives of the Association.
- Summary of the previous meeting.
- Announcement and agenda of the weekly meeting.
- Articles, contingencies, prepared by the members to send to the media and that are previously published in the internal bulletin.
- Internal matters of the Association and notes regarding social events of the members.

Since the bulletin first appeared, it enriched the life of the Association, making their meetings more productive and producing greater participation among the members of the meetings, events and activities. The members that did not attend the weekly meetings felt close to the Association, able to make their opinions

known and to send contributions according to their interests and abilities.

They were able to start promoting a process of consultations, publishing a note with options and asking for calls to their executive board of directors to record and register the responses and reactions of the members.

They were able to inform everyone of all events and meetings without having to make constant phone calls. Now, everyone is invited to everything.

The issues to be decided upon were announced beforehand, so that each person came with their ideas or doubts more clearly formulated.

Little by little, the members began to contribute comments or to suggest notes for inclusion in the bulletin. Everyone had the feeling of being an owner of the weekly report.

They are now at the stage in which each person has a copy of the membership list, and some associates have already sent messages to everyone or to specific members.

They are now a network. They maintain a horizontal relation of multiple access.

Of course, the bulletin as well as the network are useful and have life because the Association has life, because its members use it and believe that it empowers their actions and contributions. The network exists because the members want it to.

Now they are learning about computer programs that can facilitate communication and consultation among them and that also permit dialog and conversation about various themes or proposals. They are also becoming familiar with the possibilities of linking with networks in other countries in order to plan and enrich their actions.

All of these are possibilities that are open, but which are possible because the Association has a spirit and a definition of its organization and of how the members want to relate to it, in order to be more efficient as a group and so that each person's effort has the greatest possible impact.

A civic group that functions in a network can relate to others of a similar spirit and nature. Each one will decide how to connect and coordinate with others, to strengthen its capabilities and impact.

### **The network "No al atraso" (No to backwardness)**

In the days after the coup attempt of February 4th, a group of Venezuelans from different sectors of society shared the sensation that the corruptocrats and the coupsters "were robbing the country from them".

From the ensuing meetings came a clear recognition of the need to modernize Venezuela and eradicate backwardness. To achieve this it was obviously necessary to point out and explain the negative effects of backwardness.

Given the conditions existing under the suspension of constitutional guarantees, the group initiated a communication campaign via a series of close to fifteen faxes presenting its message, once every two or three days, in which the recipients were asked to reproduce the faxes or send them by the same means.

The experience still has not been evaluated in depth. But it serves as an example because the members of the campaign functioned as a network, with faxes, committee and assembly meetings, and telephone calls.

One aspect of the campaign that impeded a greater impact was the anonymity of the mailings and the absence of a telephone number or physical place with which to link or respond to the mailings.

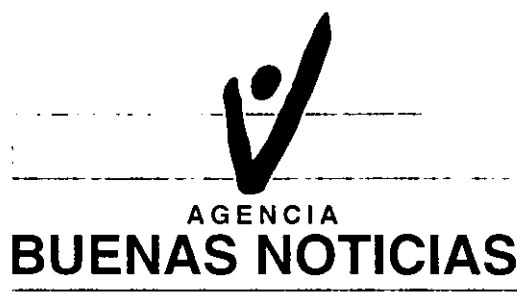
Highlighted in this initiative is the emphasis on an excellent presentation and a campaign rhythm through which the recipient slowly discovers the total content of the message.

The potential of this type of campaign, designed to circulate through networks, remains to be seen. This was a first step.

## The Network of "Buenas Noticias" (Good News)

From the experience of the promotion and dissemination of positive community experiences, the Escuela de Vecinos de Venezuela (School of Neighbors of Venezuela) created the concept of "Buenas Noticias".

That which began as a printed bulletin, continued as a weekly radio program and later as a weekly television spot. Today the project has expanded to two printed bulletins, sent by fax and published in regional newspapers, a program and some taped radio spots that are transmitted by various stations throughout the country, a daily television program on a nationwide channel and a series of tapes distributed to regional channels. All of this carries the name Agencia Buenas Noticias (Good News Agency).



The Agency is a center for the dissemination of information through diverse channels. The step that accompanies the work of the Agency is the promotion and creation of the Network of Buenas Noticias.

The Network consists of an agreement among civic groups, community organizations, public bodies and private foundations for the transmission of information about events, initiatives, experiences and possibilities of joint action. The information is sent to the Agency, which disseminates it through the radio, the press, printed bulletins or faxes, and through the daily television spot.

Each constituent group, of a different nature, has an interest in sharing its experience, promoting its initiatives or finding common ground for joint action. For this, it communicates with the service center of services of the network: the Agency. Its mission is to organize

in order to disseminate, with dissemination emphasizing the information of the broadcasting group in order to promote horizontal contacts and relations.

In turn, each group that enriches the Agency can become a broadcasting center for all the participants of the network, utilizing the bulletin that is sent to all the members of the Network of Buenas Noticias, called Vida Comunitaria (Community Life), or producing its own bulletin or tool of dissemination.

Periodically, the Escuela de Vecinos de Venezuela promotes the Encuentros de Buenas Noticias (Meetings of Good News) to allow a direct interchange that catalyzes the process of articulation and enrichment of experiences.

The bulletin Vida Comunitaria is sent by fax to some presses, making possible its mass dissemination. It also is sent to each group that enriches it via fax and, if it were not enough, close to a thousand copies are published and distributed from the regional offices of the Escuela de Vecinos to the groups and citizens that show an interest in receiving it. In the few weeks of its initial operation, this initiative has facilitated encounters among groups that now coordinate with one another, meetings of orientation and support between experimental groups and those that recently began, and the production of reports designed to be sent to others with whom there was no previous contact.

One of the aspects of greatest potential for this network is the daily use of a television spot to announce and promote events from the immense range of civic groups that exist in the country. For example, there is the savings in phone calls, faxes or letters that you can have if a local representative of each group, a cooperative for instance, agrees to be televised daily. In this way, messages are received from some national or regional center and then continue to be transmitted through the local network. Along this path, the possibilities are endless.

## 4. ¿WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO FOR OUR COUNTRY?

The viability and the advantages offered by a network of networks to the civil society and the process of modernization of the country are in the hands of the potential members of the network, of each network, and of the possible network of networks.

This transparent conspiracy, that promotes changes from each sector, needs to strengthen local or experimental solutions to national problems. It needs encounter, coordination, and regular interaction among those who promote it. The network of networks creates conditions in which we respond to the uneasiness of the feeling "that they are robbing our country from us". So that we can respond to the question. What are we going to do for our country? But this can be the subject of another conversation.

## Weaving the Network

Thanks to the publication and distribution of the first edition of this pamphlet we have made contact with civic groups and community organizations in different parts of Venezuela and Spain, Perú and the United States. It is probable that some type of meeting will be held to reflect on the proposal.

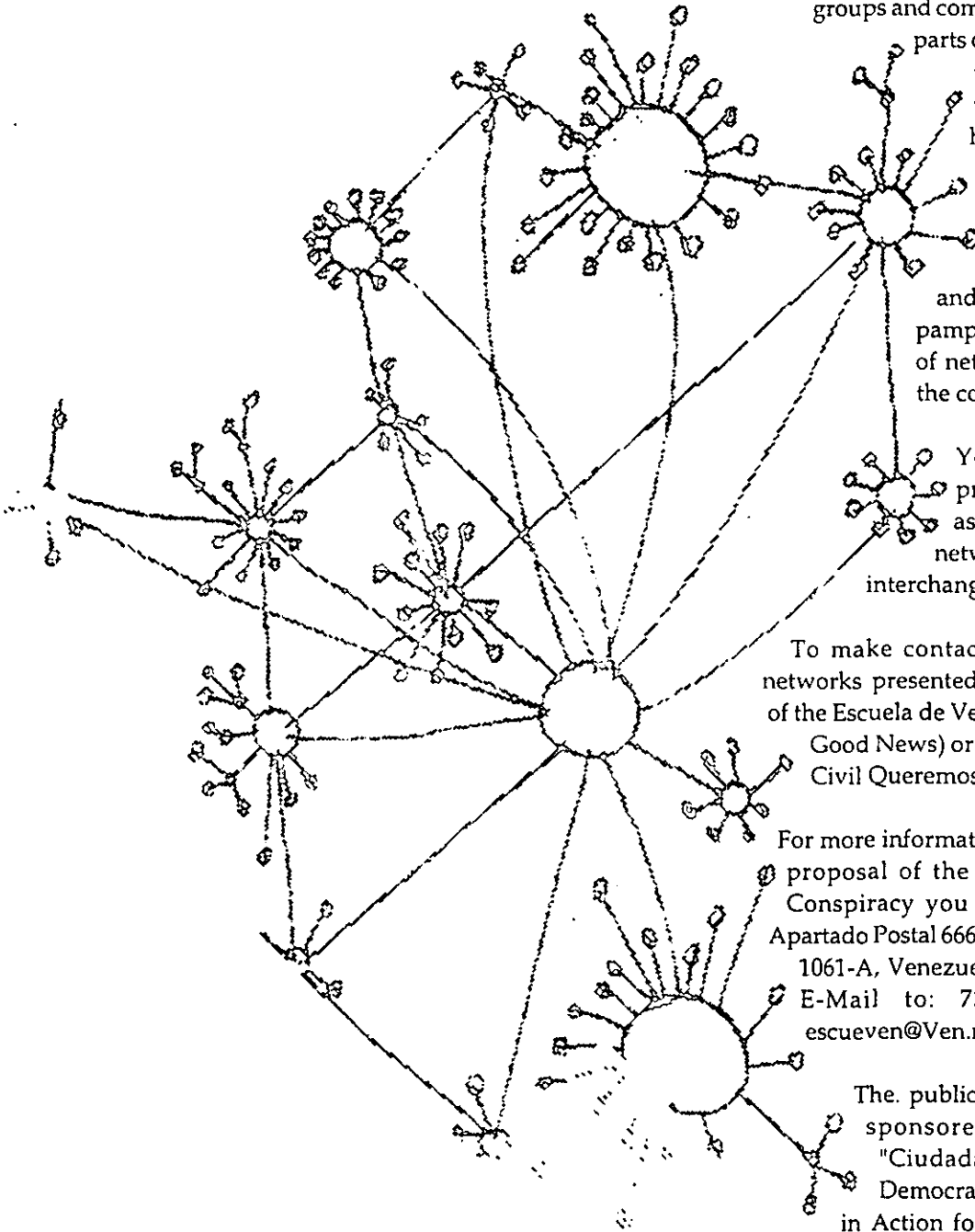
Profits from the sale of this publication will be used for the promotion, through lectures and events and later editions of the pamphlet, of the proposal of a network of networks for the modernization of the country.

You can request lectures or presentations of this proposal and assistance in the development of a network of groups, or for the simple interchange of experiences.

To make contact with the experiences of the networks presented here, you may call (582) 5764402 of the Escuela de Vecinos de Venezuela (Network of Good News) or (582) 5765436 of the Asociación Civil Queremos Elegir.

For more information or interchange regarding the proposal of the Network for the Transparent Conspiracy you can write to Elías Santana at Apartado Postal 66668, Correo Las Américas, Caracas 1061-A, Venezuela, send a Fax (582) 5736902 or E-Mail to: 73050.1364@Compuserve.Com escueven@Ven.net.

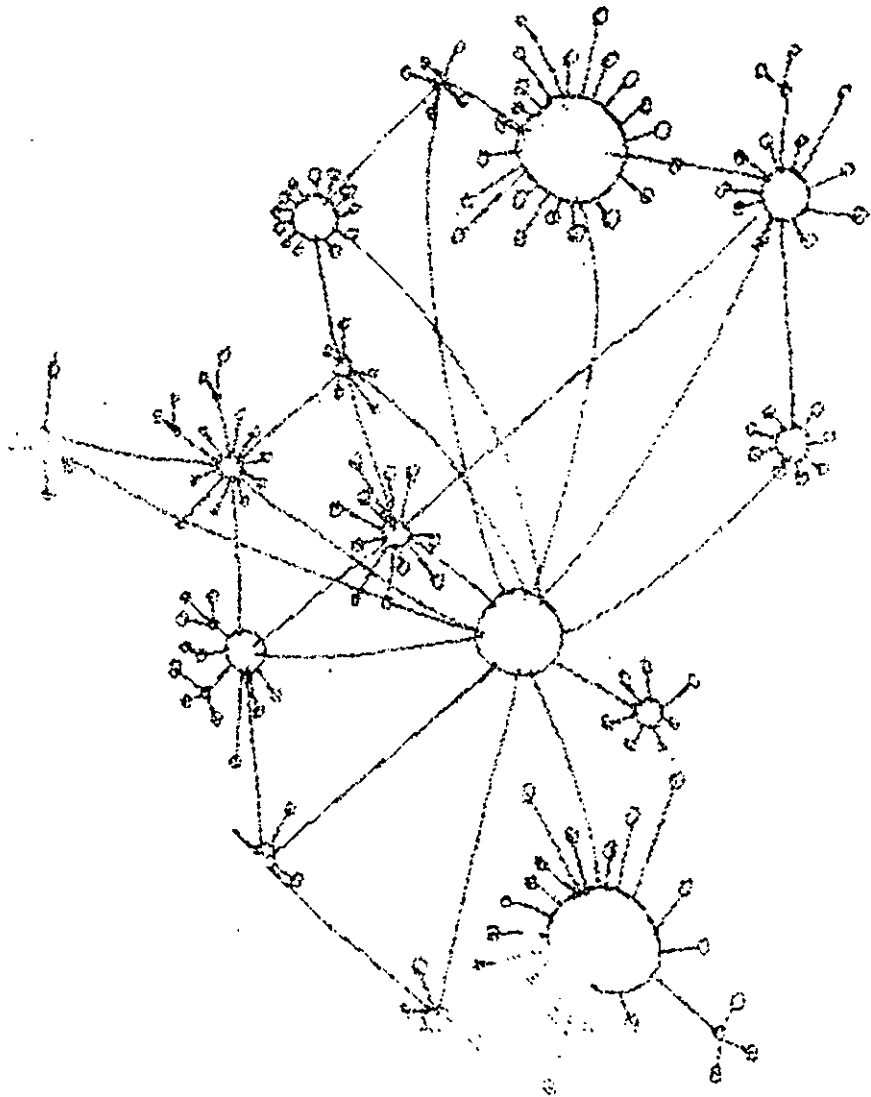
The publication of this pamphlet has been sponsored by the Asociación Civil "Ciudadanos en Acción por una Mejor Democracia" (Civil Association of Citizens in Action for a Better Democracy), with the collaboration of the Escuela de Vecinos de Venezuela.



**NEW  
DOCUMENT**

A Network for the Transparent Conspiracy

# NETWORK OF NETWORKS



Eliás Santana  
Caracas, Venezuela  
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# **A Network for the Transparent Conspiracy**

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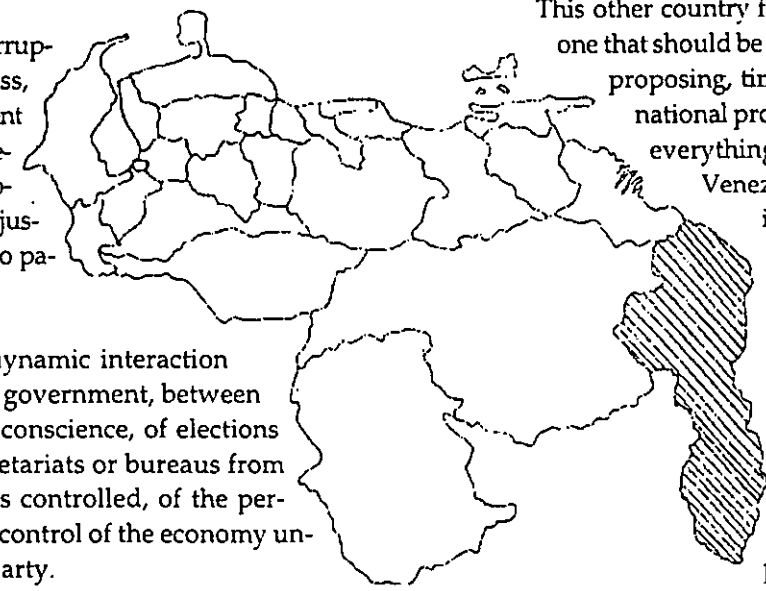
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An option allowing each group to specialize and continue being efficient in its area, but with the security of participating in or of being interconnected with a global project. This has to be guaranteed for each group, but it must be guaranteed in a special form for each participant of the group or sector. We should not forget that for the new groups, the free and responsible individual is the subject of the process.

### An Option: The Network of Networks

If we already possess an internal culture that functions as a network, perhaps the option will be that of creating a network of networks. A system that treats each group with the same care and attention with which each member treats his associates, that guarantees them information, consultation, channels of participation, opportunities with others.

A network of networks has the advantage of not being a federation of groups, with a board of directors that represents everyone, or that concentrates on the leaders of each group to the point of paralyzing the dynamic of each one, in the pursuit of a "superior interest". The network facilitates and empowers the action of each sector, multiplying its effects on the society and public opinion. It constitutes a visible force in its constituent parts and as a whole, but is not so rigid that it generates friction or invites shocks.

This scheme permits the sharing of human or material resources. It accepts individual participation in various groups simultaneously, as a part, not as a compact whole, but as a dynamic process of clear goals, both global and partial, but plural.

Each network grows and multiplies, but it has to guarantee that the inputs received by the network of networks circulate among its members or representatives. This is perhaps the most important service, in addition to a small contribution to defray the costs of a streamlined structure in order to make it function. A structure that certainly does not represent anyone and does not have the ability to decide for others or much less to make agreements or negotiate in the name of anyone.

Preferably, this structure should be the responsibility of some sector and be managed day to day by a streamlined team and a representative of each node of the network in meetings well-spaced from one another.

The rest has to be left to the network of networks to generate its own dynamic of agreements and encounters, of interchange and polemics, of specialization, of competence and cooperation.

## **The Thread of the Network**

The permanent link in a network of networks is a bulletin, a publication that flows from fax to fax, from hand to hand, from computer to computer. It is designed to present information in a clear and accessible form that invites one to use it, that makes it accessible and easy to distribute through the networks of each civic group.

The bulletin is created at one point in the network. It can be produced by a team created for this purpose, or it can be a service offered through one of the groups, financed and evaluated by each recipient in special meetings or through the bulletin itself. It can also be decided that some of the groups specialize in specific bulletins that circulate through the entire network. The system, as it appears, can have the features that are decided upon by its owners and clients, who are one in the same.

The content of the bulletin is the result of the voluntary contributions of each component of the network. It is the sum of the contributions and of the descriptions of experiences, agenda of activities, promotion of initiatives, and recounting of useful information and opinions. Its vivacity depends on its own users who, from each particular experience, produce it. It is the thread that gives coherence and regularity to the network

Whether the bulletin is produced through a specific group or through an association that assumes this responsibility, it remains at the same level as the rest, without a special hierarchy. It is there to offer and facilitate information, not to "impose" it.

Those groups that assume special responsibilities for the creation of the general bulletin of the network, or a particular one for circulation throughout the entire network, do not acquire a worth other than that which would be the result of their own effort, of their capacity to bring together or of the relevancy of their information or organizational proposals. In this sense, there is a competition between the producers and the recipients of the bulletin, and there is a collaboration among them as well, to the benefit of the bulletin and the network of networks.

If each group has, in its turn, its own network, the work, the process and the resulting potential are as efficient as we can make them.

The network of networks has an enormous power that offers rapid access to information and coordination with quality.

## The Network of Networks for the Modernization of Venezuela

In a network of networks, there are probably some clues to the type and the quality of organizations in Venezuelan society faced with challenges such as international competition, the renovation of leadership and the culture of political representation, the opening of the economy and the redefinition of the State, and the strengthening and autonomy of public opinion and of civil society; all of which are, in their turn, the keys to the modernization of the country.

Within each specialization, one can have groups with very different aims. Being in the same network does not make the link obligatory, does not create dependency, does not obligate one to share other things that would not be in the interest of the network and in its effect as a promoter of modernization.

Each group offers its information and its possibilities. They do not exist as a function of one another, nor are they in any way unified in their initiatives, unless they decide to be.

## The Network for the Conspiracy: The Transparent Conspiracy

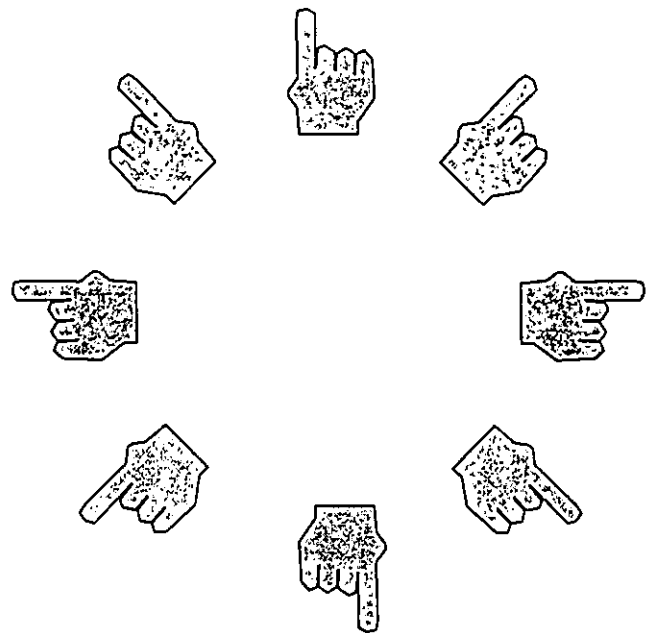
A network of networks implies the possibility of citizen action on behalf of a national project, generating and coordinating initiatives in the style of a conspiracy, of a transparent conspiracy. A conspiracy that does not have anything to hide nor is secret, but which slowly carries out its aims, in accord with the rhythm of each process, and that places its ideas on the public agenda, generating personal, group and institutional changes belonging to each stage of the process of modernization.

It is an option of collective action originating from the civil society, from political options and representation and from the individual action of each citizen. It is, possibly, an experience that will nourish the search for new forms of organization and the exercise of the political rights of citizens in this century and in the country of the future.

In the network (and, therefore, in the transparent conspiracy) the fundamental component is daily individual action. Each person makes a reality of the proposal modernization, the planning of radical change from his quarter, from the company where he works, from the corner that he frequents, or from his group of friends and his own house or family core.

The sum of all the personal changes and commitments yields, as a result, a multiplying of the community and social impact. The space of daily life of the family, of the community, of the municipality and of work, is the appropriate space within which to make a reality of the experiences that later form themselves into a network, empowering themselves and growing anew, until they return to the beginning with great force, from a more complex reality.

More than a model of articulation, which it is, a network of networks signifies a culture of relations for encounter and action. It is perhaps the organizational symbol of modernization, the key word that has made us find ourselves.



# 3. GUIDE FOR STARTING YOUR NETWORK

That which follows is none other than the systematization of the experiences we have had in civic associations and community organizations with few material resources and a minimum of technical knowledge. It is the result of our desire to convey our organizational model and system of relations and participation.

We believe that we have not discovered anything new, that we have only ordered our experience to make the road for others more pleasant and productive.

The start of a network is the conviction that we want to have regular communication among all of the members of a civic group. A regular flow of information that is generated from a center, that is the property of everyone. For this, someone responsible is designated to give form to, produce, send and evaluate the bulletin. But also to collect and promote the mailings of each associate, to respond to their interests and to make the network a rapid channel for the processing of information, opinion, recommendations and invitations.

The great advantage of this is that, even though we agree upon a center of service or production, each member has the opportunity to become a productive center, periodically or regularly. This succeeds in circulating among all of the associates the membership list.

The access of each member can be through mail or by fax, including by modem, but the spirit of the network is not associated with any particular channel. Nowadays, a good means is via fax. The following are some initial experiences.

## The Network of "Queremos Elegir" (We Want to Choose): The Bulletin "Informe" (Information)



The experience of the Asociación Civil Queremos Elegir is simple. It had so much information, notices for events or activities, reports of opinions or published news, and so much need to motivate the members to offer their

opinions, in brief, about some theme, that it was decided to pool resources to acquire a computer and a modem-fax, and to hire one of the members for the daily execution of the network.

The network began with a weekly edition of a bulletin, which they called "informe".

They started by deciding that the commentaries and weekly reports would be brief, presenting the information in a form as pleasant and most in accord with their style of work as possible.

They set the goal of producing the bulletin weekly, mailing it to the members on Wednesdays, one day before their weekly meetings.

The features always present would be:

- Review of press information.
- Report of activities held the previous week.
- Invitations to events of interest to the members.
- Notices with information regarding the day, place, time and agenda of each meeting of committees, engagements, meetings with other groups, or visits to the media.
- Previous announcement of appearances by members in opinion spots or public events.
- Follow-ups on initiatives of the Association.
- Summary of the previous meeting.
- Announcement and agenda of the weekly meeting.
- Articles, contingencies, prepared by the members to send to the media and that are previously published in the internal bulletin.
- Internal matters of the Association and notes regarding social events of the members.

Since the bulletin first appeared, it enriched the life of the Association, making their meetings more productive and producing greater participation among the members of the meetings, events and activities. The members that did not attend the weekly meetings felt close to the Association, able to make their opinions

known and to send contributions according to their interests and abilities.

They were able to start promoting a process of consultations, publishing a note with options and asking for calls to their executive board of directors to record and register the responses and reactions of the members.

They were able to inform everyone of all events and meetings without having to make constant phone calls. Now, everyone is invited to everything.

The issues to be decided upon were announced beforehand, so that each person came with their ideas or doubts more clearly formulated.

Little by little, the members began to contribute comments or to suggest notes for inclusion in the bulletin. Everyone had the feeling of being an owner of the weekly report.

They are now at the stage in which each person has a copy of the membership list, and some associates have already sent messages to everyone or to specific members.

They are now a network. They maintain a horizontal relation of multiple access.

Of course, the bulletin as well as the network are useful and have life because the Association has life, because its members use it and believe that it empowers their actions and contributions. The network exists because the members want it to.

Now they are learning about computer programs that can facilitate communication and consultation among them and that also permit dialog and conversation about various themes or proposals. They are also becoming familiar with the possibilities of linking with networks in other countries in order to plan and enrich their actions.

All of these are possibilities that are open, but which are possible because the Association has a spirit and a definition of its organization and of how the members want to relate to it, in order to be more efficient as a group and so that each person's effort has the greatest possible impact.

A civic group that functions in a network can relate to others of a similar spirit and nature. Each one will decide how to connect and coordinate with others, to strengthen its capabilities and impact.

### **The network "No al atraso" (No to backwardness)**

In the days after the coup attempt of February 4th, a group of Venezuelans from different sectors of society shared the sensation that the corruptocrats and the coupsters "were robbing the country from them".

From the ensuing meetings came a clear recognition of the need to modernize Venezuela and eradicate backwardness. To achieve this it was obviously necessary to point out and explain the negative effects of backwardness.

Given the conditions existing under the suspension of constitutional guarantees, the group initiated a communication campaign via a series of close to fifteen faxes presenting its message, once every two or three days, in which the recipients were asked to reproduce the faxes or send them by the same means.

The experience still has not been evaluated in depth. But it serves as an example because the members of the campaign functioned as a network, with faxes, committee and assembly meetings, and telephone calls.

One aspect of the campaign that impeded a greater impact was the anonymity of the mailings and the absence of a telephone number or physical place with which to link or respond to the mailings.

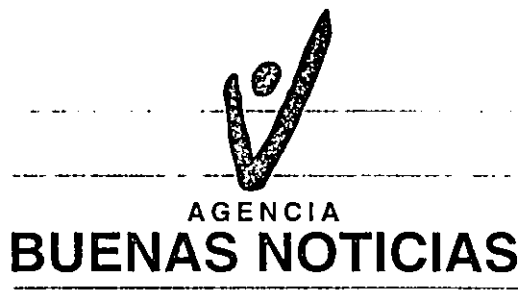
Highlighted in this initiative is the emphasis on an excellent presentation and a campaign rhythm through which the recipient slowly discovers the total content of the message.

The potential of this type of campaign, designed to circulate through networks, remains to be seen. This was a first step.

## The Network of "Buenas Noticias" (Good News)

From the experience of the promotion and dissemination of positive community experiences, the Escuela de Vecinos de Venezuela (School of Neighbors of Venezuela) created the concept of "Buenas Noticias".

That which began as a printed bulletin, continued as a weekly radio program and later as a weekly television spot. Today the project has expanded to two printed bulletins, sent by fax and published in regional newspapers, a program and some taped radio spots that are transmitted by various stations throughout the country, a daily television program on a nationwide channel and a series of tapes distributed to regional channels. All of this carries the name Agencia Buenas Noticias (Good News Agency).



The Agency is a center for the dissemination of information through diverse channels. The step that accompanies the work of the Agency is the promotion and creation of the Network of Buenas Noticias.

The Network consists of an agreement among civic groups, community organizations, public bodies and private foundations for the transmission of information about events, initiatives, experiences and possibilities of joint action. The information is sent to the Agency, which disseminates it through the radio, the press, printed bulletins or faxes, and through the daily television spot.

Each constituent group, of a different nature, has an interest in sharing its experience, promoting its initiatives or finding common ground for joint action. For this, it communicates with the service center of services of the network: the Agency. Its mission is to organize

in order to disseminate, with dissemination emphasizing the information of the broadcasting group in order to promote horizontal contacts and relations.

In turn, each group that enriches the Agency can become a broadcasting center for all the participants of the network, utilizing the bulletin that is sent to all the members of the Network of Buenas Noticias, called Vida Comunitaria (Community Life), or producing its own bulletin or tool of dissemination.

Periodically, the Escuela de Vecinos de Venezuela promotes the Encuentros de Buenas Noticias (Meetings of Good News) to allow a direct interchange that catalyzes the process of articulation and enrichment of experiences.

The bulletin Vida Comunitaria is sent by fax to some presses, making possible its mass dissemination. It also is sent to each group that enriches it via fax and, if it were not enough, close to a thousand copies are published and distributed from the regional offices of the Escuela de Vecinos to the groups and citizens that show an interest in receiving it. In the few weeks of its initial operation, this initiative has facilitated encounters among groups that now coordinate with one another, meetings of orientation and support between experimental groups and those that recently began, and the production of reports designed to be sent to others with whom there was no previous contact.

One of the aspects of greatest potential for this network is the daily use of a television spot to announce and promote events from the immense range of civic groups that exist in the country. For example, there is the savings in phone calls, faxes or letters that you can have if a local representative of each group, a cooperative for instance, agrees to be televised daily. In this way, messages are received from some national or regional center and then continue to be transmitted through the local network. Along this path, the possibilities are endless.

## 4. ¿WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO FOR OUR COUNTRY?

The viability and the advantages offered by a network of networks to the civil society and the process of modernization of the country are in the hands of the potential members of the network, of each network, and of the possible network of networks.

This transparent conspiracy, that promotes changes from each sector, needs to strengthen local or experimental solutions to national problems. It needs encounter, coordination, and regular interaction among those who promote it. The network of networks creates conditions in which we respond to the uneasiness of the feeling "that they are robbing our country from us". So that we can respond to the question. What are we going to do for our country? But this can be the subject of another conversation.



## Weaving the Network

Thanks to the publication and distribution of the first edition of this pamphlet we have made contact with civic groups and community organizations in different parts of Venezuela and Spain, Perú and the United States. It is probable that some type of meeting will be held to reflect on the proposal.

Profits from the sale of this publication will be used for the promotion, through lectures and events and later editions of the pamphlet, of the proposal of a network of networks for the modernization of the country.

You can request lectures or presentations of this proposal and assistance in the development of a network of groups, or for the simple interchange of experiences.

To make contact with the experiences of the networks presented here, you may call (582) 5764402 of the Escuela de Vecinos de Venezuela (Network of Good News) or (582) 5765436 of the Asociación Civil Queremos Elegir.

For more information or interchange regarding the proposal of the Network for the Transparent Conspiracy you can write to Elías Santana at Apartado Postal 66668, Correo Las Américas, Caracas 1061-A, Venezuela, send a Fax (582) 5736902 or E-Mail to: 73050.1364@Compuserve.Com escueven@Ven.net.

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