

8. Governance: International Networking in the Society of Jesus, Challenges from a Universal Perspective

A Google search for “Jesuit networking” produces 7,770,000 results...

On the 26th of February in 2009, during my visitation of the New England Jesuits studying at Regis College in Toronto, I was walking down a main street when my cell phone rang. “Hello Tom!” said the voice on the other end. “Who do “we” know in Scotland? The speaker, calling from his home in Orinda, California, was Ben Kacyra, an alumnus of Baghdad College in Iraq and a major benefactor of the New England Province. He is also the CEO of CyArk, a 501c3 non-profit organization with the mission of digitally preserving cultural heritage sites through collecting, archiving and providing open access to data created by laser scanning, digital modeling, and other state-of-the-art technologies, most of which were pioneered and developed by Mr. Kacyra, himself.ⁱ

He was calling because he and his company had been invited to make a presentation to Historic Scotland, the executive agency of the Scottish Government charged with safeguarding the nation’s historic environment. He was hoping to gain their permission to scan several of the architectural treasures throughout the country. As a well-traveled international businessman, Mr. Kacyra was keenly aware of the Society of Jesus’ presence in most of the countries in which he worked. At this point, he knew that it would be helpful to enlist the support of a few high ranking members of the Scottish government and perhaps some local venture capitalists, who might be willing to help finance his project. I told him that I would make a few inquiries and see what I could do. Upon returning to the community in which I was staying, I sent two emails, one to London, to the Provincial of the British province, the second to his predecessor who was then regional superior in South Africa. Both individuals, whom I knew well, responded immediately and recommended that I contact a certain Scottish Jesuit, who would be only too happy to make the requisite introductions. The very next day I was able to call Mr. Kacyra with the good news. A few weeks later, he made a successful presentation in Edinburgh, his ties to Historic Scotland, having been well established.ⁱⁱ

Although very brief, this story illustrates both the amazing power and the immense range of the international resources upon which the Society of Jesus can draw. Through a conversation over a two day period individuals living in four Jesuit provinces and one dependent region, spanning five countries were able to interact for a common goal. Unfortunately, all too often, the great potential of this network is either ignored or simply taken for granted. Consequently with each passing day, an untold apostolic potential remains unactualized. The theme of this weekend’s conference: International Networking in the Society of Jesus, Challenges from a Universal Perspective is therefore both timely and extremely important. In an age of instantaneous communications the three related questions that have been proposed for our consideration on the relationship of Jesuit governance and international networking merit our prayerful reflection and discussion:

- How can the management of modern networks be integrated in the classical structures of the Society of Jesus? How can the potential tensions be resolved or managed?

- How do international structures fit with Canon Law and with the Society's Constitutions, internal rules, and way of governing? What are the limits and possibilities of international networking considering the norms of Jesuit governance?
- How can these new structures help us toward more internal sharing of our resources and capacities? What characteristics should they have to promote more internal justice and overcome internal inequalities?

Allow me to offer some thoughts about how we, as Jesuits, might respond to these three questions.

I. How can the management of modern networks be integrated in the classical structures of the Society of Jesus? How can the potential tensions be resolved or managed?

On the home page of The Jesuit Commons one reads: *Jesuits and their lay colleagues are blessed with one of the world's most extensive, expert education and social service networks. You'll find Jesuit-administered universities, high schools, and refugee centers, churches, vocational training, or poverty eradication programs in more than 100 countries!*ⁱⁱⁱ

It is important to note that before referring to institutions such as schools, refugee centers, churches and training programs for which the Society of Jesus is so well-known, the above sentence first mentions "Jesuits and their lay colleagues." As a launching-off point, that is not insignificant. The Jesuit network is first and foremost about people. The foundation of this worldwide network is based upon trust and interpersonal relationships united in a common mission. For over four hundred and seventy-two years, as the Formula of our Institute makes clear, the Society's mission is and always has been "universal" in character.

Today, for the Society, not to do all in its power to nurture and build upon this extensive base would be to underutilize an apostolic tool, of unprecedented nature and scope. The success and effectiveness of this network entirely depends upon the "Jesuits and the individuals with whom we work." At this point in our Society's rich history, the phrasing of this last sentence appropriately reflects the current state of the field, i.e. The network depends upon the "Jesuits and the individuals with whom we work," not upon "Jesuits and the individuals who work with us." "*We* collaborate with the laity in the works of the Society."^{iv}

Decree Six of GC 35, entitled *Collaboration at the Heart of Mission*, delineates many key aspects of what genuine collaboration entails. In that document, the delegates at GC 35 encourage the Society's government at all levels "to explore means by which more effective networking might take place among apostolic works associated with the Society of Jesus."^v Father Adolfo Nicolás, General of the Society of Jesus, has instructed us how we might approach such a task. In his letter to major superiors which accompanied a post GC 35 commission report entitled "The Renewal of Province Structures in the Service of Universal Mission", he wrote, "I am hopeful that, if we face the challenges of this document with freedom, generosity and

courage, we will find ourselves both more deeply Jesuit in our identity and more creative and energetic in our mission.”^{vi}

Over a very short period of time, we are witnessing an enormous paradigm shift unfolding right before our eyes. One of the Society’s major resources for collaboration and networking has always been one of its most closely guarded, namely access to the vast number of alumni/ae who graduated from Jesuit institutions. In all of the countries in which Jesuit institutions educate students, this body of individuals has vast personal and collective power. Fortuitously today, the ranks of men or “old boys” as they are called in some circles are augmented with equally large numbers of women who proudly count themselves as Jesuit graduates.

Anyone who has worked with alumni/ae has no doubt encountered the almost impenetrable “silos” in which particular high schools, colleges and universities exist. These silos present one of the major obstacles to tapping into the Jesuit network more effectively. Networks by definition are horizontal in nature. More often than not, when faced with networking opportunities, individual institutions react vertically. They deal only with their own and fear more often than not that by “sharing” their alumni/ae with other institutions or with wider Ignatian based initiatives they will undermine their own development efforts.

Understandably, directors of particular works should and must care for the apostolate under their charge. As such, they are often reluctant to look beyond the parameters of their respective institutions. In the United States, in both higher education and secondary education, institutions are happy to come together and share best practices, but few are willing to share resources resulting in needless overlap in many operational sectors. While provincials and presidents of conferences may see the benefits of international and inter-institutional collaboration and networking, these efforts are often resisted at the local level. This short-sightedness comes at a tremendous cost. Hopefully the recent “National Jesuit Alumni Day of Service” and the upcoming international colloquium on secondary education, sponsored by Boston College High School which will be held here in Chestnut Hill, signal a most welcomed reversal of these sentiments.

If the Society is to tap into the amazing resources of its extensive alumni/ae base and deepen its networking opportunities, **greater efforts must be made to engage individuals regionally and not institutionally.** Collaboration on a province level or in terms of a geographical area which encompasses several provinces holds out tremendous potential. Concrete examples of how this can be done effectively can be seen locally with three recently formed programs which have now really come into their own and are currently thriving “The Jesuit Connection,”^{vii} “Principle Centered Leadership”^{viii} and “The Jesuit Collaborative.”^{ix} The first involves over three hundred and fifty individuals in the mid-twenties to early thirties. Each month, this group sponsors an event at a venue somewhere in the greater Boston area. One month the focus of the gathering might be a topic in spirituality, another month the focus might be on networking, service, faith development, or just recreation. Various functions have brought together graduates of as many as sixteen different Jesuit institutions. Attendance at any given event may range anywhere from twelve to eighty-five individuals depending on the nature of the program.

The second program, Principle Centered Leadership features a targeted audience of CEOs and CFOs who meet on a regular basis to deepen their awareness of Ignatian Spirituality. Since each participant in the group holds a position of significant authority, the decisions which they make have a significant multiplier effect affecting thousands of individuals and their families. Those working with this group find this particular aspect of working with and engaging these professionals very Ignatian in character.

A third program, The Jesuit Collaborative was formed after extensive consultation and planning in a joint effort by the New England, New York and Maryland Provinces. Today the Collaborative, whose work extends from Maine to Georgia, is a flourishing professional association of Jesuits, laypersons, clergy and religious who share the tradition of the Spiritual Exercises. It promotes networking, reflection, scholarship and learning, while managing and coordinating a wide and diverse range of ministries that derive from the St. Ignatius' great gift to the Church.

For many years efforts such as these were not even attempted because it was thought (and correctly so) that high schools, colleges and university would be most reluctant to release any lists of alumni/ae living in a given area. Now things have changed. In the present day, one quickly realizes that to ask for such lists is hardly necessary. As the formation of The Jesuit Connection proved so well, all that is needed is a core of recent graduates who have *Facebook* accounts.

Here the paradigm shift manifests itself most dramatically. Social networking is a reality. Although well-known and utilized quite effectively by Jesuit scholastics across the world, the leadership of the Society of Jesus, who obviously comes from an older generation, is just beginning to comprehend the scope and power of this new technology. For example, in December of 2007, when the current Boston College seniors were notified that they had received early-action acceptance into the class of 2012, the good news arrived via email at noon, (Eastern Standard Time). By seven o'clock that evening there was a *Facebook* group of "Admitted Boston College Students" numbering over seven hundred and fifty very happy high school seniors from all over the world. Most of these students were not in the least bit phased by this amazing feat of networking. They merely took it in-stride as part of the everyday world in which they live. In this new paradigm, networking happens horizontally.^x

On a national level, here in the United States, one might point to the networking efforts of *Alpha Sigma Nu*, the National Jesuit Honor Society as representative, albeit on a small scale, of what might be possible on a much larger scale.^{xi} *Alpha Sigma Nu*'s database contains a listing of members from the twenty-eight Jesuit Colleges and Universities, Regis and Campion Colleges in Canada, and Sogang University in Seoul, South Korea. Members now reside not only in the United States but also in eighty-nine other countries! In most major American cities, *Alpha Sigma Nu* members, who represent only 4% of those graduating from Jesuit institutions of higher education in any given year, can be found in major leadership positions in all sectors of the economy. A significant number work and travel internationally. Tapping into this resource not only benefits local institutions, who otherwise would have no idea that such distinguished graduates from other Jesuit schools are working in their local areas, but also serve as a means to re-engage individuals who for reasons of geography have no direct contact with their home

institution. A current project at Loyola University of Chicago has surfaced the names of well over two thousand *Alpha Sigma Nu* members, who live in the greater Chicago area. In the fall an event will be held to engage them. Among them are graduates of all twenty-eight Jesuit Colleges and Universities.

In many ways *Alpha Sigma Nu*'s database is unique. It represents, however, such a small percentage of Jesuit alumni/ae. Were a comprehensive database for all graduates of Jesuit Schools to exist, this rich collaborative resource could provide the means by which countless individuals could network horizontally with their peers and reengage their "Jesuit" ties. This would enable the *cura personalis* of the Society to enfold them once again in terms of on-going spirituality, continuing education, and opportunities for service.

The size and scope of the networks connected to the Society of Jesus and its works is mind boggling. The Jesuit Commons list hundreds of already existing networks linked to Jesuit schools, social and pastoral institutions, parishes, provinces and assistancies. The statistics for the *Fe y Alegria* network alone merit mention in terms of the number of people and institutions who are engaged. In the year 2003 the students and other participants attended to by *Fe y Alegria* reached a total of 1,232,140. When adjusted for those who participate in more than one program, the total is 962,417. The network of *Fe y Alegria* consists of 2,080 centers, in which 2,696 service units function, namely: 1,015 school plants, 67 radio stations, 906 extension education centers and 775 centers for alternative education and other services.^{xii}

If, as Decree Six of GC 35 stated: "The heart of an Ignatian work is the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius" one must wonder the extent to which individuals involved in these various Jesuit networks have a sufficient understanding of the Exercises or a viable sense of Ignatian spirituality.^{xiii} Here the obvious tension which presents itself was highlighted in Father General's address to the participants who gathered for the international meeting on higher education held last April in Mexico City. While acknowledging the powers and positive potential of the great networking resources which are set before the Society of Jesus today, Father Nicolás also reflected upon the downside of such a global capacity. He referred to what he termed the "globalization of superficiality."^{xiv} He cited as examples of his point, the ways in which individuals can access a vast amount of information so quickly without ever experiencing the need to think about, process or reflect upon it; the ways in which the powers of critical thinking can be short-circuited via the instantaneous spread of video images from half a world away without any sense of or appreciation for the context in which the images were created; and finally, the easy manner in which with the click of a mouse, one can become "friends" with mere acquaintances or complete strangers within one's social network.

If Jesuits and our would-be colleagues in various apostolic endeavors are to be "people of depth" (another phrase depicting Father Nicolás hopes and expectations), then a deepening of one's sense of the dynamics of prayer, the Spiritual Exercises and of Ignatian Spirituality would seem to be a *sine qua non* requirement for going forward. Here the on-line resources of the Jesuit network can be of real help and value. In the last few years Jesuit retreat houses and centers for Ignatian Spirituality have gone to great lengths to share their considerable resources with individuals throughout the world. There are numerous websites where people might find food for spiritual challenge and refection whether it be on a daily basis or via programs geared towards

longer periods of engagement. Last year over 1,153,497 visited “Sacred Space” a place for daily prayer and meditation, maintained by the Irish Province.^{xv} The fact that similar sites which offer the 19th annotation “retreat-in-daily life,” or various forms of Ignatian eight-day or thirty-day retreats, also experience significant web-based activity indicates that there is a real and genuine hunger for spirituality and that the Jesuit network is making significant strides in meeting it.

II. How do international structures fit with Canon Law and with the Society’s Constitutions, internal rules, and way of governing? What are the limits and possibilities of international networking considering the norms of Jesuit governance?

In terms of Society governance the range of existing networks truly runs the gambit of possibilities in terms of how they relate to the Society itself, considered as an ecclesiastical institution and canonical entity. These possibilities, as outlined in *The Instruction on the Administration of Goods*, consist of the following:

Works owned by the Society

Works entrusted to the Society but not owned by it

Dependent Works

Independent Works

Works not owned by the Society but having a connection to it

Works founded or promoted by the Society, titled to or governed by another entity

Works in whose governance the Society has some special or indirect influence

Works that in some way are “related” to the Society

A work entrusted to the individual direction of a Jesuit^{xvi}

From the perspective of canon law, the different ways in which various networks relate to the Society takes on considerable importance in terms of who are the operative “juridic persons.” For instance, when one considers the many networks that are now linked to Jesuit works, several practical questions emerge. **Who speaks for the Society? To whom is one speaking when one engages a network? Who can commit to what?**

The structure of the Society’s governance as described extensively throughout our *Constitutions* is monarchical and centralized. It is not horizontal or collegial in either style or operation. The very existence of a network cuts across local boundaries and raises countless questions for static structures of governance.

One concrete example may suffice to illustrate how this can create issues. In recent years most provincials in the U.S. Assistancy have reported being approached by loyal and well-intentioned groups of alumni/ae, who are very interested in starting various levels of “Jesuit” schools in the areas in which they live. They are motivated by their great appreciation of the Jesuit education that they received and they would like nothing better than to make the same experience available to their children. Usually they are people of means who can marshal considerable resources. By the time the provincial is brought into the planning process, he learns that discussions are well underway on several fronts. This clearly is not “our way of proceeding.” Breaking this news to such groups only highlights the delicate balance that the Society must face.

The very fact that such groups are formed and proceed with the best of intentions fully realizing that it is most unlikely that any Jesuit will ever be involved in the actual operation of the school that they envisioned serves to illustrate why Decree 6 of GC 35, posed the following questions for further study:

1. What constitutes a Jesuit work, and how might it be sustained with other than Jesuits in leadership?
2. What are the necessary elements of formation needed by Jesuits and others to ensure growth in the spirit and practice of our mission?
3. What bonds might appropriately unite us as collaborators in mission who seek to serve together, with deepening affection, the mission given to the Society?^{xvii}

At stake here is nothing less than **the integrity of the name “Jesuit.”** With so many programs and entities invoking the Jesuit nature and affinity of their mission and identity, the extent to which the Society of Jesus can control the way in which the term “Jesuit” is used and by whom, becomes of paramount importance.

III. How can these new structures help us toward more internal sharing of our resources and capacities? What characteristics should they have to promote more internal justice and overcome internal inequalities?

When fully empowered, Jesuit networks can be the means by which resources and capacities can be effectively shared with dramatic results. To illustrate this point, let us consider some examples first from the standpoint of Jesuit educational institutions and then secondly from the standpoint of Jesuit provinces.

In recent memory, perhaps the most stellar example of how various Jesuit institutions can work together collaboratively was the effort made at Peking University in Beijing, China where twenty-four Jesuit universities joined forces to create the International Management Center.^{xviii}

Other countries could benefit from developing a similar model for use in a wide range of disciplines. But stop for a moment and realize that this model, viable as it was when it began, still assumed an actual, physical presence. In the present moment, Jesuits also need to explore how other web-based networks can be used to access regions of the globe from literally “worlds” away. Such is the thinking behind the model currently being developed through the use of virtual immersive learning environments in the Jesuit Commons. Its program “Higher Education at the Margins (JCHEM) provides Jesuit higher education to those at the margins, where people are unserved or underserved by higher education.”^{xix}

A further example of the profound impact that can be realized in this latter area can be seen in a relationship that was established several years ago between Fairfield University and the *Universidad Centroamericana* (UCA) in Nicaragua. Among the immediate developments that grew out of this partnership was that selected UCA faculty and doctoral students were given access to the complete range of on-line databases available through Fairfield University’s library. Accounts were created and passwords shared, all within full compliance with the respective licensing agreements. Through arrangements such as this, which come at virtually no cost to the host institution, an incredible range of scholarly resources can be made available to scholars who might otherwise be deprived of such valuable research materials.

Our late Jesuit brother, the economist Xabier Gorostiaga, S.J., who died in 2003, dedicated much of his scholarly efforts to studying the widening gap between rich and poor and concentrated his focus upon the increasing concentration of wealth within the hands of a smaller and smaller percentage of the world’s population. Beyond the concentration of wealth, however, what disturbed Father Gorostiaga was the increasing concentration of technological know-how that has become the axis supporting the accumulation of wealth. He saw how the distribution of technological skill is even more skewed than income distribution. Ten percent of humanity controls upwards of almost ninety percent of all research and development resources. With such cutting-edge technology and informatics concentrated in so few hands, those who are not privy to these resources and to these networks will be relegated to squeeze out a living as the divide between the North and the South continues to grow.”^{xx}

In so many ways, the means to narrow this widening gap already exists within the scope and the capacity of the many overlapping Jesuit networks. The question is how can this power be harnessed and directed more effectively? Realizing that the capacity was already in place was the seminal insight that guided Father Pedro Arrupe in 1979 when he sought to address the plight of the Vietnamese boat people. In a letter to major superiors dated November 14, 1980, Father Arrupe asked “what they in their own countries and the universal Society could do to bring at least some relief to such a tragic situation?”^{xxi} With that question, Father Arrupe put the Jesuit network into motion and the Jesuit Refugee Service was born. As Father Arrupe went on to write, “[the] response was magnificent. Immediate offers of help were made in personnel, know-how and material; supplies of food and medicine as well as money were sent; direct action was taken through the mass media to influence government and private agencies; services were volunteered in pastoral as well as organizational capacities; and so on.”^{xxii}

Today the Jesuit Refugee Service operates in fifty-one countries. Over the last thirty years more than 500,000 individuals have been direct beneficiaries of JRS projects^{xxiii}.

A second example can be drawn from the creation of the African Jesuit AIDS Network (AJAN) which was set up on 21 June 2002.^{xxiv} In an effort to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis, the Jesuit Superiors of Africa and Madagascar created a multi-dimensional international ministry that would tackle the enormous task on numerous levels. Once again, the resources of the network were in place, they just needed to be engaged and directed more effectively. Today, ten years later, AJAN now operates in each of the twenty-seven countries in Africa where Jesuits currently work.

These two examples and the institutional examples cited above illustrate the immense power of the Jesuit network when it is used collaboratively. Currently there are over one million living alumni/ae Jesuits schools. Imagine if only the power of this group could be harnessed and directed more effectively towards the social and spiritual problems of our day, Clearly it would be an apostolic force for good the likes of which even St. Ignatius, himself, could hardly have fathomed.

Conclusion

To facilitate a more strategic way of utilizing the various Jesuit networks, I suggest that three distinct phases are necessary. The first phase would involve a much more intentional and systematic effort on the part of provinces and assistancies to connect both individuals and institutions horizontally and not just vertically. This would obviously entail greater and greater levels of both interprovincial and interassistancy cooperation and perhaps even result in a lessening of traditional notions of regional autonomy within the Society. Suggestions of how this might be done are already contained in the post-GC 35 commission report, which was prepared for Father General.^{xxv} Adaptations and changes of the Complementary Norms may be involved which would naturally entail a much larger discussion across the whole of the Society and would probably in all likelihood require the action of a General Congregation.

The second phase, would be along the lines of the efforts already underway within the “Jesuit Commons,” and would entail seeking a better means of “sharing” not only the vast amounts of knowledge and capabilities that exist within the networks, but also a sharing of human and material resources that make up the networks themselves. The latter dimension could only be accomplished by shifting and reallocating the Society’s resources from areas of plenty and overabundance to those locales where such resources are sorely lacking. Again, this action would pose serious challenges to the way in which autonomous provinces and assistancies currently function.

The third and final phase would be to deepen the spiritual roots that serve as the foundation of all Jesuit networks. The culture of superficiality about which Father General spoke so poignantly in Mexico City is alive and well. Jesuits can never lose sight of the fact that our sense of mission is and always must be “apostolic” and not simply social or ideological. Our Jesuit mission is rooted

in the gospel of Jesus Christ and no other. If Jesuit networks lose that sense of purpose and direction, all their efforts will be for naught.

Alas, what started out here as an overview of networks and the possibilities that they present for the future work of the Society of Jesus, ends up with a reiteration of tried and true principles that need to be adapted for a new age. In the service of mission, we need to (1) connect people and institutions, (2) we need to share the bounty of God's blessings with those in need and (3) we need never to separate ourselves from the source of our life and the foundation of our strength, namely the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Society of Jesus has been richly blessed with men who are willing to follow the banner of Christ along with countless lay colleagues who share our mission. To confront the needs of the contemporary world, however, the Society must operate within new paradigms.

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ⁱ <http://archive.cyark.org/>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://jesuitcommons.org/>

^{iv} GC 34, D 13, n.341, (*emphasis added*).

^v GC 35, D. 6, n.212, 29, a.

^{vi} 2011-17, Rome , September 27, 2011.

^{vii} <http://www.sjnen.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=316>

^{viii} <http://www.sjnen.org/page.aspx?pid=265>

^{ix} <http://www.jesuit-collaborative.org/about-us>

^x Taken from a conversation with a current Boston College senior.

^{xi} <http://www.alphasigmanu.org/>

^{xii} <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=105349284688104184882.000490d0cff3ee704361c&z=3>

See also <http://www.feyalegria.org/>

^{xiii} GC 35, D. 6, n.192.9.

^{xiv} See Adolfo Nicolás, "Challenges to Higher Education Today" in *Conversations* (Fall 2011, no. 40), p. 6.

^{xv} <http://www.sacredspace.ie/>

^{xvi} *Statutes on Religious Poverty in the Society of Jesus: Instructions on the Administration of Goods* (Rome: Curia General of the Society of Jesus, 2005), p. 65-70.

^{xvii} GC 35, D. 6, n.191, 8.1-8.3.

^{xviii} Efforts such as this demonstrate in practice what is imagined in Decree Twenty-One, "Interprovincial and Supraprovincial Cooperation," from GC 34.

^{xix} <http://jesuitcommons.org/Join>

^{xx} See, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1141/is_n13_v31/ai_16531823/

^{xxi} <http://jrsusa.org/Assets/Sections/Downloads/ArrupeLetter.pdf>

^{xxii} <http://jrsusa.org/Assets/Sections/Downloads/ArrupeLetter.pdf>

^{xxiii} <http://www.jrs.net/about>

^{xxiv} http://www.jesuitaids.net/go.aspx?B1=htm/mission_eng.htm&RZ=1&TL=1

^{xxv} See, note vi above.