



## Wired to the counterculture

It's hard not to be struck by the similarities between the cult of the internet and the vast counterculture movement that developed as a mass phenomenon in the United States in the 1960s and, in a variety of forms, in other Western countries. The counterculture was in fact a very broad movement encompassing the "Beat Generation", (1), the hippie movement and a host of alternative movements.

The practices of this counterculture world involved "dropping out" from the world of ordinary people, communal living, a deep desire for equality and a touch of libertarianism. There was a Gandhian attachment to the culture of non-violence, closeness to nature and (2). Society was to be a peaceful community based on love and altruism.

This idea of a new world has many similarities with the present movement developing around the internet, which is also mobilising hundreds of thousands of young people - many of them looking for a society which is more fraternal, more "communicative", more peaceful.

The continuity is striking: (3) - a space in which you can leave the "ordinary world" behind you. People who spend their time on the Net are in a sense the "drop-outs" of today. In the 1960s you "hit the road" to get a different, more spiritual sense of what life was about. Today you surf the "information highways" of the Net.

This picture of the internet culture would not be complete without mentioning an important, if secondary characteristic: (4) - of and for young people. It is a sort of permanent revolution in which young people decide the direction that it will take.

The development of the internet is strongly dependent on the younger generations. Microsoft is currently trying to negotiate its way into closer contact with the world of the Net, and it has no hesitation (5). The company believes that young people will be more or less permanently connected to the Web, and it has therefore hired two teenagers to explain to its middle-aged executives their new philosophy of work and leisure.

It is within this youth culture that the glorification of speed has become a new creed: (6). Speed is what frees us from our bodies and gives us a possibility of 24-hour access to others.

Reading some of the articles and statements that have been appearing, you could be forgiven for wondering what kind of space this “new world” will leave for old people - i.e. those over the age of 35. A study actually shows that there is a real issue about (7) due to the prevailing “youthism” of that world.

**Missing sentences (there is one extra):**

- a) in recruiting very young people to help guide its strategy
- b) the world of the internet is, in its own way, today's counterculture
- c) the values which it embraced gained social currency and influenced life styles
- d) the exclusion of older people from the new world of information technologies
- e) fast is good, and brings you closer to the world of the mind
- f) the youth protest movement which later led to the big student revolts
- g) the Internet cult is a cult of youth
- h) a mysticism coloured by Eastern influences, particularly Buddhism