

THE CENTURY AHEAD

An Interview

with

Futurist David Pearce Snyder

published in the
Winter 1999/2000 Issue

Zukünfte

Berlin, Germany

(The following dialogue is an edited translation of an interview that originally appeared in the Winter 1999/2000, issue of the German journal, *Zukünfte* [Futures].)

David P. Snyder has consulted with major companies and government agencies in the U.S. and around the world on questions about the future since the 1960's. As a Senior Planning Officer, he previously developed a strategic planning system for the IRS, the American tax agency. As early as the mid-1970's Snyder proposed, in an article in the FUTURIST magazine, a social innovation: Giving families the same rights as economic enterprises that companies and other formal institutions have enjoyed for centuries – to incorporate as ongoing legal entities. Since then, his ideas have attracted several noteworthy supporters; for example, Nobel laureate Gary S. Becker of the University of Chicago. ZUKÜNFTE correspondent Evelyn Hauser spoke with David Pearce Snyder.

Globalization and Mass Culture as Major Driving Forces of the Future

HAUSER: Will the new Millennium bring us fundamental changes in society?

SNYDER: At this moment, humankind is encountering multiple revolutionary changes, including globalization. That, by itself, is a genuine revolution. From now on, the world economy will move as a single system. It's never been that way before. The integration of the global economy in the 21st Century will see the universal adoption of Western marketplace practices, resulting in a worldwide mass market consumer culture, extensively motivated by the mass media.

In this respect, the next century will bring about a movement toward a global culture, and an increasingly homogenous marketplace. By the time we get to the end of this century, there will be just a handful of popular, well-known brand names for each major consumer product and service in the world marketplace. Most dominant vendors in the global mass market will come from Western economies simply because we are the oldest mass-market economies.

There will still be regional brands that cater to particular local tastes, especially in food and clothing style. There will also be great commercial icons from non-Western cultures that will expand to become dominant "global players" in the world marketplace. For example, current evidence suggests that in the future we will see Indian firms become major global traders in both agricultural products and in the hospitality business.

HAUSER: So globalization will be one of the main driving forces in the next century?

SNYDER: Absolutely. And globalization of the economy will, in turn, lead to the emergence of a global culture: continuously-evolving amalgamations of the music, art, and cuisine of many nations. Moreover, modern technology is going to get very good at replicating differing cultural settings. In ten years, three-dimensional television will be common. In 20 years, most homes will have a so-called "data cave," in which the entire room will be the screen. You will walk into it and be present **in** the projected image. You will be standing in the middle of a bazaar in downtown Calcutta in 1820, not merely looking at a picture of it. You'll see all the sights, hear all the sounds and people talking; there even will be all the smells. We will be able to transport ourselves into the simulated environments of different places and times. By the end of the 21st Century, this will be a common phenomenon.

The Struggle to Preserve Cultural Integrity

HAUSER: This might be true for Western industrialized countries....

SNYDER: This is going to happen everywhere. To begin with, information technology will become so cheap, so powerful, and so intuitively simple to use that it will be truly ubiquitous by 2025. The kinds of sights and sounds that appeal to Westerners are not unique to the West. Many of the physical experiences that thrill me, engage me, draw me in, are commonly appealing to all human beings. Many local leaders in the developing nations are upset, (with good reason)

Interview with David Pearce Snyder • The Snyder Family Enterprise • www.the-futurist.com

because, once their citizens are exposed to the vivid graphic visual images of modern Westernized daily life on the Internet, local events and culture will seem dull, and nobody will want to watch local television or adhere to traditional customs anymore. There is now a growing movement to preserve local cultural integrity. Just as conservationists are trying to preserve endangered species of animals and plants from becoming extinct, there are groups out there – political movements, international organizations, etc. — trying to protect local indigenous cultures and languages from becoming extinct. This will be a big battle in the 21st Century.

HAUSER: What do you think the outcome will be?

SNYDER: Well, there will continue to be sporadic attempts by nations to exclude or restrict the Internet, but all will fail. There will also be growing numbers of *cultural preserves* or *enclaves*, but I believe it will be a losing battle. The appeal of global culture is already so powerful that it will simply capture most of the young people from every culture that becomes exposed to the audio-visual excitement and social dynamism of Western culture. Whole generations will be sucked right out of their traditional cultural norms and expectations. The first generation of a local culture that modernizes will retain some of their old lifestyles, behaviors and values, but not most of them. And two or three generations down the road, all but the dominant local cultural forms and icons will be gone altogether.

There will be a variety of institutional attempts to preserve the artifacts and rituals of traditional cultures. In Industrial nations around the world, for example, there are "Country Life" parks recreating daily life on a farm a hundred years ago, before electricity. There will be reservations that preserve traditional local lifestyles, crafts, structures and tools. Ethnographers and cultural anthropologists will enshrine them in "living museums," some of which will become highly successful tourist destinations. But that's it. There will be attempts to halt the homogenizing effects of modern global culture, but I think most will fail as self-sustaining communities.

Local Tribal Cultures Will Be Gobbled Up

HAUSER: Let me exaggerate a little bit. Does that mean that South America, Africa, parts of Asia, will be museums in 100 years from now?

SNYDER: Oh no. They will become modernized like we are. They will have high rise cities and suburbs and highways and so forth. As the modern secular lifestyle rolls across them, their local tribal cultures will be largely pushed aside and then

gobbled up. Modernization will come to all parts of the world. Within a hundred years, most humans will live in places that look like Singapore, Houston or Istanbul, which may sound terrible to many people.

HAUSER: Does that mean you think that — basically — lifestyles will become the same all over the world?

SNYDER: Yes and no. There will be a mixing of "memes" — what they call the equivalent of "genes" in culture. These memes — individual components of a cultures daily ritual or behavioral style — from different cultures will be mixed into the global culture and they will enrich it. Each succeeding generation of young people in the modern societies will increasingly be in direct contact with young people in Zamboanga, Cairo, or Chichicastenango through the Internet. They will talk about the things that are important to them. Within ten years electronic instantaneous translation will mean that the children of the United States will be able to interact with children of Central China who are speaking Mandarin. This will break down barriers, certainly, among cultures, and it will accelerate the degree to which we feel a kinship with people on the other side of the world who look and sound different from us. This will do much to reduce animosity and even, hopefully, warfare.

Manifestations of traditional cultures will endure in those aspects of life that we commonly associate with cultural style: music, art, clothing styles, food, manners of expression, design, social customs, personal habits. Do you shake hands to greet some one? Do you press your palms together or do you hug one another? These will be the things that give us our unique identity as Amazon Indians versus being Brazilian etc. It's just that most of the enormous disparities between indigenous cultures of the developing nations and those of the developed world will largely disappear, simply because billions of people will no longer be living in distressful conditions of extreme poverty and austerity. But artifacts of those cultures — the common rituals and symbols — will remain as a part of local social style in a global civilization; a kind of collective social-cultural statement: "This is who we were, and it is part of who we are now." But less and less will we be purely what we *were*. By the close of the 21st Century, I believe people everywhere will take great pride in saying: "I am a citizen of the world....., of the planet Earth."

This is not to say that there aren't many people who are very unhappy with globalization — and with the cultural modernization that comes with it. There will be violent attempts to forestall globalization — revolution, terrorism, civil war, etc. Simultaneously, intentional communities will emerge in societies throughout the world that will seek to withdraw from all this — who will try to find places out in the

desert, or up in the mountains, etc. — where they can be free of all this innovation and change. That's fine. There have always been people like that and we will continue to have people like that. But these will not be mainstream societies; there will not be whole nations like that. There will be no Taliban regime in Afghanistan 50 years from now; Afghanistan will be much more like Morocco or Tunisia are today. They will still be Islamic and they may dress differently from us, but they will drive cars, have computers and television sets and invest in stocks and bonds. Most importantly, they will observe global standards of human rights with respect to women and to peoples who are not from their culture.

Meanwhile, More of Us Will Commute by Going Downstairs

HAUSER: People will still need food, clothing, housing, healthcare, daycare, eldercare. How do you envision this in a hundred years from now?

SNYDER: Certainly, more of us will work out of our homes. More and more of us will commute by coming downstairs, not only in the U.S., but worldwide. By the time we get to the end of this century, up to half of all gainful employment in modern societies will be done in the home. The other half of the work — just by necessity — will have to be done onsite, such as road maintenance, manufacturing, construction, law enforcement, and things like that. The important reality here is that the home will no longer be just a social setting; it will also be an economic enterprise as well. Until the Industrial Revolution, most households were both social **and** economic enterprises. Just 100 years ago in America, half of all the workers were home-based. Most were farmers; others were professionals — doctors, lawyers and, accountants, etc. — or artisans, like the potter, the tailor or the jeweler who lived above or behind the shop.

Information technology and the info-mated economy will return much productive enterprise to the household. In this setting, children will grow up in homes where marketplace work is done, which will give young people a much better understanding the world of work. This will be an important side-benefit altogether. Right now, most young people's view of work is primarily shaped by the way television depicts the workplace. Of course, television very carefully never shows you ordinary people actually doing ordinary work, because that's not entertaining. They show people socializing on the job, having affairs, going through mid-life crises, suffering accidental injuries, etc., but never working.

Farm children, by comparison, grow up watching their parents work, and are given chores to do themselves at a very early age. They learn the notion of work and

personal responsibility, and how work links the individual to the larger world beyond the household and the local community. In contrast, all the typical suburban home offers its children is a social context — or a social-emotional context, if you will — and that I believe, is not an adequate introduction to the world of adult life.

HAUSER: If more of us work at home in the 21st Century, where will we go to "play?" Some futurists say that virtual reality and other forms of cyber-entertainment will make home recreation so appealing that people will stop going out to movies and concerts.

SNYDER: Well, 85% of all leisure activity today already occurs in the home, and three activities make up almost all of it: watching television, reading books and magazines, and socializing with family and friends. I believe that a hundred years from now the proportion of home-based leisure time will be very much the same. Most of our leisure and recreation time will be spent in the home. But info-com technology will bring a wealth of physical environments into our homes. For example, the friends and family members with whom we socialize in 2025 will be scattered all over the country — or the world—and assembled in our living rooms through the wonders of virtual reality.

What's more, we will be able to experience in-doors almost anything that we can experience out-of-doors, often more quickly, more safely, and cheaper than if we went outside and actually did it. At the same time, our ability to interact with any place in the world through the media in our homes will also serve as the hook to lure us out of the house to experience reality. We'll watch somebody riding a dune-buggy or walking into the 2km-long "big Room" at Carlsbad Cavern on 3-DTV and say: "I want to do that."

One other basic parameter that will change over the next 100 years is that average life span will get much longer. Average life expectancy in the modern countries will be somewhere between 85 and 95, and in the rest of the world it will certainly jump up to between 65 and 75. Now, if we look at a future where everybody will be living longer and staying healthy until they are in their seventies or eighties, many people will extend their active work life, have several careers in sequence, and certainly have a more active "retirement." This will be an area of ongoing adaptive behavior world wide throughout the 21st Century.

The Family as Social Service Institution

HAUSER: Who will take care of the people who are not be able to sustain themselves in the course of this very long lifetime? Will we have huge government agencies taking care of dependent elderly people? Or will private sector insurance do it?

SNYDER: The observation that I have always made in looking at the future of social welfare is that formal institutions are, by and large, not very good at nurturance. On the whole, they are bankruptingly expensive and offer indifferent care. We've got a lot of data that says elder care facilities, even expensive ones, are often neglectful and abusive, and that it is very difficult for formal institutions to motivate people to be truly nurturing to strangers simply by paying them cash money. It has been this gradually-dawning realization that is leading us to reassess the modern family as an evolving, multi-functional enterprise rather than simply as the nuclear social unit in which people are born and raised.

The modern nuclear family became the dominant form of household in Western Culture around 1900, and lost that dominance in the mid-1970's. The family is the most adaptive institution that we have. Larger, formal institutions resist change as something that is inconvenient, distracting, unpredictable, and worse. Public institutions are often unable to change without political or legislative permission. Families, on the other hand, have no choice but to look at their circumstances and deal with them. What's more, history suggests that the family, if adequately empowered by law and supported by public policy, can become not merely the principal social institution but the principal **social service** institution, for modern society. Given appropriate public policy support, the only time that a person or an individual household should need to turn to the government for a social "safety net" would be if their extended family — that is, the total network of their living relations — were collectively unable to deal with the situation.

HAUSER: Do you see this as a plausible scenario?

SNYDER: Absolutely! In fact, that's the way things used to be before the industrial era. In most formal cultures in history — whether tribal, nomadic or mercantile—the family assumed, or was assigned, the responsibility for social welfare. I believe that, as we move into this increasingly prosperous, market driven global culture, there are several reasons why the family will become the most reasonable, the most probable, and the most desirable social support unit.

Think about it! Who are the people who will have remained emotionally close to me during a lifetime spent in this mass culture world; a world where we will be

increasingly likely to move all over our country and even all over the world; where we will change jobs many times, and may not even stay in the same career path? There is almost nobody with whom we will maintain contact over a 75-year lifetime *except* members of our family. Therefore, who's going to know us best in times of need? Who will be able to accommodate us — even if they may not want to accommodate us — better than any formal state institution? Our families!

The Extendable Family

SNYDER: French sociologist Émile Durkheim spent much of his life trying to discover an institution that would be humane to its members and yet still survive and prosper over the long term in an Industrial world dominated by giant private and public bureaucracies. He looked at the industrial welfare systems being created in Europe around 1890 and was the first one to refer to social institutions as "warehouses for people." He concluded that it would be crucial for society to create an organization small enough to accommodate the natural diversity of humankind, and yet still big enough to have some leverage or influence in a mass culture. After spending his life looking — and he studied all kinds of things, communes, cooperative ventures, etc. — he concluded that the most effective social institution is the extended family. I agree with Durkheim, that the extended family — or as I now prefer to call it, the "extendable" family — should be regarded as the primary social safety net for the post-industrial age.

HAUSER: What do you mean by that?

SNYDER: In the U.S. suburbs, there is currently a building boom underway of "Granny flats" and "mother-in-law wings." Instead of going into assisted living communities or elder care facilities, a growing share of our Baby Boomers' physically-dependent, aging parents are moving back "next door" to their grown children. (One-third of senior citizens surveyed by the UCLA School of Medicine say that they would kill themselves rather than go into an elder care facility.) If we are concerned about the quality of life of elderly people, there is one group of people who are most likely to make a diligent effort to care for and nurture an elderly person: their relatives. The extendable family is the naturally occurring assisted living arrangement.

Engendering Tolerance for Human Diversity

SNYDER: Another great benefit of the extendable family is that it teaches you tolerance for the natural diversity of humanity. Uncle Oscar, for example, lived with us when I was growing up. Uncle Oscar was not entirely “all there.” He was a nice enough guy, but he couldn’t seem to hold down a job. He had very impractical ideas about money and propriety, and sometimes he disappeared for weeks at a stretch. Then he would turn up again and he wouldn't seem quite well. But he was a reliable baby sitter who had a swell relationship with all the children in the family. Now, who is able to take better care of Uncle Oscar in his dotage than the relatives who know and love him in spite of the fact that he's a little weird.

It is that tolerance of human diversity that formal institutions cannot even afford to acknowledge — that ability to accommodate the natural variety of “personhood” — that makes the family the best institution to take care of the dependent elderly members of society. And, of course, Uncle Oscar might also be just the right person to take care of another elderly relative with Alzheimer's perfectly; a slightly pixilated, able-bodied episodic alcoholic in his sixties who finally finds his role in life.

In fact, sociologists have now concluded that the nuclear family is probably not an optimal setting in which to raise kids. There are only two adult role models for the children to pattern on. If those two adult role models are going through a difficult time because one has lost his/her job, or one of them has a substance abuse problem, when they are not fighting with each other, they are complaining about how rotten life is, etc.

HAUSER: How do you imagine everyday life in an extendable family?

SNYDER: By definition, the household of an extendable family hosts multiple functions and multiple adult generations. Typically, those multiple functions would include — in addition to the basic function of shelter — gainful employment, education, social context and convalescent or long-term care. In the freehold farmsteads of Europe and North America, for example, it has long been common for three generations of one family to live under one roof, or at least, on the same property. My great grandfather and his brothers left Switzerland for America in the 1860's **not** for freedom and fortune, but because, they complained, all the houses in the village where they lived were so crowded with live-in relatives that there was no personal space or privacy.

When they got here, my forbears found a country where land was so plentiful and cheap that successful farm families routinely expanded their homes or built new

houses to accommodate their adult offspring rather than squeezing the extended family into an unextended dwelling. Perhaps the most striking examples of family self-sufficiency are the Amish and Mennonite farmers of North America, who continue to endow each new generation of families with their own farmsteads in the immediate community — i.e. a horse and buggy ride distance from where the preceding generation live — in anticipation that the younger generation will care for the elder when the time comes. These traditions derive from the Sect's strict interpretation of Christian scripture, as does their refusal to pay social security taxes or to accept social security benefits. They are, in fact, their own socio-economic safety net.

Of course, it is commonly argued that farm families are uniquely able to be trans-generationally self-sufficient, because the household itself produces marketplace value, and because the ownership of land affords ample space for multi-generational housing. In Europe, however, during the Mercantile Era that followed the Renaissance, residential property in the market towns typically included *two or three dwelling structures*. At the front of the site, right on the sidewalk, was the structure that housed the family business on the ground floor, over which the family lived. As the town, the business, and the family grew, a second house was built, about 15 to 20 meters behind the street-front structure, into which most of the family moved. The original dwelling space over the shop was either used for expanded business activities, or was given to the oldest child and his/her family as their "starter home." Finally, 20 to 30 years after the original house and shop were built, a third structure, often referred to as the "retirement house" was constructed at the back of the property.

Both in towns, or in the countryside, under one roof or several, multi-generational households were the social safety net of pre-industrial Western culture. This is not to say that there were not endowed and religious charities; there were. But most were "means tested," and open largely to people who had no family to care for them. For most widows, orphans and other indigent persons, both social custom — and contemporary law — assigned responsibility for care to their families. All of this changed with the rise of industrial cities.

Industrialization reduced the family's capacity for trans-generational self-sufficiency in two ways. First, it shifted the physical location of most marketplace work out of households and into factories, mines and mills. And then, because industrial production required unprecedented concentrations of labor, industrial residential arrangements — dormitories, tenements and terrace housing, etc. — placed families in small, densely-packed unexpandable dwelling spaces that simply could not accommodate extended households. During the ensuing century-and-a-half, the industrial economy compensated workers and their

families for the loss of their natural social safety net by hugely increasing compensation for the bulk of the workers, and by creating formal institutions to replace the extended household, such as pensions, health and accident insurance, social security, savings banks and assisted living centers.

Whether or not we were entirely happy with the trade-offs we made, by the 1950's and 60's, the institutional social safety nets in most mature industrial economies began to work for most people. But today, now that hundreds of millions of people in Europe and North America have come to rely upon formal institutions for their social services and economic security, those institutions are being dismantled, scaled back, and subjected to marketplace forces. Our Industrial Era social technologies are now out-dated. Like the vertically-integrated corporate conglomerate and the hierarchical, pyramidal bureaucracy, our industrial era public schools, healthcare and social welfare programs are past their economically-efficient service lives. They will have to be re-invented for the Information Age.

As mature industrial economies pass over the threshold from labor-intensive to information-intensive work, they will eventually invent new social technologies suitable to our new techno-economic realities. But during the turbulent, transformational decade or two ahead, it is only reasonable that, with the shrinkage of the Industrial Era social safety nets, people are turning, once again, to society's natural safety net, the extendable family. And, strikingly, the individual household's capacity to extend itself has become much greater than it was just a generation ago. In 1970, income-producing work took place in fewer than 10% of all U.S. households; today, gainful employment occurs in over 40% of U.S. households. (You may not be able to mass-produce automobiles or appliances in your home, but you *can* produce valuable information products and services!)

Moreover, 70% of North American households now live in suburbs, where average lot size is similar to that of Europe's Mercantile Era towns. As a consequence, there is an ongoing boom in home expansions — e.g. office additions, granny flats and in-law wings, etc. In the U.S., while 1.5 million elderly live in nursing homes, nearly 10 times that many live with relatives. The trans-generational, extendable family is back; it's alive and well, and I believe, capable of making society much less dependent upon large, formal institutions and their de-humanizing, rule-based, one-size-fits-all services.

So, in response to your original question, everyday life in a 21st Century extendable household will be very much like everyday life in the extended households of 16th Century mercantile Europe, or 19th Century rural America. It will be home to 2, 3 or even 4 generations, and a variety of commercial enterprises. Unlike the typical

20th Century suburban home, which frequently stood empty most of the day while it's occupants went off to work, day care and school, the 21st Century extendable household is likely to be occupied and active from sun-up to late at night.

Other Appropriate Social Technologies

HAUSER: Isn't this something exclusively for rich countries? Aren't other solutions necessary for less well-to-do people and nations?

SNYDER: First of all, let's be clear that most long-range forecasts today project not only growing prosperity for essentially all the world's people, but a dramatic closing in the economic gap between the highest income households and the lowest, both **within** nations and **among** them. Today, the ratio between the average incomes of the wealthiest nations and the poorest is about 30 to 1. By the end of the 21st Century, this is expected to be about 6 to 1. What's more, the great majority of middle-income households created during the next 100 years will be in what we currently regard as "developing" nations in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Given humankind's great potential for progress as we enter the 21st Century, we should not casually assume the continued predominance of the massive poverty that currently characterizes many of the world's nations. It is much more purposeful, I believe, for us to begin exploring how we can sustain the consumption rates characteristically associated with our soaring levels of prosperity without exhausting our natural resources and destroying our environment. Clearly we will need more efficient physical and social technologies in the 21st Century than we were able to devise during the Industrial Era.

Group Houses

SNYDER: For example, in the U.S., we have something we call "group houses" or "affinity" houses. They are naturally-occurring, non-familial, multi-member households. They exist all over America, in cities, suburbs and in rural areas. One of the fastest growing types of "group house" involves mature single women. Because men die five to ten years earlier than women, there are a lot of widows living alone out there. They are still healthy and they want to live where all their friends are—and their parish churches. But they don't want to live alone in a large suburban house.

Interview with David Pearce Snyder • The Snyder Family Enterprise • www.the-futurist.com

One strategy of these older single women is to build accessory apartments in their homes and rent them out. The tenant then becomes their live-in handyman (handy-person). That's a growing phenomenon in the U.S. Another is for three to six widows to get together. Very often, they will have known each other for years. They will buy a large single-family home in a suburb where most of them have lived all their adult lives, and establish a "family" of a half-dozen elderly women living together in the same house. They live together like a family, their behavior is like a family's—they eat most meals together, share household chores, etc.

Since the 1970's, U.S. courts have ruled that these arrangements are legal, and not excludable by local residential zoning codes. This has paved the way for the spontaneous establishment of thousands of group houses across America, for non-elderly, largely as homes for groups of 4 to 8 single young adults, often sharing some common affinity — e.g. all law students, programmers, nurses, etc. Group houses are a naturally-evolving social technology in a growing number of developed nations today.

Co-housing

Europe's contribution to the ongoing evolution of domestic enterprise is "co-housing," invented in Denmark in the early 1970's, by a group of 27 families seeking to re-create the mutual support functions of a traditional village in an urban neighborhood. In a co-housing community, each family has its own home, but the households also share common-use facilities, including child and elder care, a business center, frozen food locker, community kitchen and dining/party/meeting room, gymnasium/swimming pool/playing field, work shop, vacation property, etc. The concept has gained currency in Sweden and the Netherlands and in the U.S. where numerous co-housing communities, serving from 8 to 30 families each, are scattered across one-third of the States.

When surveyed, members of co-housing communities consistently report that they are enormously pleased with their choice of living arrangements. Given their high satisfaction ratings, it is worth noting that fewer than 200 co-housing communities have been created in the U.S. during the past 30 years. The great problem with co-housing is that you must pre-establish a community of 10 to 30 compatible households who are willing to commit \$100,000 to \$300,000 each — in advance — to acquire the property and build the community to a design on which all parties agree. According to the leaders of the movement, it typically takes between 5 to 10 years to actually assemble the members of a co-housing community, (although the Internet should speed the process considerably).

Interview with David Pearce Snyder • The Snyder Family Enterprise • www.the-futurist.com

In the mass-culture societies where most of us will live and work by the mid-21st Century, people will seek to insulate themselves — buffer themselves — from the risks and uncertainties of life in a rapidly changing, de-regulated, free trade, free market world. A generation from now, once nations have largely assimilated these multi-fold changes, it is reasonable to expect that countries around the world will begin to invent new social technologies — new formal institutions — to deal with the system dysfunctions and unintended side-effects of our mature, informed, globalized, free market economies. But until that time, most individuals and nuclear families will need to depend more upon smaller, less formal, more flexible social technologies. History records an array of such social inventions — for example, the "beguines" and secular monasteries of 14th Century Northern Europe. But the extended family has, throughout history, served as the "natural" social safety net when formal institutions have failed.

In short, I am confident that, in the decades ahead, wherever there is growing prosperity combined with personal freedom and marketplace choice, societies around the world will engage in an efflorescence of adaptive, innovative living and working arrangements to exploit the opportunities and imperatives posed by their changing circumstances. In particular, the information revolution will place so much productive capacity at the disposal of individuals, households and dispersed families that the principal choice for the provision of almost every form of human service — e.g., convalescent care, education, income security, housing, etc. — will increasingly be between formal institutions and technologically empowered, self-reliant, multi-generational families.

HAUSER: Provided that the whole world would develop according to this model, do you think that there will still be poor people 100 years from now?

SNYDER: Of course. The purposeful question to ask is, "How many poor people will there be 100 years from now?" And that is one of those questions that is very difficult to answer because poverty has so many different causes: e.g., political, environmental, cultural, etc. If current U.N. projections are correct, fertility rates will continue to fall so that we eventually reach a stable global population of about 10 billion people around 2080 or so. From that point on, reducing world poverty will become much easier, since we have every reason to believe that the global economy will continue to grow beyond that date, and further, that we will be able to ameliorate the environmental consequences of our prosperity.

As long as the world's population is growing faster than we are able to raise capital, food and housing to accommodate that growth, poverty is going to be a problem. But if general levels of prosperity continue to rise at current rates, and

the world continues to move toward a stable population at current rates, then, surely, we should be able to overcome most poverty by the end of this century.

Evelyn Hauser is an independent writer and researcher specializing in cyberculture, emerging lifestyles and social change. Teleworking from Northern California, she is also part of a virtual network of European futurists and a professional member of the World Future Society. Her e-mail address is ehausersf@aol.com.

© 2000 David Pearce Snyder
The Snyder Family Enterprise
8628 Garfield Street
Bethesda, Maryland 20857
phone 301-530-5807 • fax: 301-530-1028
e-mail: snyderfam1@AOL.com
www.the-futurist.com