

A photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California, taken at dusk. The bridge's towers and suspension cables are silhouetted against a sky transitioning from deep blue to a soft purple and pink. The bridge is illuminated with warm lights, and the water below reflects the ambient light. The foreground shows a dark, silhouetted shoreline.

# Building Open Source Communities

Larry Wall

# Asking the right questions

A photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco at dusk. The bridge's towers and suspension cables are silhouetted against a sky transitioning from deep blue to a soft purple and pink. The bridge's lights are on, and the water below reflects the ambient light. The foreground shows a dark, rocky shoreline.

Who?

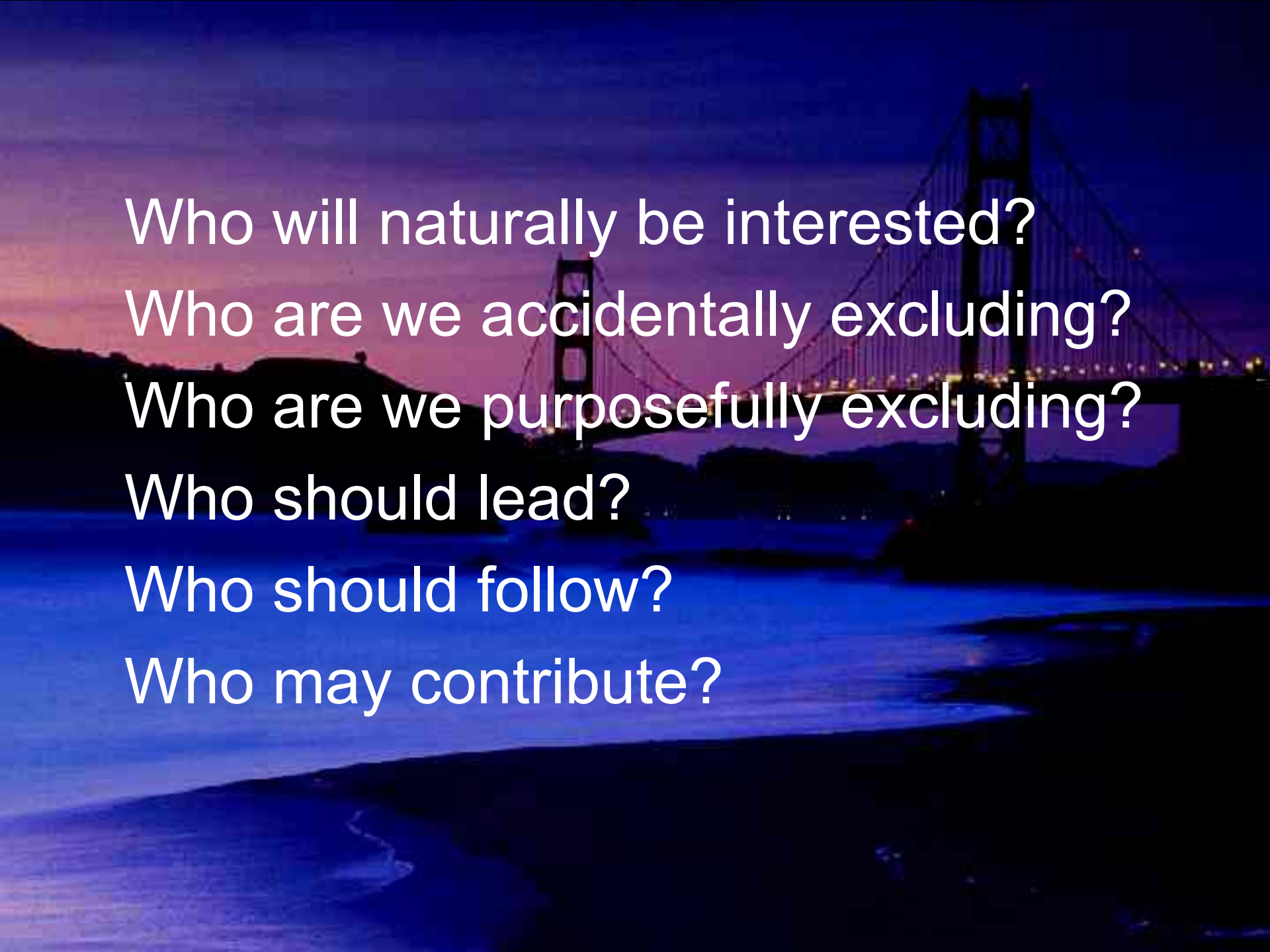
What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?

A photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco at dusk. The sky is a mix of deep blue and purple, and the bridge's lights are visible against the darkening sky. The water in the foreground is dark with some white foam from waves.

Who will naturally be interested?  
Who are we accidentally excluding?  
Who are we purposefully excluding?  
Who should lead?  
Who should follow?  
Who may contribute?

A photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco at dusk. The bridge's towers and suspension cables are silhouetted against a sky transitioning from deep blue to a soft purple and pink. The water below is dark, reflecting the ambient light. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

What is the goal of our community?

What can people contribute?

What rules will our community have?

What structure will it have?

What “network effects” do we expect?

What will the volunteers get out of it?

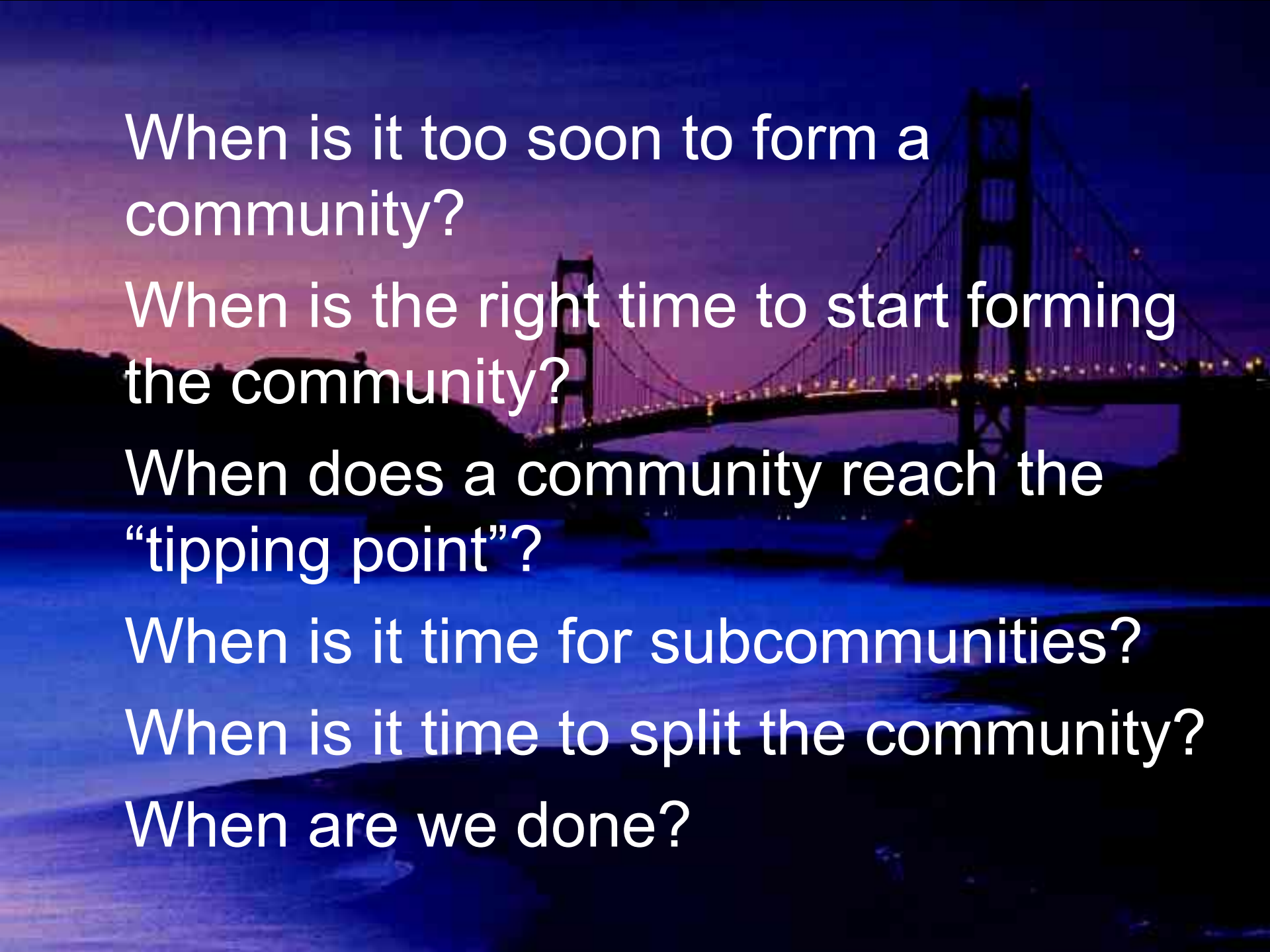
A photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California, taken at dusk. The bridge's towers and suspension cables are silhouetted against a sky transitioning from deep blue to a soft purple and pink. The water below is dark, reflecting the ambient light. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Where will our community meet in cyberspace?

Where will our community meet in physical space?

Where might we encourage subcommunities to form?

Where will they form spontaneously?

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When is it too soon to form a community?

When is the right time to start forming the community?

When does a community reach the “tipping point”?

When is it time for subcommunities?

When is it time to split the community?

When are we done?

A photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California, taken at dusk. The bridge's towers and suspension cables are silhouetted against a sky transitioning from deep blue to a soft purple and pink. The water below is dark, and the bridge's lights are beginning to glow.

Why do we *really* want a community?

Why do people join?

Why do people leave?

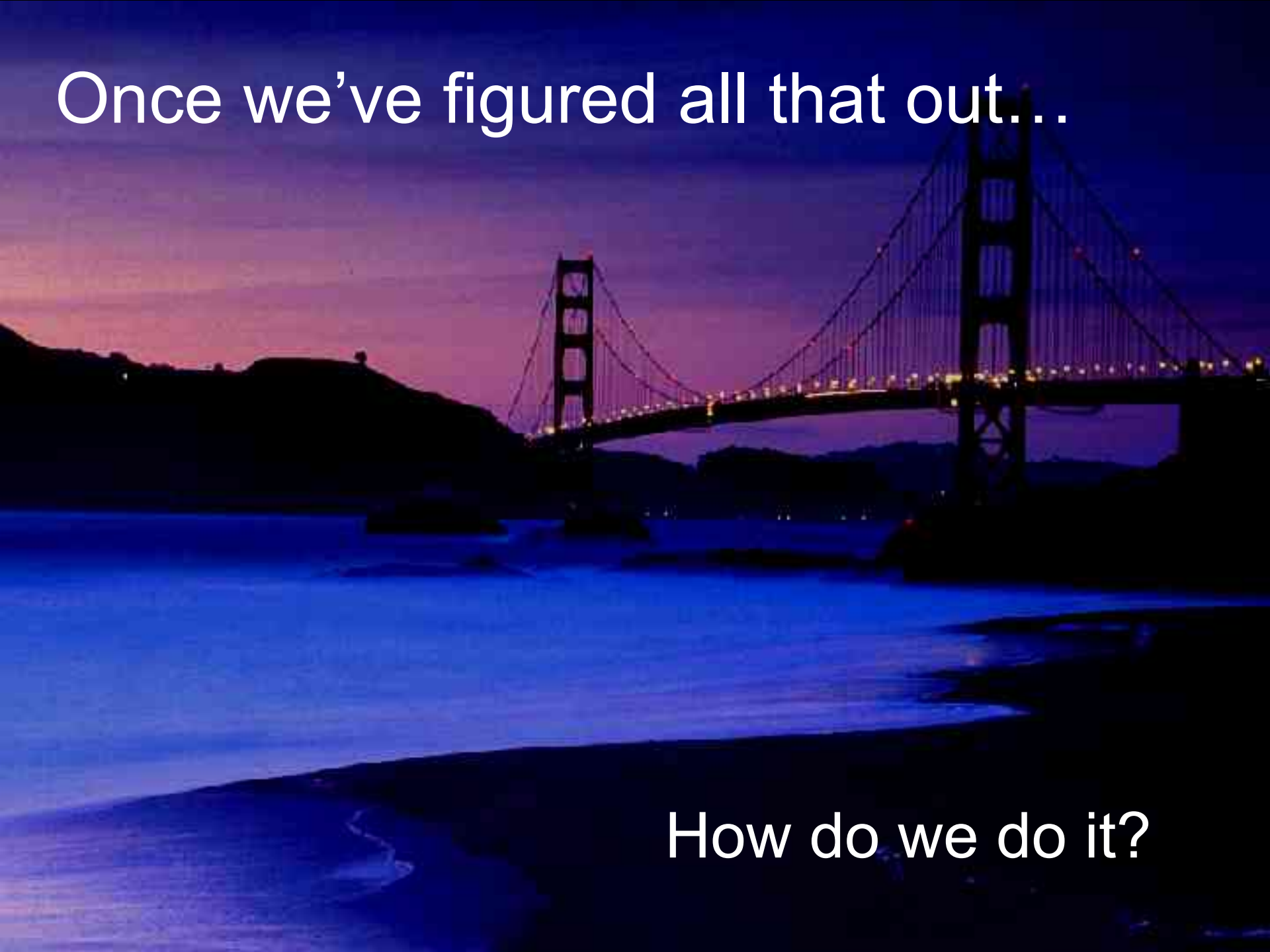
Why do people fight?

Why do they stop fighting?

Why do they enjoy being together?

Once we've figured all that out...

How do we do it?

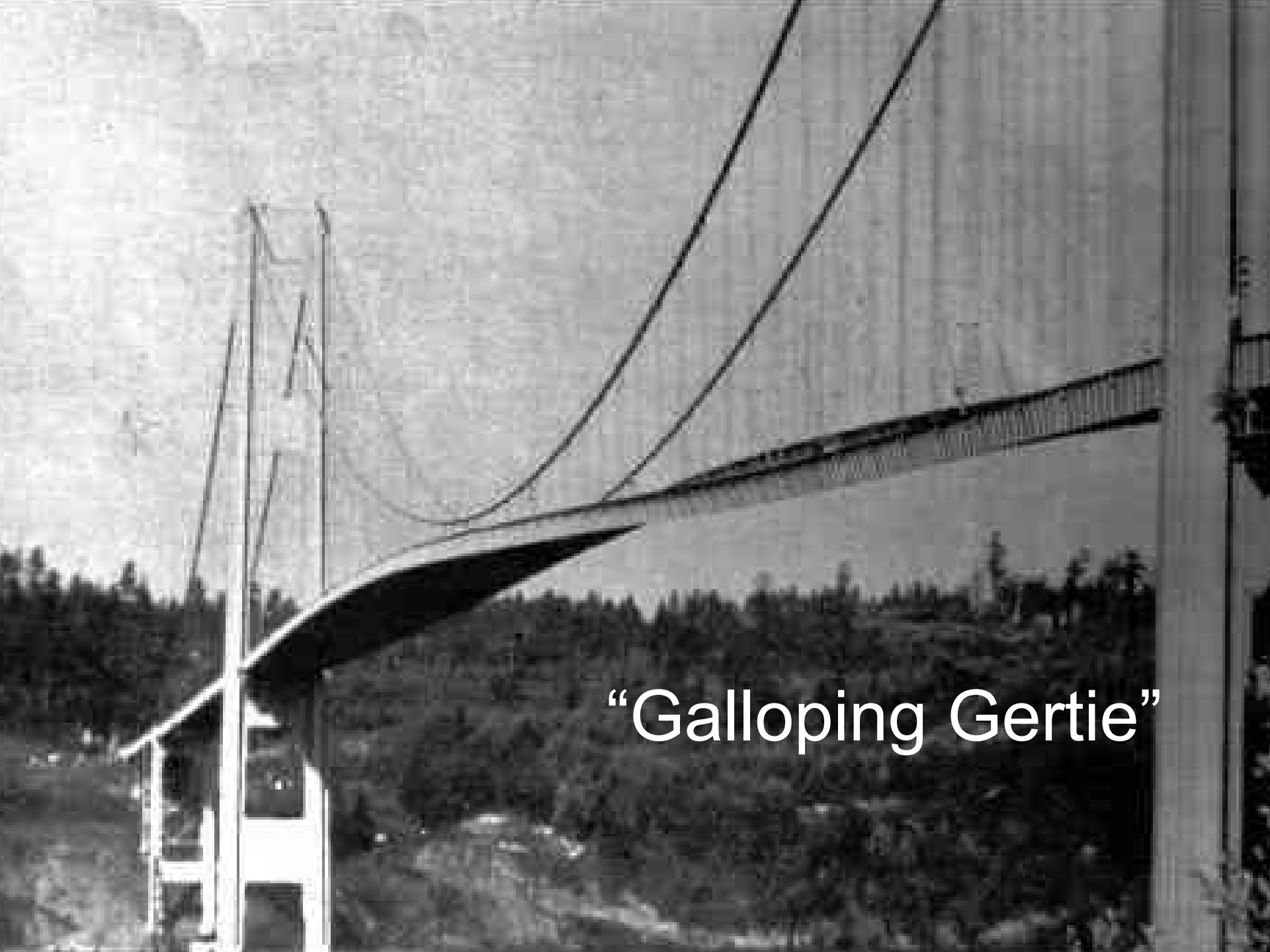




A photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California, taken at dusk. The bridge's two massive towers and suspension cables are silhouetted against a sky transitioning from deep blue to a soft purple and pink. The bridge deck is illuminated with warm lights, and the water below reflects the ambient light. The foreground shows a dark, silhouetted shoreline.

Like the Golden Gate Bridge

It's a simple matter of engineering.

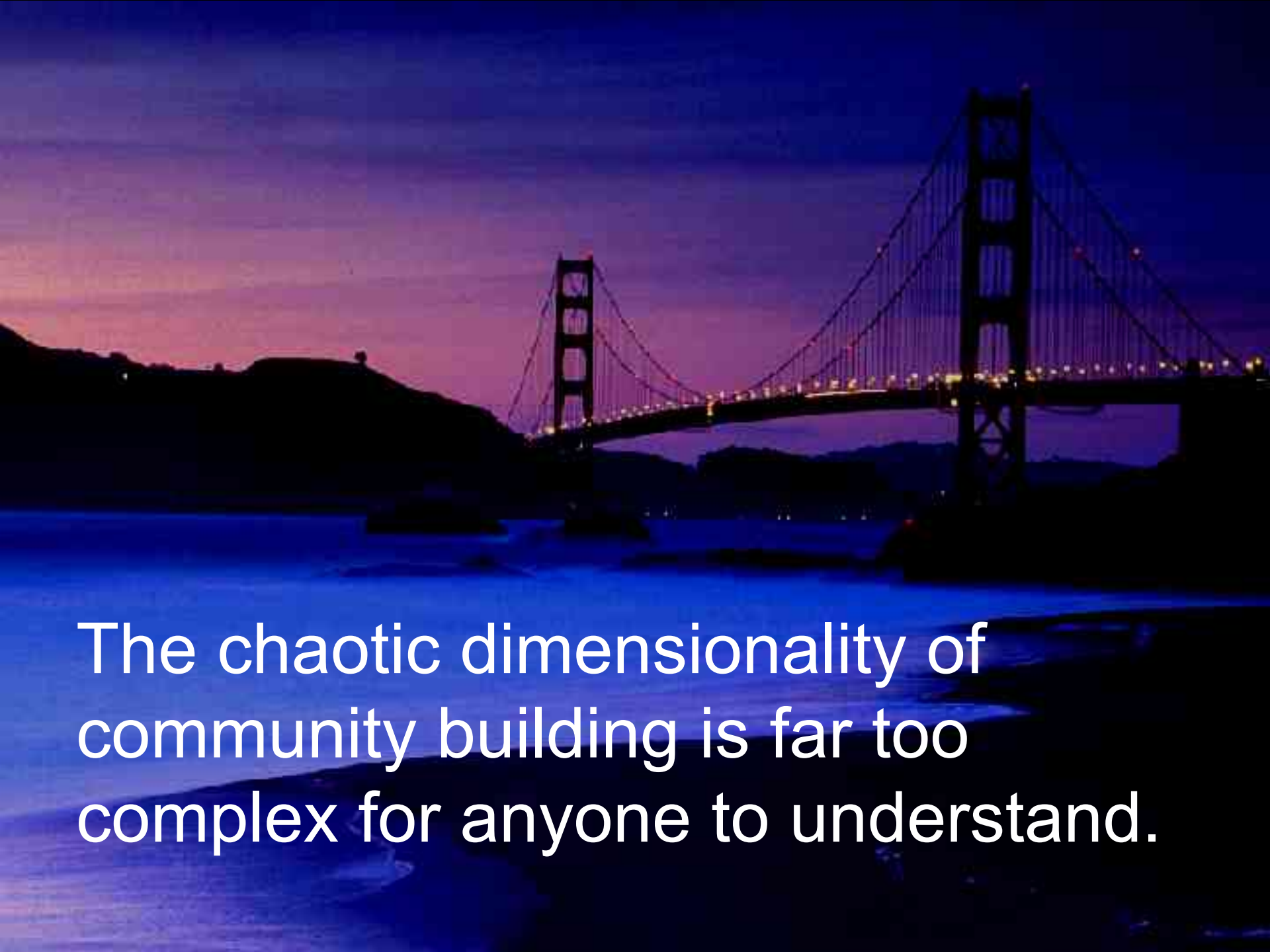


“Galloping Gertie”




“Gallopig Gertie”

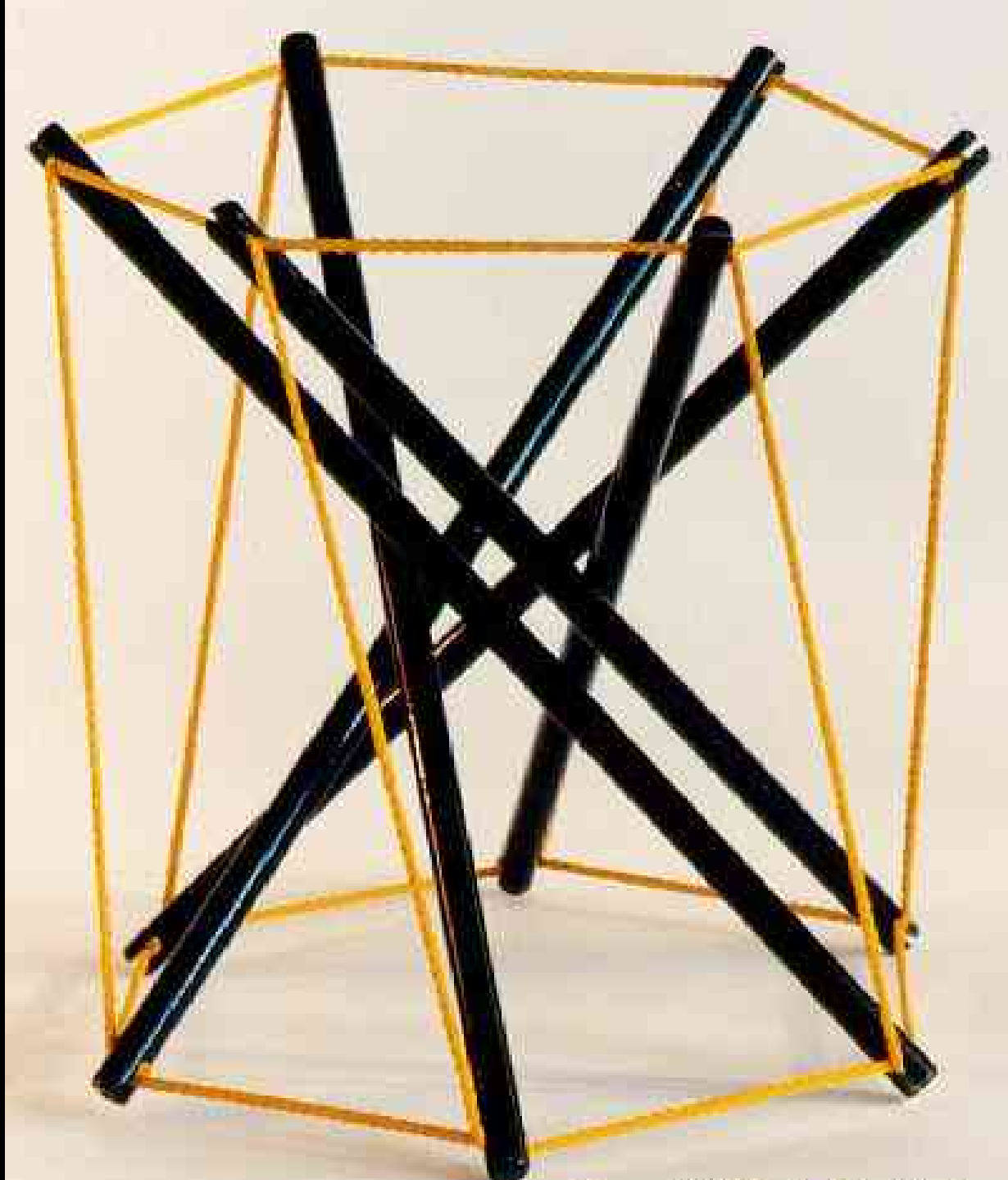




The chaotic dimensionality of community building is far too complex for anyone to understand.

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But we can use some metaphors, such as bridges, engineering, and “tensegrity”—tensional integrity—to understand how communities work.



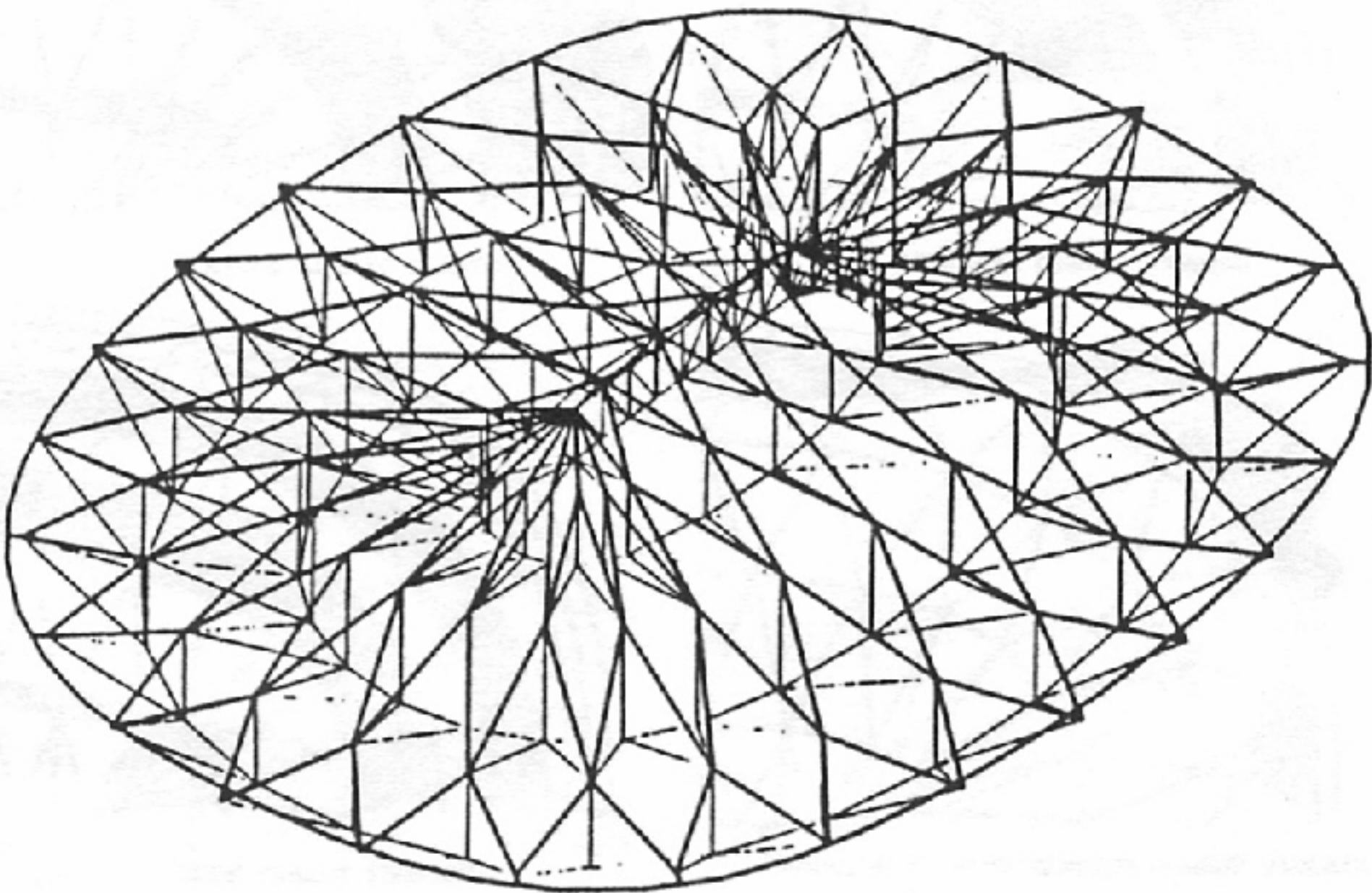
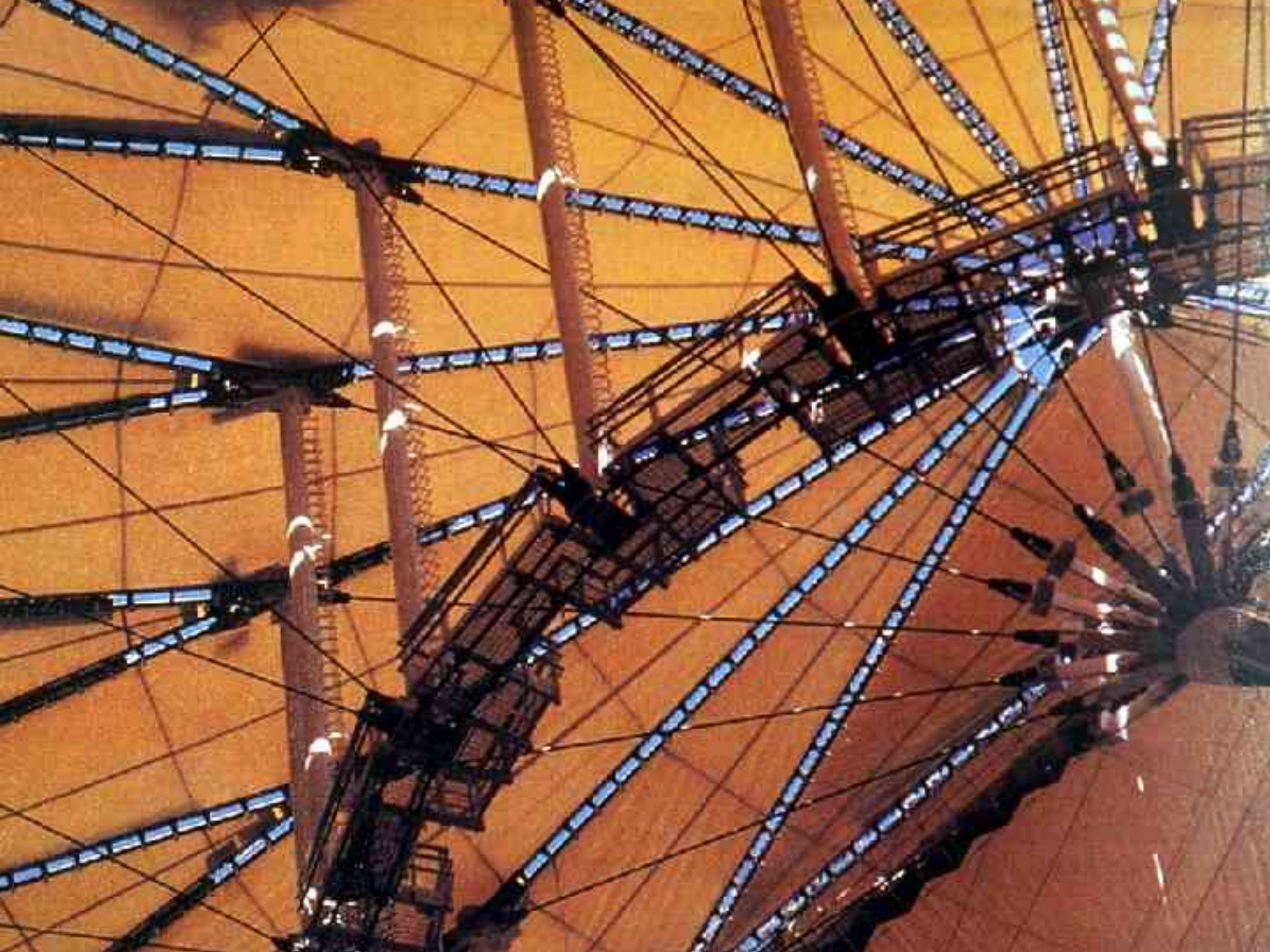


Fig 1. Hypar-Tensegrity Dome





FALCONS











Believing “Contradictions”

# Believing “contradictions”

It is good to push.

It is good to pull.



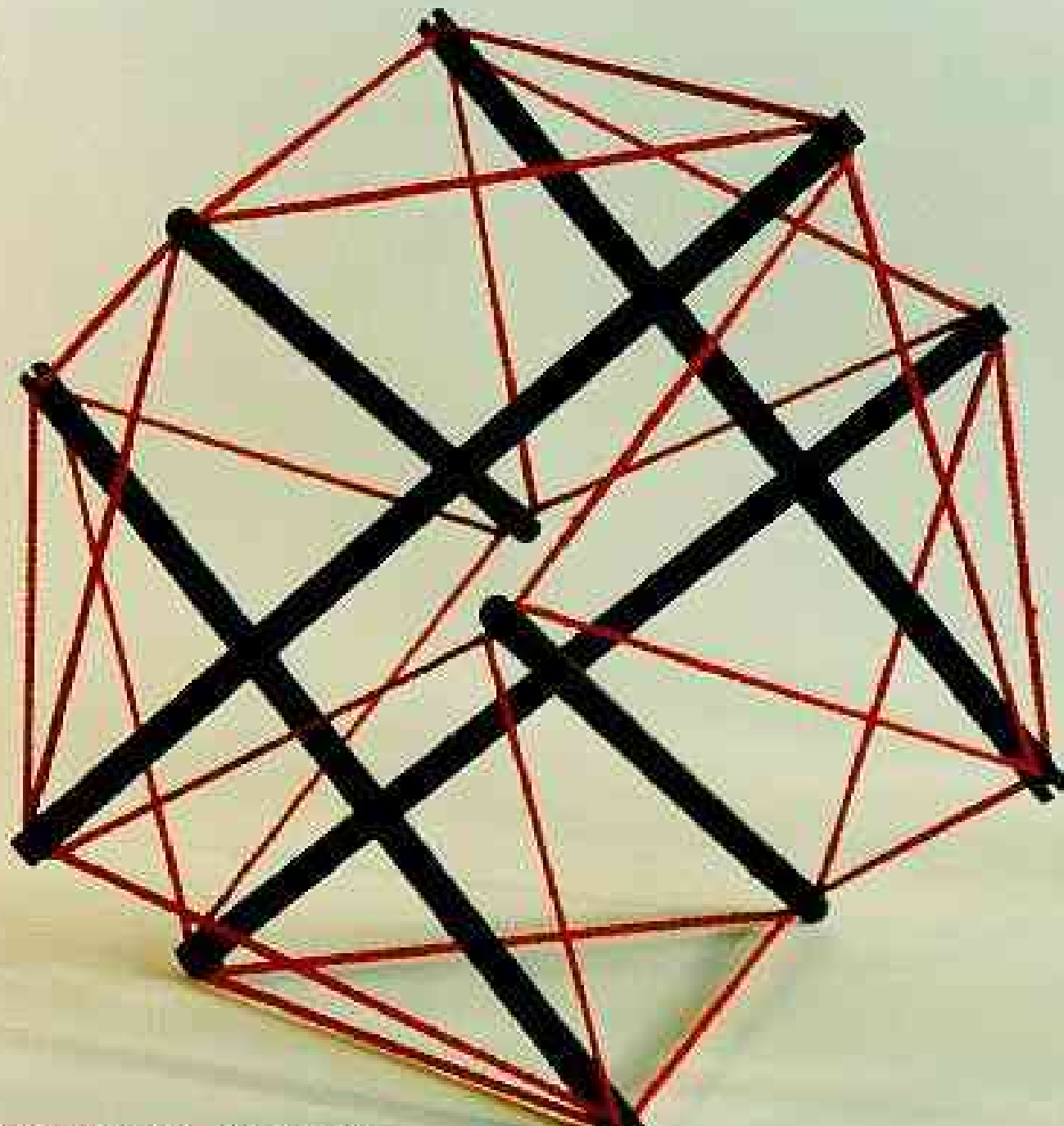
It is good to love your wife just the way she is.

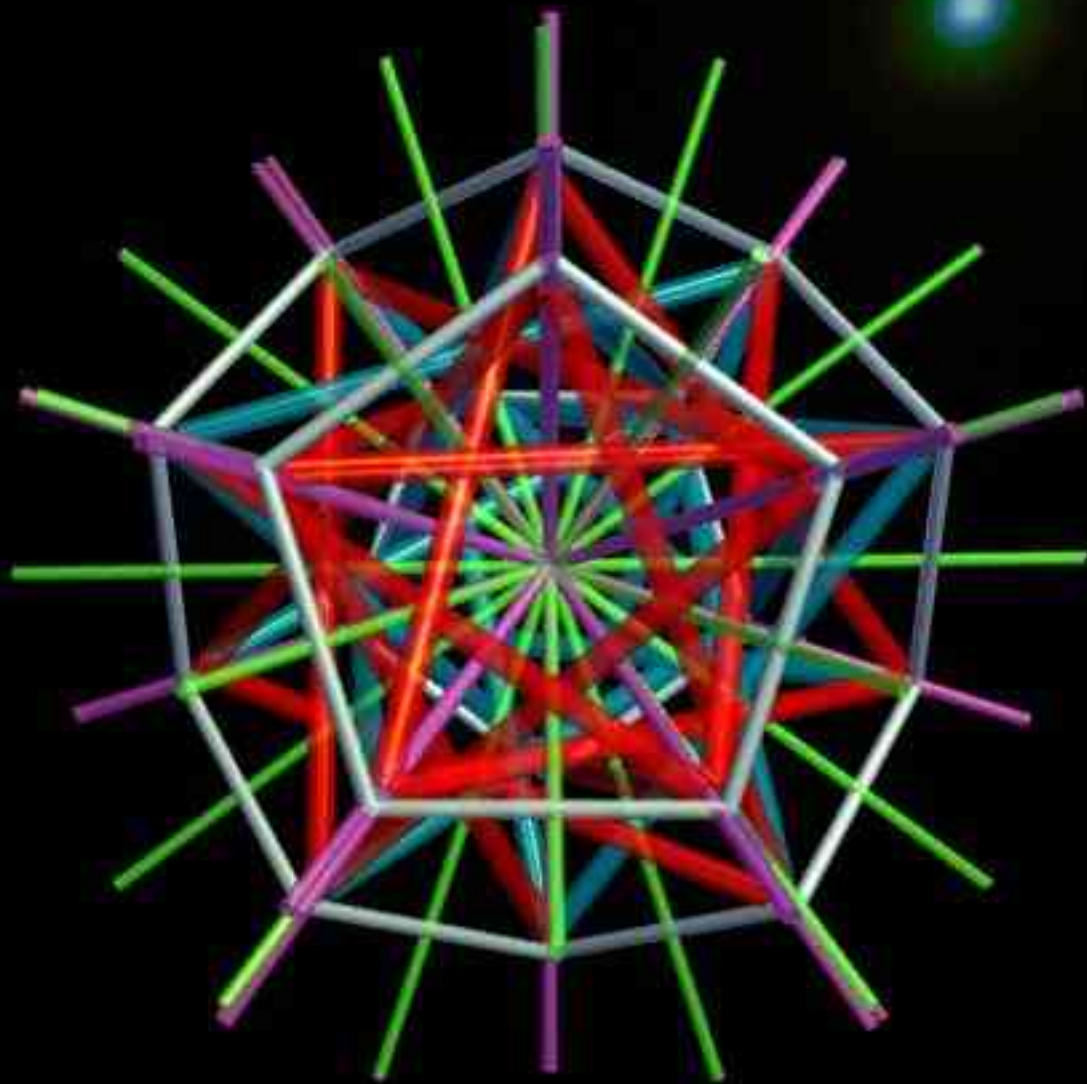
It is good to want your wife to improve.

To most Christians, God is one person,















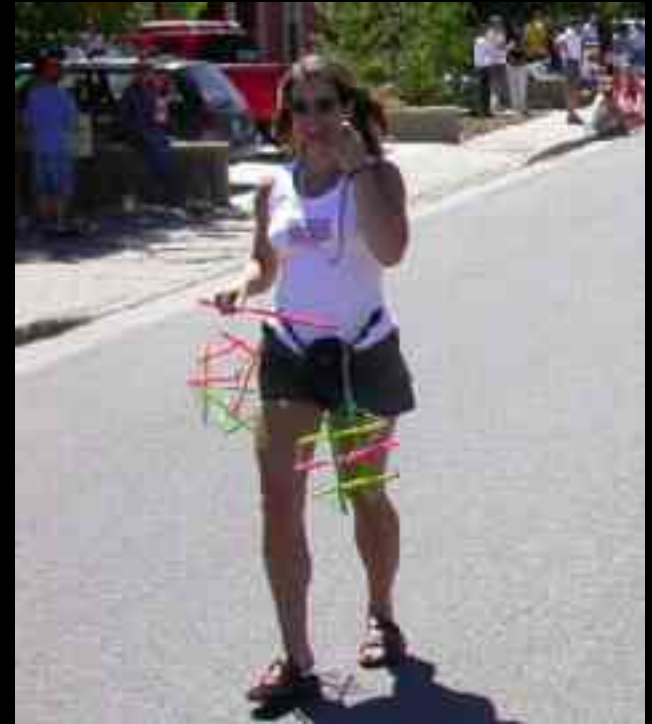
People are naturally good.  
bad.



People <sup>love</sup> <sub>hate</sub> new ideas.



People love outsiders.  
hate



People should all be alike.  
different.





People <sup>should</sup> <sub>shouldn't</sub> be in charge of others.

It should be **easy** to get in.  
**hard**



It should be **easy** to get out.  
**hard**



Specialization is good.  
Specialization is bad.



People volunteer for **altruistic** reasons.  
**selfish**





We need  
don't need a benevolent dictator.



Larry Wall is important.  
unimportant.



Larry Wall is a genius.  
an idiot.



Modernism is good.  
bad.

Postmodernism is good.  
~~good.~~



Communities develop naturally.  
artificially.

# Communities develop naturally

Habitat

Food

Health

Sex, cross-fertilization

Big gene pool

Leadership by example, consensus

Defined by core, not by periphery

Migration and Speciation

# Communities also die naturally

Habitat destruction

Starvation

Disease

No cross-fertilization, insular

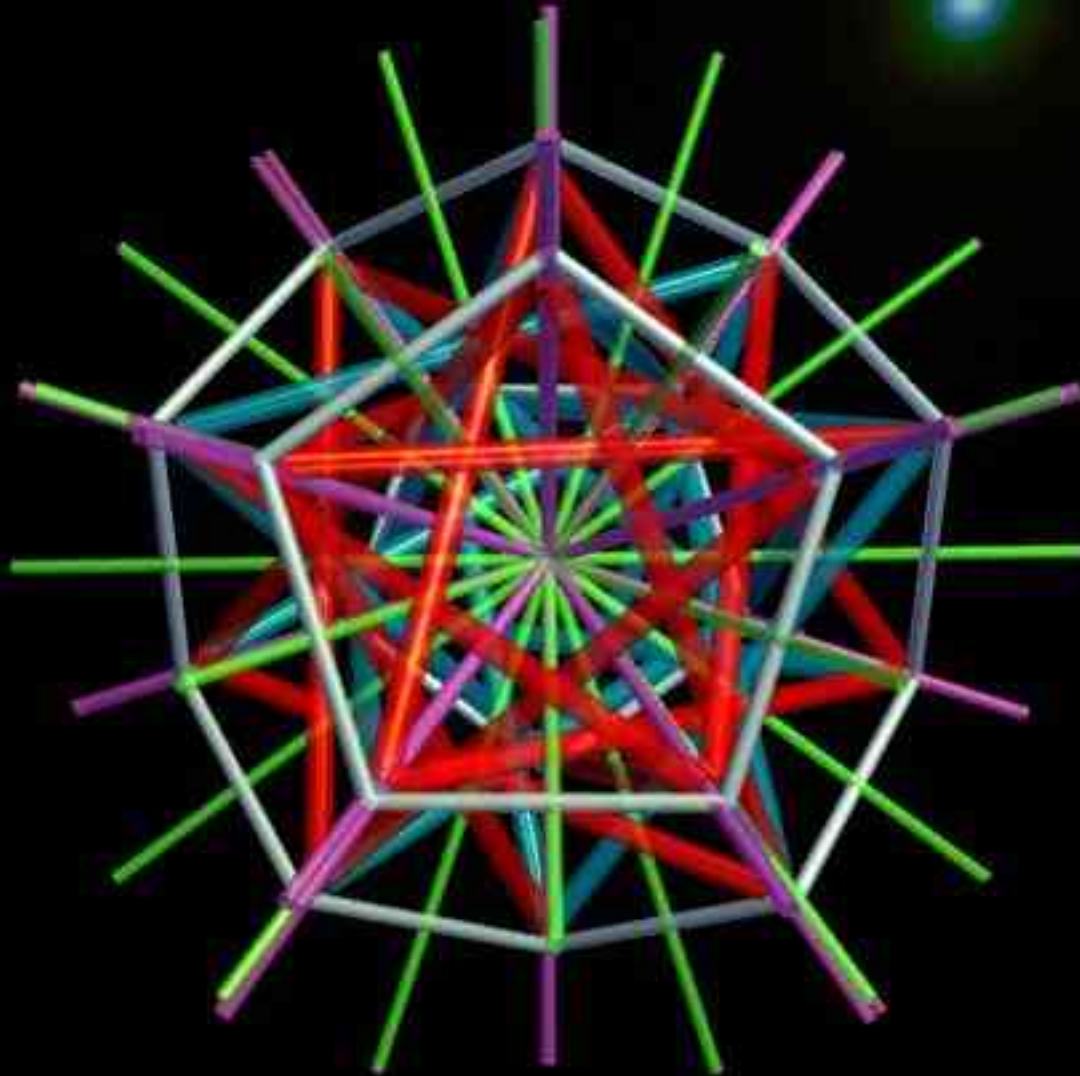
Small gene pool, tribalism

Internal warfare and anarchy

Defined by arbitrary boundaries

Stagnation and Extinction

A healthy community is both unified.  
diverse.

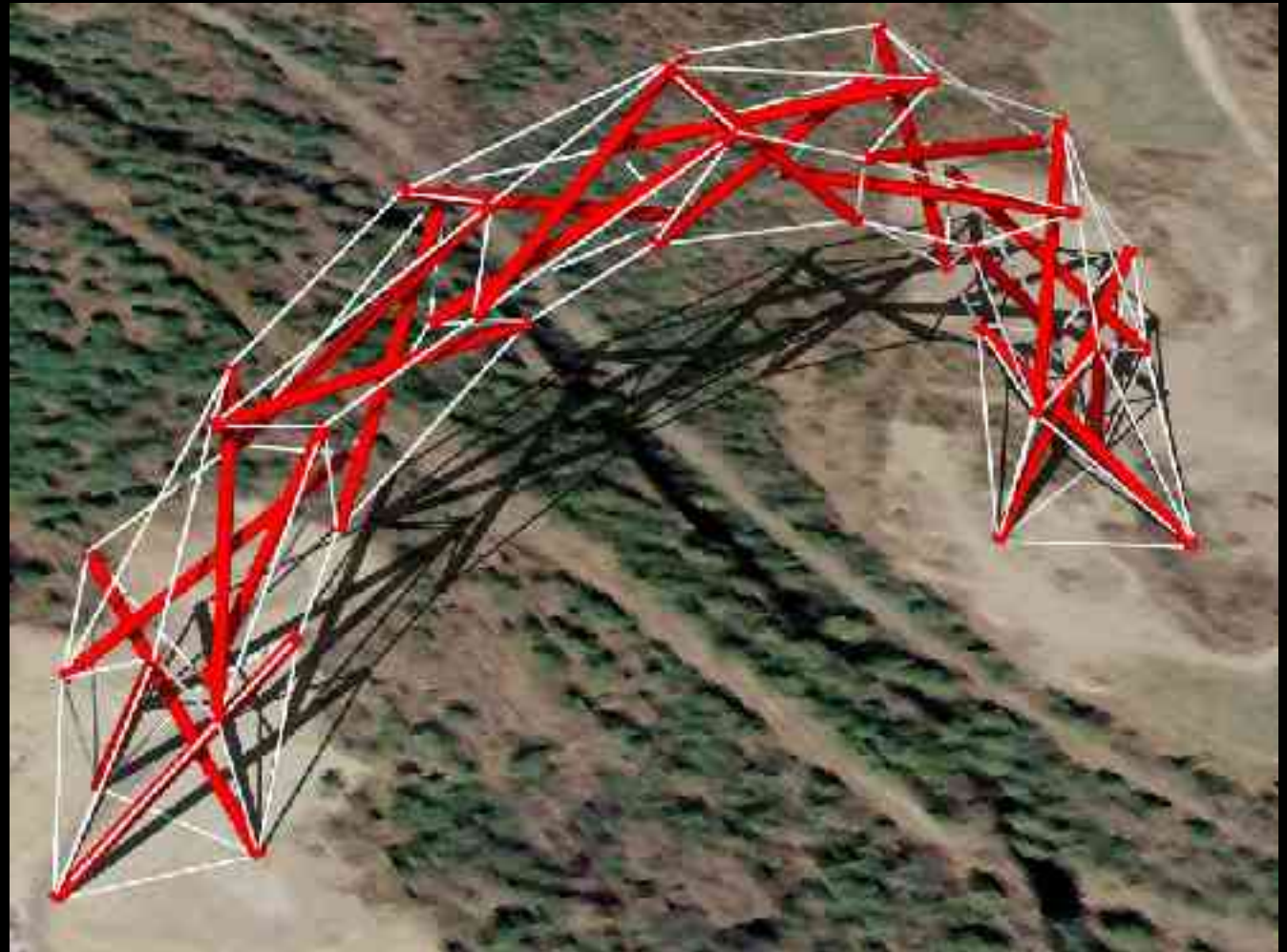


A community needs to share a set of core values, but also allow honest differences of opinion on side issues.



Is there a technological fix?

Yes!  
No!





# Is there a technological fix? Yes!

Look for a fine-grained extension mechanism. Perl 4 > Perl 5 > Perl 6...

Build a repository like CPAN.

Be prepared to separate combatants.

Do not be afraid to ask the community to restructure itself.

Give people enough time to get used to new ideas.



# Is there a technological fix? No!

People are basically irrational. Look for cheerleading opportunities.

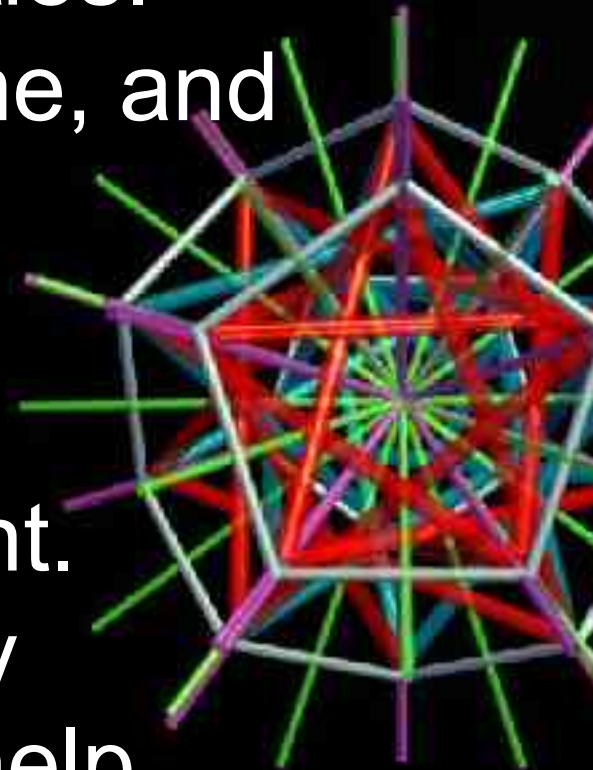
Allow people to be the same, and allow them to be different.

Simultaneously encourage and discourage the “cult”.

Cultural identity is emergent.

You need to find some way of making people *want* to help.

Have fun!!!



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