Ctrl-ZINE
Issue 22
- Vol 2

"sit back and
zine"

About ^Z

Ctrl-ZINE (^Z) is a Ctrl-c.club/Smol Web collaborative zine that celebrates tech and the Smol Web. Started in March 2023, Ctrl-ZINE publishes a monthly issue, where anyone can download a PDF version and a pre-folded PDF version for home printing. No digital format of the content is maintained on a Website whatsoever. Some of the topics within these issues range from Smol Web protocols and communities (ActivityPub, Tildeverse), Web-adjacent protocols (Gopher, Gemini), alternative forms of communication (HAM radio, LoRa, finger), snippets of code, artwork, and anything tech-related

Those who contribute to ^Z are passionate about what they share. They want what is best for Us, the citizens of the Web. With that, anyone with that same passion is welcome and encouraged to contribute to future issues. Further info can be found in the Editorial section of this issue. May the Smol Web live forever!

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The internet's resilience is social *by ~nttp*

The internet and its resilience have been on my mind a lot these days. People keep coming up with novel tech to make it more decentralized and private. But I'm not sure that's what we need more of. After all, the internet was literally designed to survive a nuclear war. If anything, much of what we've added since have only turned it into a wobbling pile of kludges that falls over if you breathe too hard.

Formats on top of protocols over transport layers, each more complicated than the last, and for what? So that Google can shave a few more bytes off every request?

Meanwhile, every authentication method devised for web services ultimately falls back on your ability to prove that you have control over a known e-mail address. And how can you do that? Why, it's turtles all the way down!

How easily that tower can topple. And never mind that e-mail is one of the oldest internet protocols still in active use. Oh, the irony. At least my main website is hosted by my neighborhood ISP. In an emergency, I can walk over there in five minutes and talk to a human +being face to face. But the domain name is managed by a registrar in the US. Oops! Conversely, my other domain is managed by RoTLD. I can get there by bus if need be (and have in the past). But the hosting provider is based in Washington DC. See?

It's a mess. That's not the problem. Life itself is a mess. We're human. But like with so many things in the past half a century, we've been trying to solve human problems by adding more tech.

Hot take: we don't need ever fancier ways for two computers to send each other smilies. Every single one will fail if the connection is severed. What we need is multiple connections. They could even be analog landlines, if those were still a thing. Likewise, we don't need great European initiatives for online payment systems. Minitel solved that problem more than four decades ago. Heck, look up what internet banking looks like in rural areas of Central African countries. It doesn't get much more low-tech than an SMS between dumb phones.

And check this out: nothing can take out both my websites at the same time. Nothing can cut off my access (or anyone else's) to them at the same time. That's what resilience used to look like on the internet. Not Tor and VPNs.

I'm a lot more worried about my continued ability to receive money from abroad. And the main obstacle isn't technical but legal. Briefly, society considers me automatically suspect for existing and wanting a bank account with a card attached that I can use to, you know, be a part of it in 2025.

At least public discourse at the highest levels has shifted from "what

do we need cash for anymore?" to "everyone should keep sufficient amounts of cash handy at all times". That's good. If this house of cards we've built ever collapses, keeping computers running will be the last of our worries. Better practice that face-to-face thing ahead of time. You can even use emoji: simply smile, wink, or blow a kiss.

Weltanschauung *by ~mindhunter*

There's one particular passage in the Archaeology of Knowledge where Foucault calls himself as the enemy of the Weltanschauung, a word that loosely represents a general orientation towards life. Such a proclamation seems rather innocuous in and of itself but if understood in the proper context, it reveals Foucault's disdain for overarching truths and narratives. By pioneering the postmodern technique, he hoped to show that knowledge, throughout history, has never progressed cumulatively. There were endless debates about the nature of the world and in the intersection of each epoch, new frameworks of knowledge and truth displaced more than it built on the work of its predecessors. So instead of seeing a movement towards objectivity or better approximations of truth, Foucault witnessed a history of dispersion. A series of events which only acquired meaning within a certain frame of reference, which according to Foucault, was mostly discursive.

As much as these observations seem reasonable enough, they also entail the invariable conclusion that all affirmations of truth and morality are fundamentally tyrannical. Since there can be no question of a true objectivity, making it possible to discern truth and error only inside a certain reference point, the act of choosing one reference over another becomes arbitrary or as Foucault called it, contingent. It naturally followed that arguing for a specific worldview was more an instantiation of your unique context than an attempt to communicate what you believed to be true. The subject was always subordinate to the rules within which he existed. Rules that not only informed his way of life but which also ultimately determined what he could say to be true or false. In virtue of the fact that an individual's conceptions was fettered by this intellectual tyranny, Foucault undertook the herculean task of deconstructing these rules and contexts by showing that under the weight of his analytical knife, nothing remained which was not our own linguistic construction.
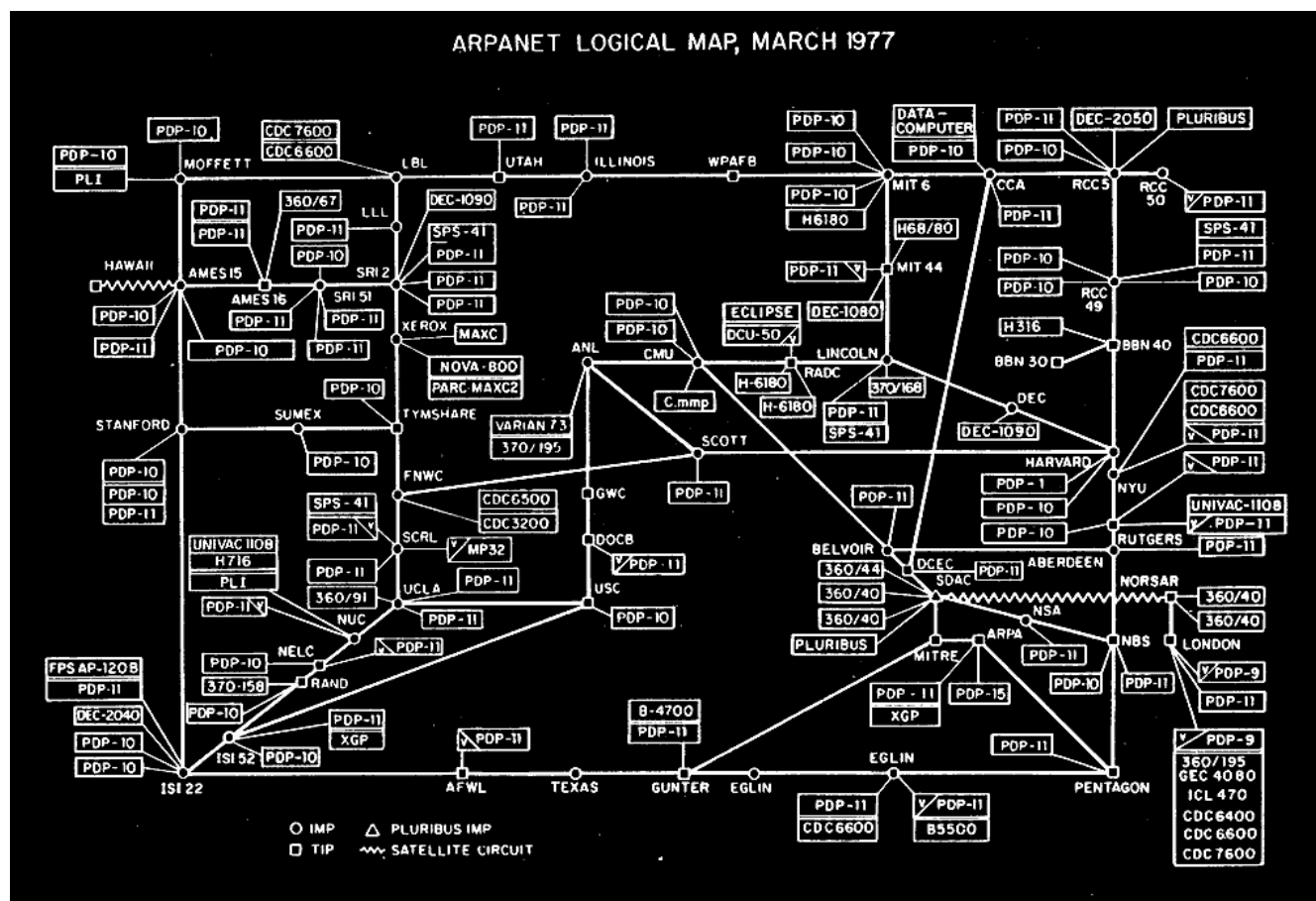
It became pointless to search for hidden meanings, underlying truths or some ulterior discourse which illuminated the secret order of things. All of us existed in an ateleological sea of islands drifting aimlessly and moving towards nowhere. And the fact that we inhabited an island, cherished a specific value, held a worldview dear to us or elaborated a certain Weltanschauung is simply a consequence of historical happenstance. Although such claims ring the death knell of most things I consider worthwhile in human life, they enjoyed wide acclaim and continues to, in my opinion, inform the undercurrents of modern culture.

It is by no means radical to say that society now suffers from a general loss of objectivity which found its loudest expression in Foucault's works. Throughout the world we see the continuous rise of extremism whose flames are fanned mostly by the prevalent aversion towards disagreements. If, as Foucault claims, there really is no underlying thread which connects seemingly random events in history, no place where a person can meet another outside his frame of reference, what becomes the purpose of human relationships? Why would I cherish disagreements when all I see in it is a gaping cleft that reminds me of

my abject loneliness? As mired with contradictions Foucault's ideas seem to be, they are also a faithful expression of an isolation that is now widely felt. For a rational mind that prefers ugly truths over comforting delusions, it seems appealing to embrace this ambivalence and wage war against the Keepers of Weltanschauung vainly searching for something they may never find. However for a mind that is both rational but also shudders in the fear of its own separation, it would be more desirable to hold ground and use whatever means it has at its disposal to delay the isolation it perceives to be imminent.

So it is no surprise that we are no longer able to find a place of commonality in disagreements. We tenaciously cling on to our beliefs and worldviews because, much like Foucault, we are not quite sure what exists outside of them. And we are more terrified of what we are without them. Therefore as much as I recognize the seeming arbitrariness of my own notions, in what hope am I to relinquish them, even momentarily, if all I see outside my island are vistas of interpretations and perspectives stretching into nothingness? Isn't this all the more reason to hold on to what has been given to me? Wouldn't I be a fool to forsake what I imperfectly know for a possibility of perfection I might never attain? We have nursed these questions deep in our hearts, albeit rather poorly, and we are preoccupied with answering it unlike a fool, but why shouldn't you be a fool?
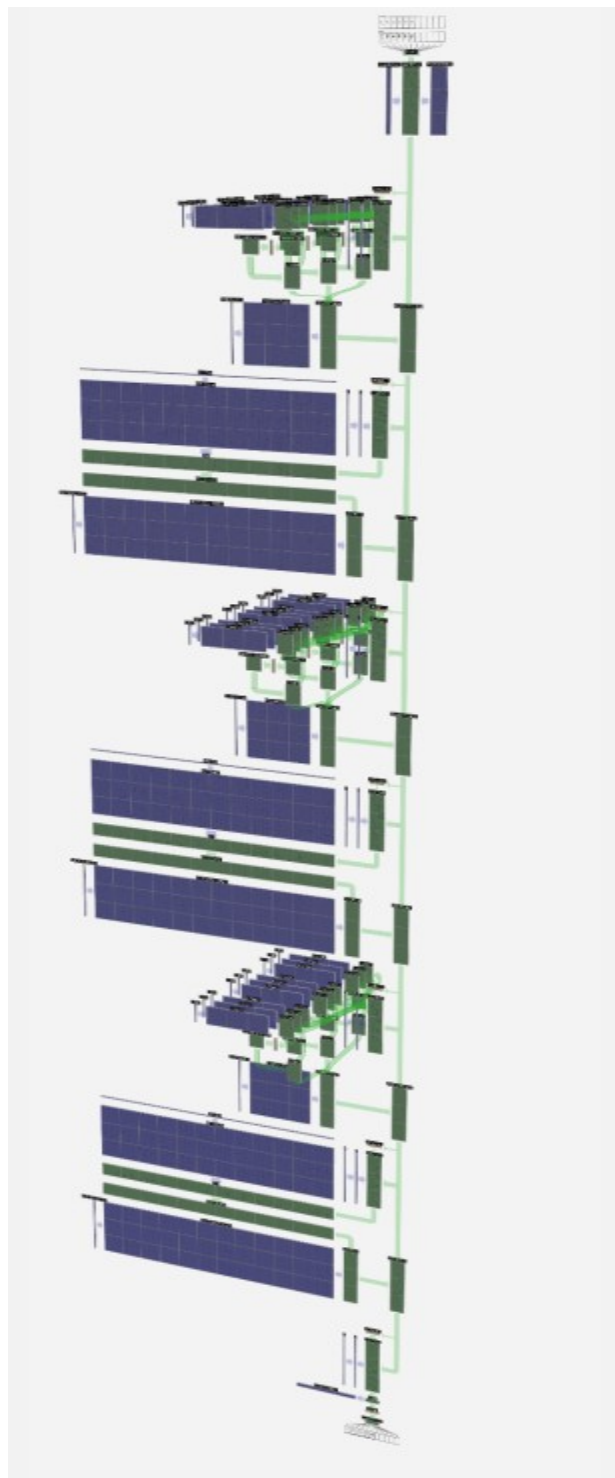
ARPANET LOGICAL MAP 1977

ARPANET LOGICAL MAP, MARCH 1977

LLM visualizer (nano-gpt)

"How fast we'll hallucinate ourselves into bankruptcy" *by ~loghead*

I spent thee past six months homeless. I have an apartment now, in the town I love, and am safe and secure. The roads up/down/traveled were enthralling but tumultuous. Things worked out, overall: I got a HUD voucher, with the Missouri HUD list closed, during a government shutdown, while homeless, and secured housing within two weeks of receiving the voucher. A stroke of luck, indeed.

While out an about, likely over tall cans at a local park, me and a friend started to discuss AI. Tech, the companies leading the charge with AI (really just LLM's), and where we're going. Knowing how the current AI models are, Gemini, Llama, chatGPT, etc., and what the companies promise *to* deliver, but aren't there (yet), and the amount of capital being invested to *get* those companies there, a friend said "how fast we'll hallucinate ourselves into bankruptcy".

And I agree. And both the companies and their (our) economies will burden the financial cost of it all.

Nevertheless, I choose another road with technology: like the one to get on my feet from homeless destitution, a road that may be less traveled, but worth it nonetheless: a Smol Web. A small home on the Internet. Most media I download - videos, mussic, photos, and keep it local/non-buffering. But online, it's little groups - IRC, Linux and UNIX servers, the Tildeverse, and BBS's that keep the "connected" blood flowing.

Others may not seen, nor is it necessary that the Smol Web *be* seen - but it's there, for us all to enjoy.