Discovering networking

When historians of the future reflect on this time, they may discover that some of our era's most significant inventions have been social, not technological. Germinated in the uproar of the 1960s and born in the self-reflection of the 1970s, networks appear to be coalescing everywhere in the 1980s, an appropriate-sociology response to bureaucratic logjams. As potent and poignant antidotes to loneliness and fragmentation, networks link people of like minds, be they secondary school administrators in Minnesota, agronomists in Asia or doctors everywhere working to prevent nuclear war.

We hear the word "network" every day. A television network. A telephone network. Networks of pathways, roadways, railways and waterways. Or simply *Network*, the Hollywood film, remembered for the TV commentator shouting, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it any more."

The word has come to describe all types of people associations:
a friendship network, a neighborhood network, a women's network, a board member network, a self-help network, an old-boy network, a scuba-diving network, a knitters' network.

Seymour Sarason, a sociologist at Yale University, writes extensively about "human resource networks." Psychologists Ross Speck and Carolyn Attneave have developed a psychotherapeutic model called "network therapy." The academic discipline of social network analysis publishes a scholarly journal called *Social Networks*.

The *Oxford Universal Dictionary* cites the first use of the word in 1560, meaning "a work in which threads, wires, or the like are arranged in the form of a net," or later "a complex structure of rivers, canals, railways, or wireless transmitting stations."

A network in the modern sense, in the sense we use it in this

book, has no dictionary definition yet. The word itself has evolved not as jargon, but to mean something new, something that can be regarded as being similar to, yet quite different from, its earlier meanings. Its more complex usage extends the word into additional grammatical forms. The noun is "a network." The verb is "to network." The gerund is "networking." A person who networks is a "networker." The word even crosses language barriers. In Japan, the word for networking is "networking," transliterated into Japanese characters.

This new meaning of "network" includes but is not limited to these images:

? a physical system that looks like a tree or a grid;
? a system of nodes and links;
? a map of lines between points;
? a persisting identity of relationships;
? a 'badly knotted fishnet";
? a structure that knows no bounds;
? a nongeographic community;
? a support system;
? a lifeline;
? everybody you know;
? everybody you know who.. swims, collects coins, sings in the church choir, watches the children walk to school, reads Teilhard de Chardin....

What is a network?

What is a network? A network is a web of free-standing participants cohering through shared values and interests. Networks are composed of self-reliant people and of independent groups.

What is networking? Networking is people connecting with people, linking ideas and resources. Networking has entered the lexicon to mean *making connections among peers.* One person with a need contacts another with a resource, and networking begins.

The rise of networks is accompanying other cultural shifts. Future forecaster John Naisbitt cites the shift from hierarchy to networks as one of ten major *megatrends* shaping the future. "We

are giving up dependence on hierarchical structures in favor of informal networks," he writes. Whereas once charts of pyramiding boxes were believed to be the only rational map by which people organize themselves, today systems of intertwining, densely populated networks can be found supplementing, weaving through, and sometimes entirely eclipsing bureaucracies.

Though personal networking is as old as the human story, only in the past few decades have people consciously used it as an organizational tool and only now are people beginning to put a name to it. While classic "old boy" networks have held things in check for centuries with their limited view of the meaning of ''we,'' in recent years networking has opened up new lines of communication, both locally and globally.

A few examples give the broad scope of networking and its humble elegance:

? In remote Rangeley, Maine, Bill Ellis, a physicist and advisor to international agencies, tends TRANET (Transnational Appropriate/Alternative Technology Network) with participants on five continents, by publishing a quarterly newsletter and answering thousands of information requests each year. Ellis says it's easier to network from this tiny village near the Canadian border than it would be in New York.
? In Tokyo, Masaaki Shiihara, a veteran Vietnam War journalist, invites just over 100 colleagues to form Networking 108, a tight web of professionals who share ideas and resources at monthly meetings.
? In Boston, Massachusetts, an independent jewelry saleswoman, concerned about the lack of connections among her female colleagues and cognizant of the industry's men-only associations such as New York's 24—Carat Club, invites seventy-five women to get together and nearly fifty show up. New England Women in the Jewelry Industry is born, providing the women, previously isolated in their individual jobs, with a place to meet and share concerns.
? In Bogota, Colombia, a Boeing 707 jet lands, carrying medicine, tents, canned foods and clothing for the survivors of the mud slide that submerged two villages at the base of a volcano. Rodrigo Arboleda Halaby, an international networker, has filled

the plane simply by letting his friends and associates know of the need.

? In Denver, Colorado, the Office for Open Network of Pattern Research organizes an information file that allows people to find others—whether investor and inventor or tenderfoot and trail guide. Leif Smith and Patricia Wagner are the network's weavers.

In addition to linking up people with complementary needs and resources, networking is also used as a conscious alternative to top-down organization. In Newark, Delaware, W. L. Gore and Associates, manufacturers of Gore-tex, a water-resistant fabric that "breathes," operate a multimillion-dollar corporation with a networking management structure that founder Bill Gore calls the "lattice." People are grouped around projects; projects are undertaken on the basis of commitment. The firm's 2,000 "associates," not employees, have not bosses but "sponsors."

Nowhere is the use of the words *network* and *networking* more prevalent than in the computer world: the large centralized behemoths that ruled the electronic world of only a few years past are now encircled by decentralized nets of small autonomous microcomputers.

A computer network is a web of free-standing computers linked by shared electronic protocols. At the leading edge of social change, people working at home in Toffler's *Third Wave* "electronic cottages" are by definition free-standing. When people interact from their electronic cottages and from their personal computers at work, they do so as self-reliant participants in a larger network. Their electronic connections, for all the suggestive Orwellian imagery, are potentially equal. With the technology in high-speed flux, every new link is forged on the frontier, where cooperation is more socially adaptive than competition.

In the end, it is this sense of cooperation among self-reliant, decision-making peers that vitalizes a network. Networking swallows up buck passing and renders each of us more responsible, self-respecting and creative. The process of networking itself changes those who are networked, by expanding each person's matrix of connections.

Networks as organization

Until the past several decades, network theory was drawn from the physical world. Road, telephone and television networks, with their entrances, byways and exits, are hardware systems. People networks are something else.

The seminal theoretical work about large-scale people networks comes from anthropology. In 1970, University of Minnesota anthropologists Luther P. Gerlach and Virginia H. Hine published *People, Power, Change; Movements of Social Transformation*, the first deep study of the large-scale structure of networks, based on their field work with two subcultures, the Pentecostal Movement and the Black Power Movement. Although the core ideologies of the two movements differed dramatically, Gerlach and Hine found that their structures were very similar and could be described as "a network—decentralized, segmentary, and

"In the minds of many," they wrote, "the only possible alternative to a bureaucracy or a leader-centered organization is no organization at all." Rather, what they observed was a multileadered netting of sovereign participants threaded by common ideology.

Virginia Hine, who died in 1982, offered a concise summary of this work and gave it an historical perspective in her classic essay, "The basic paradigm of a future socio-cultural system." Hine introduced the concept of the SPIN, an acronym that stands for a "Segmented, Polycephalous, Ideological, Network" and suggested it as an "adaptive pattern of social organization for the global society of the future."

Contrasting a network with a bureaucracy that collapses like a table when one leg is cut off, Hine wrote, "A SPIN, on the other hand, is composed of autonomous *segments* that are organizationally self-sufficient, any of which could survive the elimination of all the others." A segment stands alone, and it stands with other segments.

The word *polycephalous* literally means "many heads." In traditional anthropology, Gerlach and Hine observed, a tribe without a single key leader is called "acephalous." In networks, Gerlach and Hine observed many leaders, with different people assuming leadership for different tasks. Not one key person but many.

Not one supreme authority, but rather many pools of responsibility.

"Frequently a leader is no more than *primus inter pares*, or first among equals, who speaks for the group only on certain occasions and can influence decision making rather than make decisions for the group," Hine wrote.

It is really the "I" of the SPIN that gives it its oomph. "The 5, the P and the N represent organizational factors which can be handled at the sociological level of analysis," Hine wrote. "But the power of the unifying idea adds a qualitatively different element to the equation. The power lies in a deep commitment to a very few basic tenets shared by all."

A social network is a form of human organization. Evolutionary longevity testifies to the adaptability and indispensability of personal networking, probably as old as our species. Today, informal networking permeates our daily lives and operates at every level of even the most structured modern institutions. Our personal lives are sustained and complicated by clusters of connections that we call upon and that call upon us.

As though to bridge the distant past and the envisioned future, today we witness the emergence of a new form of network—group networks. Group networks are large-scale human organizations, like the previous social inventions of hierarchies and bureaucracies. A group that calls itself a network links individuals or groups or both. Often, groups within networks are organized along traditional hierarchic-bureaucratic lines yet maintain peer relationships at the network level.

In our sample of networks, we find two common patterns: (1) networks are whole systems composed of relatively autonomous participants; and (2) networks are created and sustained by bonds of shared values among participants.

Networks arise and function among equals. While nothing is absolutely self-reliant or totally independent, networks come alive through the relative autonomy of their participants, whether people, groups or large institutions. In networks, a respect for each entity, whether person, group or ecosystem, establishes the foundation for peer relationships.

Networks *decentralize decision making* through guidance by *many leaders* with *multiple layers* of intertwining connections and

concerns in which people communicate as *nodes and links* that fade from view through fuzzy ***boundaries.***

Networks are *decentralized* organizations. When a network disintegrates, its members stand free. Unlike the components of a centralized bureaucracy, the parts of a network are essentially independent and generalized. In networks, decision making is distributed; networks are coordinated, not controlled.

Networks are *polycephalous,* which literally means "many heads". Decentralized coordination requires distributed and fluid leadership. A network is always in a dynamic equilibrium between a few agreements on shared values and many disagreements on how to get from here to there. The *multiplicity* of leaders and viewpoints protects the network from domination by any one leader or any one opinion. This babble of equivalent voices is also what makes a network vulnerable to the impotence of factionalism.

Network participants connect horizontally, automatically generating two levels of activity at once, the level of each participant and the level of their network, their whole. As a network grows, local groups proliferate and new connections are made between networks, generating *multiple levels* of networking activity. All complex organizations, human or otherwise, develop a level structure. What distinguishes the network is that while generating levels, it also preserves autonomy and prerogatives for decision making in each participant at each level. In networks, information and decisions flow in all directions, up and down and across the layers of organization.

People in networks communicate as *nodes and links,* terms from communications theory that describe how physical networks, like the telephone, function. As a source or recipient of information, a person is a node. As an information carrier, making a connection between nodes, a person is a link. The essence of networking lies in the person-to-person relationship; it is people who write letters, memos, and business plans, talk in groups, place telephone calls, propose ideas, compile resources and cut deals. It is people who have and who transmit values.

Decentralized, polycephalous, multilayered, node/link networks have *fuzzy boundaries.* Connections based on shared values are bound to wax and wane as circumstances change for individuals and society. Just as we cannot completely enumerate everyone in

our personal network, which in any case would change by tomorrow, so a group network rarely knows the extent of its membership, influence and resources.

An invisible, unweighable, intangible glue holds a network together. That glue is shared *values*. Values are the magnets that draw people into networks and hold them together. Values are binding forces. Values are the organizing principles that hold Peters' and Waterman's "excellent" corporations together. People in a network hold values shared by others in their network, even though values, above all, cannot be "held" in the physical sense of the word. Values are the principles that we live by, the perspective on life that our parents, and all the other institutions in our lives, pass along to us, and that we pass along to our children.

Making connections

To illustrate networking at work, we recount the beginning of our networking research and trace one of the journeys we explored in doing the research for this book: specifically, the pathway that led us to the experiential education network.

Our itinerary illustrates how networks function by forming links along lines of tenuous and tangential connections and related interests. Our odyssey is also a multileveled tale in the spirit of the late Yale psychologist Stanley Milgram, who found that anyone in the United States can reach anyone else by going through a statistical average of no more than *5.5* other people. In this example, we reached the universe of experiential education at our fourth ''stop'' of inquiry. Along the path of this particular itinerary, we passed by thousands of other groups and individuals.

Our tour began at Stop 0, in Newton, Massachusetts, where we sent our very first letter of inquiry to Robert A. Smith, III, at Stop 1, then living in Huntsville, Alabama.

Robert A. Smith, III, a retired US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) organizational management official, from Pine Apple, Alabama, is a networking pioneer, a quiet, backstage letter writer who connects people of like interests and ideas.

We first met Smith on the telephone in the mid-1970s, when he

called at the suggestion of someone else, and a lifelong friendship was born. Bob Smith's personal story is exemplary of how one person without credentials, extensive education, or contacts in high places" can nurture and create a one-person network that reaches around the globe.

The oldest of four children born in rural southern Alabama, Smith had what he calls an "eiditic capacity." He recalls, "We did not have kindergarten, and since we lived so far from town, my mother encouraged my imagination. From the time I was very young, I could entertain myself."

This self-motivating principle served him well later when, at the age of 43, in 1964, he suffered a nearly fatal heart attack that completely reshaped his life.

To recuperate, he sat for many hours in his backyard garden, where one day he had what he later understood to be a peak experience. "Suddenly, I became aware of how small I was in one sense, and how large I was in another," he explains. "I could feel my connection to the whole cosmos, and from there I was bolted into writing a dialogue between [authors] Henry Miller and Henry David Thoreau. I felt that I was at Walden Pond. I could actually see the cabin."

In one extraordinary moment, Smith burst open, like a spring pod in his lush garden, and began to experiment. In the summer of 1966, he spent two intense weeks at the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine. "I began to read more. I studied Teilhard de Chardin, Goethe, and Jefferson, and developed the courage to dialogue with other people interested in the same ideas. And my wife, Dot, was very supportive of my emerging role change."

Smith's new path was unfolding at the same time that the US government, where he was now working as head of a NASA management research program, began to use WATS (Wide Area Telephone Service) lines, the first inexpensive long-distance phone service.

"I am a strong believer in synchronicity," Smith explains, "but people need to be connected to one another in order to form synergetic partnerships. So I started to use my WATS line to connect people."

By the end of the 1960s, Smith was on a "first name basis" with people who were completely outside his early life and experiences,

nurturing a kind of human horticulture, companion planting people with similar interests in each other's mental garden. "I started directing people with similar ideas to one another," he says. "Then people began to 'use' me, and by that I mean 'use' in a very loving way, to find others with similar interests."

As the farewell gesture to his dear WATS at his retirement from NASA in 1977, Smith distributed his own catalog of contacts called "Try It! The Invisible College Directory and Network of Robert A. Smith, III." This concoction, organized by Smith's own feel for what is "good in the world," made public his personal network.

The Invisible College, photocopied and stapled together, was a cut-and-paste networking scrapbook of names, addresses, letterheads, drawings and quotes, complete with cutouts of book reviews, newspaper articles, photographs, brochures and thought-provoking headlines. It included such diverse novelties as a picture of Stevie Wonder, a birthday announcement for a 4-year-old in Pine Apple, Alabama, quotes from Dane Rudhyar and Sri Chinmoy, a recipe for peanut pie from Angie Stevens in Plains, Georgia, an ad for a meditation bench, a photograph of Sasquatch/Big Foot positioned next to a snapshot of *Whole Earth Catalog* publisher Stewart Brand. It was half-typed, half-written by hand and crossed out, and it concluded, on page 82, with these words penned in by Smith: "As Bob Dylan would probably put it, this directory is a concern with 'chaos, watermelons, collard greens, clocks, meditation, space travel, everything'. It may reveal how diversity does not necessarily lead to structured pluralism or fragmented separatism but rather a unity with a profound mosaic."

When we began our network research, we began with Bob Smith. He responded immediately with names and addresses of nine more people to contact. Two of those referrals pick up the path of the experiential education network, Peter and Trudy Johnson-Lenz at Stop 2, in Lake Oswego, Oregon, and Robert Theobald at Stop 2A, in Wickenburg, Arizona. Both referred us on to Leif Smith at Stop 3, at the Office for Open Network in Denver, Colorado, but in two very different ways: the Johnson-Lenzes wrote us a note suggesting three contacts, the first of which was Leif Smith; Theobald's referral came, in characteristic networking fashion, indirectly.

At the time that Theobald received our letter, both he and the Johnson-Lenzes were active users of the Electronic Information

Exchange System (ETES), a computer conferencing system (see Chapter 7) based in Newark, New Jersey. Theobald submitted a copy of our letter to TRANSFORM, a group of people participating in a conference by that name on EIES. Among the people reading the letter in TRANSFORM was Charlton Price at Stop 2B, in Tacoma, Washington, then editor of the EIES newsletter ***Chimo.*** Price published our letter to Theobald in the electronic newsletter available to everyone on the computer system (which we subsequently learned about when Price sent us a copy of the newsletter item in the mail). Another user of the computer conferencing system, David Voremberg, at Stop 2C, in Somerville, Massachusetts (about fifteen minutes from our home), saw the same message in the electronic newsletter, called us on the phone and, among other suggestions, mentioned that we should contact Smith in Denver.

So we wrote to Smith at Stop 3. He and his coworker, Patricia Wagner, responded first with a telephone call and then with a follow-up packet of materials that included two years' of their tabloid newspaper (no longer published) containing several hundred more references, which we then combed looking for people and groups that seemed relevant and/or intriguing. Among these names was that of Maria Snyder, who became Stop 4, at the Association for Experiential Education, located in Denver, which published the *Journal of Experiential Education.* In contacting Snyder, we reached an entry point into the experiential education metanetwork.

Snyder responded quickly and fully, providing us with yet another list of names, including that of the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL), at Stop *5,* in Columbia, Maryland. CAEL is both a node point for research in experiential education, and one of twelve participating links in the Coalition for Alternatives in Postsecondary Education (CAPE), at Stop 6, in Frankfort, Kentucky. CAPE's General Secretary, Robert Sexton, responded to our inquiry, incidentally telling us that our letter "arrived after having been shredded by some kind of postal machine". Apparently, the letter remained sufficiently legible for him to understand what we were looking for, because he sent a pile of documents explaining CAPE's work.

Sexton referred us on to each of CAPE's twelve members. Eventually, we received a response from the Learning Resources

Network (LERN) at Stop 7, whose headquarters in Manhattan, Kansas, serves as the exchange point for 247 participating groups in forty states and Canada. LERN's universe includes both course-offering groups and learning exchanges, which operate through telephone referrals and information banks. The Kansas office sponsors conferences and workshops, provides technical assistance, and publishes a directory of its member organizations, one of which is at Boston College in Newton, Massachusetts, where our search for information began.

Global networking

From person to planet, networking is a medium with a message.

Consider the message hierarchy carries about social order and behavior, whether it's used in a family, corporation, or country. Bureaucracy, too, carries its messages, underlining every meeting and memo.

The networking message is "interdependence with independence."

This idea—that the process of networking itself carries a message and philosophy of human interaction regardless of what the networking is about—was introduced to us as a question. From the back of the room at the World Future Society conference in Washington, DC, in 1982, a question came about whether the "value glue" of a network had to be "good" values. Did we think, the questioner asked, that networks which formed around "bad" values and interests might still generate subtle benefits because of the process of networking itself? We admitted we did think so.

Values hold a network together, but of course one person's "good" values are another's "bad" values. Without judging a network's goals, values and objectives—its "ends"—we feel that networking *per se* can be beneficial because the "means" are participatory.

Our strongest impression about the rising tide of networking is the diversity of subjects and the congruence of form. As we increasingly see the terms "network" and "networking" used in a social context of a people/organizational form, we marvel at the consistency of concept within the multiplicity of applications.

The clear visual images of physical networks, from very small (webs and nets) to very large (roadways and talkways), are prob-

ably responsible for the spontaneous use of the word to describe a spread-out, multicentered, value-based group of people. This could describe the structure of a high tech company, an environmental group, or an international terrorist ring.

There is coherence to the evolution of networking that is related to very large-scale social change. This shift, often phrased as movement from the Industrial to the Information Age, brings a new pattern of human organization, described by the word "network."

Writing in the earlier part of this century, the German sociologist Max Weber saw bureaucracy as a natural response to industrialism. Hierarchy, a word with ecclesiastical roots, emerged from the agricultural revolution that began 12,000 years ago. As later ages and forms of organization include earlier ones—as bureaucracy included hierarchy and industrialism incorporated agriculturalism—so networking includes authority and specialization.

What is *old* about networking is rooted in the human pre-history of person-to-person contact that formed cooperative groups and made possible tools and language. What is *new* about networking is its promise as a global form of organization with roots in individual participation. A form that recognizes independence while supporting interdependence.

Networking can lead to a global perspective based on personal experience. The networks we know lead naturally to an image of the world-as-a-whole richly networked.

In his *Global Brain* audiovisual presentations, British author Peter Russell projects a suddenly new, powerful image that is now part of all human inheritance—the outside-looking-in true photograph of Planet Earth, delicately framed in deepest black. A global symbol of unity and interdependence. Literally. An image of us all that we all can hold in the metaphorical palm of our hand.

So, holding the world in your hand, visualize it organized as a single hierarchy. Think of it controlled by a few bureaucracies. Imagine it as an interplay of many networks.

If you already have had visions of global networks, you probably have sensed that the process of networking, wherever you find it, at whatever scale, is itself a contribution to the solutions of the global *problematique.*

Discovering the invisible planet

This book is about networks and networking. Networks are the links that bind us together, making it possible for us to share work, aspirations and ideals. Networking is a process of making connections with other people. This book is specifically concerned with the networking that creates the universe we call the Invisible Planet.

The Invisible Planet is not a place but a state of mind. Touching every area of our lives, there is an Invisible Planet, rarely seen on television or read about in newspapers. It is a state of ideas and visions and practical enterprises that people move in and out of depending on their moods and needs, a domain that is very new, and at the same time, very old.

In this special universe, health is perceived as the natural state of the body, cooperation is regarded as an effective way to meet basic needs, nature's ecological orchestra is revered as one unified instrument, business is regarded as an effective way to get vital work done, inner development is valued as a correlate to social involvement, and the planet is understood to be an interconnected whole.

There is an Invisible Planet and it is pulsating and expanding and unfolding through networking, an organic communications process that threads across interests, through problems, and around solutions. Networks are the meeting grounds for the inhabitants of this invisible domain. These flexible, vibrant organizations often exist without boundaries, bylaws, or officers. Networks are the lines of communication, the alternative express highways that people use to get things done. In crisis and in opportunity, the word spreads quickly through these people-power lines.

The Invisible Planet and its networks are complements. The Invisible Planet represents the ideas and the values. Networks and networking are the structures and processes through which the ideas and values come alive.

Inspired by a vision of a peaceful yet dynamic planet, entirely new cultures are emerging in our lands. They are connected by casual, ever-changing links among hundreds of millions of people with shared needs, values and aspirations. As short-lived, selfcamouflaging, adisciplinary cross-hatches of activity, networks are invisible, uncountable and unpollable. Networks can be highly

active one day, and totally defunct the next. Every time a network comes to life its form is a little different.

Networks are stages on which dissonance is not only tolerated but encouraged, yet agreement is a common goal. They are the experimental seedbeds in which people risk stretching their creativity. Networks are efficient and effective; feedback is as spontaneous as telephones, mailings and meetings permit. Networks are often personal and friendly, supportive and affirming, critical and energizing. Networks can be intimate and immediate—at times they serve as our extended families, bonding people together as strongly as bloodlines.

Networks are the connections that make us all one people on one small planet near one small star. They are our newest and probably our oldest social invention. They are our gift to our children, who are natural networkers on the day they are born.

There are spokespeople on the Invisible Planet, but there are few exalted leaders, presidents, or boards of directors. There are people who serve as models, but there are few figureheads whose lives are to be cloned. There are entry points and connections—nodes and links—but there are few hierarchical structures along which individuals can advance. The Invisible Planet exists everywhere, from the smallest villages to the largest metropolises, offering anyone who shares the vision the opportunity to participate.

There is nothing to conquer on the Invisible Planet: there are only problems to solve, using personal resourcefulness as the provider of solutions. There are goods that are produced to be used but not thoughtlessly consumed, and obsoletism refers to an antiquated value system that arrogantly calls for winners and losers. Even the language people use is different: from a litany of overused cliches, people are finding novel ways to express themselves in optimistic, hope-filled phrases that help to create the reality toward which people are striving.

For every problem that is tossed up before us in newspapers and on television, someone—if not ten, twenty, or hundreds of someones—somewhere in the world is working on a solution. While the cameras have been turned in another direction and reporters have been preoccupied with following the multiple trails of disaster and corruption, networkers everywhere are creating the Invisible Planet, which is hidden to some and highly visible to others.

While the 1970s have been characterized in the United States as the age of narcissism, a more careful reading of the times reveals quite a different picture. The 1970s, we can now see, were a time of hard work, experimentation, and bridge building. It was during the 1970s that networks came into their own, offering a strong counterpoint to the centralized bureaucracies that now dominate people's lives.

? Although a women's health network may appear to have nothing to do with saving the whales, the declarations, functions, and styles of both groups indicate that they are operating out of the same, mutualistic concerns for a world in which honor and protection are accorded to all living beings.
? While a group working for disarmament may appear to have nothing in common with an executive breakfast group, these two vital networks are both working to engage people in recreating the world around them.
? Even though there is no formal connection between a Native American sovereignty network and a group of communicators in a major religious denomination, they share some deep conceptual connections and a value system that honours individual choice and cultural pluralism.
? Whereas an organization development network may think it has nothing in common with a hospice, on closer examination it is apparent that both cherish values that support people's control over their own lives.

These connections cross categories, transcending individual issues. It is a shared value system that defines the pattern of a "metanetwork," a network of networks, an immense subculture.

Our Invisible Planet exists as a pattern of connections and values, a complex latticework of hope and despair, anger and love, fantasy and reality, descriptions of problems, and examples of solutions. While some might say that optimism is unrealistic at this point in history, networkers counter with the belief that the future we create together is a matter of attitude and that while the doomsayers are important beacons, they spotlight only a portion of reality. Every day, every new situation, every new problem is a challenge and a potential for beneficial change.

The Invisible Planet is entered by taking another look at what

is going on around us and recognizing the connections and nascent links among all the little islands of hope. If the idea of the Invisible Planet seems remote, if not a fantasy, here in Chapter 1, reconsider this feeling after wandering through the examples in this book. Look closely at the networks working in areas you know something about and imagine the simple links that would carry you into the nearest conceptual neighborhoods of this planet of the mind.