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To: new civilization discussion list  
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Subject: Network Generators

## Network Generators

There are some key principles that I think are important in discovering how NCN, or any other network for that matter, will evolve and expand.

[Here Flemming refers to my essay, [A Philosophical Overview of Pattern Research, Freeorder, Open Network, and Open Society](#), which makes the distinction between a network and a network generator. -Leif]

Now, a network, at least the kind I'm most interested in, is inherently its own thing, and not really owned or "managed" by anybody. That is, the network is formed by people connecting up, by themselves, by their own volition, across boundaries, at multiple levels. A network is different from a hierarchy or a bureaucracy in that regard, where somebody's always in charge, or there are pre-assigned functions of each person or unit. A network is a more free-form thing, driven by how people voluntarily choose to link up, how they choose to cooperate, share data, socialize, or whatever they feel they need to do.

That's one reason why I didn't make NCN an incorporated non-profit organization, or any other kind of legal entity, and why I hope it won't ever be. It isn't an organization per se, it isn't one unit that somebody's the president of, or that somebody's owning or controlling.

However, a network can very well be facilitated by people or organizations who serve the network. That can be people or groups who create the network, who attract members to it, who provide common facilities, infrastructures, motivation, leadership, or whatever is necessary. These people or groups could be called Network Generators

For example, I have served as a Network Generator for NCN, together with others who have volunteered their services. The computer facilities that we're using are as well part of a Network Generator.

A network could have several or many network generators. A network generator might be an organization, it might even be hierarchical, and it might be a business. It might operate by specific rules, and there might be somebody in charge of it, setting the guidelines for how it operates, completely un-democratically.

The distinctions here are important. The network itself is a free-flowing, self-organizing organism, composed of whatever its members are up to, manifested whichever way they are able to. A network is some kind of evolving chaos where certain things emerge within it. A network generator serves the network, but it isn't the network. It is most likely more organized and orderly and it doesn't really have to work like the network itself does

A network is a space where things emerge. It isn't designed or planned or controlled. A network generator might be designed, might follow a plan, and might be tightly controlled.

There could, and probably should, be several network generators for NCN. Certainly when we expand to bigger numbers, it would be preferable that the facilities were provided in a distributed manner. The network would be more viable, sustainable and fault-tolerant that way. The different nodes or network generators could cover for each other, supplement each other, work on different kinds of tasks or agendas, serve more specialized needs or types of members, or whatever else would be needed. Each network generator could be a small organization, and would preferably be economically self-sustainable.

Synchronicity Networks, which Julie Solheim and I run, is essentially a network generator. We've found that we enjoy bringing people together and creating environments where magical and useful things happen, and that we have some success in doing so, online and in physical events. So, we serve NCN in doing so, and in providing some facilities for this purpose, and we're doing that with other networks. We're doing it because we feel it is our mission. And, as it needs to be

economically viable in the current world, it is also an incorporated business entity. Hopefully one that can work organically and be of service with integrity to the world.

Now, my own vision for NCN is that it can be a self-organizing structure that is expandable and scalable to any size, and that will maintain and enhance the ability for people to connect together in meaningful ways, to work in small groups, to find what they need, and whatever else it is here for.

Essential to this is that it is distributed and scalable. Let me explain those terms as they might not be clear to those of you who aren't technically oriented.

"Distributed" means that there are multiple nodes in the structure, multiple points of intelligence that make things happen. As opposed to a centralized structure where everything goes through one unit, and if that unit goes down, the whole system goes down. A distributed architecture is more tolerant to breakdown of any kind, more "fault-tolerant", and empowers local functions, which might make the whole system more useful and intelligent, and, if we're talking about people, more "fair".

"Scalable" means that something can be expanded fluidly without having to re-invent the whole structure. Like, we can make the system 10 or 1000 times bigger without destroying it. That requires that somebody, while the system was small, has thought of how it will work when it expands, and put some kind of elegant structure or protocol in place that would work at any size.

Now, right now NCN doesn't quite operate that way. Most of the facilities are operated on a couple of servers that are soon in the same place. If they go down, you might be without messages from NCN for a couple of days, and you might not be able to look at the web pages. No real big catastrophe at this point, but compare it with when America Online goes down, and millions of people, who depend every day on its services, are freaking out. The facilities of NCN aren't very distributed at this point.

The infrastructure of NCN isn't overly scalable at this point either. For example, at the current number of members and inflow of members it is quite doable that I send

you the introductions for the new members every month. The message is a little large, but it is tolerable when it is only 50 people or so. If it were 5000 people each month I wouldn't have time to construct the message, it would be much too big to send, and it would be too overwhelming to try to read it.

My vision is of more of a cell oriented structure. A design where one both has an intimate local group or environment to hang out in, and where there's also a connection to the bigger body or network. There's a circle of people or activities one is closely involved with on an ongoing basis, a team, a tribe, a special interest group, or whatever we'll call it. And there are mechanisms for interacting with other groups and the overall network, without being overwhelmed by the traffic.

I will write more on this later, and I must make clear that the exact way of doing this has not been invented yet. However, I must note that the absence of an organic, self-organizing, scalable structure is, in my opinion, to a large degree what is "wrong" with the old civilization. Sure, you're part of a few different local groups, like your family, your circle of friends, a company you might be working in, etc., but outside of that you're presented with a huge, chaotic society you're very likely to be alienated from. It is you alone up against the government, against a very chaotic and confusing mix of information, people, events, economic pressures, laws, norms, morals, etc. And governments and other authorities are in big trouble trying to manage hundreds of millions of people at the same time, because they don't know of any kind of organic architecture, so the best they can do is to make up some laws off the top of their heads and send out some people with guns to enforce them on everybody.

Anyway, I see a role for network generators and for infrastructure architects in figuring out and implementing ways that even very large groups of people can interact with each other, so that they can play meaningful roles, be empowered in what they do, stay informed about what they're interested in, and be spared being overwhelmed by floods of information that they don't need or want.

The New Civilization Network might seem a modest and insignificant activity at first glance. But notice that nobody else has the answer to how groups of people will link up and work well together from the bottom up. The solutions might just as well be invented here as anywhere else.

The infrastructure we need for an expandable NCN might very well reflect what a whole planetary civilization needs to organize itself effectively.

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[I would like to direct your attention especially to Flemming's [HoloWorld](#), in which he uses Arthur Koestler's concept of the "holon" as a path to understanding.  
-Leif]